



FEATURE Photo gallery: Easter and Holy Week



FEATURE Churches debate benefits of virtual Eucharist



ARTS Artworks help to lift spirits during crisis

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

Churches bank on federal stimulus to help weather financial storm

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

It may not have merited a single mention in the online video of your socially distanced Easter Sunday service this year, but behind the scenes — before, during and after Holy Week — the federal CARES Act has been and continues to be a big deal for churches.

Much of the \$2 trillion stimulus package that became law on March 27 is intended as a lifeline for private sector employers and workers, but the Episcopal Church and other tax-exempt faith-based organizations also qualify for emergency federal assistance amid the sudden economic downturn caused by the rapid spread of COVID-19. Finances at congregations of all sizes also have been disrupted by widespread prohibitions on public gatherings.

“Let’s face it, this is going to affect everybody to some extent. It just depends on what kind of condition you’re in,” said the Rev. Bob Kinney, who serves as a deacon and business manager at All Saints Episcopal Church in Tarpon Springs, Fla.

Kinney sits on the lowest rung of a ladder of churchwide mobilization. The CARES Act, formally known as the Coronavirus Aid,



The Rev. Eric Cooter presides at the online Palm Sunday service at St. Monica’s Episcopal Church in Naples, Fla.

Photo/St. Monica’s via YouTube

Relief and Economic Security Act, allotted \$350 billion for loans to employers through its Paycheck Protection Program. In addition to payroll costs, the money can be used to cover utility bills and mortgage or lease payments for up to two months. All Saints applied for a \$27,600 loan.

Up one rung on the churchwide ladder, the Diocese of Southwest Florida has been in regular communication with its 77 churches and two church plants about their financial options. As the coronavirus crisis has developed, the diocesan financial team, led by Ann

Vickers, canon for finance and administration, has organized weekly webinars with priests and parish administrators. Vickers’ advice has included how to apply for federal assistance. All Saints and 69 other churches in the diocese are doing so.

The CARES Act allows them to request loans worth up to 2½ months’ personnel costs. Across the diocese, those requests total more than \$6 million covering about 735 jobs — including the 38 people who work for the diocese and for the diocese’s DaySpring Episcopal Conference Center in Parrish, Fla.

The abrupt shift last month to online worship services has deprived churches of the ability to collect traditional plate offerings, though pledges have continued to come in through websites and by mail. Within those constraints, some Southwest Florida churches’ financial outlooks are better than others, Vickers told Episcopal News Service.

Their cash reserves vary, as do their parishioners’ financial statuses, she said. Many congregations hadn’t attempted to collect digital offerings and donations until now, when it became imperative. With

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Fort Worth rector finds grace in his harrowing experience as an early COVID-19 case

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service



Photo/Jill Walters

The Rev. Robert Pace couldn’t even touch his dog, Scout, during his COVID-19 quarantine. The day it ended, Scout jumped right into his arms.

When the Rev. Robert Pace woke up the day after Ash Wednesday (Feb. 26) “feeling miserable,” he didn’t think too much of it. His symptoms all pointed to a standard case of the flu — except the cough that just kept getting worse.

What Pace — the 53-year-old rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Fort Worth, Texas — didn’t know at the time was that this cough was about to turn his life, and the entire world, upside down. Just over a week later, he would be hospitalized with the first documented case of COVID-19 in Tarrant County, the third-largest county in Texas.

After three days in the hospital and two weeks in quarantine at home, Pace has recovered from the virus and is back to leading Trinity’s services by livestream. His experience as an early case of the disease has given him a unique perspective, both as a patient and a pastor.

The experience “has been really surreal for me,” Pace told Episcopal News Service. “It’s been quite a ride.”

For Pace, the ride may have started at the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP) Network’s annual conference in Louisville, Ky., in late February. At least eight people who attended that conference, including Pace, later tested positive for COVID-19.

But when Pace started feeling sick about a

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CONVERSATIONS

'Noli me tangere': A reflection in the time of pandemic



By Pamela A. Lewis

TOUCH IS ONE OF our most powerful senses, connecting us with our environment as well as with other human beings and creatures. Much of the world would be meaningless were it not possible for us to experience it through our sense of touch, and human relationships, partly built and nurtured by touch, would feel incomplete without it. It is not entirely metaphorical when we speak of the "human touch," suggesting as it does that touch transmits something significant from giver to recipient.

There are, however, prohibitions to touching. We probably recall when, as children, we were warned by adults, "Don't touch," when we extended a hand to touch something that was too hot, too breakable or too dirty. We see "please don't touch" signs in museums requesting that we refrain from placing our hands on ancient or delicate objects lest they be damaged. Now, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are instructed to not touch: to not touch our faces, eyes, noses, even one another.

In the Gospel of John, we also find an admonition against touching. The author writes that Mary Magdalene, who has gone to Jesus' tomb on the first day of the week, finds that the stone that had sealed it has been removed. Instead of Jesus' body, two angels are in the tomb. Weeping and distressed at the thought that the body has been stolen, Mary looks up and finds herself in the presence of a man she takes to be the gardener, and to whom she explains the reason for her distress. When Jesus calls her by name, Mary instinctively reaches out to touch him, calling him "Rabboni," which means "Teacher."

"Touch me not," Jesus tells her, "for I

am not yet ascended to my Father." The Latin version of this phrase — "noli me tangere" — became a popular trope in Gregorian chant, and it inspired many depictions of the garden scene in Christian art from antiquity to the present.

John's Gospel is the only one in which this exchange between Jesus and Mary appears. I long have been intrigued and mystified by this poignant scene, which appears to contradict everything the Gospel accounts have said about Jesus.

The one who had not only *physically* touched and healed lepers and other marginalized people but also touched so many through his teachings now was asking the woman out of whom he had cast seven devils, the one who now needed so much to touch him again, not to touch him. We can only imagine Mary's extreme heartbreak and confusion at her beloved teacher denying her an action she once could do freely.

This year's Lent and Easter were different in that the pandemic changed our understanding of the Gospel narratives and even the words that constitute them. The word "touch" is an example of this. We have heard and read the Gospel accounts and words countless times, but perhaps did so more profoundly this time, because they have become more urgently personal.

While the Gospel says Christ's instruction to Mary to not touch him was meant to explain that his resurrection was yet to be completed, we can understand these words to signify that we are yet to be healed, yet to be "safe." While a hug, a handshake, a grasp of the arm may have been impulsive actions, we now must observe physical distancing

— staying at least six feet apart, wearing masks and perhaps gloves — as though we are wearing an invisible sign that reads: "Noli me tangere."

The virus has imposed a "touch-me-not" prohibition even on those who have died from it, robbing loved ones of a last embrace and families of the opportunity to gather for funerals.

When churches received the directive to close their doors for public worship, I realized that we had stepped into that proverbial "uncharted territory." Normally, my church, Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York, is open daily, offering 19 services weekly. Its location means that it serves as a place for those who wish to reflect, pray and find respite from the city's ceaseless activity. Removing this vital presence was painful.

Like thousands of other churches, we have livestreamed our services via webcast and video. The creativity and innovative spirit of our clergy and staff in "keeping church" in these ways despite the building's closure have been impressive. Zoom has made it possible for us to hold vestry meetings, our adult-education classes and our Sunday School, as well as well-attended and lively fellowship gatherings.

Despite the power and beauty of the virtual Lent and Holy week liturgies and the successful Zoom meetings and gatherings, they all remain substitutes for the real thing. I miss the *tangibility* of being in church: listening to the organ prelude before the service begins; joining my voice with others in singing hymns; smelling the incense that always makes me cough a little; eating and drinking the Body and Blood; shaking a hand; seeing and speaking with my fellow parishioners.



Image/Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
"Noli me Tangere" Léon,
Spain, ca. 1115-20. Ivory,
traces of gilding.

Priests also have reservations about virtual worship. A clergy friend recently told me of his concerns on what community and Communion will be once the pandemic subsides. He also is worried about those without Internet access. Will we as a church become so reliant on remote worship that traditional worship will fade into obsolescence?

I hear a lot of talk about going back to "normal," about the wish to return to the pre-pandemic life we all miss. Certainly, I want to see people return to work, want the life of our city and nation to resume. Most importantly, I want everyone to be healthy and free from the threat of infection. But we will need to revise the definition of "normal."

Bible scholars have suggested that "noli me tangere" actually means "do not cling to me" or "do not hold on to me." Jesus' death and resurrection changed everything; what had been "normal" was no more. This also was true of the relationship between Jesus and his followers, including Mary Magdalene; the old, "normal" ways of touching gave way to a spirit-to-spirit bond.

The pandemic has uncovered a range of the often harmful ways in which we touch our planet and its various life forms, in how we "touch" (or do not) the poor and minorities, and in how the touch of our politics and policies can create inequities. We have known about and tolerated these "touches" for a long time and allowed them to become the "normal" and permanent features on our landscapes.

Those old norms are telling us, "Do not cling to me." It will be difficult to release our tight grasp of them, but the future of humanity will depend on our doing this and on whether the touches of the future normal will be better than the ones we must leave behind. ■

Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



IF EVER A CLICHÉ was proven true, it is the "keep calm and carry on" sentiment from wartime Britain, now reproduced on millions of products.

There's really no other way to approach the mindset needed to endure and thrive during this global pandemic, but what is the prescription for action?

In a crisis, having a sense of purpose is essential to psychological well-being. To continue the British wartime analogy, think of all the little boats that set off from England to bring the troops home from Dunkirk. Or consider New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, where volunteers from around the country, many of them from faith groups, helped rebuild homes and lives.

In this crisis, so-called "essential" workers, from medical staff to grocery workers, feel that sense of purpose and sacrifice. For those not in frontline services, it's easy to feel adrift.

Our lives have been upended, and one of the most difficult aspects is that we are told to "not do" things. Don't go out. Don't visit. Don't get physi-

cally close to others. Don't expose your mouth and nose if you happen to pass close to others.

Although we may not be bringing the mail or keeping the lights on, leaders and people of faith should be on the "essential" list. Pamela Lewis, above, writes movingly about the lack of "touch" in this year's Holy Week and Easter season, of how we now "touch" only through a computer or phone screen.

The photo collection on page 8 shows Episcopal churches expressing a joyful sense of purpose and mission — "touching" in imaginative ways, from automobile processions to takeout bags of Easter worship aids and symbols.

Another way we can touch is by making donations — if we have the capacity. If we are among those who still have work or receive a retirement income, we can mail a check to our church offices or donate online. We can support church and local food banks and relief agencies such as Episcopal Relief & Development and the Episcopal Actors Guild, or diocesan relief agencies.

We can calmly "carry on" by doing these things "in Jesus' name," even while we stay safe and worship from home. ■

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NEWS

Episcopal Service Corps programs change and persevere through COVID-19

By Heather Beasley Doyle
Episcopal News Service

Early into the coronavirus outbreak in Seattle, Adam Conley began talking with his local Jesuit and Quaker counterparts about safety protocols. Specifically, Conley worried about the Episcopal Service Corps members he oversees as director of the Seattle Service Corps. The young adults live together and serve at Seattle-area nonprofits and churches for the better part of a year — but COVID-19 had suddenly introduced new concerns.

“It was mostly a question of quarantine, keeping people safe, keeping people fed. Those were the first questions,” he recently told Episcopal News Service.

Episcopal Service Corps is a program for adults aged 21 to 32 years old. Those chosen annually live in community for about 10 months. Each serves at a local nonprofit, church, or other service project — soup kitchens, schools, social justice work — while engaging in faith formation, both individually and communally. Currently, 80

corps members are serving through 16 programs in 12 states nationwide.

Over the past month, the coronavirus outbreak has swiftly brought intentional living and in-person service into question. By the second or third week in March, Conley wondered if he could safely send Seattle corps members to their sites. Similar concerns, along with unique ones, had begun bubbling up at Episcopal Service Corps programs around the country.

In Baltimore, the Rev. Jan Hamill, director of Episcopal Service Corps-Maryland, put together protocols for living together during the pandemic, as had Conley. Meanwhile, in New York, New York Service + Justice Collaborative Executive Director Judy Douglas was making similar preparations — ensuring that there was someplace in her six corps members’ home to quarantine, as well as enough cleaning supplies and food — when one corps member began showing COVID-19 symptoms.

“He hadn’t been tested at that time, and so trying to figure out the protocols was an urgent matter for us,” Douglas said.

The program directors are spread throughout the country and oversee different cohorts serving a variety of communities; yet in this moment, they faced the same challenges. As the country shut down in earnest, Episcopal Service Committee Coordinator Wendy Johnson returned from sabbatical one week early.

“Which was perfect, because she came on and she led us all through that period of time,” said Douglas. “And we



Photo/courtesy of Kelsey Rice Bogdan

Episcopal Service Corps members with Life Together in Boston relax after hosting a dinner for alumni and friends at the start of their program year.



Photo/Andrew Hudgins

Johnson County Service Corps, which operates in Chapel Hill and Durham, N.C., checks in with their corps members via video.

met every single day for two weeks as things rapidly unfolded,” added Hamill. On those calls, the directors have talked things over with peers uniquely positioned to listen, help and commiserate.

On March 20, the Diocese of Maryland decided it would be better for Maryland’s service corps members to leave their Baltimore group home. But going home isn’t necessarily a simple thing, as Kelsey Rice Bogdan, executive director at Life Together in Boston, knew well.

Earlier in the COVID-19 crisis, Rice Bogdan was in discussion with the diocese there about sending the program’s fellows home. “And I said, ‘I don’t feel like we should do that, because I know that there are people in our community who would not have a place to go,’” she recounted, underscoring a key consideration in this process. So the decision was made: The Boston corps members would live together, family-style, with their own new protocols.

The decision for entire service corps households to stay put has been common among Episcopal Service Corps programs. It was the plan in New York, too, but one member was away at a critical moment and couldn’t return, while another decided that it would be better to leave. At Johnson Service Corps in Chapel Hill and Durham, N.C., five of the 11 participants decided to leave their intentional community.

In most cases, corps members’ service has become remote, leaving some more engaged than others. Sometimes, as corps members continued doing essen-

tial work, housemates became increasingly uncomfortable with potential virus exposure, and that was discussed.

At Life Together in Boston, one corps member moved in with a partner in order to continue to serve in person — a solution that worked for everyone. At Seattle Service Corps, a housemate working with the homeless community ultimately decided to stop going to her site, out of consideration for her housemates’ concerns.

At Beloved in the Desert in Tucson, Ariz., three of the five corps members continue to serve, two with a meals-on-wheels type program and one at a local food bank. Beloved in the Desert’s Executive Director Taylor Devine reflected on the choices and risks in an email.

“We see the risks, certainly, but we can’t also look away from those who are already so unseen by society who take risks every day to put food on their tables and find a roof under which to sleep,” she wrote. “It is a delicate balance, but Christianity is always a balance between living for ourselves and living for the world.”

In this changeable new status quo, the ongoing challenge for Episcopal Service Corps directors, now socially distanced from their corps members, is: “How do we bring them back into community?” Hamill said. They’re doing so in the same ways as everyone else, with a commitment to creative solutions: through spiritual formation via Zoom, shared Netflix movie screenings at 1 a.m., or virtual coffee breaks.

“They’ve had to reimagine community,” said Douglas. “We’ve done some online meditation to help them through it, and so far so good. The community’s still strong. Those that are away have dialed in.”

Nonetheless, having limited interaction with the outside world is hard. In North Carolina, Program Director Andrew Hudgins sees the thinned-out households as helpful.

“Some of the underlying tensions that have kind of gone on with different things — just typical stuff of living together — we don’t have an escalation of that,” he said. Now, Hudgins anticipates shepherding local corps members out of the snow-day mentality as the crisis continues.

At Colorado Episcopal Service Corps in Denver, Executive Director the Rev. Rebecca Crummey sees personality shaping people’s responses to the new constraints. She’s begun talking with her corps members about staying mentally healthy in the current reality, with the overarching question, “How do we not succumb to total depression, but allow ourselves the space and grace to grieve

and name it being difficult?”

The challenges hint at unbidden personal and spiritual growth — and such evolution already seems underway. Hamill said that one of the Baltimore corps members, normally shy, has written prayers with The Slate Project and posted them on the organization’s Facebook page.

Some are adjusting to living with their parents again, and this week, at least one has lost a family member to COVID-19. In Seattle, Conley has been watching corps members shift “from a point of kind of laughing at it and being a little cavalier — because they’re young and healthy — at the beginning of the month, to really seeing their faith base and ethical call to be safeguards for preventing that disease from passing on to someone more vulnerable,” he said.

There is another positive development emerging for Episcopal Service Corps: Corps members across the country are connecting for the first time. After Easter, they will delve into different projects together, including recording each other’s pandemic experiences and sharing them with the broader Episcopal community. “I think we’re going to see some real richness as a result of that,” said Johnson.

Johnson also noted that Episcopal Service Corps is now recruiting for its 2020-2021 program. “The work that corps members do is really important to the communities where they’re deployed, especially now, and especially in the months and years ahead as we deal with what is happening,” she said. “I think for young adults in the church who are looking for a way to respond to what they see happening in the world right now, Episcopal Service Corps provides that opportunity.”

As for the program directors she’s met with again and again over the past month, wrestling over decisions and sharing experiences, Johnson said, “as I watch them do their work, I can’t help but marvel at their resilience and passion.” ■

Heather Beasley Doyle is a freelance journalist, writer and editor based in Massachusetts.

About Episcopal Service Corps

Episcopal Service Corps is a network of young adults ages 21-32 serving through locally organized intentional communities that are dedicated to:

- Serving others in solidarity
- Promoting justice in community
- Deepening spiritual awareness
- Discerning vocation
- Living simply

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until programs reach capacity.

Visit the ESC website (www.episcopalservicecorps.org) for the application and discernment quiz, as well as details about the application process and each ESC local program.

AROUND THE CHURCH

Canterbury Cathedral's bell 'Harry' tolls daily during pandemic

ACNS

For the first time in history, the old bell on Canterbury Cathedral's central tower — known as bell "Harry" — is tolling each evening in remembrance of the day's global victims of the novel coronavirus, and in celebration of the heroism of frontline healthcare staff and other essential workers around the world.

In recognition of the unprecedented shared global tragedy of the pandemic, Canterbury Cathedral — the mother church of the worldwide Anglican Communion — began on April 9 (Maundy Thursday) tolling bell "Harry" for two minutes at 8 pm BST (British Summer Time). The daily toll will continue until the threat of coronavirus recedes.

The tolling of the bell is both in remembrance of each day's victims of the coronavirus around the world, and



Photo/Wikimedia Commons

Canterbury Cathedral's bell "Harry" is mounted in this central tower.

in celebration and recognition of the daily bravery and self-sacrifice of frontline healthcare staff and other essential workers within the U.K. and internationally.

It is hoped that the familiar sound of this bell of the 1,400-year-old cathedral will be a comfort and source of strength for all who hear it; a symbol of continuity, solidarity and reassurance that we will, as a global community, get through this dark time together, according to the cathedral.

To this end, the cathedral is encouraging everyone within earshot to record the tolling of the bell from inside their homes each evening and post it online to share with their friends and families wherever they are.

"Communities around the world have embraced the idea of clapping hands to thank publicly healthcare staff and other frontline workers at this time. We all know that their vital work is undertaken at great

personal risk to themselves. The bell of Canterbury Cathedral will lend its voice to this display of gratitude and also mark a moment to pause and remember those who have died," said Canterbury Dean Robert Willis.

"Harry" will be tolled remotely via a timer, so no staff will be present within the building. ■

Episcopal Youth Event postponed

The 2020 Episcopal Youth Event (EYE20) that was scheduled to be held at the University of Maryland, College Park, July 7-11, 2020, has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is deeply disappointing for many, and particularly for the 18 youth who have been called to serve on the planning team, many of whom are seniors," said Bronwyn Clark Skov, Officer for Youth Ministries. "We are actively working to reschedule, with special consideration for the current senior class and will provide updates as soon as we can."

The churchwide Department of Faith Formation, which organizes the Episcopal Youth Event, said it hopes to reschedule the gathering for 2021. All registered delegations and bishops have been contacted and arrangements are being made to refund deposits.

"I know that the postponement of EYE is a real disappointment for so many of our young people, especially for graduating seniors. In this time of COVID-19 pandemic, young and old alike are being called upon to make sacrifices for the good and well-being of others, as well as for our own good. Those who have changed the world and human life for the good have always been those willing to make some kind of sacrifice for a higher purpose."

"I am writing this during Holy Week when Jesus was willing to sacrifice his life if necessary to witness to God's way of love as the way of life for us all. As disappointing as postponing EYE is, please know that your sacrifice is one of many sacrifices being made by so many that are helping to save lives. For that, I thank you, and thank God for you! God love you. God bless you. And may God hold us all, the entire human family, in those almighty hands of love," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said.

Additional information about EYE20 is available at www.events.episcopalchurch.org/eye/. For more information, Skov may be contacted at eye@episcopalchurch.org.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office



Photo/the Rev. Dan Webster

A mask ministry in New Mexico

The Cathedral of St. John in Albuquerque, N.M. hangs masks from its garden gates for passersby to take as a protection measure during the novel coronavirus pandemic. A prayer is also inserted in each mask.

TRANSITIONS

Chicago, Pittsburgh bishops postpone retirements and elections of successors

Bishop Jeffrey Lee of the diocese of Chicago has told his diocese that he is delaying his retirement, which had been planned for August 2020, and the election of his successor, which was planned to take place at a special convention in June, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lee has served as the 12th bishop of the Diocese of Chicago since 2008. The election of his successor is now scheduled to happen at the annual diocesan convention Nov. 20-21, 2020.

— Diocese of Chicago



Lee

Bishop Dorsey McConnell, of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, informed the diocese on April 16 that he is postponing his retirement and the election of his successor by five months due to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The election had been planned for November 2020, with McConnell retiring on April 24, 2021. He has served as bishop since 2012.

The election is now scheduled for April 24, 2021, with McConnell scheduled to retire on Sept. 18, 2021.

— Diocese of Pittsburgh



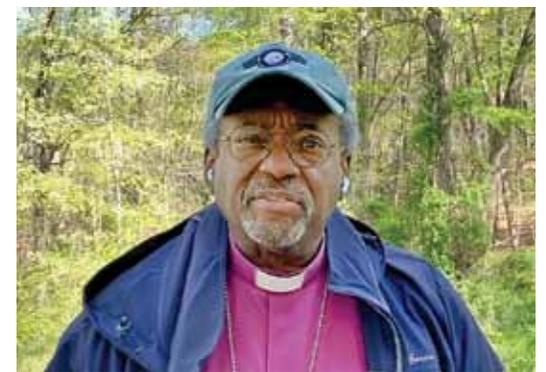
McConnell

Curry invites Episcopalians to watch 'habits of grace'

In a post on the Episcopal Church's website, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry announced a new weekly video series.

"As we learn how to adjust our lives given the reality of the coronavirus and the request to do our part to slow its spread by practicing social distancing, I invite you to join me each week to take a moment to cultivate a 'habit of grace,'" he said.

In the meditation posted on the Monday after Easter Sunday, for the week of April 13, quoting Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Curry said, "God sent us here to help God realize God's dream of a new world and society: gentle, caring, compassionate, sharing."



Presiding bishop leads "Habits of Grace" series.

A new meditation will be posted on Mondays through May. The meditations, which are three to five minutes long, can be watched at any time at (www.episcopalchurch.org/habits-of-grace).

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

AROUND THE CHURCH

Church encourages Episcopalians to complete census

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many elements of society, however the work of the 2020 U.S. Census continues. Leaders from the federal government and the Episcopal Church are reminding Americans that, without even leaving their homes, they can participate in the census.

The once-a-decade count of all Americans documents where they live as of April 1, and is even more important in light of the pandemic. The census affects Americans' daily lives in many direct and indirect ways, particularly through the distribution of congressional seats and funding for 132 federal programs. The

Episcopal Church is an official partner of the census and is urging all Americans to submit the data for their household, which is required by law.

Census participation is one of the many projects that the church's Washington, D.C.-based Office of Government Relations is working on. Since early March, the office has produced a weekly series on how the census impacts various facets of American life. Census data is used in the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding for Medicare and Medicaid, public school grants, free or low-cost school lunches and college loans, food stamps and rent vouchers.

By now, every home in the United States should have received a mailed let-

ter with instructions on how to respond to the census, which takes a few minutes and asks about the number of people in the home and some basic demographic information. There are no questions about citizenship, and the Census Bureau is legally prohibited from releasing any identifiable information, even to law enforcement agencies.

This year, for the first time, anyone can complete the census online, by phone or by mail. If a household does not respond, a census worker will come to the home to collect the information in person.

The Office of Government Relations wants to get the message out to all Episcopalians that the census is still happening despite the pandemic (with some minor operational changes) and that their participation will make a difference in their lives and the lives of their neighbors. The church's involvement stems from the fact that the census is a nonpartisan way for Episcopalians to participate in public life that particularly benefits vulnerable people, and research has shown that people are more likely to participate in the census if they hear about it from someone they trust. To that end, the Office of Government Relations offers a census engagement toolkit to help churches get the word out. (www.episcopalchurch.org)

The Office of Government Relations had previously encouraged congregations to use their physical resources to boost participation by, for example, set-



Photo/Egan Millard/ENS

The 2020 U.S. census can be completed online, by mail or by phone.

ting up computers in a parish hall and having volunteers help people fill out the census online. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended those plans, but the engagement efforts are continuing in different forms, according to church relations officer Alan Yarborough.

"We can use the church's creative assistance to help spread the word about the 2020 census," Yarborough told Episcopal News Service. "As we temporarily shift many church activities to online platforms, we recognize that in-person marketing, hosting a census forum, or creating a computer lab for the public to take the census, may not be possible. But this does not mean we cannot continue to assist the Census Bureau in getting an accurate count by advertising it in virtual services or spreading the word through outreach ministries that are still operational." ■

Deadline extended for 2020-2021 scholarships

The Episcopal Church has extended the deadline to apply for educational scholarships for the 2020-2021 academic year. A scholarship applicant must be an Episcopalian and must have the endorsement of his/her bishop.

The scholarships are derived from annual income of designated trust funds established by generous donors through bequests to the church. The scholarships assist:

- Students enrolled in theological education and training.
- Children of missionaries, bishops and clergy.
- Students of various racial and ethnic minorities, and other groups covering a wide range of eligibility.

Lists of trust funds and scholarships and other important information can

be found at www.episcopalchurch.org/grants/educational-scholarships. Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the information provided about each trust and identify in the application those trust funds that best fit their profile.

The application form is available in English and Spanish. All applications must be submitted online. The new deadline for submitting an application is May 29. Only complete applications will be considered.

Applications are reviewed by a scholarship committee composed of representatives from the church's Executive Council, the church-at-large, the treasurer's office and various other ministries. For information, contact Ann Hercules, associate for Ministries Beyond the Episcopal Church and Grants.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Registration open for preaching seminar

A new three-day preaching seminar to be held by the Episcopal Preaching Foundation (EPF) on May 26-28 is open to all those studying for ordination, whether in seminaries or other programs.

The online program, intended to be the first in an annual series, will feature nationally recognized preachers and academic authorities including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, Washington National Cathedral Dean Randolph Hollerith and Vanderbilt Divinity School Professor Amy-Jill Levine.

Prompted by the demand for continued learning while many academic institutions are closed due to precautions to slow the spread of the coronavirus, the conference combines elements of established EPF programs, particularly the annual in-person Preaching Excellence Program (PEP) for seminarians and the online moderated preaching groups offered to clergy participants in the EPF's other annual conference known as "PEP-II."

The three presenters had been scheduled to participate in the foundation's 2020 PEP conference,

originally set for May 25-29.

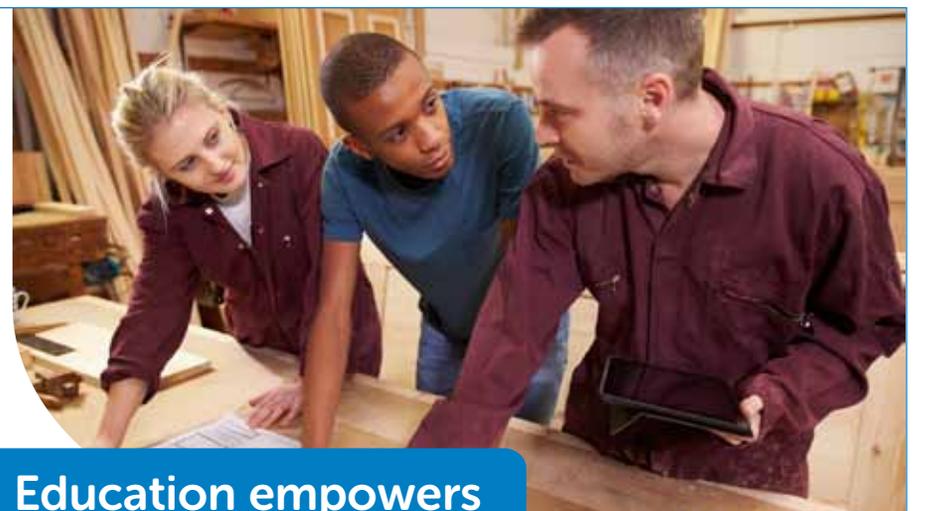
"We, like the rest of the Episcopal Church, are committed to finding innovative ways of adapting to the ever-changing challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic," said A. Gary Shilling, who founded the Episcopal Preaching Foundation in 1988.

The seminar's participatory format offers participants an opportunity to learn from leaders in the ecumenical Protestant community and beyond, interwoven with participation in four-person Zoom room moderated preaching groups. The program will be presented in coordination with Bexley Seabury Seminary.

Registration is open at www.preachingfoundation.org. The registration fee is \$100.

The mission of the Episcopal Preaching Foundation is to support and encourage excellence in preaching in the Episcopal Church. The EPF strongly believes in the foundational role of preaching to energize and build church membership and attendance.

— Episcopal Preaching Foundation



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NEWS

STIMULUS continued from page 1

much of the economy shut down and more than 16 million people nationwide filing unemployment claims in the past month, churches and their parishioners may face financial disruptions for quite some time.

“No one yet has seen the end or even the middle of what we’re going to witness regarding financial [impact],” Vickers said.

One more step up the ladder, Episcopal agencies and churchwide staff are working to extend some financial relief to dioceses and parishes while also ensuring that church leaders have the latest guidance on CARES Act implementation.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry on March 17 assured dioceses “we will work with you” if assessment payments need to be rescheduled. Church Pension Group is waiving some parishes’ pension obligations for two months. The Episcopal Church’s Washington, D.C.-based Office of Government Relations advocated at the congressional level for passage of the CARES Act, and the Episcopal Church Foundation followed up with an informational CARES Act webinar featuring a panel of experts. The discussion has since been posted on its website.

One stumbling block along the way involved confusion over whether churches were covered by the CARES Act’s Paycheck Protection Program since they are not required to obtain the same tax-exempt certifications as other nonprofits. Episcopal leaders on all rungs of the ladder shared updates and suggestions with each other as they pressed for and awaited clarification. Late on April 3, the Small Business Administration, or SBA, which oversees the program, issued guidelines that confirmed churches were covered.

Vickers shared with ENS part of an email chain in which diocesan and churchwide administrators and attorneys tracked those developments. In some cases, she said, church officials in Southwest Florida were the ones informing their lenders of the SBA’s clarification.

“That is an especially astounding example of the coordination of the Episcopal Church from all levels,” Vickers said.

Loan application pending for DFMS’ churchwide staff costs

Officials with the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, or DFMS, the Episcopal Church’s legal and corporate entity, have been active both in those conversations and in finalizing DFMS’ own application for assistance under the Paycheck Protection Program.

The program’s loans are available to employers with staffs of 500 or fewer, to help those employers keep money flowing in the short term. After two months, the loans can be converted to grants if churches and other participating employers meet certain criteria, such as maintaining staffing levels.

With a churchwide staff of 152, the DFMS applied for a \$3 million loan.

“It is very likely that income to the DFMS will be sharply curtailed for the

remainder of 2020,” Kurt Barnes, the church’s treasurer and chief financial officer, said in a March 27 memo to department heads. “The cancellation of physical worship services during Lent, Easter and thereafter will affect parish and diocesan income, which, in turn, will affect the ability of dioceses to fulfill pledges to the churchwide budget.”

Dioceses are required by church canons to contribute 15% of their incomes as assessments to the Episcopal Church to support a range of churchwide ministries, from evangelism and church planting to caring for creation and racial reconciliation. Paid in full, those assessments would total nearly \$90 million of the church’s revised \$137 million budget for 2019-2021.

“While we cannot control that income, we can control expenses,” Barnes said in his memo, which advocated a 20% reduction in overall DFMS spending this year. Staff costs make up 44% of churchwide spending, so to maintain current staffing levels, departments were asked to cut about 35% in non-staff budget items, such as travel expenses.

Barnes told ENS in a phone interview that receiving a CARES Act loan could help stabilize the income side of the equation. As of April 14, the DFMS’ loan still was being reviewed for final approval by the SBA.

With a deep recession all but certain due to the coronavirus, this moment defies recent historical comparisons, Barnes said. It also is too soon to say what long-term effect the economy and disruptions to normal parish life will have on the church’s finances, but Barnes expects to have a better picture by August, when his staff and the church’s Executive Council will begin developing the church’s 2021 budget.

As congregations face churchwide disruptions, local contexts vary

Balancing a church budget is both an art and a science for Kinney. While his job is to tally the income and expenses at All Saints in Tarpon Springs, as a church member for about 20 years, he also knows how the congregation “has behaved over time.”

Kinney knows that contributions from seasonal visitors make a difference in the Sunday offering this time of year. With in-person worship suspended, “our open plate offering is almost nonexistent,” he said in an interview with ENS.

He knows that many of the parish’s year-round worshippers are retirees and they aren’t as directly affected by the economy as working-age parishioners. Typical Sunday attendance was about 120 before the crisis. Pledge income has remained steady, he said, and he is optimistic about the church’s short-term finances.

“I worry about it,” Kinney said, “but frankly, with our congregation, we’ve

seen some drop-off but not nearly as dramatic as I thought it might be.” He has remained only mildly concerned even after Gov. Ron DeSantis on April 1 issued a “stay at home” order for the state, one of the last states to enact such a policy.

Kinney’s cautious optimism is shared by the Rev. Eric Cooter, rector of St. Monica’s Episcopal Church in Naples, Fla., about three hours south of All Saints along the coast. The church’s treasurer and comptroller carefully manage cash flow under normal conditions, and that has helped St. Monica’s respond to coronavirus disruptions, Cooter told ENS.

The church normally draws up to 250 worshippers across four weekend ser-



Photo/All Saints Church

All Saints Episcopal Church in Tarpon Springs, Fla., is among the congregations across the United States applying for loans through the Paycheck Protection Program included in the federal stimulus package known as the CARES Act.

vices, Cooter said. With worship now exclusively online, viewership numbers have been promising — about 400 for the Palm Sunday service, he said — but the normal pledge income of more than \$5,000 a week dwindled to less than half that in the first weeks after in-person worship was suspended.

Since then, pledge income appears to have returned to normal levels, Cooter said. Even so, St. Monica’s applied for a CARES Act loan to help maintain the congregation’s staff of 13 part-time and full-time employees.

“I don’t want to have to furlough anyone, and I don’t want to have to cut salaries,” he said.

Layoffs are of particular concern to church employees because they usually aren’t eligible for unemployment compensation; churches are exempt from state unemployment taxes. The CARES Act, however, includes a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program that may be available to church employees who lose their jobs.

Parishes seek loans as insurance against financial uncertainty

With guidance and support from their dioceses, congregations across The Episcopal Church are applying for the loans as insurance against financial uncertainty. That uncertainty is expected to persist even as some parts of the country are discussing plans for gradually easing social distancing precautions once the number of new coronavirus cases subsides.

The Diocese of Indianapolis announced April 1 that it was making the next two months of apportionment payments to the diocese voluntary for congregations below certain asset and income thresholds. The diocese also detailed other types of relief available to congregations, including the Paycheck Protection Program.

The loan program also has figured prominently in other dioceses’ recent communications, from Southern Virginia to Chicago to Los Angeles.

California was one of the first states hit by coronavirus outbreaks, prompting shelter-in-place orders early on. Los Angeles Bishop John Harvey Taylor issued a letter March 31 on the financial challenges now facing the diocese’s churches and invited clergy to participate April 2 in an online workshop about the CARES Act. Video of the workshop was posted to YouTube.

“The public health crisis has created an economic crisis, and we are all acutely aware of our financial vulnerabilities and responsibilities,” Taylor said in his letter. “How do we address the financial needs of the church at this time? We are all called to remember that everything we have, everything we do, everything we are is a gift from God — and it is a gift that is meant to be shared.”

In Wisconsin, the Rev. Kevin Huddleston sent a message on April 3 to the Diocese of Milwaukee outlining the Paycheck Protection Program and other types of relief available. The diocese encompasses the southernmost third of Wisconsin and ranges from larger urban and suburban congregations in and around Milwaukee and Madison to small congregations in far-flung rural counties.

“Each parish is in a different place and a different space in this particular time in their lives. Some parishes have resources; some don’t,” Huddleston said in an interview with ENS. He has served for the past month as the diocese’s interim canon for finance.

Huddleston also spoke from his experience currently leading two of those congregations: St. John the Divine Episcopal Church in Burlington and Church of the Holy Communion in Lake Geneva, each with typical Sunday attendance of a few dozen.

Neither church could afford a full-time priest, but they have shared Huddleston for the past three years as a “kind of experiment.” And while Huddleston encourages congregations across the diocese to consider applying for loans under the CARES Act, he doesn’t think he will do so for his own two congregations. The only paycheck he would need to protect is his own, and most parishioners have been reliably sending in their pledges by check.

“The question is, how long will this last?” Huddleston said. ■

NEWS

RECTOR continued from page 1

week after the conference and went to see his doctor, there were only a few reported cases of COVID-19 in the U.S., mostly in people traveling from China.

“He said, ‘Of course, COVID is starting around the world, is starting around the United States,’” Pace said, recounting the conversation with his doctor. “He says, ‘Well, have you been anywhere exotic?’ And I said, ‘Well, no, I’ve been to Kentucky!’ And we both just kind of laughed and said ‘Well, OK, let’s rule that out, then.’”

But a flu test came back negative, and Pace’s cough was worsening.

“It was this real deep cough that was just incessant,” Pace said. “And what I now understand but could not put a word to at the time — because I had never experienced it before — was the shortness of breath.”

Pace also had a low-grade fever. His doctor, assuming he had a common virus, sent him home to rest and said that, once the fever had been gone for two days, he would no longer be contagious and could get back to work. And for a brief period, that seemed to be the case. A few days later, although his cough persisted, the fever had gone, so he thought it would be OK to continue leading his scheduled Lenten series on the evening of March 4.

Pace gave a talk in front of about 45 people in the parish hall that evening, but stayed at the front of the room and didn’t shake anyone’s hand.

The next morning, he woke up with a fever of 103 degrees, and the shortness of breath was “much worse.”

“The next four days at home were just awful,” Pace said.

He went back to the doctor and tested negative for the flu again, but with reported COVID-19 cases in the U.S. still limited to a few coastal hotspots, “we just couldn’t even imagine what it could be.”

Then, that weekend, Pace learned that the Rev. Tim Cole, a Washington, D.C., rector who also attended the CEEP conference, had tested positive for COVID-19. Seeing that news was the first time Pace considered the possibility that he might have the virus too, but it still seemed so far-fetched.

“My doctor and all of us were convinced that it couldn’t be COVID — because how could it possibly be COVID?” Pace recalled.

By March 9, that idea didn’t seem so crazy. Pace couldn’t walk more than 20 feet and could barely stand. His doctor met him at the hospital, where he had to be wheeled into the emergency room. He was soon transferred to a negative-pressure isolation room, which prevents airborne diseases from escaping. Hospital staff would put on space suit-like protective gear before coming in to treat



Photo/courtesy of Trinity Episcopal Church

The Rev. Robert Pace wears a T-shirt that the Rev. Tracie Middleton and parishioner Alison Head made for him after his recovery from COVID-19.

him. Pace was given oxygen and IV fluids but never had to be put on a ventilator.

The morning after he was admitted to the hospital, he learned that he had tested positive for COVID-19 — but not from the hospital staff. His wife called to tell him that a case worker from the county health department had just shown up at their home to inform her that Pace’s test had come back positive and that she was to remain quarantined at home for two weeks. The doctors came in to tell Pace about 10 minutes later — “because they had to put the space suits on.”

Pace was grateful to learn the news

but in the same house, a doctor from the Tarrant County Health Department came to their home to explain how to divide up the space so they would have no physical contact. The arrangement was odd, but it soon became routine.

“We lived in two parts of the house,” Pace said. “Jill would cook my meals and set them outside the door [to my bedroom] ... and then I would open the door, but Jill had to be out of sight. So every day, the only way we would see each other was on FaceTime.”

That went on for about eight days, after which the county health department doctor returned and Pace tested negative for COVID-19 on two consecutive tests. Walters did not contract the virus.

Because Pace had limited his time in the church buildings to that March 4 Lenten talk and didn’t get close to anyone, there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 in the congregation. Initially, there was some concern because the church was used as a polling place in the Texas primary elections on March 3, but Pace had not been in the building at all since becoming sick.

Once those concerns were allayed, Pace was determined to make something good come out of the experience.

“We said, ‘OK, this could be an opportunity for evangelism,’” he told ENS. “It became very clear, then, the message is, ‘How do we love our neighbor? We follow the physical distancing guidelines.’”

Pace returned — virtually — to a church that looked very different in some ways, but familiar in others. Services are livestreamed, coffee hours and Bible studies are held on Zoom and a phone tree has been set up so everyone in the parish will be contacted.

“One of the blessings that has happened is, for a long, long time, we’ve talked about, ‘How do we stay in touch with all of the people in our parish who are kind of on the edge and shut in and things like that? We need to figure out how to continue to communicate with them.’”

That solution turned out to be “the old-fashioned phone tree.” Pace has found that at this point, his parishioners are more concerned about the economic effects of the virus than of contracting it themselves.

Pace is also helping out in a way that no one else in the Trinity community can: He’s donating his blood, which now contains antibodies that can fight COVID-19. The Food and Drug Administration is approving (on a case-by-case basis) the use of blood plasma from people who have recovered from the virus as a treatment for patients currently suffering from it. He’s trying to get the word out to other people who have recovered from COVID-19 that they can help, too.

“If you’re in this situation, go let your blood bank know that you’re available to give plasma if they call on you,” he said.

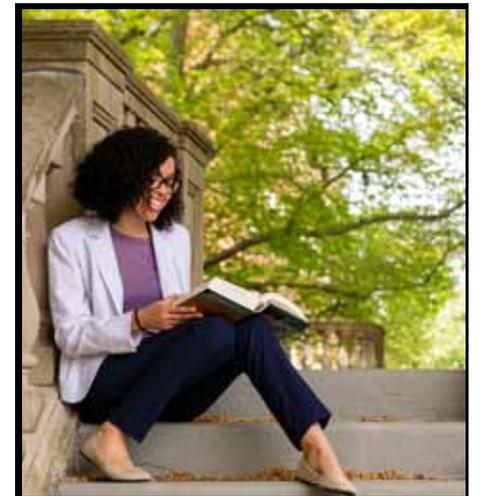
Besides the physical effects, the hard-

est part of having the virus was the isolation, Pace told ENS.

“I am an extrovert. I’m someone who loves to be out and among people, and I love to be in the middle of things. ... That’s been hard.”

But he added that it was a small price to pay to keep his neighbors — both near and far — healthy.

In a global pandemic, “our actions affect the entire world, and that is a humbling and powerful message,” Pace said. “We are having to make these individual little sacrifices now so that the world will be OK. And that’s actually true not just with COVID-19, it’s true in all that we do. And that’s actually the message of Christ.” ■



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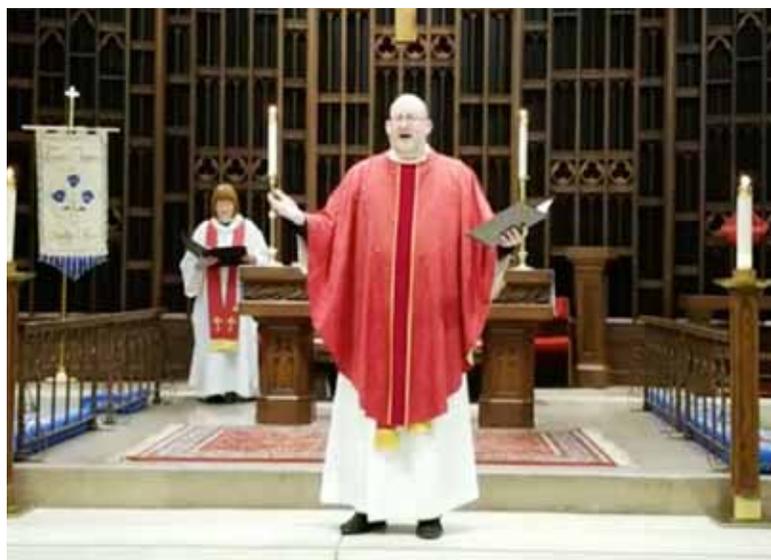
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Photo/courtesy of Trinity Episcopal Church

The Rev. Robert Pace leads the Maundy Thursday service on April 9.

from his wife “because we were able to pray and talk about what this means and have that personal moment.” Pace’s wife, the Rev. Jill Walters, is the early childhood and lower school chaplain at All Saints’ Episcopal School, also in Fort Worth.

Pace spent three days in the isolation room, mostly sleeping but sometimes praying the Daily Office on his phone, which was “very comforting.” Gradually, his fever subsided and he started to feel better, and the doctors told him he was improving enough to finish his quarantine at home. Late on the third day, he said, “it was actually a little bit surreal how quickly they booted me out of there.”

Because Pace and his wife would both be under separate quarantine restrictions

FEATURE

Holy Week and Easter services inspire creativity and imagination



Photo/Meaghan Keegan

The entrance to St. Paul's Church in Greenwich, N.Y., is seen with Easter decorations and a selection from the Gospel of Matthew.



Photo montage/courtesy of Casey Kremer

A virtual Palm Sunday

This montage shows parishioners at St. Gregory's, Deerfield, Ill. celebrating Palm Sunday. A graphic of "bosanna palms" was emailed to the church's members to print, color and place in their windows. At the start of the service, the church played the traditional Palm Sunday hymn, "All glory, laud and honor" via Zoom and parishioners went outside and took photos of their palms. They emailed the photos to the church, which created and distributed the montage by the time the service was over.



Photo/Megan DeSola

Tara Halpin and the Rev. Jeffrey Queen distribute Easter lilies outside St. Andrew's, Ft. Thomas, Ky.



Photos/courtesy of Katie Sherrod via YouTube

A Palm Sunday car procession

Worshipers stay in their cars as the Diocese of Fort Worth (Texas) holds a mobile Palm Sunday procession outside St. Luke's in the Meadow, Fort Worth. Service leaflets were distributed and the Rev. Karen Calafat blesses the motorists.

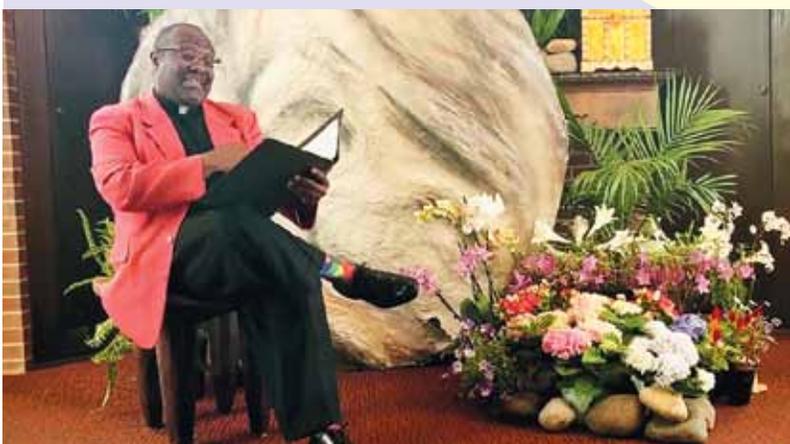
Easter services at a distance



Photo/courtesy of St. Augustine of Canterbury

Support and service

The Rev. Joseph Alsay, clergy and members of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Oklahoma City, maintain safe physical distancing while preparing to take food donated during Lent to the Jesus House recovery program. Below, Alsay reads "How the Virus Stole Easter" to the church members, via YouTube.



Photo/courtesy of St. Augustine of Canterbury via YouTube



Photo/Georgene Conner

At St. Alban's, St. Pete Beach, Fla., a wooden cross bears flowers brought by parishioners on Easter Sunday. They were given an "Easter love bag" that included a paper lily.



Photo/Craig Wirth

Dean Tyler Doherty preaches at a broadcast Easter Sunday service from St. Mark's Cathedral in Salt Lake City, Diocese of Utah.



Photo/Caroline Carson

A video setup is shown for an Easter Sunday broadcast from Holy Innocents' church in Beach Haven, N.J.

NEWS

Priests, deacons enlisted to pray 'last rites' by phone for dying COVID-19 patients

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

One of an Episcopal priest's most solemn duties — praying the Ministration at the Time of Death, also known as "last rites" — is particularly difficult to fulfill during the current coronavirus pandemic because hospitals have tightened access restrictions to prevent further spread of the virus.

"You can't reach and touch someone's hand, even through bedsheets, as they're dying," the Rev. Alice Downs said, "because they are alone."

Downs, a former hospice chaplain now living in Maine, is one of 87 Episcopal priests and deacons who have volunteered to minister by phone to people dying of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, which has infected more than two million people worldwide. The phone ministry is called "Dial-a-Priest" and was created in a matter of days by the TryTank Experimental Lab, a joint project of Virginia Theological Seminary and General Theological Seminary.

"What we're doing is a pastoral response to a need, which is that there are people who are dying and we know we have words of comfort," said the Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija, TryTank's director. He began working on "Dial-a-Priest" about a week ago as an imperfect solution to an unprecedented challenge posed by the coronavirus.

The words of comfort in the Book of Common Prayer's Ministration at the Time of Death typically are read by clergy called to the bedside of a dying person. That face-to-face scenario still is preferred, Lebrija told Episcopal News Service. With help from dioceses and parishes, he is promoting this free phone-based service to hospitals when they have no other option for connecting a patient nearing death to a priest.

"Church is about community, and this is a way we can, in these awful circumstances, still try to be one people," he said.

Since April 7, Lebrija has scheduled one or more of the volunteer priests and deacons to be available to receive calls from 4 a.m. to midnight EDT each day, with expanded coverage as the roster grows. The volunteers are all Episcopal clergy, but they will pray with people of any faith. The volunteers will log in to a dispatching system and wait for their phones to ring.

It remains unclear how often those phones will ring, but the potential need is great. More than 160,000 people

worldwide have died from COVID-19 as of April 17, including more than 37,000 in the United States. Most cases are reported to be mild, with symptoms similar to seasonal influenza, but life-threatening conditions can develop in severe cases.

Lebrija chose the name "Dial-a-Priest" not to make light of the trauma such patients are enduring, but because it is an easy phrase to remember. A dying patient, or the patient's doctor or nurse, can call 213-423-3600 to be connected, and the number also can easily be found and dialed with a single click from DialAPriest.com.

An automated message will let the caller know that a clergy member will

What we're doing is a pastoral response to a need, which is that there are people who are dying and we know we have words of comfort.

— the Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija



be on the line shortly. Lebrija hopes to offer callers a Spanish option, when he recruits more Spanish-speaking volunteers. TryTank's calling system will ring all of the priests and deacons who are currently logged in, and the first one to answer will be connected with the person who is nearing death.

The priest then will begin the prayers: "Almighty God, look on this your servant, lying in great weakness, and comfort him with the promise of life everlasting, given in the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Downs, the Maine priest, repeated those words many times in the 1980s. She worked for several years with the Momentum Project, providing pastoral end-of-life care to dying AIDS patients in the New York area. In her later work as a hospice chaplain, she again repeated the prayers at the time of death for elderly patients in central New Jersey, where she also served as a parish priest.

In the coronavirus pandemic, "what's different about this is how alone people are," Downs said in an interview with ENS. With the virus spreading rapidly across the United States in the past month, social distancing policies across the country aim to limit further infections so hospitals are not overwhelmed.



Even close relatives may not be allowed to visit and say goodbye to those who are dying from the disease.

Downs heard from a fellow priest who is connected to Virginia Theological Seminary about this new TryTank initiative. TryTank's experiments seek to revitalize the Episcopal Church through

new approaches to ongoing challenges. She let Lebrija know she can be available for calls from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., Monday through Friday from her home in Southwest Harbor, Me.

"I think one of the most beautiful things the Episcopal Church has is the [Book of Common Prayer's] words at the time of death and immediately afterwards," she said, "and just to be able to say those, should I be called on in this ministry, at least helps me believe we are still all one people." ■

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FEATURE

Drive-thru Communion? Remote consecration?

COVID-19 sparks eucharistic experimentation — and theological debate

By Egan Millard and David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

As the COVID-19 lockdown drags on, many Episcopalians are experiencing the longest absence of the Eucharist they've had in years — perhaps even in their entire adult lives. While this has been viewed by some as an opportunity for an unintentional Lenten devotion — “Eucharistic fasting” — others have proposed new ways of celebrating the sacrament to provide spiritual comfort at a time when it has never seemed more necessary.

Some of these alternative practices — like “drive-thru Holy Communion,” delivery of consecrated hosts to parishioners' doorsteps and even “virtual consecration” — have ignited debate within the Episcopal Church about health risks, the appropriate amount of adaptation of sacramental practices to the current crisis and the nature of the Eucharist itself. Is it still the Eucharist if it is celebrated by one priest alone in a church while the congregation watches on Facebook Live? If the priest never touches the bread and wine? If it is consecrated and sent through the mail?

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry recently offered guidance on these and other sacramental questions, but diocesan bishops started encountering these dilemmas several weeks ago as the COVID-19 crisis escalated and churches were forced to suspend in-person worship. Bishop Susan Haynes of Southern Virginia started getting creative suggestions very early on, she told Episcopal News Service.

“When the stay-at-home orders were pronounced, people immediately began to think of ways that they could continue to be a connected worshipping

community,” she said. “They looked for ways around the ban on social gatherings and they came up with lots of creative ideas.”

The first suggestion she received was one of the most common alternative Eucharist practices that emerged in the COVID-19 era: a drive-in Eucharist, in which a priest consecrates the host and administers it to parishioners through car windows. Some Episcopal churches briefly held services like these in March, but Curry discouraged them for theological and health reasons in his March 31 letter to the church. Haynes was immediately wary of putting parishioners at risk.

“I was concerned about that because, at the time, we were hearing that the virus was capable of aerosolizing — in other words, it was capable of being in the air,” Haynes said. Some studies have indicated that the virus can spread this way.

Some practices remove an element that has defined the Eucharist since the Last Supper (commemorated on Maundy Thursday): the physical presence of a community celebrating the sacrament together.

“And if you roll down your car windows to receive the Eucharist, you could be transmitting germs unwittingly to the people who are trying to serve you,” Haynes said. “My primary motivation



Photo/Egan Millard/ENS

The Rev. David Kendrick, rector of St. John's Church in Springfield, Mo., celebrates the Eucharist on Facebook Live.

from the beginning has been the safety of the people, and I've been listening to the health professionals and taking my cues from them, and they all say, 'Stay home.'”

Other ideas raised practical and theological concerns in addition to the risk of transmission. One suggestion, which Haynes quickly turned down, was to send consecrated hosts through the mail.

“While the mail is often very reliable, sometimes it isn't, and I didn't want to be reckless with Jesus and have him lost on some postal carrier's truck, never to be found again,” Haynes said.

A variation that has shown up in other dioceses was to deliver consecrated hosts to parishioners' homes and leave them at the door. While Haynes “really liked the ingenuity of that idea,” it removed an element that has defined the Eucharist since the Last Supper (commemorated on Maundy Thursday): the physical presence of a community celebrating the sacrament together. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, Haynes was reluctant to break with 2,000 years of tradition.

“The Eucharist is something that we celebrate in community, and the prayers are the work of the community that has gathered,” she told ENS, a view endorsed by Curry in his letter. Though he avoided making judgments of “permissible/not permissible,” Curry wrote that practices like these “present public health concerns and further distort the essential link between a communal celebration and the culmination of that celebration in the reception of the Eucharistic bread and wine.”

Though the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer do not stipulate that the Eucharist is only valid when celebrated as an in-person gathering, many Episcopalians believe it is understood and implicit in the way the rite is written. Some, however, interpret

it differently.

The Rev. David Kendrick, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Springfield, Mo., describes his congregation as Anglo-Catholic, and the inability to receive Communion has been particularly difficult for his parishioners.

He asked himself: “Was there a way I could make Communion available in a way that I felt was consistent with the rubrics of the prayer book?”

The last in-person worship was March 15. The next day, Bishop Martin Field

ordered a suspension of in-person worship across the Diocese of West Missouri.

On March 22, Kendrick set up a livestream in his office, celebrating Holy Eucharist just through the Liturgy of the Word. He followed up on March 29 with a service broadcast from St. John's chapel with the church organist as the only other participant, and this time he celebrated a full Eucharist, reserving some of the consecrated wafers.

“I knew I just needed to do something to make Holy Week a little more special for people,” Kendrick told ENS.

With temporary approval from Field, Kendrick told parishioners the Communion from the March 29 service would be available upon request. Kendrick, following sanitization procedures, placed individual wafers in sealed plastic bags midweek for doorstep delivery on April 4 to parishioners who had asked for them. Then they were encouraged to receive that Communion during St. John's online Palm Sunday service, as Kendrick and the organist celebrated Eucharist with new wafers. Some of the Palm Sunday Communion — as well as consecrated wine — will be distributed to parishioners this week for Easter.

“It's a similar situation to when I take Communion to someone who's shut in,” Kendrick said.

While Kendrick is celebrating the Eucharist with the church organist present, some have asked whether a priest can celebrate alone in a church while the congregation watches on a livestream, to prevent any risk of disease transmission. Again, the current Book of Common Prayer has no specific prohibition against this, although the wording of the rite (in which “the People” are an integral part of the service) implies that the Eucharist is inherently a communal act.

This point, too, draws differing interpretations. Roman Catholic priests are

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COMMUNION continued from page 10

allowed to celebrate Mass alone if there is a good reason to do so, such as illness. The Church of England still officially uses the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which does explicitly require the presence of at least three people for Communion. However, on March 31, the Diocese of London announced that if priests cannot have anyone else present, they are permitted to celebrate with people attending via livestream for as long as the current physical distancing restrictions are in effect.

But if priests celebrate the Eucharist with congregants watching online, have the people actually received the sacrament? If they have bread and wine in front of them at home, could the priest consecrate them remotely?

That was a hypothetical considered by the Rev. Liz Hendrick, rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Snellville, Ga., which canceled in-person services on March 14. To continue celebrating Communion, church leaders first considered an approach similar to that of St. John's in Missouri: Wafers would be consecrated and placed in Ziploc bags that parishioners could come and take home. But with so much still unknown about the virus, they realized they could not guarantee parishioners' safety.

"And then I thought about the idea of doing Communion-in-place," Hendrick told ENS. She or the associate rector would celebrate the Eucharist via livestream, and parishioners would have bread and wine (or juice) ready at home.

"And as we came to the consecration, people at home could hold up bread or could hold up wine, and that it would be consecrated ... that it would somehow become the body and blood of Christ, as



Image/courtesy of St. Matthew's Church

The Rev. Tommy Matthews, associate rector of St. Matthew's Church in Snellville, Ga., celebrates an agape meal with parishioners via livestream.

in the sharing of the Eucharist without trying to have the sacrament itself.

"The sacraments that we do in the church are always done in community," Hendrick said. "And that community is the one that ... sees the sharing of Christ's body and blood as being a corporate event and not an individual one."

And many of the livestream services from other churches that she saw "didn't really strike me as community. It struck me as a few representatives of community," she said. "Watching a few people receive while everyone else at home watched — it wasn't anything that resonated with me."

The practice St. Matthew's settled on is called an agape meal (from the Greek term for unconditional love). Parishioners are invited to decorate their tables at home and prepare a meal. An ante-communion service is livestreamed (essentially the Eucharistic rite without the Eucharist itself) and then the meal is blessed — not consecrated — and shared.

"That is a way of pulling us together around the breaking of bread and the sharing of fellowship. It may not be a sacramental sharing of food, but it's a blessed sharing of food," she said.

In solidarity with her parishioners who cannot receive the Eucharist, she and the associate rector will not celebrate it until they can all be together again, instead opting for the Daily Office and other services.

Some have pointed out that this is familiar territory for the Episcopal Church. Episcopalians' common practice of celebrating the Eucharist and receiving Communion every Sunday is a relatively new development in the history of church, beginning in the liturgical renewal movements of the mid-20th century. The shift was seen as a return to Christian roots of the first centuries of Christianity, when Jesus' early disciples

Haynes, bishop of Southern Virginia, shares the view that the physical presence of the community is a crucial component of the Eucharist, and well-intentioned efforts to celebrate it in other ways may miss the point.

"We are an incarnate faith. We are a bodily faith. God made our bodies; he deemed them good. So he likes them. And he thought our bodies were good enough for his son to come and dwell in one, and to share our human experience in a body. None of that was done virtually," Haynes said.

At the same time, Meyers cautioned that some of the efforts to bridge physical separation and continue receiving Communion may be too narrowly focused.

"It has an undue emphasis on the actual reception of the elements, without looking at the totality of the celebration, which includes not just receiving the elements but that great prayer of thanksgiving," Meyers said.

Haynes agreed, pointing to a practice that churches in her diocese and others have begun adopting: celebrating the Eucharist on livestream, displaying the consecrated bread and wine on the altar, and having the congregation at home pray the



Photo/Amanda Livermont

Young parishioners of St. Matthew's Church participate in a Palm Sunday livestream service.

would regularly receive the bread and wine together in remembrance of his death and resurrection.

Christian practice gradually shifted away from such regularity, so that by the 16th century, when reformers tried encouraging worshippers to receive Communion weekly, they found little success. It had become common to receive Communion just once a year at Easter — if at all, according to the Rev. Ruth Meyers, dean of academic affairs and professor of liturgics at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Many Christians were content simply to look at the bread and wine and feel a spiritual connection without receiving, possibly because they didn't feel worthy.

A new reform movement finally began to change worship habits in the 1950s. The Roman Catholic Church notably adopted changes in that direction recommended by its Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, and in the Episcopal Church, grassroots efforts to increase the frequency of the Eucharist influenced the church's 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Among the additions in that prayer book revision was language specifying that Holy Eucharist is "the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord's Day and other major feasts."

"The way that we have inherited and understood Eucharistic celebration is that this is a community that gathers with bread and wine and together gives thanks for this bread and this wine in this place," Meyers told ENS.

Prayer of Spiritual Communion attributed to St. Alphonsus, which expresses a desire to receive the spiritual benefits of Communion when it cannot be received in physical form.

"I believe very strongly that if we truly want the body and blood of Jesus, we will receive the benefits of that even though we can't consume it physically," Haynes said. This concept is put forth in the rite of Ministration to the Sick in the Book of Common Prayer, which specifies that the benefits of Communion are received even if the bread and wine cannot be consumed.

There is a similar reference in the Armed Forces Prayer Book, Meyers said.

"Theologically, it's saying that, really, the benefit comes not just from receiving the sacrament but from the work of Christ with his incarnation and life and death and resurrection," Meyers told ENS. "Spiritual communion is a way of connecting with the tangible element of bread and wine that we don't have tangibly."

Haynes also encouraged Episcopalians to look beyond the familiar rituals they miss and see that encounters with God happen in other ways.

"I miss not being able to receive the Eucharist, but I do think that Christ is revealed to us in other ways as well, like through the Word and through acts of kindness to people that are marginalized," she said. "And maybe God is using this time to remind us that there are other ways to encounter his son." ■



Photo/the Rev. David Kendrick

Consecrated host, prepared and packaged with sanitized hands by the Rev. David Kendrick, awaits delivery to parishioners. The bishop of the Diocese of West Missouri has authorized Kendrick to deliver the Eucharist to parishioners through Easter.

it would have if it was on the altar.

"The rubrics of the church say that you really can't do that, when you look at the instructions — that it is a custom in the church that [the bread and wine] be touched. And for that reason, and also because of a conversation that I had with my bishop, I wanted to rethink that," she said.

Hendrick looked for a way to re-create the sense of community people find

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Artworks help buoy the spirit during widespread crisis

By Sharon Sheridan

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced people across the world to shelter in place, many turned to the arts for entertainment, solace and inspiration. To help lift readers' spirits during this continuing global health crisis, Episcopal Journal offers these profiles and pictures from painters in the Diocese of Newark (N.J.).

Melissa Hall

Rector, St. James, Upper Montclair

For the Rev. C. Melissa Hall, the COVID-19 pandemic spawned a rebirth, of sorts, for her painting career.

In 2008, she and a now-retired Diocese of Newark priest, the Rev. Judy Baldwin, began a weight-loss endeavor of walking together daily alongside the Hudson River in Hoboken, where Hall then lived. They began noticing old pieces of logs and lumber and other wooden detritus.

"These beautiful pieces of wood were washed up along the river. We started to collect them. We didn't know why. This went on for about a month and a half."

Then Hall's partner, Fran Lapinski, said: "Enough! What are you going to do with all this?"

"I said, 'I'm going to paint on it.' She said to me, 'You don't paint.' And I said, 'Well, I will.'"

Thus River Bones was born.

"I started to paint on these pieces of wood and started to make things out of



Images/courtesy of Melissa Hall

Above, the Rev. C. Melissa Hall named her paintings on wood she found along the Hudson River in Hoboken, N.J., "River Bones." Left, Hall intends to create art from railroad spikes she collected during the COVID-19 crisis.



it," Hall said. "I've got a piece upstairs. It's like 6 feet long and 4 feet high. Someone had written on the back of it: 'Take me home.' So I did. I still do it."

Over time, she expanded into painting on other surfaces, from conventional canvas to unconventional plastic torso forms from bathing suits, which she turned into five women's faces and heads called The Bad Girls of the Bible, depicting women including Rahab, Ruth and

Bathsheba.

She prefers working in acrylics, both for their quick drying time and because "they have a mind of their own," she said. "You start to push them around. They push back." And something new, and different than the artist imagined, emerges.

A medical condition that affected her eyesight changed her painting style.

"When I started to lose my eyesight, it was distressing because, the preciseness of the art — I could not do that anymore," she recalled. She began painting

with bigger, bolder strokes.

One day, she created a painting "by accident." She used red and blue — "not necessarily colors I'd put together."

"When you look at it, they're women. They're women dancing. When it happened, I couldn't see it. I was just kind of slapping paint on there."

But her daughter Katherine looked at the finished product and said: "Look at all the women you painted!"

"If you just relax and let it happen, the Spirit comes through you," Hall said. "The Spirit handles the creativity."

Entering Holy Week amidst the pandemic, Hall was awaiting the Spirit's prompting.

Two Sundays earlier, she and Lapinski had gone for a walk in Montclair. "I said, 'Let's walk down the train tracks.' How insane is that? It was that feeling of everything had stopped ... nothing was usual."

"We walked down the train track from one station to another. Along the way, what did I find but these huge spikes, lots of them, that they use to put the rails into the ground, and these enormous screws. ... I've started to collect them. I have about 14 of them. They're in my backyard."

"Every day, I go out, and I lay them on the ground, and I arrange them, and I look at them, and I'm waiting for the Spirit to say, 'Oh, do this.' I think I'm going to paint them."

"It is 'found art.' I just don't know what it will be yet," she said. "It's River Bones all over again."

Debra Cook

Member, Grace, Nutley

For Debra Cook of Bloomfield, the artist's and spiritual paths increasingly have intertwined and deepened each other.

Sometimes, she's inspired to paint in reaction to current events, such as when ISIS beheaded a group of orange-clad Coptic priests in Libya in 2015.

"Sometimes that happens. I just get the feeling, and I have to do it," she said. "I feel like the Holy Spirit is speaking to me. Rev. Pam [Bakal, Grace's rector] sometimes calls me a mystic."

In mid-March, she hadn't yet painted anything in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But she had helped to inspire others' artistic responses. She posted on Facebook about how to "chalk your walk" with positive messages, and people in several surrounding towns followed her suggestion. She also posted about creating a rainbow picture to hang outside after hearing from her daughter in Germany about people creating rainbows there and in Italy. And she is giving her grandchildren online art lessons.

Her own art journey began in childhood.

"I started when I was 7," she recalled. "I have a picture that my mother saved.

I drew a bagpiper sitting on a rock. I drew his plaid kilt and everything."

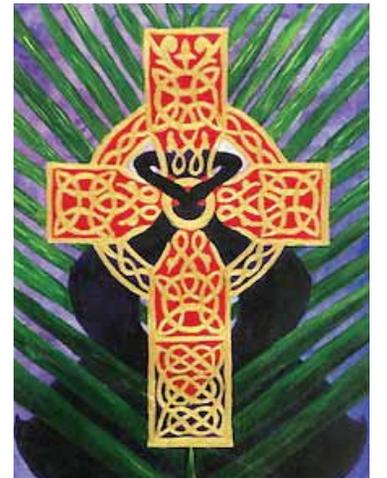
From there, she took every art class offered at school, served as arts editor of the school yearbook, attended the Parsons School of Design and the School of Visual Arts. As a mother, she created artwork and displays for her children's school and Scout functions. At her Presbyterian church, she directed Vacation Bible School every year. In 1996, she opened the Renaissance Art Studio in Bloomfield.

Then circumstances changed at her church, and she began praying to find a new one. In 2010, she attended a Christmas pageant at Grace, Nutley, where one of her students was performing. The church contains a series of early 1900s murals on canvas by English artist Clinton Balmer that are mounted on the ceiling of the nave and the end wall of the chancel.

"I thought I was walking into heaven,



From left, Debra Cook's paintings of flowers in the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens in Montclair, N.J., were displayed in an art exhibit in New York City, a few years ago. She painted "Holy Week" using acrylic, watercolor and gold leaf.



Images/courtesy of Debra Cook

with all the paintings on the ceiling," Cook said. She told her husband, a Roman Catholic, that all she wanted for Christmas that year was for them to attend Christmas Eve service at Grace together. "That spring, we both joined the Episcopal Church."

Cook began exploring liturgical art, learning how to write icons and do illumination. "My spiritual journey just keeps getting deeper and deeper into liturgical art," she said. "It's so exciting."

Cook closed Renaissance after eight years, switching to teaching art lessons at a home studio. In 2018, she launched Amour Colour de'Art. She teaches art lessons at her house, leads Advent and

Lenten art workshops at churches, and holds wine-and-cheese painting parties at churches, including as a fundraiser for congregations. In January, she led children at a diocesan Prison Ministry workshop in painting a mural of themselves that was displayed at diocesan convention. At the wider church level, she is a member of Episcopal Church & Visual Arts (www.ecva.org).

Cook works in a variety of artistic media, including doing photography, but she sees herself primarily as a painter and likes working in acrylics best. "I do like colored pencil, too," she said. "That's what I do botanical art with."

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Hopeful movies for Episcopalians in self-quarantine

By Paul F. M. Zahl

We are all spending more time than usual at home this month. And probably next month, and maybe the month after that. We are certainly spending less time in church, or at least in the beautiful building we love. That, too, may go on for a while.

So I submit to you four classic movies to entertain you and inspire you during this involuntary form of a Lenten fast.

Three of them tell the tale of a minister or priest trying to lead the people through a time of extraordinary crisis. The fourth presents a marriage that is in search of a miracle. All of these films embody a Christian view of faithful persistence under extreme stress. I hope they can lift our spirits just now.

Oh, and each is easily available, either as a mail-order DVD or streamed over the internet.

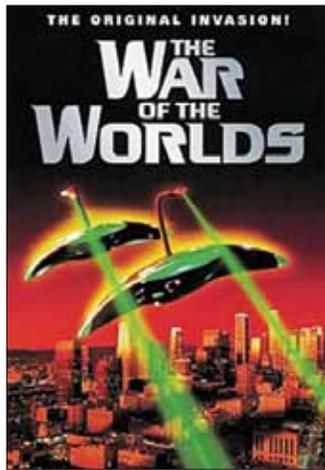
War of the Worlds (1953)

This is the original Hollywood version, produced by George Pal and starring Anne Robinson and Gene Barry. It posits the entire human world up against an insuperable and merciless foe — the Martians! But God is not mocked. In the unforgettable conclusion, Gene Barry enters three successive churches in search

of the woman he loves. In the last church, he finds her. As they embrace, fully expecting the Martian death ray to destroy the church and them with it, the minister prays our “Prayer for All Sorts and Conditions of Men” from the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*. At that moment, a miracle takes place.

Note also that a very Episcopal-looking minister is the heroine’s uncle, who confronts the Martians with his prayer book and the Twenty-Third Psalm.

Available as a DVD or streaming.



But then a natural disaster happens, and everyone must work together.

And they do!

The Return of Don Camillo feels timely for our time in more than one important way.

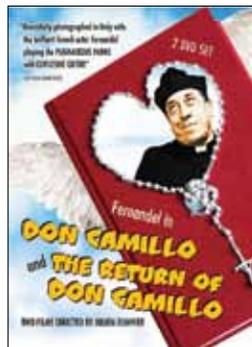
It is available as a DVD.

Journey to Italy (1954)

The immortal Roberto Rossellini directed this one, which stars Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders. They portray an unhappy married couple who are vacationing in Naples, near Pompeii. After arguing bitterly for most of the film, they encounter a miracle, a *bona fide* religious miracle.

Some people regard *Journey to Italy* as Rossellini’s greatest film.

You decide. It is a true wonder of a work of art, in any event. Available as streaming video.



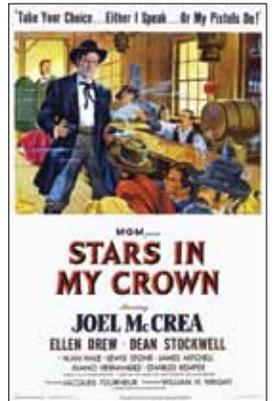
The Return of Don Camillo (1953)

This is an Italian movie directed by the Frenchman Julien Duvivier.

It concerns a wry and wise Catholic priest in a small Italian town, who mostly battles an elected Communist mayor and city council.

Stars in My Crown (1950)

Here is depicted a small-town Methodist minister who must navigate both an epidemic of typhoid fever and an outbreak of racial prejudice. By the grace of God, he finds the way of Christ and the movie is a *tour de force*. The minister is played by Joel McCrea, and McCrea’s son told me that *Stars in My Crown* was his father’s favorite film. I can understand why. See this movie for hope and delight. It is also a family favorite, as the story is told from the vantage point of a 12-year-old boy. Available as DVD or streaming video.



Four film gems, three of them set in a “time of cholera.” Mary and I have gone back to them ourselves — with shutters down and curtains drawn — and they sure helped to restore our hope. ■

The Rev. Paul F. M. Zahl was formerly rector of All Saints’ Church, Chevy Chase, Md. and dean of Trinity School for Ministry. This story was first published in The Living Church and is used with permission.

ARTISTS continued from page 12

Lynne Bleich Weber

Rector, Atonement, Tenafly

The Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber has created art most of her life — beginning with drawing as a child and painting in high school — but not always consistently. Working in advertising and busy at church while living in a small place in New York, “I went a lot of years without painting.”

But working with a clergy coach taught her to set aside time for self-care, including painting and taking retreats. In 2010, she spent two months on sabbatical in the British Isles and France thanks to a Lily Foundation clergy-renewal grant. Last fall, she signed up for an art class as she resumed painting again after a hiatus necessitated by family obligations.

Weber creates mostly oil paintings, but sketches in watercolor when she travels. Stylistically, she’s now “trying a little bit of everything,” from still life to abstract art, she said. “I’m sort of trying to figure out whether I want to continue in the style I was working on after my sabbatical, or if I

want to try some new things.”

Her new work includes a painting created during the COVID-19 pandemic, “Coastal Impressions 2.”

Nature’s beauty has been a consistent inspiration for Weber. She was attending an eight-day Jesuit retreat in Gloucester, Mass., when her art and prayer life connected in a powerful way.

These summer retreats, which she attended annually for several years, “were just profound spiritual experiences for me in a beautiful setting,” she said. In her free time, she sketched watercolors of the ocean and surrounding area.

One day, one of her spiritual directors asked: “Have you ever used your art in your prayer life?”

The idea made sense, Weber said, “particularly with Ignatian spirituality, because it’s all about the imagination. It’s all about entering into the biblical story and imagining yourself there.

“I started to do that that year. It was a wonderful experience,” she said. “I have to admit, I’ve had a hard time doing that when I’m not on retreat. There was something about being in that beautiful setting and spending all that time in prayer and, whether it was while you were praying or when you were dreaming, it all sort of flowed together.”

Once, during an “imaginative prayer” exercise on a retreat, she experienced the story of Nicodemus meeting with Jesus by night anew — “very, very different from the way I had interpreted it or understood it

before.”

“It was Jesus and Nicodemus caught up in the Spirit. ... Like whirling dervishes, they were dancing together. Jesus was going, ‘It’s the Spirit.’ Nicodemus was saying, ‘Oh, I see!’

“I had to find a way of painting that.”

Years later, “I don’t always preach on it exactly that way,” she said. “[But] it’s impossible for me to preach on that text without thinking about that experience and looking back on that watercolor that I did.”

In worship, she sometimes invites parishioners into the creative process: offering a painting station or providing them with pieces of paper to color or write on, based on a sermon’s theme, and place on a canvas.

One constant in her own paintings remains her focus on the sky. “My landscapes are about 5/6 sky and 1/6 land,” she said. Looking through sabbatical pictures on her phone, every other photograph was of a sky and clouds, she said, “all the skies I wanted to use as resources for paintings.”

“That’s still something that really



Above, the Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber painted Nicodemus and Jesus dancing together after envisioning them during an “imaginative prayer” exercise on a retreat. Right, she painted “Coastal Impressions 2” during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Images/courtesy of Lynne Weber



The Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber captured scenes in a sketchbook during a sabbatical in Europe.

move me,” she said. “It still just draws me in. I call it my heaven and earth series.” ■

A version of this article first appeared in *The VOICE Online*, the Diocese of Newark’s online newsletter.

The Rev. Sharon Sheridan Hausman is a priest in the Diocese of Newark.

FEATURE

Wyoming diocese 'spreads the love' with million-dollar COVID-19 relief

By Pat McCaughan
Episcopal News Service

Each of the 46 congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming has received a \$10,000 grant and instructions to take Holy Week to discern ways to spend it to aid those affected by COVID-19.

For the Rev. Roxanne Jimerson-Friday, who serves two congregations on the Wind River Reservation, the needs are painfully clear and relief from the pandemic is absolutely essential.

"Unemployment was already high on the reservation, probably about 50 to 60%," according to Jimerson-Friday, the first woman Shoshone tribal member ordained in the Episcopal Church. "Now, it is even higher. Businesses have closed. People have been laid off. There are two grocery stores on the reservation. One closed yesterday because they had an employee who tested positive.

"There are about 26 people in our county that tested positive out of 200 cases in the state, and 11 of those are from the reservation," she said.

Jimerson-Friday, who serves both Our Father's House Episcopal Church in Ethete and the Shoshone Episcopal Mission at Fort Washakie, said members are making DIY face masks to aid others and are hoping to work together to create a food bank and a help center.

"We'd like to start a food bank with nonperishable items, and then we're looking to see if we could get diapers, baby wipes and other items for young families," Jimerson-Friday said.

Wyoming Bishop John Smylie, in an April 3 letter to congregations, wrote: "Our hope is that you will dream of ways you can make a love-spreading difference in the lives of those negatively impacted by this crisis. We are asking that you distribute these dollars within 60 days to meet the most pressing needs you currently discern."

The grants are part of the \$1 million commitment to COVID-19 pandemic relief made by the Foundation for the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming, according to Gary Hartman, a board member. Congregations are asked to spend the funds on childcare, vulnerable adults, food insecurity or other assistance, but not on church capital expenditures or operating costs.

The foundation has assets totaling \$78 million currently, mostly from private gifts and bequests, according to Press Stephens, executive director. A large part of the foundation's funds derived from a bequest from a donor in the cable, radio and television business, he said. "It's a remarkable story of how those gifts can do God's work in a remarkable way. It's just a good story of a remarkable planned giving arrangement by someone who really cared about his church."

Stephens said the foundation wanted to get the funds disbursed as quickly as possible "because people needed the money yesterday."

Hartman said the foundation is encouraging churches to work with community partners. "There are a lot of nonprofits in these communities, both city- and county-based, including food banks, who are providing meals for kids not attending school."

COVID-19 has resulted in food insecurity; loss of jobs; and insufficient income to pay rent, mortgages and utilities. "If the money could not be used by the local congregation in the next 60 days, we've asked that they come back to the diocese with a plan of how they intend to spend the money," Hartman said.

Wyoming's first coronavirus case was reported March 11. On March 19, Governor Mark Gordon ordered the closure of public spaces in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. A day later, Smylie directed congregations to suspend worship, meetings and gatherings, and

social activities.

A University of Wyoming statewide survey has revealed that nearly a third of the state's 577,000 residents say they or their immediate family members have lost jobs or been laid off because of COVID-19.

In Jackson, COVID-19-imposed closures have impacted the local tourist economy, according to the Rev. Jimmy Bartz, rector of St. John's Church.



Photos/courtesy of Wind River Reservation Ministry

Above, Barbara Ferris-Mireau, a member of the of Fort Washakie community, and an Eastern Shoshone Tribal member, is making masks, quilts and other items as needed.

Left, Vernetta Panzetanga, a Shoshone Tribal member and a member of the Shoshone Episcopal Mission in Fort Washakie, Wyo., sews DIY face masks to aid others.

"We sit at the southern end of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem," Bartz said. "This is the gateway to the Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. Both are closed. We are one of the premiere ski destinations in North America, and our ski resort, the Jackson Mountain Resorts, closed early. Unemployment is epidemic here."

Concerns that local hospitals could be overwhelmed by the virus prompted the mayors of several cities, including nearby Victor and Driggs in Idaho, to make commercials essentially pleading with people "not to come here," Bartz added. "We have a less-than-50-bed hospital."

As a foundation board member, Bartz contacted congregations to offer assistance and support. "A church in Saratoga — which sits in the second-most impoverished community in our diocese — is talking about finding ways to provide Wi-Fi hotspots for students so they could continue to engage in schooling," he said.

Others were considering strengthening existing partnerships with food banks and local utility providers "because they know people will struggle with light and heating bills. There are a lot of people who are hungry now because they are not employed. They're trying to reserve cash to pay their rent or mortgage. There have been huge increases in visits to local food banks," Bartz said.

The Rev. Bernadine Craft, a former foundation board member, is rector of the Church of the Holy Communion in Rock Springs, a community of about 25,000 heavily dependent upon the oil, gas and minerals industries.

"We're telling people, 'Let's use Holy Week as a discernment,'" said Craft, a former state senator who was baptized, confirmed and married in the church she now serves. "We may end up with something we haven't thought about yet.

"We will divide the money among areas where it is needed most. It can be the difference between whether a family eats that night," she said. "And then we will apply for additional funding, to continue helping for as long as it takes."

Craft also serves the Oregon Trail Memorial Church in Eden Valley and said that, while both congregations number less than 50 on an average Sunday, they are

very active and excited about the possibilities for helping their neighbors.

The current grants mirror similar diocesan efforts to raise suicide prevention and awareness and alleviate food insecurity. Wyoming has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, she said. Previously, Smylie created Mustard Seed Grants, where each parish received a \$10,000 grant and was invited to spend the money on community improvement.

"Every community in Wyoming is very different," Craft said. "We found, if we gave grants to local parishes, they could reach as many people directly as possible. This is so incredibly important, to put money where it's going to do the most good, which is in the community."

Sweetwater County, where Holy Communion is located, had four confirmed cases of coronavirus, she told ENS recently. The church is considering a high priority those "who

have lost their jobs and are now struggling. We are particularly targeting families with children."

Other high priorities are victims of domestic violence and single mothers with children. "So many people live life on the edge and are one paycheck away from being homeless, from being hungry anyway," Craft said. "The slightest little thing, which of course is the horrible thing of this pandemic, can push them over the edge."

In Buffalo, a ranching and tourist community located at the foot of the Bighorn Mountains, the Bread of Life Food Bank has been on the front lines, aiding the food-insecure for several decades, according to the Rev. Doug Wasinger.

"When it became clear that COVID-19 was shifting things around, a group of people who work with feeding kids — the school system, the senior center and Bread of Life — got together to see how kids could get food even when schools closed," according to Wasinger, rector of St. Luke's Church in Buffalo.

Previously, the food bank fed about 200 people per week, "and we are anticipating that the number will go up pretty quickly."

Vestry approval is required for grant-spending, and Wasinger is certain St. Luke's will support the food pantry. "We will also consider rent alleviation and utility support for the vulnerable, and then we'll start getting creative," he said.

"I'm seeing is a lot of creative ways to keep people going, that spread through Facebook and phone calls," Wasinger added. "There'll be a post that says a restaurant is open, so call in and order something and go pick it up. There is a real intentionality about keeping people employed and working, even though people are not seeing revenue coming in."

Wasinger added that Holy Week discernment for spending the grant feels prophetic. "This is starting to feel like the disciples in the Upper Room. This is no longer an intellectual exercise.

"Jesus said, 'Watch for the resurrection.' God's going to do some amazing things through this. Maybe we get a big reset about what's really important and how do we take care of each other and discover we have a lot of residual strength we didn't know we had." ■

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Churches take Stations to the streets in Holy Week

By Neva Rae Fox

Traditional Holy Week services were greatly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. With mandatory closing of church buildings, many congregations turned to Zoom, Facebook, videos, podcasts, YouTube and other digital means to offer creative and inspiring ways to connect with spiritual themes. Others opted to take the Stations of the Cross to the streets, sans technology or internet.

In Rixeyville, Va., Native American artwork dotted the landscape with outdoor stations. The Rev. Stacy Williams-Duncan, rector of Little Fork Episcopal Church, said the actions were motivated by the pandemic but have had a far-reaching effect.

“The artwork has been very positively received and we have had people who have never visited the church grounds before come out to see them,” Williams-Duncan reported. “We are a remote rural church, so this alone is an evangelism success for us. We have had people respond on our Facebook page that are not members of the church, and our parishioners have reported hearing people talk about this project in their friend groups.”

Designed by Choctaw artist Melanie Twelves, the images were placed so they could be easily viewed from cars and spaced far enough apart to respect social distancing.

At Grace Church in St. Francisville, La., self-directed stations became a neighborhood experience and were



Photos/courtesy of Little Fork Church

Little Fork Episcopal Church in Rixeyville, Va. featured Native American artwork in its outdoor Stations of the Cross. A digital version of the stations can be found at www.smallchurchesbigimpact.org.

enhanced with supplementary materials. Meg Kendrick, the parish administrator, explained, “I made booklets, we had maps made, and then did a sign for each station. We had neighbors around our church who offered to have their home be a station, so it was put on the outside of their fence. It started outside our church and ended outside the Methodist Church.”

Another set of neighborhood stations, in Jacksonville, Fla., were specifically designed for all to join. Deeming it Outside-the-Church, “We wanted to provide a safe alternative for people to participate in this devotion with their families,” said the Rev. Tom Murray, rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in the city’s Ortega neighborhood.

Inspiration for this Holy Week activity, according to Murray, came from parishioners who saw families participate in neighborhood scavenger hunts during the stay-at-home order. ■

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Photo/courtesy of St. Mark’s Church

Stations of the Cross are seen outdoors in Jacksonville, Fla.

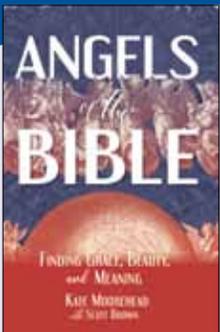
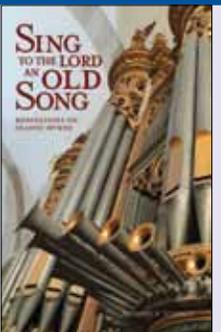
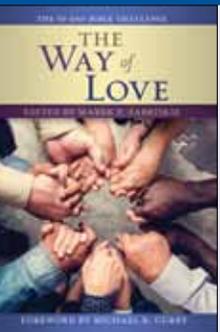
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FEATURE

Tubman triumphs in Lent Madness contest

By Neva Rae Fox

Harriet Tubman has earned her Golden Halo and has risen to become a member of the Communion of Saints ... the ones honored through Lent Madness.

This was the 11th year of the popular program, which pits saint against saint in daily voting, starting the day after Ash Wednesday (Feb. 26 this year) through to the Wednesday of Holy Week (April 8 this year).

The brainchild of the Rev. Tim Schenck of St. John the Evangelist in Hingham, Mass. and the Rev. Scott Gunn, executive director for Forward Movement, Lent Madness has steadily grown in popularity over the past decade.

Humorous and upbeat, but primarily educational, Lent Madness is designed for all ages and all denominations, not just Episcopalians.

“As an online devotion, Lent Madness was well-positioned to supplement people’s spiritual hunger and need for community,” Schenck explained. “Since we’ve been at this for 11 years now, Lent Madness was actually a source of stability and familiarity as we suddenly plunged into unprecedented online spiritual territory. As people’s personal Lenten devotions got flipped upside down, receiving that daily e-mail with the day’s matchup

became a source of spiritual grounding for many. And if we helped people smile a bit in the midst of it all, the effort was well worth it.”

Schenk and Gunn use the Lent Madness website, Facebook, Twitter, and emails to spread the word and invite participants.

On her way to the Golden Halo, Harriet Tubman bested Joseph the husband of Mary, Hildegard of Bingen, Julie Billiart and Herman of Alaska. Gunn commented, “I’m excited that Harriet Tubman won, and I hope her life and witness will inspire people today to work for justice. I’m grateful our church has recognized her in our official calendar of commemorations since 1997.”

“The witness of Golden Halo winner Harriet Tubman — both her powerful faith in Jesus and her ability to persevere — really resonated during these trying times,” Schenck said. “If there’s ever a saint who helps point us beyond the current struggle, it’s Harriet.”

Harriet Tubman joins the previous Lent Madness Golden Halo winners: George Herbert, C.S. Lewis, Mary Magdalene, Frances Perkins, Charles Wesley, Francis of Assisi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Florence Nightingale, Anna Alexander

and Martha of Bethany.

The design of the program may sound a bit familiar. The two priests took a cue from March Madness, the annual college basketball event that coincides with Lent Madness. This year, with March Madness cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic, Lent Madness was the only game in town.



Gunn noted, “This was another successful Lent Madness, and I’m grateful that so many people have made the saints a part of their Lenten journey. When we get to know the saints, we find companions on our journey, witnesses who can pray for us and inspire us in our own journeys as disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Gunn won’t positively attribute its high numbers this year to the social restrictions occasioned by the pandemic, but comments on the Lent Madness website point to the participants’ grati-

tude for this online community.

“Many Lent Madness participants shared that the online community that pops up around this devotion meant something more this year,” Schenck. “That the light touch on the learning was particularly welcome, and that the inspiration of the saintly souls we highlighted offered hope in difficult times.”

Participation in Lent Madness stretched beyond the daily voting. Weekly Monday videos from Gunn and Schenck — self-named the Supreme Executive Committee — provided updates, insights, and encouragement.

The Cathedral of St. James in South Bend, in the Diocese of Northern Indiana, prepared hand-painted dolls and entertaining videos.

There were also daily memes from Michael Wachter. Sister Diana Doncaster of the Community of the Transfiguration in Cincinnati prepared daily hymns for each of the saints.

Nominations for Lent Madness 2021 will be accepted later in Eastertide, “in a safe and socially distant way,” Gunn promised. ■

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