

# Episcopal JOURNAL

10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

MONTHLY EDITION | \$3.75 PER COPY | VOL. 10 NO. 9 | OCTOBER 2020



**NEWS** 'House churches' take worship safely outdoors



**ARTS** Bellini's method in art embodies St. Francis



**ARTS** As season ends, baseball can be a path to God

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

## As wildfires threaten communities in the West, Episcopalians offer support

By David Paulsen  
Episcopal News Service

With wildfires raging up and down the West Coast, prompting evacuations, destroying homes and threatening communities, Episcopal leaders say they and their congregations are responding and preparing to respond to communities in need as the crisis develops.

At least 100,000 Oregon residents reportedly faced evacuation orders as of mid-September, with the number potentially reaching 500,000 as the fires spread. The mayor of Portland declared an emergency with fires raging just beyond the city's suburbs.

"The fires are intense, and the air quality is horrible," Oregon Bishop Michael Hanley told Episcopal News Service in an email. "We are working this morning to get connected with folks in the hardest hit areas." Some Episcopalians likely have lost their homes, he said, though he didn't yet have confirmation. St. Martin's Episcopal Church in the small



Photo/Reuters

Sandra and Daniela Reyes comfort Isaias Reyes while visiting their damaged mobile home after wildfires destroyed a neighborhood in Bear Creek, Phoenix, Ore.

Oregon city of Shady Cove is close to the edge of one of the fires. Hanley said he heard from the vicar that the town is safe for now.

In California, where fire crews are struggling to contain some of the West's largest fires, the Diocese of San Joaquin's Episcopal Conference Center Oakhurst was evacuated this week, with staff members making it safely to Fresno, about 60 miles to the south.

"Our congregation members in Oakhurst

at St. Raphael's are currently in the evacuation warning stage, so they are ready and prepared should evacuation become mandatory," the Rev. Anna Carmichael, the diocese's canon to the ordinary, said in an email. "Our prayers are with our evacuated staff, our congregation members who are waiting and watching for evacuation notice, for our sisters and brothers in California, as well as Oregon, Washington and Idaho also battling devastating fires."

She also praised the work of emergency responders and firefighters who are risking their lives to protect communities from the blazes.

Even when communities aren't threatened directly by the wildfires' flames, smoke and ash are creating a public health crisis, driving air quality to hazardous levels and prompting authorities to recommend residents stay indoors.

"The air quality is terrible," said Stephanie Taylor, communication director for the

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## From mountain biking to learning pods, camps and conference centers adapt to COVID-19

By Egan Millard  
Episcopal News Service



Courtesy photo

Mountain bikers ride the trails at Ride Kanuga in North Carolina.

Episcopal-affiliated camps and conference centers — whether they're owned by dioceses or operated independently — have allowed the church to branch out into an increasingly secular world, offering children and adults an experience with faith in a more neutral and natural setting than the local church. But their business model — relying on income from the hundreds of visitors that stay at the facilities, often in close proximity — has been decimated by COVID-19.

How are they staying afloat, and will they survive? Some may not, said Ashley Graham-Wilcox, director of communications and events for the nonprofit group Episcopal Camps & Conference Centers.

Four of its member facilities — Camp Mitchell in Arkansas, Gray Center in Mississippi and Camp Stoney and the Bosque Center in New Mexico — are evaluating if and how they can reopen. But many are adapting to the new normal, diversifying their offerings and moving camps online. One facility, Camp Allen in Texas, even held its summer camp, with COVID-19

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## CONVERSATIONS

## This is a time of hope and challenge for the church

By Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows



IBRAM X. KENDI recently wrote in *The Atlantic*: “From the beginning, racist Americans have been perfectly content with turning nightmares into dreams, and dreams into nightmares; perfectly content with the law of racial killing and the order of racial disparities. They can’t fathom that racism is America’s nightmare. There can be no American dream amid the American nightmare of anti-black racism — or of anti-Native, anti-Latino, anti-Asian racism — a racism that causes even white people to become fragile and die of whiteness.”

I want to share a little bit about my experience. I’m not an expert on dismantling systemic racism and anti-blackness. I’m not an expert on unlearning the messages that are continually and consistently telegraphed reminding me that my dark skin is not as valued as white skin. But I am expert on my life and my story, and I want to share a bit of it with you and then name the hope and challenges before us.

The part of my story that is fairly public knowledge is that I was born and raised in New York City — the granddaughter of Shinnecock Indians on one side and sharecropping descendants of slaves on the other. The first ten years we lived in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn — and I attended a diverse elementary school with black, white and Latina teachers and black, white, Puerto Rican and Jewish classmates. We had next to no money but a lively neighborhood where the owners of the mom and pop stores knew the name of every kid.

When I was ten, we moved to Staten Island, and I’ve never gotten over it. We were now living in a segregated space. White kids took the yellow school buses

to our junior high school, and black and brown kids mostly took the city bus or walked the seven blocks to school. Many days, as I walked home alone, there were older white kids and adults who would spit at me and call me the n-word. Each Friday there would be reports of the “race riots” at one of the local high schools — meaning, blacks and whites fighting after school, every week. I figured out by seventh grade that testing out and getting to a specialized school in Manhattan would be a better choice because I didn’t want to deal with that kind of racism. So I commuted an hour and half each way taking a bus, ferry and subway train to midtown Manhattan for high school where the diverse world opened back up for me.

For whatever reason, talking about race, building bridges, having friendship groups that looked the like Benetton ads of the 1980s has been my lot for over 40 years. And I’m tired because I’ve spent my life pushing away and unlearning the messages that whites and black can’t be real family and friends, but too many white folks won’t do the work of unlearning those same messages. I’m tired of the burden white supremacy places on me and the black and brown people I love. I’m tired of black folks bearing the symptoms of white sickness. This exhaustion is not two weeks old or global pandemic old. Black and brown people spend our lives learning to live with the exhaustion of white supremacy as a survival mechanism.

Yes, I can remember the first time, back in 1982, my uncle was pulled over driving his BMW home from work because he was a black man in too nice a car. Yes, I’ve had police in my predominately white neighborhood run my plates. Yes, I’ve already had “the talk” with my nine-year-old black son about what to do if approached by the police and how he can’t play with water pistols like his white friends. Here’s the thing, every black and

brown person in this country, in our congregations, has stories like these. The black and brown folks with Ivy League degrees who show up to our churches in nice dresses and suits have these stories as surely as the black and brown folks we cross the street to avoid.

We have these stories and we have not often told them outside of black and brown circles. There are experts who can better explain why, but I suspect that it has something to do with the fact that it is hard to tell the stories of racial trauma to the people who have the power to make things different and won’t.

And when we have told the stories, long before there was the internet and hashtags, we were too often told to get over it, stop playing the race card, and conform. The videos we now see played over and over again of the killings and abuses for just living while black have finally awakened those with the power to change things, and I hope and pray policies and behavior begin to change.

Hope and challenge are two sides of the same coin. Across the globe people are risking their health in the midst of a pandemic to hold police departments, cities and corporations accountable to changing policies embedded in racist structures. This is gospel work. And the church is not exempt.

So here is the challenge for the Episcopal Church: we need to stop being afraid of committing to the work of dismantling systemic racism and white supremacy. We need to learn and understand how it operates inside the Episcopal Church and in the world.

As a predominately white institution that is rooted in the American experiment, we must be unequivocal and clear. When I go to the webpage of Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream, it is clear that they are about selling ice cream and dismantling white supremacy.

I want our church to be that clear. Our being afraid of making white people upset makes us complicit in keeping white supremacy in place. We must not be afraid of giving our time and financial resources to the groups who are doing this work on the ground.

Many of our congregations are made up of people who have the power to affect policies, programs and money — if we are not actively dismantling white supremacy as a part of our baptismal ministry, then we ought not write another statement.

If we are not giving away our power and centering the voices on the margins, then we ought not be surprised when people of color stop sharing their stories and attending our churches. If we go to Black Lives Matter demonstrations but return to our church buildings to livestream worship surrounded exclusively by white images of Jesus and the saints, then we must understand that we contradict our actions and become just another performative ally not helping our people or the movement.

Now is the time for acting — for doing the work of unlearning bias against black and brown people. Our everyday choices from where we buy groceries, to what we read, to how we adorn our sanctuaries, to where our money goes, to how we vote all add up.

It all adds up to a world where people and systems are activated to value and support all of God’s children no matter what they look like or where they come from and every choice moves us a little closer to God’s dream. Not just the American dream — God’s dream. So let’s get to work, church. The time is now. ■

*Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows is diocesan bishop of the Diocese of Indianapolis. This reflection was first delivered on June 8 to an online meeting of Episcopal bishops and canons.*

## FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK



TO A WHITE PERSON, it might seem like the current conversations about race just go on and on — yet another article, another demonstration, another panel discussion, another speech.

It seems tiring, doesn’t it? There are times I put down the newspaper, turn off the computer, shut off the TV and go do something fun to get my mind off the subject.

For a real definition of tiring, read Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows’ powerful essay, above. If white people have tired of recently hearing about race, they have the luxury of tuning it out. Black people never have that luxury — and they are really exhausted.

I recently heard a work colleague of color say that when George Floyd was killed, “white people were probably astonished and appalled. Black people said, ‘not AGAIN.’ I am so tired of this.”

In October, I’ll be in a group at my Episcopal church starting to take the churchwide “Sacred Ground” course on anti-racism. The course is

an online curriculum of documentary films and readings, part of the church’s commitment to “Becoming Beloved Community,” which the church describes as “a long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice in our personal lives, our ministries, and our society.”

A key concept is “long-term.” In one of the assigned books, “Waking Up White,” author Debby Irving writes about a quiz in which (several years ago) she answered that she discusses race “once or twice a year.” A black friend is amazed, answering the question that she discusses race “daily.” At which point, it’s Irving’s turn to be amazed.

“Sacred Ground” is designed to start conversations — and get white people talking to other white people about race, in the context of the Episcopal Church and Christian theology.

One of the great differences about the conversation on race, post-George Floyd, is that white people are starting to identify as white — and expanding their questioning of what that means in America, and in the church. This promises to be an uncomfortable, but liberating place to stand. ■

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Subscriptions: To change subscription addresses, contact: Episcopal Journal Circulation Department, PO Box 937, Bellmawr NJ 08099-0937 [ejournal@egpp.com](mailto:ejournal@egpp.com) or call 800-691-9846. Individual subscriptions are \$36 per year, available through [www.episcopaljournal.org](http://www.episcopaljournal.org).

Episcopal Journal is an independent publication, produced by and for members of the Episcopal Church in the United States and abroad. Episcopal Journal is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable corporation, registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Episcopal Journal is published monthly by the Episcopal Journal, Inc. Episcopal Journal is published monthly and quarterly in partnership with dioceses and individual churches and is distributed to individual subscribers. Postage paid at Bryn Mawr, Pa. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Episcopal Journal, P.O. Box 937, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0937. ISSN: 2159-6824

## NEWS

# Episcopal teens address extreme poverty with philanthropy initiative

By Richelle Thompson  
Episcopal News Service

From her home in Stratford, Conn., 18-year-old Fabiola Millien-Faustin helped a woman in Pakistan buy supplies for a small business that makes discarded tires into sandals. In nearby Ridgefield, Kayleigh Bowler, 17, loaned money to a single mother from Togo for a bakery business. A microloan from Dana Walters, 16, of Bridgeport helped a family in Venezuela buy sewing kits.

These teens are part of Global Philanthropy Leaders, an initiative established by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Ridgefield, Conn. It combines Scripture readings with teachings on personal finance, development economics and the ins and outs of microlending. The teens talk about issues of global poverty and learn how to take action by providing microloans to people across the globe.

The daughter of Haitian immigrants, Millien-Faustin said she had witnessed people support ministries in Haiti and other countries, but she didn't know how she could contribute.

"I always thought philanthropy was for people who were very wealthy, but I 100% see myself as a philanthropist now," Millien-Faustin said. "I'm seeing change in the world and I can definitely play a part in it. A little bit of money, all gathered up, can go a long way."

Buoyed by the initial response from St. Stephen's youth, the initiative expanded in 2018 to St. John's in Bridgeport. The following year, youth "apostles" from St. Stephen's and St. John's visited other congregations to teach about and establish the program in more locations.

Global Philanthropy Leaders has received requests to expand the initiative to congregations across the United States.

This fall, the initiative is scheduled to launch in Jacksonville, Fla. Also, an online formation class for youth and adult leaders, with a focus on philanthropy for teens, will launch in partnership with ChurchNext sometime in the fall.

Since St. Stephen's began Global Philanthropy Leaders in 2017, co-founder Rich Stein, an economist and member of the congregation, said about 65 high school students from nine Connecticut congregations have now invested \$10,000 in small businesses and entrepreneurs throughout the developing world, one \$25 loan at a time. The students have a 99% repayment rate, which they use to extend new microloans, Stein told Episcopal News Service.

These students are making "sustainable and lasting change," he said. "Our high schoolers are really looking for ways to make a difference, tangible ways ... to help someone build a business, to help build a better future for that family. If that one person becomes successful enough to hire someone in their village or neighborhood, now you've helped another family and, soon, the whole village."

An estimated 736 million people worldwide live on less than \$1.90 a day, with the majority of those in poverty living in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, according to the United Nations, which has ending poverty as its No. 1 sustainable development goal. Extreme poverty leaves millions of people without access to clean water, health care or education.

Microlending is one tool to help address this problem. In many places, capital is simply not available for small loans, Stein said. Few banks will lend money for a new cow or sewing kits, but for the recipients, these small investments can



Photo/courtesy of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Teens from St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Ridgefield, Conn., met monthly before the COVID-19 pandemic to discuss Scripture and learn about microlending.

be life-changing. Instead of turning to loan sharks, who can charge up to 100% interest, people can apply for a microloan, with structured repayment plans and low interest rates, Stein said.

The intersection of social justice and faith appeals to Dana Walters, a member of the youth group at St. John's who began the program last year as a sophomore.

"I love it," she said. "It's very exciting to see how much you can help change. We don't have a whole bunch of money, but it keeps recycling and coming back, so we get to help more and more people."

The idea began with a conversation between Stein and the Rev. Whitney Altopp, rector of St. Stephen's in Ridgefield, who co-founded the program.

Stein, who has experience in microlending, wondered how to encourage the practice in congregations. Altopp entered the conversation with a history of working with youth and a passion for developing ministries that engage teens through faith and service.

The pair enlisted Jane Lindenburg, youth ministry coordinator at St. Stephen's, and began fleshing out the con-

cept. The vestry committed to funding the program, giving each participant enough money to make up to 10 loans a year. The students are encouraged to contribute \$25 of their own money.

The support of the vestry is very meaningful to the students, said Lindenburg. It's a message: "We believe in you. We trust you. We want you to become the helpers, the purpose-driven leaders. Our youth take great pride that they're stewarding the parish's money."

Once a month during the program year, the group gathers for a meeting; at the end of the year,

the participants share their experience with the wider congregation. They start with food and fellowship, followed by a dive into Scripture. Stein and others offer lessons on different aspects of economics, including investing in the future, living within your means and paying God first.

Stein also teaches best practices for microlending, such as how to research requests and evaluate the likelihood of repayment. The students then make their own decisions about which projects to extend the microloans to, using the nonprofit crowdfunding loan platform kiva.org.

During her three years in the program, Kayleigh Bowler, a member of St. Stephen's, often chose to support the businesses of women — and listened to her gut. "Sometimes, I would feel this sense of rightness, like this was the person I was supposed to be making a loan to, that we were meant to be connected." ■

Richelle Thompson serves as managing editor of *Forward Movement* and is a member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Fort Thomas, Ky.



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## AROUND THE CHURCH

## Episcopal relief agency responds to Hurricane Laura

Episcopal Relief & Development responded to Hurricane Laura by supporting local church partners in Louisiana and Texas as they provided emergency assistance to people affected by the storm. Dioceses distributed food and building and cleaning supplies, and arranged services such as temporary housing, laundry and building and vehicle repairs.

On August 27, Hurricane Laura made landfall on the Gulf Coast as a Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 150 mph, affecting eastern Texas and western Louisiana. The storm made direct impact on the Lake Charles, Alexandria, Shreveport, Ruston and Monroe areas of western Louisiana, causing catastrophic damage to buildings and infrastructure, including a fire and chemical leak in a



Photo/NOAA

*Hurricane Laura intensifies in the Gulf of Mexico, aimed at Texas and Louisiana.*

chemical plant and significant damage to the electrical and public water systems.

Episcopal Relief & Development's U.S. Disaster Program team was in close contact with dioceses along the Gulf Coast in the days leading up to the storm's arrival as the partners mobilized disaster preparation and response plans. Staff continued

to provide expertise and guidance as partners determined the most urgent unmet needs in their communities.

With Episcopal Relief & Development's support, the Diocese of Western Louisiana distributed emergency assistance such as gas, food, personal care and cleaning supplies to marginalized communities who evacuated or whose homes were damaged or destroyed. The diocese is also arranging other aid such as car repairs to allow individuals to go to work, access laundry services and replace medications that were lost in the storm.

The Diocese of Texas leveraged local connections and their extensive experience in disaster response to provide

building materials such as tarps, nails and contractor trash bags to a regional distribution center. The diocese also supplied gift cards for food and other supplies. Additionally, diocesan leaders arranged temporary housing in local motels and hotels.

As many as 10,000 evacuees from southwest Louisiana sought shelter in New Orleans. COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols have complicated traditional sheltering efforts. Many of the evacuees were in hotels throughout the area, provided by the City of New Orleans. The Diocese of Louisiana supplied food, clothing and gas, as well as purchasing assistance for household supplies.

— Episcopal Relief & Development

## Diana Akiyama elected 11th bishop of Oregon

Delegates to the Diocese of Oregon Electing Convention held Aug. 29 elected the Rev. Diana Akiyama as the 11th bishop of the diocese. The vote was confirmed after two ballots, concluding the yearlong process of seeking a successor for Bishop Michael Hanley, who began his service in the diocese in 2010 and will retire in January 2021.

Akiyama currently serves as vicar at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Kapaau, Hawaii, and is dean of Waiolaihui'ia School for Formation.

Ordained in 1988 in the Diocese of Eastern Oregon, Akiyama has the historical distinction of being the first Japanese-American woman ordained to the Episcopal priesthood. She has extensive experience in Christian formation, teaching, social justice advocacy and mission field, having served ministries in Oregon, California and Hawaii.

The Electing Convention was the first all-online election held within the Episcopal Church. Due to state-imposed COVID-19 restrictions and health concerns, the originally scheduled June 2020 election was postponed, tentatively refash-

ioned as a multi-site event and ultimately conducted remotely via Zoom.

The majority of voting delegates reported from their own homes, some reported from their parish settings and a head table was established to oversee the election proceedings at All Saints Episcopal Church in Portland.

"We did not choose the circumstances under which to hold the episcopal election. However, with the exceptionally creative and hard work of the Transition Committee, the flexibility of our candidates and the fervent prayers of the diocese, we feel so blessed to bring this process to a full and joyous conclusion," said the Rev. Patti Hale, president of the Standing Committee.

"It is with deep gratitude to the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Oregon gathered in convention this day that I rejoice in the election of the 11th bishop of Oregon, the Rev. Akiyama," said Hanley. "The diocese of Oregon is also grateful to all the candidates who stood for election. In all our work we have continued to pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in this process."

— Diocese of Oregon



Akiyama

## Gulf Coast churches recovering from Hurricane Sally

The latest hurricane to hit the Gulf Coast during this record-setting hurricane season left churches and residents again assessing damage, this time in communities served by the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast in southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle.

Hurricane Sally moved ashore early



Photo/Camp Beckwith via Facebook

*The storm uprooted trees at Camp Beckwith, Diocese of Alabama.*

Sept. 16 as a Category 2 storm, with wind speeds reaching 105 mph. The storm was blamed for at least two deaths and caused flooding, power outages and structural damage. At least four Episcopal churches sustained property damage, as well as the diocese's Camp Beckwith in Fairhope, Ala.

The Rev. Will Lowry, rector of Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Gulf Shores, reported on Facebook that the church was dealing with downed tree limbs, and water had seeped into the church. "Otherwise we seem to have done well," Lowry said, though the storm caused varying degrees of damage to some parishioners' homes.

An email update from the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast said the diocesan offices were without power and phone service as of Sept. 17. Other closings

were reported in the southern part of the diocese, including at St. Paul's Episcopal Preschool in Daphne, Ala.

Christ Episcopal Church in Pensacola, Fla., also reported the church was closed in the days after the storm, and it issued a call on Facebook asking parishioners to contact the parish's clergy directly to report any damage or family needs.

"We are here on the journey with you as we recover," the post said.

Hurricane Sally reportedly dropped 30 inches of rain in some places, which combined with the storm surge caused heavy flooding in coastal communities.

Central Gulf Coast Bishop Russell Kendrick traveled to some of the churches in his diocese that have been impacted by the hurricane.

"Hurricane Sally really caught us off guard by the direction she took. Because of that, very few were prepared. Thankfully, while there is significant damage, the folks who live in this area are resilient and hopeful," Kendrick said in an email to ENS.

The diocese is working with Episcopal Relief & Development to assist residents and business owners who are dealing with severe damage. Camp Beckwith shared photos on Facebook showing trees downed by the storm, including one that hit a camp building.

In Pensacola, the storm knocked out power and phone service at Holy Cross Episcopal Church, according to a YouTube update from the Rev. Rob Dixon, the rector.

— Episcopal News Service

## OBITUARY

## RIP: Bishop John Tarrant

Bishop John Thomas Tarrant, who served as bishop of the Diocese of South Dakota, died Aug. 24 at age 68 of an apparent heart attack, according to a pastoral statement issued by Western Massachusetts Bishop Douglas Fisher.

Tarrant was consecrated bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of South Dakota in 2009 and became diocesan bishop in 2010. Following his retirement as bishop, Tarrant began serving as an interim at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Pittsfield, Mass., in May 2019.

Tarrant was born in Kansas City, Mo. and raised in rural Michigan. He graduated from Michigan State University in 1974 with a political science degree and received his master of divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1983. He has served con-



Tarrant

gregations in Western Massachusetts, Connecticut and South Dakota.

Upon his retirement as bishop, Tarrant returned to Western Massachusetts.

"His pastoral presence was a great blessing to the people of St. Stephen's. His support of the Cathedral of the Beloved and the under-housed in the city resonated with John's lifetime commitment to forming 'beloved community.' His passion for justice motivated John's witness at Standing Rock. His humble ministry among indigenous people made John a wonderful storyteller of God's love for diversity," wrote Fisher.

Tarrant is survived by his wife Pat and their children.

— Diocese of Western Massachusetts

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## AROUND THE CHURCH

## Episcopal Church on 'solid ground' financially, council hears

By David Paulsen  
Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church's finances are "on pretty solid ground" for 2020 despite the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic, church leaders said July 22 during an online meeting of Executive Council, the church's governing body between meetings of General Convention.

Most of the meeting focused on financial updates since Executive Council's lengthier and wider-ranging meeting June 8-11. With church leaders trimming an additional \$129,000 from the budget recently for a total cost savings of \$3.6 million this year, their analysis was mostly upbeat.

"No surprises. Unexceptional," said Kurt Barnes, the Episcopal Church's chief financial officer. "Those are words that most people want to hear in a financial report." Dioceses have been paying their assessments at nearly the same rate as before the pandemic, Barnes said, and church trust funds have rebounded from investment losses in the spring.

Executive Council's next meeting is scheduled for October, when the focus is expected to shift to the church's 2021 budget.

So far, only the Diocese of Mississippi has indicated it may have to reduce its assessment payments, said the Rev. Mally Lloyd, who chairs Executive Council's Finance Committee. Other dioceses may apply for waivers by the end of the year.

"We're on pretty solid ground still halfway through the fiscal year," Lloyd told her fellow Executive Council members.

Several factors are working in the church's favor. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the church's legal and corporate entity, received a \$3 million federal stimulus loan from the Paycheck Protection Program. At the same time, the pandemic forced cuts to various church expenses, like staff travel and conference attendance, helping church staff achieve about \$3.5 million in savings, more than offsetting a \$1.8 million deficit originally budgeted for 2020.

The church has more than \$5 million in cash, Lloyd said, as well as \$12 mil-

lion in short-term reserves. Of those reserves, about \$9.5 million is set aside for "the rainiest of rainy days."

Executive Council typically meets in person three times a year, with a goal this triennium of gathering at least once in each of the church's nine provinces, most recently in February in Salt Lake City. That plan was upended in March with the initial surge in cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Since then, Executive Council has met online about once a month.

Much the meeting was devoted to expanding and strengthening the church's racial reconciliation work.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, in his comments to Executive Council, lamented this time of heightened anxiety, as the coronavirus pandemic and racial injustice collide with an American political divide that has only worsened in recent years. Add the upcoming U.S. presidential election to the mix and it is like throwing gasoline on a fire, he said.

"The tensions and the divisions are real and they're deep, but we need not fall victim to them," Curry said. "We



The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, left, and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, below, give updates to Executive Council during its Zoom meeting.



Photos/via Zoom

will need to be praying and we'll need to be speaking, to make it a Christian voice for the way of love and justice and compassion and human decency and adult behavior as values and norms by which we live as human beings. ... I'm not talking about how people vote; that's not the point. I'm talking about how we live together."

Curry also noted that the Lambeth Conference of bishops from across the Anglican Communion was postponed until 2022 because of the pandemic. ■

## Episcopal Youth Event cancelled/ EYEx planning underway

The Episcopal Church Department of Faith Formation, in collaboration with the 2020 Episcopal Youth Event (EYE20) planning team and Episcopal Church leadership, announced today that the Episcopal Youth Event will not be convened this triennium due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"I recognize and share the deep disappointment this holds," said Bronwyn Clark Skov, staff officer for Youth Ministries. "During the next year, our office will focus on discerning and implementing creative and meaningful support for youth ministry and leadership formation. Undoubtedly, new models for ministry are emerging and God is calling upon us to unite and respond."

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, in responding to the change in plan, said, "EYE is one of the most important and transformational ministries of The Episcopal Church. Over the years, so many youths have begun their journey in the Jesus Movement through it, so many have deepened their faith by it, so many have gone on to proclaim the Way of Love based on their experiences during it. We make this decision now out of an abundance of not just caution, but also of love for our youth and those who serve them."

The church supports an international youth ministry event at least

once during each triennium, the three years between General Conventions.

Last summer's Evento de Jóvenes Episcopales (EJE) in Panama City, Panama, fulfills this requirement for the present triennium. The Office of Youth Ministries remains committed to embracing and lifting up "the energy of the youth of The Episcopal Church" so that it "can continue to be utilized in active ministry as members of the Body of Christ."

In coming months, the Department of Faith Formation anticipates offering an alternative means of responding to God's call to "Unite/Uninamos," which was the planned theme for EYE20. Titled Episcopal Youth Experience or EYEx, the content will be planned and implemented by an EYEx Steering Committee, made up of youth and adults from the EYE20 planning team and the Youth Ministry Council of Advice.

"I recently was invited to join Encuentro de Jóvenes, an online youth gathering in Province IX, which was creative, inspiring, and hopeful," continued Skov. "This event gave me hope for what we can do together online since we cannot gather in person."

Details about EYEx will be available in the fall.

For questions or additional information, contact Bronwyn Skov, eye@episcopalchurch.org or 212-716-6074. ■



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## NEWS

# 'House churches' offer return to in-person worship by following practice of early Christians

By David Paulsen  
Episcopal News Service

For three Sundays this summer, the backyard of Charles Taylor's home in Washington, D.C., offered more than a place for peaceful relaxation. It became a place of worship. Home is where the church is.

Taylor and his wife have hosted a "garden group" of parishioners from St. Columba's Episcopal Church on Sundays deemed convenient and environmentally appropriate, most recently on Aug. 23. "Basically, we've been trying to look for days when the weather wasn't too hot or too wet," Taylor told Episcopal News Service.

About 10 people arrange themselves in the backyard a safe distance apart. Wearing masks, they read from a customized order of service bulletin produced by St. Columba's for house churches like this.

"It becomes more like what one imagines early Christian meetings were like," Taylor said. "It's not the same [as attending in a church], but the smallness of it is actually very welcome."

Similar Sunday scenes are taking place in Minneapolis among a group of parishioners from St. John's Episcopal Church. They gather for worship most Sundays in the front yard of John Belknap and Lynnell Mickelsen.

The congregation first organized these and other similar gatherings as small, in-person watch parties for the church's

small group of people," she said in an interview with ENS. It is one example of the pandemic's silver lining: "We're just experimenting with different things, Heinsohn said. "Innovation is just happening every day."

Much of the church-wide innovation this year is shaping virtual worship, which has taken off in ways that no one could have imagined before the coronavirus took hold in mid-March and forced the suspension of most in-person worship. Online services continue to be a mainstay of Episcopal worship heading into the fall, though some congregations have begun holding outdoor services and, more rarely, small services indoors. Masks, use of sanitizer and at least six feet of separation are standard requirements for participation.

This summer, the Episcopal Church also launched a series of online resources to help Episcopalians start small group ministries, particularly focused on discipleship and formation and easily administered online through conferencing tools like Zoom. Examples of house churches are less common across the church, but some Episcopalians have found a liturgical oasis in these natural,



Members of St. John's Episcopal Church in Minneapolis gather in the front yard of a couple from the congregation for Sunday worship.

Photo/St. John's Episcopal Church

ioners can share each other's presence while remaining in their own homes.

About 200 people typically attended services at St. John's before the pandemic. The church is small and doesn't have a lot of outdoor space, which has made it difficult to predict when the congregation will be able to return to some form of worship at the church, Heinsohn said. In the meantime, the watch parties offer an in-person option that can accommodate everyone who signs up, as long as some are willing to host at their homes.

Even at home, such services need to follow precautions intended to slow the spread of COVID-19. During the services in Taylor's backyard, there are no hymns because of the transmission risk posed by singing. Eucharist is celebrated, though with limited personal contact. The Communion elements are consecrated the previous Thursday by a priest at St. Columba's and brought on Sunday by a parishioner who has been trained as a Eucharistic visitor. Consecrated wafers and wine are put into paper cups for participants to receive by picking them up from a table in the Taylors' yard.

Taylor, 70, is a native of Great Britain, a retired economist and a regular churchgoer. He and his wife have been pleased with how church leaders have kept the congregation connected online, though they miss attending church in person at St. Columba's and seeing other parishioners.

"This fills a little bit of a gap," he said, though he acknowledged that Zoom meetings offer at least one advantage: You can see each other's faces. "When you meet in the garden, you don't, because they're wearing masks."

The plan for the St. Columba's house churches was developed by the Rev. Joshua Daniel, associate rector for discipleship and worship.

"The idea came in trying to think about, what's the best entry level for in-person worship?" Daniel said in an interview with ENS. To bring the congregation back for worship inside the church was "logistically complicated and not particularly safe."

As the congregation expanded its dig-

ital offerings during the pandemic, church leaders also began thinking about new ways of worshipping in person. Gathering outdoors is presumed to be safer than indoors, less likely to enable the coronavirus to spread rapidly, and by using a backyard, group size would be limited. Daniel also was inspired to expand on the brief

encounters parishioners have with each other during traditional church services, such as at the peace.

In a church setting, "those interactions can only be so personal," he said. In small group worship, personal encounters become the main event.

"Hopefully, there will be opportunities to get to know each other in a much more in-depth way, but also to pray with one another in a way that large corporate worship on Sunday just doesn't afford because of how many people there are."

To get the house churches off the ground, church leaders asked for volunteer hosts, parishioners with big backyards or nearby public parks. Initially, the services just followed the Liturgy of the Word. Daniel sought to enlist Eucharistic visitors because that role is detailed in the Canons of the Episcopal Church: to serve "members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration."

The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany in Richardson, Texas, also is overseeing home church worship led by Eucharistic visitors. The congregation in the Diocese of Dallas conferred with Bishop George Sumner to ensure it was following his guidelines for worship during the pandemic, but in this case, house church is not a communal service but simply a family worshipping together.

Parishioners are trained as Eucharistic visitors so they can worship with their own families at home and receive Communion. "This is certainly not a drive-by Communion," the Rev. Betsy Randall, the church's rector, told ENS.

The response has been encouraging, Randall said. For the 20 or so families who began participating this summer, it offers opportunities for family-based discipleship and spiritual growth despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

In Washington, several groups of St. Columba's parishioners have gathered for intimate worship services in various settings this summer. One group chose to meet frequently in the courtyard at the church, though church members

continued on page 7



Photo/Joshua Daniel

St. Columba's parishioners gather in the church's courtyard for a worship service.

Sunday service. Each week, the church posts a video online of Holy Eucharist through the Liturgy of the Word.

Now some groups lead their own worship, reading out loud parts of the liturgy from the St. John's service and incorporating video of the rector's sermon and other prerecorded components when appropriate. The rector, the Rev. Lisa Wiens Heinsohn, often is among the 10 to 15 people who attend — as a fellow worshipper, not to preside at Holy Eucharist.

Heinsohn is reluctant to celebrate Communion in this setting, though she senses the Holy Spirit at work.

"Everybody brings their own chair and everybody wears a mask, but there is this feeling of being present even with a

communal settings, like the Washington backyard and Minneapolis front lawn.

"They want to connect with each other and with God, and there is just something intangible and wonderful about seeing each other in person," Heinsohn said.

St. John's invites its parishioners to sign up for an in-person watch party for its Sunday online services, so organizers and hosts know how many will attend. If a large number of people are interested, they may break into multiple gatherings, but often there is just one group. Participants gather around a screen to watch the service, which is followed by discussion and fellowship.

The congregation also hosts an online watch party through Zoom, so parish-

## NEWS

FIRES continued from page 1

Diocese of California, which is based in San Francisco and encompasses the Bay Area. News images from the region this week showed the daytime sky darkened to an ominous orange as smoke drifted in from the fires.

In subsequent days, smoke from the fires created haze as far as the East Coast.

Taylor, in an email, said the diocese is applying for a grant from Episcopal Relief & Development to buy N95 face masks for local residents who are homeless. Episcopalians in the diocese also are assembling “care bags” for evacuees with food, toiletries and other supplies.

Episcopal Relief & Development released a statement on Sept. 10 saying it has been working since mid-August to support California and other Western dioceses dealing with the wildfires.

“Our partners are continuing to monitor the fires and the air quality in their areas and are reaching out to vulnerable groups to determine needs,” program officer Tamara Plummer said in the state-

ment. “Right now, we need to let the first responders make it safe before dioceses can begin to provide relief.”

The Western states, especially California, are no strangers to devastating fires, though the extent of the recent blazes has been particularly alarming, and the public health impact is compounding the effects of ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks. At least 15 people are reported to have died in the fires, which have consumed more than 3 million acres in California and nearly a million acres in Oregon and plagued communities in Washington as well.

The intense fire season also comes at a time when Americans across the country are reeling from numerous natural disasters and destructive weather systems that scientists say are becoming more likely because of climate change.

South of San Francisco, the Diocese of El Camino Real reports that some of its priests serving congregations in evacuation zones have developed communication plans to remain connected with parishioners and fellow clergy and to as-

HOUSE CHURCHES continued from page 6

haven't yet adopted the practice broadly, Daniel said.

“We had hoped for it to be kind of small this summer so we could test out these things and find some best practices,” he said. More groups will be encouraged to form this fall.

The typical Sunday attendance at St.



Photo/Charles Taylor

*The Communion elements are set up on a table in Charles Taylor's backyard for one of the “house church” services arranged by St. Columba's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.*

Columba's in pre-COVID-19 times was about 600 worshippers. Some parishioners may be reluctant to gather even in a limited way while the coronavirus is still spreading. After the first spike in cases began to subside in late spring, “no one was breaking down the doors to have in-person worship on Sundays,” Daniel said.

The response was similar in the Diocese of San Diego when Christian Gillette began encouraging house churches. The concept hasn't yet been adopted by worshippers there, as California looks to stabilize after a summer surge in new COVID-19 cases, which had averaged more than 5,000 a day for two months.

“A lot of people are still nervous to gather in person,” Gillette told ENS in late August. As the diocese's canon for evangelism and discipleship, he has been working with some churches to launch small group ministries, but in general, “everyone's still kind of wanting to stay online.”

Gillette also thinks some Episcopalians

are apprehensive about the house church setting because they don't want it to replace traditional worship in a church, though he hopes that some in the diocese will give at-home worship a try this fall.

He posted written resources online to assist groups of up to 10 with planning such gatherings. Early Christians' home-based gatherings “were the primary way in which people came to faith and gathered to worship,” Gillette noted in the online post. “The number of people who would gather was limited to how many people could fit inside the space of residence.”

Like Daniel at St. Columba's, Gillette expects trained Eucharistic visitors to safely help Episcopalians receive Communion in small groups. It may not be worshippers' preferred setting, but for now Gillette sees it as one of the few opportunities to gather in person for worship at a time when large indoor gatherings are not yet possible — and may not be for some time.

“People miss community. They're missing the Eucharist, and I imagine that people will be more willing if they feel safer to try new things, to have that experience with their community,” he said.

When the pandemic diminishes and St. Columba's reopens for regular worship, Taylor thinks it will be a great relief, but his garden group might continue to meet now and then. Small group worship can be a worthwhile experience in normal times in as well.

“I have to say, there's something nice being in the open air, hearing bird sounds in the background, a little wind, the flowers in the garden and praying,” Taylor said. “There's a group of Christians coming together. It is a lovely experience.” ■

sess local needs as the disaster evolves.

“In our diocese, I have witnessed with wonder as people have walked through these stormy times towards those in need,” Bishop Lucinda Ashby said in a message to the diocese. “It is amazing to behold God's beloved as they reach beyond their own fear, to stretch out a hand and offer solace, care, and a warm bed to another.”

And in the Diocese of Los Angeles, some communities are dealing with evacuation orders or potential evacuations, though the present threat is more smoke than flames, according to the Rev. Melissa McCarthy, canon to the ordinary. “It's the waiting and waiting and watching that's hard, in addition to

the horrible air,” she said in a message to ENS.

Fires in the San Gabriel Mountains and San Bernardino National Forest pose potential threats to several Southern California communities where there is an Episcopal presence, including Monrovia, Beaumont and Yucaipa, the diocese reported. Los Angeles Bishop John Harvey Taylor visited St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Monrovia on Sept. 9 and said in a Facebook post that the Bobcat Fire “looked pretty close.”

“But we're encouraged that breezes were blowing north and temperatures relatively mild,” Taylor said. “Please keep St. Luke's and all our communities threatened by fire in your prayers.” ■

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## FEATURE

CAMPS continued from page 1

protocols including daily temperature checks and pre-camp quarantine.

With camps and conference centers varying greatly in location, size and resources, a wide variety of strategies were used this summer.

“We are responding creatively and continuing to look for ways to serve our communities, and need and appreciate support from across the church,” Graham-Wilcox told Episcopal News Service.

Kanuga, the largest Episcopal-affiliated camp and conference center, sits on 1,400 acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains in western North Carolina. With over 150 buildings capable of hosting 700 people, Kanuga’s overhead expenses are significant.

“It is a very expensive property to maintain,” said the Rev. Michael Sullivan, Kanuga’s president.

That made it all the more devastating when the pandemic forced Kanuga to cancel scheduled conferences — including Nuevo Amanecer, which is being held online — and its two summer camps in the spring. By the end of May, Kanuga had already lost \$2 million in revenue, and Sullivan says that figure is now up to \$7.5 million.

Kanuga is an independent nonprofit, not owned by a diocese, so it is responsible for generating its own income. It immediately launched a fundraising drive and “experienced an abundance of support,” said marketing and communications director Jane Cox Childress, raising

\$1.2 million from over 1,700 people.

Kanuga also received a payroll grant in the first round of the Paycheck Protection Program. Still, major cuts had to be made, including staff reductions. Usually there are about 100 year-round employees; now there are fewer than 20.

With in-person conferences and camps still off the table, Kanuga focused on renting its cabins and cottages as socially distant retreats where people could enjoy the natural beauty and outdoor activities Kanuga offers, like tennis, hiking, canoeing and archery.

But the biggest lifeline turned out to be a project that was already in the works before the pandemic hit: a mountain biking park called Ride Kanuga. National downhill racing champion Neko Mulally partnered with Kanuga to build a series of trails on Kanuga’s land, for which it receives a portion of the profit. Passes are available by the day, month or year, and riders can stay at trailside cabins, campsites or the main cabins.

The park opened in mid-July, and with people eager to find socially distant outdoor activities, “the timing of its opening could not have been better,” Childress said.

Since then, the park has hosted hundreds of guests. A “ride and stay” promotion over Labor Day weekend was especially effective; about 30% of the lodging guests that weekend were there for Ride Kanuga.

“I would go so far as to say that Ride Kanuga is probably our greatest hope for making it through this,” Sullivan said.



Left, empty chairs line a deck at Kanuga.

Below, a sign reminds visitors of COVID-19 protocols at Kanuga, near Hendersonville, N.C.



Courtesy photos

Smaller facilities have lower operating costs but fewer options for in-person activities. The Claggett Center in Adamstown, Md., is owned by the Diocese of Maryland but is self-sustaining through program fees.

“[In] a typical year, financially, we’re a really healthy organization and are able to not just cover our operating expenses, but to continue to invest and have repairs and maintenance and things like that,” said Lisa Marie Ryder, the center’s co-executive director.

But when it was forced to cancel its summer camps in May, along with scheduled conferences and retreats, it faced a 75% drop in revenue for 2020. It applied for and received several grants from nonprofits and government agencies; through federal aid, the center was able to retain its full staff of 38 people until June, but after the funding ran out, about 75% of the staff was laid off.

Still, with some counselors on campus, the center was able to offer “long-distance camp” online to small groups that met weekly for activities, games, Bible study and even live campfire songs by request. About 20-30 kids participated in those groups for the full 10 weeks they were offered, as well as some one-off small groups.

For the fall, the center has a brand-new program designed to meet the needs of families during the pandemic: the Claggett Academic Mentoring Program (C.A.M.P.), offering on-site, socially distant child care and online learning facilitation for kids in elementary and middle school.

The public school system in Frederick County, in which the center is located, is holding classes completely online at least for the beginning of the school year, putting a strain on working parents. C.A.M.P. is designed to synchronize with the public school schedule and curriculum, providing kids with the equipment, supervision and tutoring they need — as well as socialization and recreation.

“This is an opportunity for working families to be able to actually still go to work,” Ryder told ENS. “They can send their kid here and have them here in a safe environment, and our tutors and mentors

are assisting them and helping them work through their virtual learning. And when learning time isn’t happening, they’ll be canoeing and playing games and doing all the fun and wonderful things that camp offers, but in a CDC-compliant and socially distant and safe way.”

The center is acutely aware, however, that access to these kinds of child care and online learning support groups is a factor in deepening inequity in education, so they built equitable opportunity into the program.

“One of the things we were seeing in our community was that families who are of means — it hasn’t been particularly hard for them to find the support they need, so people are forming education pods, they’re hiring private tutors,” Ryder said. “We’re going to mirror the percentage of kids in our county who are on free or reduced lunch. We’re committing 27% of our program to be free to kids on free or reduced lunch. ... We’ve formed a great partnership with a group in our area that works with children experiencing homelessness. And they’ve been really excited that this is a great opportunity and a great place to get those kids engaged in a safe place for six hours a day.”

Even with all their innovative solutions, though, so many camps and conference centers still face the threat of closure — even major facilities like Kanuga. With the timeline for a COVID-19 vaccine uncertain, facilities can’t assume things will be back to normal next summer.

“COVID will definitely have long-term impacts on our camps and sites, spaces that thrive and are driven by bringing people together, with no certainty or definitive ideas around when people will feel safe gathering in groups again, or sending their children to gather in groups,” Graham-Wilcox said. ■

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## FEATURE

# Children in rural West Virginia travel world from home with Episcopal ministry's 'Camp in a Box'

By David Paulsen  
Episcopal News Service

When the pandemic disrupts, ingenuity sometimes blooms. In rural West Virginia, the result this summer was Camp in a Box, an Episcopal initiative serving dozens of children in one of the poorest counties in the United States.

The Highland Educational Project, a ministry of the Diocese of West Virginia, had been planning to launch a nine-week, in-person summer camp program for children who, for various reasons, were being raised by relatives other than their parents. The diocese received a \$10,000 Roanridge Trust grant this year from the Episcopal Church to support such families engaged in what is known as "kinship care."

Then the coronavirus pandemic hit, forcing administrators to cancel, limit or reimagine Episcopal summer camps across the church over fears of spreading COVID-19. The Highland Educational Project team then shifted to a pandemic-ready alternative. Each week for seven weeks, participating families in McDowell County received boxes filled with a range of activities and supplies for exploring one of the world's seven continents.

Many of the children haven't had opportunities to travel far beyond their home community, said Mary Green, the Highland Educational Project's coordinator. "We wanted to create something to help them see there is so much out there to explore in life and ... different cultures," Green told Episcopal News Service.

The shift to Camp in a Box also allowed Green and her team of partner organizations and volunteers to expand their pool of participants among the students of Kimball Elementary School. In addition to serving 33 children in kinship care situations, school administrators helped identify nearly 70 other students whose families would benefit from extra support.

So, when Camp in a Box kicked off on July 10 with an invitation to explore Australia, the Highland Educational Project distributed customized boxes to 39 families with more than 100 young explorers waiting to see what camp fun was contained within.

Inside each week's boxes, the children found books, science experiments, suggestions for physical activities and art projects — koala art was featured during the Australia week — as well as recipes and ingredients for a meal the family could prepare at home. The Highland Educational Project also supplemented the boxes with a welcome kit mailed to the families. The kit included a wall map, passport and journal for recording the children's travels around the world.

And each family received a digital audio player that was loaded with recordings of a teacher reading the featured books out

loud. The audio player also contained music from the continents visited by the students in their imagination, and they were encouraged to re-create some of the music at home with makeshift instruments.

Green said the focus on helping kinship care families stemmed from the stories she had been hearing from residents, educators and social service providers. "These children, they've gone through traumatic situations that have landed them in a home not with their parents," Green said.

She didn't have detailed information on the reasons most parents are absent, but some cases involve parents who have been incarcerated. She also noted that drug use often is an underlying problem among individuals and families in the region.

McDowell County, with a declining population of about 20,000 people, is positioned on the Virginia state line and just east of Kentucky. It is a region of Appalachia that once rode the fortunes of the mining industry, but now, after years of coal mine closures, it is struggling with unemployment, drug addiction, water quality issues, deteriorating homes and failing infrastructure.



Photo/Highland Educational Project via Facebook

*Goodie bags for the Kimball Elementary Team in McDowell County. Masks; hand-sanitizers bottles that strap to a belt loop; Advil; hand lotion; and a little chocolate.*

The Diocese of West Virginia's Highland Educational Project has served these communities for more than 70 years, providing food, clothing, help with utility bills and other basic assistance. Such efforts had stalled in recent years, resulting in the ministry's temporary closure in 2018 amid a leadership transition.

Green, who also serves as the diocese's communications coordinator, took over in April 2019 as the Highland Educational Project's interim director and has renewed ties with local partner organizations, such as the community group WATT, which stands for We Are The Teachers. The group provided volunteers for Camp in a Box distribution and promoted the ministry regularly on its Facebook page.

"No better way to grow the mind, spark curiosity and instill hope in a child than to travel and see the world," the group said in a post announcing the first distribution on July 10.

Each week, Green and her husband, with the help of volunteers, assembled the boxes at their home in Charleston, West Virginia's capital. With a list of the 39 participating families, they filled specially labeled boxes with a customized



Photo/We Are The Teachers

*Activities are ready for distribution in the Highland Educational Project's first Camp in a Box, offering children a visit to Australia. The boxes, distributed over the summer in McDowell County, W.Va., featured stops in all seven continents.*

mix of items and loaded the boxes into Green's Volkswagen Jetta and her husband's Subaru Forester.

Every Friday morning, the Greens drove more than two hours south to the tiny city of Keystone, just east of Kimball. After unloading the boxes in the City Hall parking lot, Green's husband drove back to Charleston while Green stayed to oversee distribution. Families could drive up and have volunteers load the boxes into their car trunks. For families who couldn't make it to the pickup location, Green delivered their boxes right to their homes.

It made for a long day, but Green described the experience as "one of the biggest blessings I've ever had in my life."

She also hopes this experience has laid a foundation for future growth in the Highland Educational Project's efforts to serve these families throughout the pandemic and when the crisis is over. Students return to school on Sept. 8, some in person and others online. Ministry volunteers already have delivered gift bags for school staff members who are preparing to receive students, and Green

is planning to offer short online reading sessions for Camp in a Box graduates starting in October.

And Green is already looking ahead to next year's summer camp options.

"I believe that the benefit of what we did this year can help us. Hopefully, in 2021 we will have a much more hands-on camp, where the camp counselors do come in. And we have built trust with the families and the school and the community as a whole," Green said, "that we can do something next year that might look more like what we hoped it would this year." ■

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## COMMENTARY

## Administering Holy Communion in a time of pandemic

By David W. T. Brattston



DURING THE worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Christians around the world had no opportunity to receive Holy Communion. It was too dangerous to attend church because of the chance of infection.

Instead, many denominations presented online church services. For instance, the Church of England provided digital resources of public worship, and guidance and support to dioceses and congregations for live streaming them. Thus, Anglicans could watch a Eucharistic celebration, although they could not physically receive Christ as bread and wine.

Many Protestant groups and individuals offered brief worship services with Holy Communion on YouTube, with invitations to viewers to provide their own bread and wine or grape juice and share them by online participation. A congregation of the largest Lutheran denomination in America holds weekly Eucharistic services by YouTube, and encourages viewers to similarly commune with bread and wine in their homes.

In my mind, this gives rise to a host of issues. Is this method valid? Does it conform to the structures of the Christian faith? Another consideration is that

Christians generally hold that both consecration and reception must be within a worshipping community, which makes me wonder whether such a community can be at distance of hundreds of miles, or include only people who are personally in each other's presence. Does it make a difference if there is only one person on the receiving end, or must someone else be present to administer?

There are also questions concerning whether an actual worshipping community exists. If geographical distance does not matter, is it proper to participate at home only when such a community is assembled during a live broadcast, or may it be done at different times by viewers logging on YouTube hours later?

If a viewer can tune into the YouTube service at any time, the receiving ends of the internet do not share the Eucharist at the same time. How far can Episcopalians go with electronic media to still be within the intentions of Jesus Christ and the apostles?

According to the Thirty-Fourth of *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, "It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers[e], and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word.

"Every particular or national Church

hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying."

We can consider the writings of early Christians, which help us to reconstruct the parameters within which the Bible



Photo/James Coleman/unsplash

writers intended the Holy Scriptures to be understood.

Historic Anglicanism sees living continuity between the original and present-day church, and the early and modern periods ought not to be separated. For instance, in the second and third centuries, deacons took the consecrated elements to parishioners who could not be personally present.

The first indication we have as to what sort of Christian can lawfully conduct Holy Communion comes from a bishop of Antioch around AD 107:

"Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid."

Thus, it all depends on the bishop: *s/* he can entrust not just clergy to officiate, but anyone in the Christian community, even those who participate electronically.

In AD 217, Hippolytus, a bishop in central Italy, compiled a manual to preserve apostolic practices. It provides that, although the bishop was the officiating celebrant, the presbyters joined him in consecrating the bread and wine.

The manual regarded as "presumptuous" or contrary to "discipline" for laypeople to consecrate the elements. Does this apply when there is a health emergency or modern long-distance participation?

Sometime between AD 204 and 212, the church father Tertullian outlined the origin and overlap of the clergy-laity distinction:

"It is the authority of the Church, and the honor which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order,

continued on page 11

## 'Come labor on' hymn calls us all to do God's work

By Michael J. Diorio



IF ANY OF US HAD the chance to redeem our time, what might we do differently? If we could affirm the convictions of our faith, yet name those things which prevent our active fulfillment of God's call to us, would such awareness enable us to truly claim God's high calling?

I have been a church musician and organist for nearly 25 years. With each passing year, the hymnal has become deeply rooted into the fabric of my thinking and feeling. I must admit that as a young organist, I wasn't prepared to develop an immediate connection or thoughtfulness towards the tunes and texts that I now hold dear.

It wasn't until later, as I began to teach and develop, that I understood the vital importance of *inviting* people into a relationship with song and text as opposed to imposing it upon them. This realization also implied a need to deeply understand texts.

Hymns are literature before they are music. Their rhetorical devices are carried into and enhanced by their musical setting, which may come several years after the text is authored. In hymnody we find varying degrees of poetry, imagery,

metaphor and analogy. Just how present each of these descriptive devices are is predicated upon the period in which a text was composed. Such tools are employed to assist in underscoring the main narrative.

Often, a hymn will come to mind — if only a few sentences of a stanza — and will stay with me for a number of weeks. For me, world events, social anxieties and life's joys are often given voice through the medium of hymnody. Hymnody offers a path towards grace if we take the time to truly see the words and hear the message.



Photo/David Beale/unsplash

Nineteenth-century Scottish author and philanthropist Jane Laurie Borthwick is best-known for her English translations of German hymnody and original works. Borthwick was also an avid supporter of both foreign and domestic missions, including shelters for the homeless, places of refuge and countless community outreach efforts.

Borthwick's personal calling to lift up those afflicted by injustice and to advocate for people impoverished by indifference inspired her authorship of numerous books, essays and poems. In one such opus, "Thoughts for Thoughtful Hours," Borthwick offers a collection of 35 devotional poems and hymn texts. Among all the texts in this volume her most well-known is "Come, labor on," a hymn based on texts from Matthew (9:37-38) and John (4:35-37).

Though written in the lyrical inflection of the Victorian era, viewing "Come, labor on" through a modern-day interpretative lens is not too arduous a task. Simply put, the text speaks of the work that the church invites us *all* to do, and reminds that we are called to be an extension of the body of Christ — a message that never goes out of style, no matter the dialect or inflection.

In our hymnals (#541) the selected stanzas of Borthwick's text appeals to us to engage rather than stand as spectator. The "harvest plain" represents the shared territory of our lives. The "golden grain" that waves so abundantly symbolizes that each one of our lives is replete with opportunity to share in the work of stewarding the faith of our church. This is work that, as Christians, we are each called to do: to bear the Gospel in word and deed, to engage in service for others and to respect the dignity of every hu-

man being.

To be sure, words *are* important. In these fractured times, we see how they can spark thought, anger, confusion and hurt. Conversely, words can also invite us to help and to heal. When we fail to use our words, or stop speaking truth to power, we disengage. Silence is too perilous a choice, a choice that may find us unwittingly wandering into the dangerous territory of by-standing, defeatism or, perhaps worse, a state of indifference.

Time may still be redeemed, though a great deal of work is required ahead of that. "Come, labor on" invites us to be an active part of that work. The following is a stanza from Borthwick's original text, which was inexplicably excluded from our hymnal: "Come, labor on. The laborers are few, the field is wide, New stations must be filled, and blanks supplied. From voices distant far, or near at home, the call is, 'Come.'"

In so many ways we are all invited to engage in the communal harvest of our lives. Through this work, we may more fully realize the promise of God's grace and love. The church body *needs* to do this work; this is work that is imperative; this is work that is life-long and life-saving. ■

Michael J. Diorio is organist and director of music at Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, Pa.

## COMMENTARY

COMMUNION continued from page 10

which has established the difference between the Order and the laity. Accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical Order, you offer, and baptize, and are priest, alone for yourself. But where three are, a church is, albeit they be laics.”

The church can modify procedures it has created to include situations such as COVID-19 where it can be life-threatening to be personally present. The church can always alter what would be considered “presumptuous” and adjust its discipline.

Ten years earlier, Tertullian had discussed the principle more fully:

“The chief priest (who is the bishop) has the right: in the next place, the presbyters and deacons, yet not without the bishop’s authority, on account of the honor of the Church, which being preserved, peace is preserved.

“Beside these, even laymen have the right; for what is equally received can be equally given. Unless bishops, or priests, or deacons, be on the spot, other disciples are called i.e. to the work.

“The word of the Lord ought not to be hidden by any: in like manner, too, baptism, which is equally God’s property, can be administered by all. But how much more is the rule of reverence and modesty incumbent on laymen—seeing that these powers belong to their superiors—lest they assume to themselves the specific function of the bishop! Emulation of the episcopal office is the mother of schisms.

“The most holy apostle has said, that ‘all things are lawful, but not all expedient.’ Let it suffice assuredly, in cases of necessity, to avail yourself (of that rule), if at any time circumstance either of place, or of time, or of person compels you (so to do); for then the steadfast courage of the succourer, when the situation of the endangered one is urgent, is exceptionally admissible; inasmuch as he will be guilty of a human creature’s loss if he shall refrain from bestowing what he had free liberty to bestow.”

The same rule applies because the substance of both baptism and Eucharist are sacraments appointed in Scripture, which means they belong to and are bestowed by God, and not by human clergy or custom.

In short, it all depends on what the church authorizes, as a united body or a local bishop. In a COVID-19 emergency, distance between consecrator and communicant on the internet does not matter if the church decides it does not. After all, a homily is no less effective when given to someone physically present or connected by radio, television, or YouTube. One person self-communing alone is doubtful, because Christ in Matthew 18:20 specified that one person alone is not a “church”: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” ■

*David W. T. Brattston’s articles on early and contemporary Christianity have been published by multiple denominations. He lives in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.*

## NEWS

## Diocese of Chicago plans to offer headquarters for sale

The Diocese of Chicago intends to offer its downtown Chicago headquarters for sale in the coming months, Bishop Jeffrey D. Lee announced on Sept. 15.

The building was built in 1967 and significantly renovated in 2012. The diocese spends \$750,000 each year to maintain it, which Lee called “unsustainable.”

“Put simply, maintaining an undereused diocesan headquarters ... is not good stewardship of diocesan assets,” he wrote in a letter to the diocese.

The proposed sale, which will be managed by Andrew Norman and Yolanda Valle of CBRE, will create a fund that would function like an endowment and be governed by the diocese’s Bishop and Trustees, an elected body of laypeople and clergy. “Such a fund would be transformative for your ministry with the next bishop of Chicago and for many decades to come,” said Lee, who will retire as the diocese’s bishop at the end of 2020, after the election of his successor on Dec. 12.

The Bishop and Trustees, which holds title to the property, intends to invest a “meaningful portion” of the sale’s proceeds in affordable housing, said Lonny Myers, the body’s first vice president. “Selling 65 E. Huron would help secure the future of our diocese’s



Photo/courtesy of Diocese of Chicago

*The Chicago diocese plans to sell its building.*

ministry and also let us continue and expand our decades-long commitment to funding affordable housing,” he said.

Lee said that while the pandemic has confirmed his decision to offer the building for sale, he and the diocese’s leaders have been discussing the idea for nearly a year. It was slated to be sold when he took office in 2008, he said, but when that deal fell through, he sought to address “urgent maintenance and accessibility issues” by launching a fundraising campaign in 2011.

“It was critical to our ministry together,” he wrote of the renovations. “But the world around us has shifted since then, and today we know that the building’s final gift to us can be to help assure the diocese’s long-term financial viability.”

The property is expected to be offered for sale in 2021.

— Diocese of Chicago

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## FAITH AND THE ARTS

## Bellini's painting technique embodies Franciscan values

By Dennis Raverty

Giovanni Bellini's "Saint Francis in Ecstasy," in the collection of the Frick Museum in New York, embodies both the Franciscan sense of poverty and its attitude towards nature, not only in the style and subject matter but also in its pristine, jewel-like oil glazing techniques.

It was painted at some time in the last few decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and so stands at a pivotal historical point, near the end of the early Renaissance, and just on the threshold of the High Renaissance in Italy. It represents the 13<sup>th</sup> century saint alone at the mouth of his cave retreat. Having just stepped outside, he witnesses the early dawn as if it were an unexpected miracle.

In the background, we see the charming hilltop town of Assisi in central Italy from which he came. Much has been written about both the style and the iconography of this magnificent painting, but I want to discuss it here principally in terms of its technique and how the oil glazing method Bellini used embodies Franciscan ideology and values.

Although oil paint is now a revered traditional technique (having been practiced for centuries), at the time Bellini worked, oil painting methods were the new, cutting-edge technology originating far away in the Netherlands. Only a few Italians at

that time had even experimented with the new medium, which mixed pulverized colored pigments in a base of linseed oil and varnish that binds the powdered color together and adheres it to the work's surface.

The standard media for early Renaissance panel painting in Italy was tempera. In tempera, the binder is egg yolk instead of oil, and it dries very quickly, so it demands a rapid, dry-brush technique of application. But oil paint dries much more slowly, and certain additives can speed up or slow down drying so the artist has more control over the timing of the painting's execution and can lavish more attention on details and nuances of color.

During the Renaissance, however, oil

paint was not applied freely to the canvas or panel as it is today, but was glazed in thin transparent layers of paint laid down one over the other, allowing some of the underpainting to be visible through all the other layers, giving it that luminous, jewel-like effect.

Leonardo da Vinci's unfinished painting, "Saint Jerome," in the collection of the Vatican Museums, offers a rare glimpse into the oil painting techniques used by Italian artists in the first

stages of a work. Initially, Leonardo covered the entire panel with a warm yellow ochre ground, after which he established the broad darks and lights of the composition with earth browns.



Da Vinci's unfinished "Saint Jerome in the Wilderness" is in the Vatican Museums.

Image/Wikimedia Commons



Images/Wikimedia Commons

Above, Bellini's "Saint Francis in Ecstasy" is in the Frick Collection, New York. Right, a close-up of Saint Francis.



Next Leonardo would presumably have glazed in the local colors for the skin, the sky, the lion's fur, the rocks, and so forth, but allowing some of the ochre underpainting to remain visible, shining through the various transparent glazes, giving greater overall coloristic unity to the finished painting.

In Bellini's "Francis in Ecstasy," there is a coloristic dialogue between the warm amber foundation (more intensely orange-yellow than in the Leonardo) and the cool grey-blue and brown glazes he layers over this underpainting in articulating the main masses and elements of the landscape.

But because blue typically seems to recede while yellow appears to push forward, the amber underpainting almost gives the effect of the light coming from behind the picture, softly illuminating the entire landscape in all its minute, lucid, naturalistic detail, so lovingly labored over, and echoing the gentle light of the emergent dawn.

The attentiveness Bellini shows to every detail is typical of Netherlandish art, but is somewhat rare in Italian art, where the landscape setting is often minimal — just enough of a background to situate the figures in a believable space.

The landscape here, however is rendered in all its marvelous, minute, rich, naturalistic detail. This truth to nature, with each leaf and blade of grass so lovingly and realistically rendered with all its imperfections, embodies the Franciscan reverence for nature and a respect for creation that Bellini shares with the saint.

In yet another respect Bellini parts with tradition in this painting. It was customary during the Italian Renaissance to idealize forms as a way of indicating the presence of divine grace. Images of Christ, his mother and the saints would all re-

semble the idealized gods of the ancient Greco-Roman world, like Apollo and Aphrodite (Botticelli's contemporaneous painting comes to mind).

But Saint Francis in Bellini's picture is a homely man of small stature, with a crooked nose and a balding pate, hardly the Adonis we might reasonably expect from an Italian master. But this lack of idealization is also in keeping with Franciscan humility, the modest saint as he is represented here is remarkably un-beautiful — not dominating the landscape, but living harmoniously within nature's bounty as brother and fellow creature.

In Bellini's hands, not only the diminutive, homely saint, but also the animals, birds, plants and even the sun itself seem almost to be incarnations of the divine, and the "poor," commonplace materials used in the making of the picture — wood, oil, pigments, varnish — are themselves transformed and transfigured by the artist sacramentally, so that the painting itself is a sort of "incarnational" witness revealing the Christ potential in all living things. As the saint himself puts it in his famous *Canticle of Brother Sun*:

By mother earth my Lord be praised,  
governed by Thee, she hath upraised  
what for Man's life is needful.

Sustained by thee through every  
hour,  
She bringeth forth herb, fruit  
and flower. ■

Dennis Raverty is an associate professor of art history at New Jersey City University, specializing in art of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## FAITH AND THE ARTS

# 'Grantchester' offers a compassionate sermon in difficult times

By Linda Brooks

This past summer, PBS promoted its "Masterpiece Mystery" summer series — period dramas that seemed a pleasant escape to times that may also have been stressful, but at least were far enough removed to be historic curiosities.

But the seventh season of "Grantchester" on PBS offered not so much an escape from our present times but a better understanding of it. We are living in very different times than had existed a few months ago, and are now searching inwardly to better understand ourselves in that world.

Based on the "Grantchester Mysteries" short stories by James Runcie set in the late 1950s, the ITV production is filmed in the real English village of the same name. Located a few miles from Cambridge, its picturesque meadows, river, and the Church of St. Andrew and St. Mary provide backdrops for many of the scenes.

The series follows the usual combination of characters often seen in detective mystery stories where the murder and suspects present themselves in the first scene — the gruff and dogged inspector detective, the sharp and dashing amateur sleuth, and the lovable sidekick that always seems to offer advice or a major clue to the murder without realizing it.

But the amateur sleuth, the Rev. Will Davenport (Tom Brittney), like his predecessor, the Rev. Sidney Chambers

(James Norton) in the first four seasons, is an unconventional parish vicar who enjoys motorcycles, rock and roll and boxing. Because of conflicts in his own life, he finds sleuthing helps fulfill his desire to assist his parishioners beyond the church doors. With the gentleness and tact of his clergy training he gains confidence and information that police inspector Geordie Keating (Robson Green) is unable to do.

Standing off to the side in the police interrogation room, his clergy garments soften the harsh grey atmosphere, subconsciously offering comfort, forgiveness and maybe spiritual redemption, to a suspect with a secret to hide. This same gentleness is there to console when a tragic death needs to be announced, either to a poor parishioner or wealthy mansion owner. He treats everyone with equal compassion, even when trying to hide his own feelings.

Along with the murder in each episode, there is an ongoing subplot involving the support characters that often echoes the emotions of the murder story line. Through conversations and actions, they act as complementary pairs, balancing their self-righteous good intentions against their fears and inner demons.

Each character has a secret to protect that would shatter their image of the person they try to be, against their own internal image of themselves. Each has their place within the parameters of 1950s society.

Keating must accept his wife having a career beyond the home, now that their children are older. Davenport must work out his anger with his aristocratic upbringing, where he was expected to be more than a poor parish priest. The assistant curate, the Rev. Leonard Finch (Al Weaver), must hide his homosexuality for fear of losing his position in the church while discreetly enjoying the affections of his lover. And the housekeeper, Mrs. C., (Tessa Peake-Jones), must keep her fears from her ruined first marriage from destroying her second.

It is the contrasts and conflicts of these varied characters that can inspire us to take a look at our own lives. These times of COVID-19 and social justice have forced many of us to look at ourselves more closely and observe our inner conflicts, our strengths as well as our weaknesses. Do we project an image to others that may not be who we are inside? How do we respond if someone we love hurts us? Or we hurt them? Do we fight back or forgive?

Each episode concludes with a sermon in the church. The sermons tie the crime plot and character sub-plots together reinforcing the theme that flowed through the story. We sit through the



Photo/courtesy PBS  
Left to right, James Norton as Vicar Sidney Chambers, Robson Green as Inspector Keating and Tom Brittney as Vicar Will Davenport in a scene from "Grantchester."

sermon along with the parishioners (actors and local extras) and though we may not shake hands with the good vicar, as in our own virtual services, we walk away wondering what it means to love, to forgive, offer compassion, deal with our anger, and make peace with our failings.

We can look back some 60 years and say that things are different now, but they are not, really. We still have the same fears and angers as well as love and compassion. The pandemic isolation may give us this time to be more introspective and inspirations like "Grantchester" can act as a virtual guide.

"Grantchester" is available for streaming on PBS Passport, Amazon Prime, Netflix. ■

## Online seminar to address prayer, worship and music

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) and Church Times, which covers the Church of England, will sponsor an online webinar on Monday, Oct. 19 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. British Summer Time (4 p.m. to 6 p.m. EDT) on how the church's public expression of prayer, worship and music has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March.

Called "Creativity out of crisis: Hymns and worship webinar in association with RSCM," the descriptive material notes that: "All of church and worship life has been transformed in recent months. What of two of the fundamentals: hymns and liturgy?"

According to the advance description, the webinar also will address the questions, "What have we learned and what have we missed most? What has worked best and what are the key themes to emerge? How do you find support and resources — and how can anyone think creatively when so much is going on?"

The program agenda includes:

### What has online lockdown worship done to participation?

Mark Earey, director of Anglican formation and tutor in liturgy, The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, U.K., will explore how active participation in worship by the congregation has been seen as central both for liturgical renewal and for song-based worship. He will address the question, "how do you 'participate' when worship is pre-recorded or via Zoom?"

### Finding support and resources during this continuing pandemic. What lessons have we learned along the way?

Sal McDougall, RSCM deputy director and Sarah King, RSCM education programs administrator, are scheduled to lead this section.

### Creating worship that connects: Liturgy as a tool of mission in reaching out

Chris Thorpe, Vicar of Shifnal, Shropshire, U.K. is the presenter for this section.

### Creative solutions in playing music in worship under restrictions

This section will be led by Noel Tredinnick, RSCM honorary advisor, and David Price, former RSCM council member and director of music at Portsmouth Cathedral, U.K.

### Pushing Pixels and Sacraments - The Theology and Practice of Digitally-Mediated Worship

This talk by the Rev. Simon Rundle, Priest in Charge, Roborough Team Ministry, Plymouth, U.K., will examine how sacraments can be authentically experienced within digital space and how churches can reshape their liturgy and worship for the new digital environment.

A panel discussion will follow the presentations. Tickets are £10, or approximately US\$13. Most credit cards automatically convert foreign currency to U.S. dollars. More information is at [www.churchtimes.co.uk/hymns-and-worship](http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/hymns-and-worship) and [www.rscm.org.uk](http://www.rscm.org.uk).

— Church Times



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## BOOK REVIEWS

## Cli-fi: What is it and why is it important to the church?

Reviews by Christine Havens

“For years, authors have been writing climate change fiction, or ‘cli-fi,’ a genre of literature that imagines the past, present, and future effects of climate change.” So wrote Amy Brady, of the Chicago Review of Books, for her then-new column, “Burning Worlds,” an exploration of all things cli-fi. Her piece also introduced Dan Bloom, a literature professor who coined the term in 2007 after having read the 2006 report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Though as a proper genre, cli-fi is just over 10 years old, books fitting the definition have been around since at least the 1960s. Science fiction authors and staples of mainstream and literary fiction have created a varied and blended spectrum of books. Frank Herbert’s sci-fi classic, “Dune,” is a primary example, as is Margaret Atwood’s “Oryx and Crake” and J. G. Ballard’s “The Drought.” What unites them is a desire to help humanity “see” possible futures lived out on a burning, drowning, or dying planet,” says Brady.

My curiosity about the genre was piqued by a customer browsing in the environment and sustainability section at BookPeople in Austin, Texas, where I’m a bookseller. She asked me if we had a sepa-

rate section for cli-fi. My face surely betrayed my befuddlement as she explained, “cli-fi — climate change fiction.”

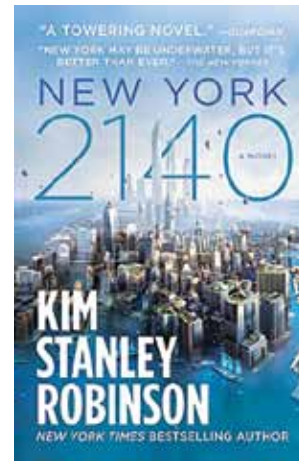
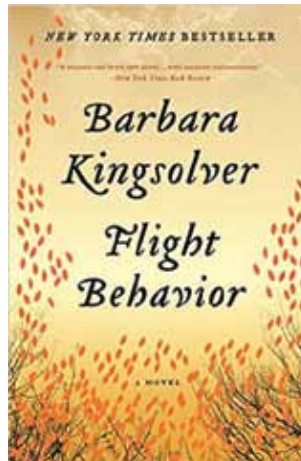
We didn’t have one, but that soon changed after I read Brady’s piece. I’ve curated it for the last three years. My public conversations with customers about this genre have stayed mostly in the secular realm, with the same goal as Dan Bloom, Amy Brady, and others — to raise awareness and increase readership of this genre. However, perhaps now is the time to bring climate fiction into creation care discussions among religious people.

Two sections of the Episcopal Church’s Creation Care webpage offer good reasons to use climate fiction to facilitate theological and spiritual conversations: Loving Formation and Liberating Advocacy. As a person who is passionate about the intersection of literature and theology, I have found that fiction can be a liberating advocate in unique ways, serving as an excellent tool for loving formation. In the ten years that I have been a member of this church, the small groups I have facilitated were all grounded in using literature as a means of spiritual exploration.

To start such exploration in the world of cli-fi, two titles are especially helpful,

“Flight Behavior,” by Barbara Kingsolver and “New York 2140,” by Kim Stanley Robinson.

“Flight Behavior” provides a compassionate way into the cli-fi genre. Kingsolver writes bestselling literary fiction and nonfiction as well as poetry. Her works incorporate her passion for the



environment into strong narratives involving family relationships; she deftly weaves faith and scripture in as well.

“Flight Behavior” is set in a rural, impoverished area of Appalachia, an environment that Kingsolver knows intimately. The protagonist, Dellarobia Turnbow, a young wife and mother, feels trapped and yearns for a life beyond raising sheep and abiding her unimaginative husband, Cub.

On a cloudy day in November, she walks up into the higher reaches of the valley, heading for a tryst, only to encounter an unnerving sight: What she mistakes for trees on fire when the sun breaks through the clouds turns out to be monarch butterflies sheltering in the valley, an inexplicable occurrence.

Della wonders at the miracle of these creatures, not realizing that they are far afield from their normal overwintering home in Mexico. She thinks of them at first in terms of Moses and the burning bush — a sign from God.

Instead of following through with her affair, she turns around and returns home, intending to keep the butterflies a secret. However, the region has been receiving abnormal amounts of rain all year, causing crops to fail and families to face financial peril. The trees in

that part of the valley are valuable timber and soon the secret is revealed.

Once the world at large becomes aware of the butterflies, the “miracle” comes under scrutiny from many sources, including Dr. Ovid Byron, an entomologist. He risks ridicule and outright belligerence when he brings the bad news that the monarchs and the life-altering rain are both due to climate change.

continued on page 15

## In the autumn, looking for grace in the ‘church of baseball’

Reviews by Solange De Santis

Religion and sports have been closely linked for centuries, teaching eternal values and calling the human spirit to greater heights.

Baseball is no exception, from Annie Savoy in the movie “Bull Durham,” who declares her faith in “the church of baseball,” to the book “Green Cathedrals,” which lovingly details every past and present major league and Negro League ballpark.

As this unusual, shortened baseball season winds down to the World Series, scheduled to start on Oct. 20, here are three books that propose various forms of relationships between the national pastime and the divine.

“God and Baseball,” by J.H. Sauls, is a pocket-sized, 87-page read. Sauls’ three sons play the game (as has she) and she writes from a conservative evangelical viewpoint, comparing baseball to

“the Game of Life,” and calling God the “Great Coach.”

In her view, “in the Game of Life, there are only two teams to choose from: God’s or the Devil’s.” In this game, “you are already in the winner’s bracket and you will advance to Heaven — if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.”

A reader who balks at evangelical theology may still enjoy Sauls’ vivacious style and one can’t argue with the values expressed in chapter titles such as “Humble,” “Patience,” “Forgiveness” and “Disciplined.”

Although Sauls acknowledges at the start of the book that her family is so competitive, they regard second place as “first loser,” she relates at the end the number of times she has experienced “second place” in her life. Being close to God, however, always puts us in “first place.”

Gary Graf, the author of “And God Said, ‘Play Ball!’”, finds parallels between the Bible and baseball, treading some of the same base paths as “God and Baseball.” There are 18 chapters, each corresponding to a half inning, with a quote for each, such as “Answered Prayers! After 42 Years, the Angels win the Series.”

Graf makes note of his Catholic faith at the beginning, writing that he “grew up memorizing the teachings of the Baltimore Catechism and the lineup of the San Francisco Giants.” He freely admits that his first Communion and first ma-

ior league ball game were “spiritual experiences.”

Graf retells well-known baseball history and anecdotes, relating them to Scripture or religious practice. One of the most affecting chapters (“Top of the 4<sup>th</sup>”) concerns Jackie Robinson’s integration of baseball in the modern era, set alongside Jesus’ outreach to non-Jews and a vision of a more-inclusive church.

“Christianity and baseball have long had ideals. It just took them both a while to live up to them,” Graf writes.

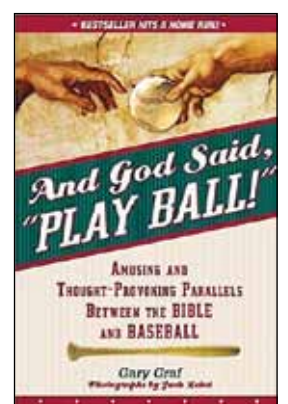
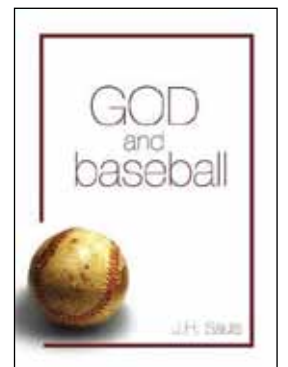
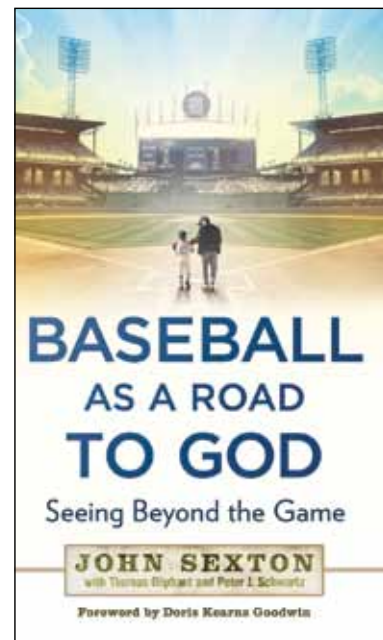
Author John Sexton also labels his nine chapters as innings in “Baseball as a Road to God: Seeing Beyond the Game,” written with Thomas Oliphant and Peter J. Schwartz.

When he was president of New York University, from 2002 to 2015, Sexton taught a course of the same name. He also references his Catholic faith as he takes the reader on a spiritual journey through the secular sport “to explore subjects ordinarily associated with religion: prayers, altars, sacred space, faith, doubt, conversion, miracles, blessings,

curse, saints and sinners,” writes historian Doris Kearns Goodwin in the foreword.

As an academic, Sexton’s prose is more lyrical and his concepts deeper. In his chapter on “Conversion,” analyzing fans’ occasional change in baseball loyalties, he cites St. Paul, theologian Paul Tillich and Christian apologist C.S. Lewis as profound thinkers on the idea.

In this strange season, when we view church and baseball through screens, these books can feed the soul. And for the record, God is a New York Mets fan. ■



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FAITH AND THE ARTS

# Episcopal TV writer launches mask challenge

By Egan Millard  
Episcopal News Service

In July, several months into the COVID-19 pandemic, William Lucas Walker was feeling exasperated — not just by the constant angst of the pandemic itself, but by Americans’ failure to take the simple step of consistently wearing masks to contain the virus.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield had just said that “if we could get everybody to wear a mask right now, I think in four, six, eight weeks we could bring this epidemic under control,” yet Walker was still seeing too many people refusing to wear one, and not enough national leadership on the issue.

“As someone who works in the entertainment field, by mid-summer I found myself a little puzzled, still waiting for the national, coordinated PR campaign around mask-wearing that wasn’t happening,” Walker said.

A friend of his was feeling the same way and posted about it on Facebook.

“And she, basically, in her Facebook post said, ‘Where the hell is the big Hollywood mask campaign they should have rolled out months ago, with all these movie stars telling people to put on a mask?’” Walker said. So he decided to

start one.

Walker, a member of All Saints Church in Pasadena, Calif., is a veteran TV writer, having worked on shows



Image/courtesy of William Lucas Walker

**Dozens of people have participated in the #whoamimaskchallenge so far.**

like “Roseanne,” “Frasier” and “Will & Grace.” He’s also the creator of the #WhoAmIMaskChallenge, a social media drive to encourage people to wear masks, which he initially envisioned as a series of quick TV PSAs.

“I immediately saw, in my head, a man in a mask — and, of course, you couldn’t tell who it was because I can’t even tell who my children are in a mask,”

Walker told ENS. “And this title comes over his face and it says, ‘Who am I?’ And he slowly looks into the camera, takes his mask off and gives you his big smile, and it’s Denzel Washington. And in 15 to 20 seconds he tells you why he wears a mask.”

He knew it would take too long to get major stars on board — and that they are bombarded with requests to do videos like these — so he decided to start smaller and make it a grassroots social media campaign. The formula is simple: You record a brief video of yourself, in a mask, holding up a sign with the hashtag on it, then remove your mask and say a few words about what motivates you to wear one. You post it on your social media accounts tagging five friends, challenging them to do the same.

To make people more likely to do it, he kept it as simple as possible. “Everybody’s got two minutes,” he said. “What else are you doing?”

He was partially inspired by the Ice Bucket Challenge in 2014, which may have started among members of a small church in Georgia, who then challenged other churches to do it. Seeing that congregations may be ideal communities for social media challenges like this, Walker enlisted the leadership of All Saints, where he has been worshipping since

1994 and where he met his husband 21 years ago.

Now some of the videos are being shared on their social media accounts, and Walker will introduce everyone to the challenge at their homecoming Sunday Zoom service. He’s also shared it with a priest friend in Northern California, who has challenged his congregation.

But he’s also reaching out through his connections in Hollywood and Broadway. Walker is friends with the mother of pop star Billie Eilish, who may do a video at some point. It turns out her mother has enough social media followers — mostly fans of her daughter — that the video she did is already gaining traction through them. Actors Beau Bridges and Bryan Batt are among the celebrities who have done videos so far, and more are coming.

Of the dozens of videos he’s seen, Walker said he’s interested to hear the different reasons people give for wearing masks. “No two are alike,” he told ENS.

“It’s fast, it’s easy — it’s so easy to do,” he said. “My goal is that eight weeks from now, you won’t be able to go anywhere on Instagram or Facebook without seeing somebody taking off their mask and tell you why they wear it. Not berating you, just telling you why.” ■

CLI-FI continued from page 14

Kingsolver’s well-researched premise, poetic style, and sharp insight into human nature make “Flight Behavior” an excellent introduction to climate fiction. While not as overwhelmingly apocalyptic or dystopian as some other cli-fi novels are, the reader is still faced with revelation. At the end of the book, Della is in much the same position as Noah, watching her world begin to drown. Despite her faith, she is uncertain what the future will hold.

“New York 2140” presents readers with a more certain, though no less dire, vision of the future. Robinson’s body of work is one great act of advocacy, envisioning different climate change scenarios and plausible road maps for thriving adaptation. He writes literary sci-fi and most of his nearly 20 novels have been bestsellers. In 2017 he gave the opening talk at the Trinity Institute’s global conference on water justice, and is considered by many to be the quintessential climate fiction author.

This book takes place in New York City in the year 2140. Climate change has caused two catastrophic rises in sea level to a total of 50 feet. Robinson’s tale, which is told from the point-of-view of several denizens of a now Venice-style metropolis, is a radical one, with roots as much in Dr. Seuss’s “The Lorax” as in Thomas Piketty’s “Capital in the Twenty-First Century.”

The engaging, and often quirky, characters include Mutt and Jeff, whose opening discussion of capitalism’s relationship to climate change prompts

them to report some major financial improprieties to the SEC, which sets the rest of the narrative into motion.

There’s also Amelia, a young woman who rescues polar bears from the Arctic in an airship and a citizen, who serves as a sort of Greek chorus. In 2140, the super-rich have not changed — power and money still dictate government policies to their advantage. The other main characters, such as Vlade, Franklin and Charlotte, find themselves joining forces as a result of Mutt and Jeff’s unintended consequences in order to permanently change the status quo.




“New York 2140” is a work chronicling and championing the best of human resilience. It is an apocalyptic novel, rather than a post-apocalyptic one unveiling the present through future eyes. Despite its length (600+ pages), Robinson’s narrative isn’t bogged down with dense prose. He writes very clearly, with engaging characters and a fast pace, and encourages people to advocate for the climate and social justice.

Climate fiction is on the edge of becoming an important part of the conversations happening around creation care — Bishop Cathleen Bascom’s just-published debut novel, “Of Green Stuff Women” is a fine example, though I might term it eco-theo fiction. “Flight Behavior” and “New York 2140” can help draw us into deeper conversation about climate change, which is not fiction. ■

*Christine Havens graduated from the Seminary of the Southwest and is administrative and communication assistant at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas.*

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