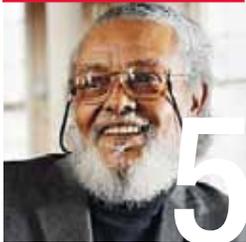


Episcopal JOURNAL

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NEWS Leaders review church's efforts to battle racism



NEWS Caucus presses for churchwide LGBTQ+ inclusion



ARTS Episcopalians learn art of Ukrainian Easter eggs

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Episcopal Church releases 'Jesus in America' study

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Most Americans see Jesus as an important spiritual figure. More than 30% of Americans have decreased their participation in religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. And only one in 10 thinks those who attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, were associated with organized religion.

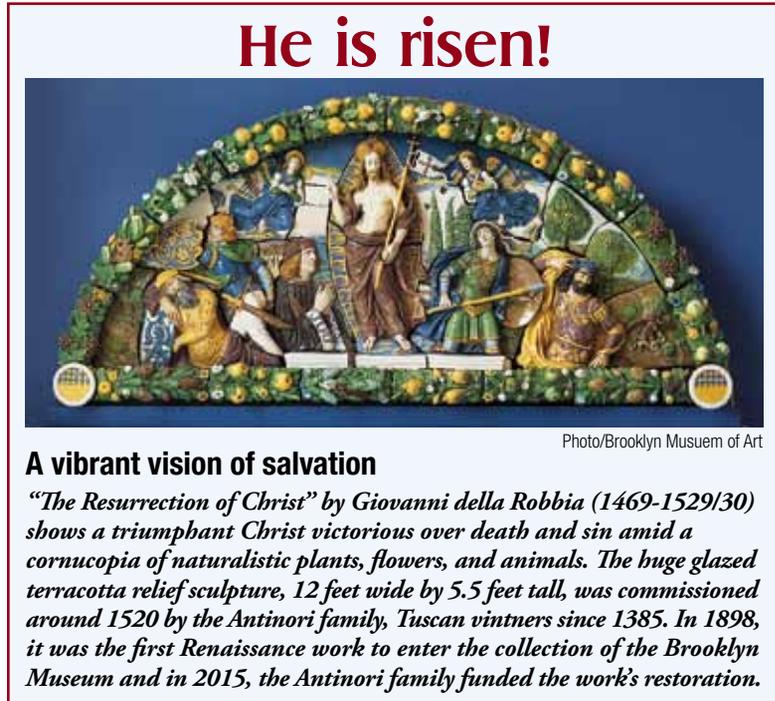
Those are some of the findings of a national study commissioned by the Episcopal Church and conducted by the polling firm Ipsos. The results of the "Jesus in America" study, released March 9, highlight the wide-ranging faith perspectives of a diverse cross section of Americans, including those who identify as nonreligious.

Episcopal leaders say the study points to both the popularity of Jesus' teachings and the ways Christians are often perceived as failing to live up to those teachings.

"We are encouraged that the research shows Americans still find Jesus compelling, but we also see that the behavior of many of his followers is a problem, and it's not just certain Christians: it's all Christians," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in a news release announcing the study.

"This is a wake-up call for us, and based on what we have learned, we are refocusing our efforts on being a church that looks and acts like Jesus and models its behavior on his teachings. In this process, we hope to ignite a revival of love that encourages all Americans to do a better job of loving their neighbors."

To conduct the study, global market researcher Ipsos polled 3,119



He is risen!

Photo/Brooklyn Museum of Art

A vibrant vision of salvation

"The Resurrection of Christ" by Giovanni della Robbia (1469-1529/30) shows a triumphant Christ victorious over death and sin amid a cornucopia of naturalistic plants, flowers, and animals. The huge glazed terracotta relief sculpture, 12 feet wide by 5.5 feet tall, was commissioned around 1520 by the Antinori family, Tuscan vintners since 1385. In 1898, it was the first Renaissance work to enter the collection of the Brooklyn Museum and in 2015, the Antinori family funded the work's restoration.

Americans, ages 18 and older, from Nov. 22 to Dec. 2 in English and Spanish, with a margin of error of 2%. The results will be used by Episcopal leaders to help plan for the post-pandemic church.

"The goal of the 'Jesus in America' research project was to identify the most compelling themes and narratives about Americans' attitudes and perceptions of who Jesus is, his enduring importance and impact on society, how the pandemic has shaped how people pursue and find spiritual and religious fulfillment, and how Christians are currently perceived by non-Christians," Amanda Skofstad, the church's public affairs officer, told Episcopal News Service in a written statement.

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Episcopal leaders pray for Ukraine as Russian forces bring death, destruction to country

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Episcopal churches in Europe and the United States expressed solidarity with and prayed for the people of Ukraine as Russian forces continued an invasion that has killed thousands of civilians and soldiers, devastated Ukrainian cities and threatened to topple the country's freely elected government.

"The Episcopal Church has been in Europe for more than two hundred years," Bishop Mark Edington of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, said in a video message released Feb. 25. "Our churches have seen Europe's wars unfold. They've lived and endured in the midst of the destruction and depravity that war brings."

Edington recounted examples of Episcopal parishes maintaining ministries during wartime, from the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 to the World Wars of the 20th century. An Episcopal church in Dresden, Germany, was destroyed by bombing during World War II, while the Cathedral of the Holy



Photo/Video screen grab

Participants in the virtual Faith Vigil for Peace in Ukraine included Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

Trinity, commonly called the American Cathedral, in Paris was used as a military chapel by occupying German forces.

"For a long time — almost 80 years — we have believed that the futility of war was enough to deter it. Today, with war unleashed in Ukraine, we have been proven wrong," Edington said referring to the Feb. 24 Russian invasion of the former Soviet republic.

"Our faith teaches us that we must stand with the vulnerable and the oppressed. And at the same time, our faith teaches us that we are meant to be followers of the prince

of peace, of the one who taught us that violence is always a compromise with evil. It is hard for us to reconcile those two teachings today, when innocent people are dying at the hands of a military onslaught."

According to U.S. intelligence, Russian began positioning troops along the Ukrainian border in December. Its invasion prompted the U.S. and its European allies to implement stiff new economic sanctions against Russia while unifying NATO opposition to Russian aggression.

Though Ukraine is not a NATO member nation, Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited the prospect of the country someday joining the Western alliance as one of his top grievances.

Religious leaders and denominations around the world have condemned Russia's march to war. On the eve of the invasion, The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations and the Quakers' Friends Committee on National Legislation organized a vigil for peace.

"We pray for a just peace. ... We pray that

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CONVERSATIONS

When it comes to Russian Orthodoxy, Kyiv is essentially Jerusalem

By Diana Butler Bass



WHILE THE SECULAR media tries to guess Vladimir Putin's motives in Ukraine, one important aspect of the current situation has gone largely

ignored: Religion.

In effect, the world is witnessing a new version of an old tale — the quest to recreate an imperial Christian state, a neo-medieval “Holy Roman Empire” — uniting political, economic, and spiritual power into an entity to control the earthly and heavenly destiny of European peoples.

The dream gripping some quarters of the West is for a coalition to unify religious conservatives into a kind of supranational neo-Christendom.

The theory is to create a partnership between American evangelicals, traditionalist Catholics in western countries, and Orthodox peoples under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church in a common front against three enemies — decadent secularism, a rising China, and Islam — for a glorious rebirth of moral purity and Christian culture.

In the United States, Trumpist-religion is most often framed as “Christian nationalism.” It is, indeed, that. But it is also more — it is the American partner of this larger quest for Christian internationalism.

No one has articulated this more clearly than Steve Bannon, who, despite his legal troubles, remains a significant force as a kind of philosophical apostle in right-wing Christian circles for a neo-Christendom.

There have been a few bumps on the way to this Humpty-Dumpty hope of reassembling a Christian Roman Em-

pire, however.

Interestingly enough (and I'll leave this to future historians to sort out), American evangelicals bought into this neo-medieval project wholesale, having been prepared for far-right nationalism by their fondness for racial and gender hierarchies.

The most democratic form of Protestantism will evidently sell its soul to keep black people and women in their “place.”

The hardest partner to recruit to neo-Christendom has been the Catholic Church. The election of Pope Francis in 2013 proved a major stumbling block for the emergence of a right-wing global political order.

The new Pope eschewed all such schemes in favor of opening up the church to the poor, outcasts, and the marginalized with a social vision that questions capitalism and the destruction of the Earth. Neo-medieval Catholics — often referred to as “trad Caths” — haven't taken this well and have mounted a decade of resistance to Francis that may well culminate in something like the Avignon schism of the fourteenth century. So far, however, Pope Francis remains in charge.

Until recently, it appeared that Putin had successfully co-opted Orthodoxy into this globalist triumvirate, making for a surprising love fest between American evangelicals and the Russian strongman.

Witness the praise for Putin from former Secretary of State and stalwart evangelical Mike Pompeo. Outside observers might think Putin was firmly in control of the future of Orthodoxy vis-a-vis neo-Christendom.

Except he wasn't. The Ukrainian Or-

thodox had other ideas.

And that's a real problem. Because when it comes to Russian Orthodoxy, Kyiv is essentially Jerusalem.

More than a thousand years ago, in the 980s, the pagan Prince Vladimir of Kyiv consolidated the Rus people of modern-day Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine into a single realm.



Photo/Amazonaws.com public image
St. Vladimir's Cathedral in Kyiv serves as the mother cathedral of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

When his emissaries reported back to him on the glories of Christian Constantinople, Vladimir converted to their religion, brought his people into the Byzantine church through a mass baptism, and married a Christian imperial princess.

Under his rule, Kyiv became a prosperous and peaceful city at the heart of a new Christian empire, with churches, courts, monasteries, and schools, as well as civic programs to care for the poor.

Known as Vladimir the Great, he was eventually canonized as St. Vladimir and his memory is celebrated by Eastern Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Anglicans, and some Lutherans.

In the 1200s, however, Kyiv suffered a number of assaults from rival Rus princes and Mongol invaders.

Many Rus people moved north and east to the newer cities of Vladimir and

Moscow where, under the Czars, the Russian church eventually grew to be one of the richest, most powerful churches in the Orthodox world.

With the shift, an Orthodox tradition founded under the auspices of Constantinople became a church under the authority of a patriarch in Moscow.

This has created tension between Ukraine and Russia for centuries, in some ways brought to a head in the Soviet period, with rival forms of Orthodoxy either choosing to resist Communism or cooperate with Moscow. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine had several different Orthodox churches, only one of which was in close relationship to Moscow.

In 2018, two of those Ukrainian churches and some of the Moscow-leaning Orthodox parishes joined in a union and created a newly unified Orthodox Church of Ukraine, a fully independent national ecclesial body under no control from Moscow, with its head in the ancient seat of Orthodoxy in Kyiv.

Putin and the Moscow Russian Orthodox church authorities protested. They've been claiming the 1,000 years of Kyiv Christianity as its own — basically appropriating Ukraine's church history — to the point of erecting a gigantic (and controversial) statue of St. Vladimir outside of the Kremlin.

Putin wants the weight of tradition on his side, and St. Vladimir validates both his religious and political aspirations.

There should be no doubt that Putin sees himself as a kind of Vladimir the Great II, a candidate for sainthood who is restoring the soul of Holy Mother Russia.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



THIS IS A HARD EASTER.

Holy Week 2022 sees, once again in the world, the vicious brutality of war. The journey from Palm Sunday through the Crucifixion to the Resurrection takes place against the terrible Russian aggression in the nation of Ukraine.

Since February 24, Ukraine and its valiant people have endured a type of crucifixion on a cross of imperialism and oppression.

We in the West see these extremely distressing images on our televisions and social media — the bodies lying in the street, the wounded in hospitals, the destruction of apartment complexes and schools, the pain in the eyes of the women, children and elderly forced to flee their homes to possible safety in another country.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy has right been praised for his heroic leadership in a physical and existential crisis not of his making, but surely he had a moment in his own particular Garden of Gethsemane where he asked, “let this cup pass from me.”

Easter, like Christmas, gains a special reso-

nance in wartime.

A Paramount newsreel from World War II shows people decorating Easter eggs with Hitler's image, so they could crush it along with the shells. The date of the film is 1941 and war is already tearing apart the world, although the United States is not yet in it.

In this time, how can the joy and hope of Easter penetrate a country fighting for its life and soul, where terror and death rain on innocents every day?

This is being written in late March, but even if the guns are silent by Easter Sunday on April 17, what will resurrection look like for the people of Ukraine?

As he rallies his people with daily video messages, Zelenskyy already talks of rebuilding, telling his people of his plans and conversations with such entities as the World Bank. He is delivering a strong dose of hope, with an underlying message — have faith.

Yet these are the times when having faith — that trusting step into the unknown — is hard. Perhaps all we can do is say that there will be an Easter and pray it will be a world at peace. ■

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CONVERSATIONS

KYIV continued from page 2

The Ukrainians, on the other hand, would like to remind the Russians that they were the birthplace of both Orthodoxy and political unity in Eastern Europe.

Further infuriating Putin is the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople recognized the Orthodox Church of Ukraine as an independent body. While this fight between Moscow and Kyiv is internally significant for Russians and Ukrainians historically, it also has larger global ramifications for the future.

Katherine Kelaidis at Religion Dispatches explained:

“On one side of the conflict is the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the culturally and linguistically Greek cleric, who has historically claimed leadership of Orthodoxy. For the better part of a century, the Patriarch of Constantinople has moved toward the West and arguably many of its values.

“Today’s incumbent on the Apostolic Throne of St. Andrew speaks the language of human rights, religious freedom, and trust in science. This position arises in no small part from the Patriarchate’s own precarious role as a representative of minority religion in Turkey.

“At the same time, the Patriarch of Moscow, having reclaimed much of his post’s former political influence in a post-Soviet Russia, has taken to spearheading not only the traditionalist Or-

thodox cause, but acting as support and symbol to religious conservatives around the world.”

The conflict in Ukraine is all about religion and what kind of Orthodoxy will shape Eastern Europe and other Orthodox communities around the world (especially in Africa). Religion. This is a crusade, recapturing the Holy Land of Russian Orthodoxy, and defeating the westernized (and decadent) heretics who do not bend the knee to Moscow’s spiritual authority.

If you don’t get that, you don’t get it. Who is going to control the geographical home, the “Jerusalem,” of the Russian church? Moscow? Or Constantinople? And what does claiming that territory mean for Orthodoxy around the world? Will global Orthodoxy lean toward a more pluralistic and open future, or will it be part of the authoritarian neo-Christendom triumvirate?

We don’t know how this is going to unfold. But — here’s the key point — economic sanctions are unlikely to work if you believe your side is divinely sanctioned. That’s what Putin thinks he’s got: the approval of God.

You just know he wants to celebrate Easter — this one or next — in Kyiv. ■

Diana Butler Bass is an American historian of Christianity and an advocate for progressive Christianity. This article was first published at The Cottage (www.dianabutlerbass.com).

New Jersey church sends relief to Ukraine

By Nina Nicholson
Diocese of Newark

A few days after Russian forces invaded Ukraine, Lyubov Ferara, a Ukrainian-born parishioner of St. Elizabeth’s Church in Ridgewood, N.J., swung into action.

Ferara’s mother and the rest of her extended family live in a small town in western Ukraine.

“I couldn’t stay still and do nothing,” she said. She called people and organizations she knew in the local Ukrainian community, including the Ukrainian Orthodox church in Clifton, Holy Ascension Cathedral.

“They said, ‘We are collecting humanitarian aid and here’s the list if you would like to collect or bring anything.’”

The Rev. Andy Olivo, rector of St. Elizabeth’s, offered his church as a drop-off point for donations, and it began collecting items on Ash Wednesday.

“At 10 o’clock, when the parish office opened, we had folks waiting out-



Photo/courtesy of Lyubov Ferara

Lyubov Ferara stands next to donations for Ukraine.

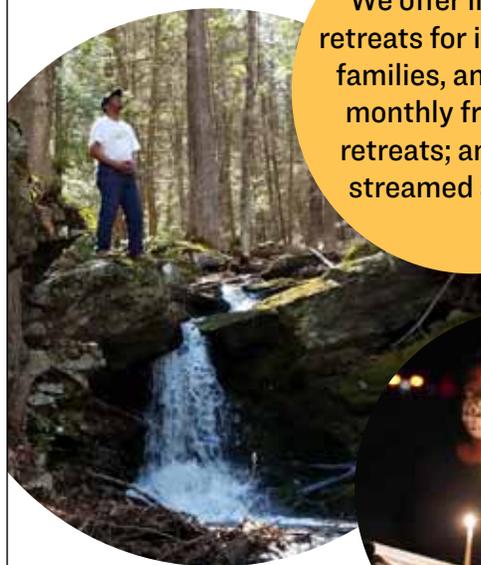
side the doors,” said Olivo. “Every day the hallway outside our offices was just overflowing with donations.”

The Ukrainian cathedral is working with companies that specialize in shipping between the U.S. and Central and Eastern Europe, in order to get the shipments through Poland into western Ukraine.

In fact, the collection of medical supplies, baby supplies and other goods was so overwhelming that on March 7, Holy Ascension stopped accepting donations of goods as they caught up with the donations they’ve already received.

Instead, those wishing to help Ukrainians are encouraged to make monetary donations to a relief organization. “No amount is too small,” said Ferara, who said her 10-year-old son brought out his piggy bank and dumped the contents on the table. Asked what he was doing, he replied, “I want to collect everything and donate it to cover the cost of shipping so these kids can get their clothes as soon as they can.” ■

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AROUND THE CHURCH

North Texas congregation wins in court its claim to large bequest

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A county court has affirmed that a North Texas Episcopal congregation is entitled to a large bequest from a former parishioner, rejecting the claim to the money made by a breakaway congregation that is aligned with the Anglican Church in North America, or ACNA.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Hillsboro received more than \$1.3 million from the estate of Hendley McDonald after he died in 2017.

ACNA officials laid claim to the bequest, arguing the money rightfully belonged to the breakaway Anglican congregation, which still calls itself St. Mary's.

Until that dispute could be resolved, the two sides agreed to keep the money in a joint bank account, where its value has grown to about \$2 million, according to David Skelton, senior warden of the Episcopal congregation.

McDonald filed his will in Waco, where he had been a longtime resident, mandating the dispute over the bequest be referred to Waco's probate court.

On Feb. 16, a McLennan County judge signed an order saying the terms of the will "are unambiguous with regard to the identity of the beneficiary," which the judge ruled was the Episcopal congregation.

That congregation should be "the only owner and signatory on the investment count," the court said.

The congregation's victory comes a year after the Fort Worth-based Episco-



Photo/David Skelton

St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Hillsboro, Texas, has worshipped in a former bank drive-thru building since June 2021.

pal diocese lost its 12-year legal battle to wrest property back from the group that left the Episcopal Church in 2008 to align with ACNA.

In February 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court said it would not hear a final Episcopal appeal, letting stand a Texas Supreme Court ruling that endorsed ACNA's claim to diocesan property worth more than \$100 million.

ACNA also retained the Diocese of Fort Worth name. The Episcopal diocese has since renamed itself the Episcopal Church in North Texas.

The Hillsboro congregations' litigation over the McDonald bequest is separate from the broader property case that the Episcopal diocese lost last year, though ACNA argues that similar legal principles should apply.

"We are quite naturally disappointed with the ruling by the McLennan County Court," David Weaver, an attorney representing ACNA, told Episcopal News Service by email. "We believe the court's ruling is contrary to the previous rulings" in the diocesan case.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, though confident it will prevail, is avoiding any premature celebrations, Skelton, the senior warden, told ENS by phone. "Having won one battle doesn't necessarily mean that we're through with this," he said. "Our excitement, our delight, our optimism is muted by past experience."

His congregation will leave the be-

quest untouched while ACNA appeals the probate court ruling.

The St. Mary's congregation had split nearly in half in the 2008 diocesan schism. The dozen or so members who remained Episcopalians were allowed to continue worshipping in the church under an agreement with ACNA leaders.

After the Supreme Court declined to intervene last year, the Episcopalians decided to look for a new place and have been worshipping in a former bank drive-thru building since June 2021.

Skelton spent \$100,000 of his own money to purchase a vacant 2-acre plot where his congregation would like to build a new church, with the assumption that St. Mary's will reimburse him if and when the money from the bequest is released.

In the meantime, services in the former bank building have been drawing about 20 worshippers each Sunday. ■

Episcopal leaders condemn Texas governor's labeling of transgender medical treatments

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Texas Bishop Andrew Doyle and the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, House of Deputies president, are among the Episcopal leaders condemning Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's attempt to classify transgender medical treatments as child abuse and investigate them as such.

Doyle advised Episcopal clergy and school staff not to comply with Abbott's directive targeting transgender adolescents. "The gov's statement has no force of law. ALL people are welcome in churches of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas without fear — we offer only love," the bishop said on Twitter.

On Feb. 24, Jennings said in a letter to the House of Deputies that Abbott's "reprehensible statement" on transgender adolescents "puts some of the most vulnerable children in our society, and their families, in grave danger."

"Denying the full humanity of transgender people, putting beloved children of God at risk, and threatening to separate loving families is cruel and antithetical to the way of Jesus," Jennings said. "We must do all we can to protect the children whom Governor Abbott has targeted to advance his own political standing and, more broadly, to stop the wave of anti-transgender legislation sweeping across the United States."

Abbott issued a letter on Feb. 22 citing a legal opinion by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton that certain medical treatments for transgender minors, such as puberty blockers, hormone therapy and transition surgery, constitute child abuse.

In response, Abbott's letter to the Department of Family and Protective Services directed the state agency to "conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of any reported instances of these abusive procedures."

He added that the state's reporting requirements apply to "all licensed professionals who have direct contact with children who may be subject to such abuse."

The order has drawn nationwide condemnation this week from LGBTQ+ rights groups and supporters. They warn that such policies effectively criminalize transgender youths and their families and increase their risk of depression and suicide.

Abbott and Paxton's actions against trans youth politicizes people's lives for gain.

— Bishop Andrew Doyle

The district attorneys of Texas' five most populous counties have publicly rejected Abbott's and Paxton's claims of child abuse.

Doyle communicated directly to diocesan clergy in response to Abbott's order, according to a diocesan spokeswoman. He also affirmed on Twitter that no one in the diocese's churches or schools is required to report transgender children.

"Regardless of enforceability, Abbott and Paxton's actions against trans youth politicizes people's lives for gain," Doyle tweeted. "Turning caregivers and teachers into reporters is a fear tactic reminiscent of historic demonization and witch hunts. All people are worthy of love and belonging."

Abbott's latest actions come amid

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OBITUARY

Rev. Louis Weil, renowned liturgist and seminary professor

By ENS Staff

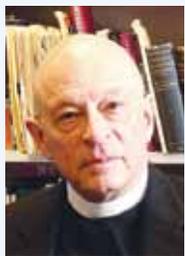
The Rev. Louis Weil, a liturgical scholar and seminary professor who was a significant contributor to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, died March 9 in Oakland, Calif. He was 86.

Weil was born in Houston in 1935 and raised in New Orleans. Born to a Jewish father and a non-religious mother, Weil became an Episcopalian while attending Southern Methodist University in Dallas and considered himself "a Jew and a Christian."

Weil earned a master's degree in musicology from Harvard University and attended seminary at General Theological Seminary, after which he spent 10 years serving small churches in the Diocese of Puerto Rico. He also taught at the since-closed Episcopal Seminary of the Caribbean in Carolina, Puerto Rico.

Weil earned a doctorate in sacred theology from the Catholic University

of Paris and returned to the U.S. in 1971 to teach liturgics at Nashotah House in Wisconsin, where he remained until joining the faculty of Church Divinity School of the Pacific in 1988. There, he served as Hodges-Haynes Professor of Liturgics until 2009.



Weil

Among his many students were several future bishops. Bishop Wayne Smith, bishop provisional of Southern Ohio, recalled Weil as "the best teacher I ever had."

Weil served four terms on the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music. A prolific author, he was one of the primary architects of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, an experience he recalled in his 2013 book "Liturgical Sense."

"I find myself constantly in awe and thankfulness for my journey," Weil said in an interview with Crossings, CDSP's magazine, in 2017. "By the grace of God, I've had doors opened I never dreamed of." ■

AROUND THE CHURCH

Black leaders assess church's efforts to battle racism

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A panel of several prominent Black leaders in the Episcopal Church discussed the state of the church's racial reconciliation efforts and its justice and equity advocacy during an hourlong Church Pension Group webinar held on Feb. 28, the last day of Black History Month.

Nearly 500 people attended the session live on Zoom, and it now is available as a video on demand on CPG's Facebook page and on YouTube.

The panelists frequently cited Becoming Beloved Community, the church's cornerstone

initiative for encouraging dioceses and congregations to take up the work of racial healing. It is named for the concept of Beloved Community that was popularized by Martin Luther King Jr. to represent a society lifted up in racial harmony.

"We do want to get there, but the reality is we're not there yet," said Dean Sandye Wilson of the Cathedral Church of All Saints in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and a Church Pension Fund trustee. "We have the contours of what Beloved Community is, but we have not yet arrived."

The Episcopal Church, with a membership estimated to be 90% white, has spent decades promoting the work of dismantling racist structures within the church and in society, however, many Black Episcopalians and people of color say it has yet to fully welcome them as equals and to listen openly to their experiences. A 2021 report from a racial audit of the church's leadership further illustrated the ways the church's racial in-

clusion efforts have fallen short.

CPG's People of African Descent Affinity Group hosted the Feb. 28 webinar. CPG has organized listening sessions with groups that have been marginalized by the church to help inform its canonically defined role as the church's financial services agency, said Patricia Favreau, CPG's executive vice president and chief communications officer.

Favreau added that CPG seeks, through the data it collects, to help the church deepen its understanding of race and racism in the church's institutional culture. Newly collected data on clergy demographics, she said, will be ready in time for the 80th General Convention in July.

"We are monitoring and measuring where we are, to help the church understand its structure and to understand our own truth," Favreau said.

Wilson and Favreau were joined on the panel by Byron Rushing, House of Deputies vice president, Bishop Nathan Baxter, retired bishop of Central Pennsylvania, and the Rev. Glenna Huber, rector of Church of the Epiphany in Washington, D.C.

Several panelists praised Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, the church's first Black presiding bishop, for underscoring the importance of the racial reconciliation work.

"We are lucky to have the presiding bishop that we have," Rushing said. "And we have to also understand that what he is asking us to do, what he's challenging us to do, might not happen." He and other panelists considered whether the church's heightened emphasis on eliminating racism will extend beyond Curry's

tenure, which ends in 2024.

"We don't know the answer to that question, until we get the people of the church to fully engage in this work," Rushing said. "We are part of a denomination that, for most of its history, did not do this."

The panelists expressed optimism at the willingness of the church, and particularly white Episcopalians, to take up these difficult conversations about the legacy of slavery and segregation in the United States and the ways racism remains embedded in religious and secular institutions. Such issues moved to the forefront of public discourse after the killing of George Floyd in May 2020.

"This is a conversation that must be had," Favreau said. "The people of the church are hungry for this now."

Huber agreed that these conversations in the church must continue, whoever is elected presiding bishop to succeed Curry. "It may not look the same on a macro level, but we will continue on the micro level doing this work, creating pathways for others, so that we can move closer to being Beloved Community."

Much of the Episcopal Church's racial

justice work today stems from commitments first made in 1991 at the 70th General Convention in Phoenix. Additionally, the church has taken deliberate steps over the past 16 years to confront its own historic complicity in slavery, segregation and other racist systems.

In 2017, the church launched Becoming Beloved Community, a framework and series of resources broken into four parts: telling the truth about our churches and race, proclaiming the dream of Beloved Community, practicing the way of love in the pattern of Jesus and repairing the breach in society.

Since then, church leaders have promoted Becoming Beloved Community to all corners of the church while awarding grants to support local ministries aimed at dismantling racist systems and bridging racial divides.

"It has given structured ways at the local level as well as at the diocesan level to learn to be in respectful conversation, ways in which we listen to each other," Baxter said. "It does not have to be perfect, in the sense that we all understand everything about one another's story, but that we enter in with an openness." ■



Bishops gather for spring retreat

Bishops of the Episcopal Church gathered for their spring retreat March 15-21 at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas. It was the first in-person assembly since September 2019, due to COVID-19 concerns. The focus was on themes of hunger, honesty, humility, hopefulness, and hospitality, reflecting the evolving pandemic.

Given the retreat format, the bishops spent time in fellowship, study, prayer, and sabbath. They planned to welcome guest speakers the Rev.

Cynthia Bourgeault, a retreat leader, and Irish poet and theologian Pádraig Ó Tuama. Additionally, the bishops were set to prepare for the General Convention and Lambeth Conference — both taking place this summer.

The House of Bishops comprises all active and retired bishops — nearly 300 members — with the presiding bishop serving as president. The church's governing body, the General Convention, is composed of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies.

— Episcopal Public Affairs Office

TRANSGENDER continued from page 4

broader push by Republican elected officials to pass anti-transgender legislation nationwide.

Since 2021, at least 21 state legislatures, including Texas, have introduced bills seeking to deny treatments that help transgender minors align their bodies with their gender identities, according to the Williams Institute at the University of California Los Angeles. Most of the bills propose criminalizing gender-affirming care.

About 150,000 individuals ages 13 to 17 identify as transgender in the United States, according to a brief prepared by the American Medical Association. Many of them suffer from gender dysphoria, defined by the American Psychiatric Association as a "conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/they identify."

"Every major medical association in the United States recognizes the medical necessity of transition-related care for improving the physical and mental health of transgender people and has called for health insurance coverage for treatment

of gender dysphoria," the AMA said.

In her letter, Jennings noted that General Convention first expressed its support for legal protections for gay and lesbian citizens in 1976, and it extended its opposition to discrimination based on gender identity in a 2009 resolution.

Executive Council also devoted one of its plenary sessions at its most recent meeting, in January, to listening to several transgender clergy members share their stories of struggling for acceptance within the church.

The group TransEpiscopal thanked Jennings and Doyle for speaking out. In a post on its website, the group said its members were appalled by Abbott's actions in Texas.

Abbott's letter "not only heaps further stigma upon trans youth and their families, but also raises the specter of community surveillance," TransEpiscopal said. "This threat of splitting trans people and our families off from a wider sense of safety in community — or, worse, of separating trans youth from their supportive families — is precisely the opposite of what our families and communities need." ■

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NEWS

Churches respond to desperate humanitarian needs in Ukraine and bordering countries

World Council of Churches

Hosting refugees, providing food, helping in hospitals, and ringing church bells as a warning when shelling starts — these are some of the many ways churches are responding in Ukraine and bordering countries as the war continues.

More than two million people have poured out of Ukraine and estimates from relief groups show that 18 million people — a third of the country's population — will need humanitarian assistance.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate reports that it is helping all those in need — the military, hospitals, and refugees all over Ukraine.

Monasteries are providing humanitarian aid to refugees, internally displaced persons and all those affected by the war. Refugee reception points have also been organized at churches through joint efforts of the clergy and volunteers.

Some provide 24-hour aid, giving out warm clothes, mats, sleeping bags, water and medicines.

Queues and checkpoints at the borders of Ukraine are overflowing with refugees, with 10-kilometer lines formed at some points.

"We are trying to help everyone," reported one parish in Lviv, as packages of food were taken to a center for refugees, which was operating at the Arena Lviv stadium. There, churches are working with the Department of Social Protection of the Lviv City Council.

"The clergy and all the employees of our churches are making every effort to help all those who need it," the Volodymyr-Volyn Diocese of the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate reported.

Many retired doctors among parishioners also are pitching in to help.

Ukrainian Orthodox churches are also providing basements as shelters from shelling and bombing, with churches helping to sound the alarm of impending attacks by ringing their bells.



Photo/Albin Hillert/LWF

Paulina, a 23-year-old mother, and her children are seen in their new temporary home in Nyiregyháza, Hungary. The Evangelical Lutheran congregation in the area is accommodating and supporting refugees from the war in Ukraine. Paulina gave birth to her third child in a Hungarian hospital the same day she and her family crossed the border from Ukraine into Hungary.

Fr. Mykolay Danylych, deputy chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, has reported that priests are also accompanying many with prayer. "Priests pray, comfort and reassure people, and provide spiritual and even psychological help," he said.

Needs are growing

There is an urgent need for humanitarian support in Ukraine and in the countries to which many refugees are fleeing — Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, as well as Belarus and Russia.

Episcopal Relief & Development announced it is supporting Action by

Churches Together (ACT Alliance) as it provides critical assistance to support people affected by violence in Ukraine.

Working through ACT member Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) and other local organizations, ACT Alliance is providing emergency assistance such as food, shelter, water and basic supplies to refugees and people displaced within Ukraine, ER&D said.

ACT Alliance church members are organizing fundraising; collecting clothes, food and hygiene items; and organizing accommodation for refugees. The organization issued an alert and is supporting national members through its Rapid Response Fund, while an appeal for multi-country support will assist in scaling up the response in Ukraine and neighboring countries.

Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and Caritas partners are providing immediate support to meet ongoing needs as the situation intensifies.

"CRS and partners on the ground are preparing across Ukraine and in bordering countries, ready to provide safe shelter, hot meals, hygiene supplies, transport to safe areas, counseling support and more," reported CRS.

The Red Cross is providing lifesaving aid to those in need — both in Ukraine and in neighboring areas.

"Many of the people affected were already vulnerable before the conflict and now face an even harsher situation as they are losing their homes and their livelihoods, being forced to seek shelter wherever they can or fleeing their country in search of safety. They urgently need food, water and shelter, but also emergency medical care, protective measures and psychosocial support to avert an even greater humanitarian catastrophe," said Birgitte

Bischoff Ebbesen, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies regional director for Europe.

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, announced a major fundraising effort to help those most affected. Elpidophoros also announced the creation of the Ukrainian Relief Effort, which was established in collaboration with International Orthodox Christian Charities.

Hungarian Interchurch Aid set up a 24-hour refugee support point on the Ukrainian side of the border at Beregsurány. The line of refugees trying to cross into Hungary at that crossing was miles long, according to reports.

A support point was set up at Asztély, near the border crossing, in a heated pavilion, which will be supplemented with additional tents and mobile toilets in the coming days.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) launched a call for donations to support the churches and people of Ukraine, who are fleeing their homes and seeking shelter, basic necessities such as food and water.

LWF general secretary Rev. Anne Burghardt said this support "is vital for people desperately seeking shelter from the gunfire and bombing. Every donation counts."

Bishop Christian Alsted, who serves in the United Methodist Central Conference that consists of Nordic, Baltic and Eurasian countries, including Russia and Ukraine, offered a pastoral word on the crisis, and urged prayer as a form of response as well.

"We pray for a change of hearts and minds of leaders, we pray for de-escalation and dialogue instead of violence and war," Alsted said. "I call on all our congregations to intercede for the people of Ukraine, and for the leaders in the world, who have the power to bring an end to war." ■

UKRAINE continued from page 1

the lives of innocents and the lives of any human child of God will be spared," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said during the online event.

The church also decided to sell off its Russian investments.

"The Episcopal Church Investment Committee met last week, opening with prayer for peace hours before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In keeping with the Episcopal Church's firm stand against this continued and escalating aggression, our investment managers sold the church's Russian stocks, which constituted a negligible portion of overall investment assets," Kurt Barnes, the church's treasurer and chief financial officer, said in a written statement.

The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe counts 21 congregations in six countries, including a mission in the former Soviet republic of

Georgia. Most of the congregations are in Belgium, France, Germany and Italy.

"Our prayers feel insufficient to defend those cowering in fear and exposed to bullets and bombs. But we know that the place where war lives is in the human heart," Edington said in his video message.

"As we begin our season of Lent, we are called to give up our easy complacency about the durability of peace. We are called to consider again the reminders in our midst of war's relentless cost to human life and God's hope. And we are called to pray, and speak, and to labor for the truth that Christ has called us to transform this broken world through the hard work of love."

Bishops across the Episcopal Church have joined Edington in condemning Russia's invasion while praying for the people of Ukraine.

"Please include in your intercessions and special prayers for the people of Ukraine, President Biden, all our elected

officials and all Americans in the military," Dallas Bishop George Sumner said in a message shared on Facebook. "Pray for our allies with whom we stand, for Russians willing to speak out, that the conflict not be widened, for an end to Russian aggression, and the restoration of peace."

Michigan Bishop Bonnie Perry issued a video message, "The Pain of Ukraine."

"People of faith, watching and feeling the political tectonic plates of our world shift and collide. How do we stand? Where is our sure footing? What are we called to do? Pray my friends," Perry said. "Pray in a way you never have before. Pray with the passion and responsibility of the people who are being called to heal."

Florida Bishop John Howard, in an email to his diocese, also called for Episcopalians to pray in response to "the unlawful, unprovoked and brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia."

"Join me in prayer that the Ukrainian war might conclude swiftly and

with justice, that the innocent might be shielded from harm and that nationalistic aggression, abusive power and self-justifying violence might cease," Howard said. "Pray, too, for the whole Christian Church in Ukraine and especially for the small Anglican congregation of Christ Church in Kyiv."

The Russian attack is creating a humanitarian crisis, as more than a half million Ukrainians have fled their country as refugees. Episcopal Relief & Development is working with Anglican agencies and other partners to assist them.

"Ecumenical and orthodox faith networks are on the ground in the border areas of Poland and Hungary," Abigail Nelson, Episcopal Relief & Development's executive vice president, said in a news release. "We will continue to coordinate with these networks, in order to meet the needs of people who have been displaced."

Donations can be made to the agency's Ukraine Crisis Response Fund. ■

NEWS

STUDY continued from page 1

Christopher Moessner, who oversaw the study's Ipsos research team, emphasized in an interview with ENS that the large nationwide pool of respondents is representative of a wide range of faith backgrounds.

"We did not want to limit our audience to only Christians or only Americans who held a particular view. We wanted to survey all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs or no religious beliefs," said Moessner, senior vice president of public opinion polling at Ipsos.

That approach helped the study more clearly examine common perceptions of Christianity and Christians in the United States. One question asked respondents what they thought was Jesus' most important teaching. More than a third said "love your neighbor," including nearly a fourth of respondents who reported no religion. About 20% of all respondents answered with "not judging others, without first judging yourself," and those with no religion gave that answer at about the same rate.

"Not many polls get into what do you really believe Jesus was about," Moessner said. "This poll also sought to understand where the intersection was between all faiths. Where's the common ground?"

He pointed to questions about what activities offered by religious organizations would most interest respondents. Some of those results were similar across all faiths,

with respondents generally emphasizing outdoor activities and helping others.

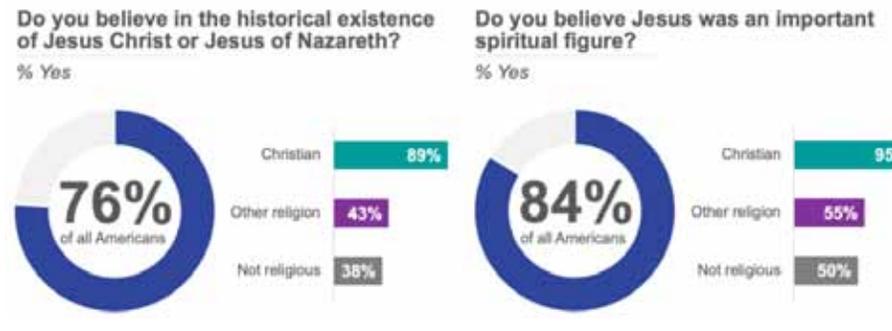
Another question asked what characteristics respondents associate with Christians. The words most chosen by the Christian respondents were "giving," "compassionate," "loving" and "respectful," while non-Christians associated Christians most with "hypocritical," "judgmental," "self-righteous" and "arrogant."

That disconnect underscores a central reason the church commissioned the study. Episcopal leaders hope that by better understanding public perceptions of Christianity, the church can more effectively spread its message of Jesus' love and compassion in contrast to what they see as distortions of the faith by some Christian and political leaders.

Curry has taken up that cause prominently since 2018 when he joined an ecumenical group of Christian leaders in launching the Reclaiming Jesus initiative. Spearheaded with the Rev. Jim Wallis of Sojourners, it sought to address "a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches" and to affirm what it means to be followers of Jesus in today's world.

Such efforts gained urgency after riotous supporters of then President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, seeking to block the certification of Joe Biden's election as president. Five people died, including a Capitol Police officer.

Most Americans believe Jesus was an important spiritual figure, although, some question His historical existence



At the time, Episcopal leaders lamented that some attackers had displayed crosses and other Christian symbols on their flags, banners, signs and clothing — suggesting that Christian identity was "being put to violent use by people who want to establish a nation in which power and privilege is held exclusively by white Christians," the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, said at the January 2021 Executive Council meeting. "This violent and exclusionary movement is on the rise in the United States. ... We have a special responsibility to stand against it."

For the "Jesus in America" study, pollsters asked: "Do you think the events at the U.S. Capitol Building on Jan. 6 are associated with organized religion?" Overall, 11% said yes, with wide variation among respondent groups. The study found 24% of non-religious re-

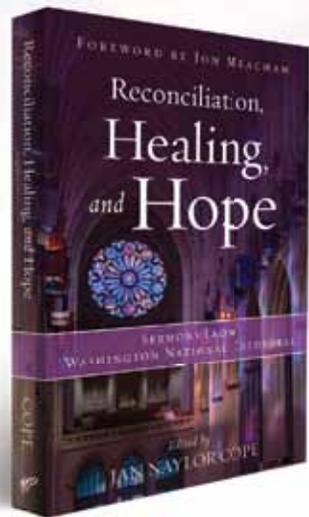
spondents answered that way.

When the 11% of respondents who said yes were asked a follow-up question, 63% said they associated the attack more specifically with evangelical or Protestant Christians.

The study also produced data on how the pandemic has disrupted churchgoing over the past two years. When asked about their "ability to participate in organized religious or spiritual activities," 37% of mainline Protestants said their participation had decreased, while 55% reported no change in participation.

"Lent is a time of intentional reflection and action," Curry said in a news release, "and we are especially mindful of our resolve to continue building meaningful and inclusive communities in our post-pandemic world that encourage all Americans to listen without judgment and celebrate differences." ■

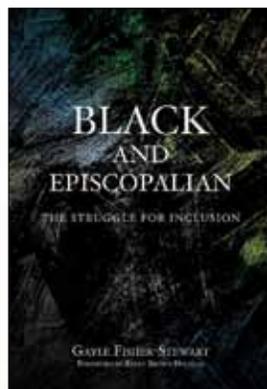
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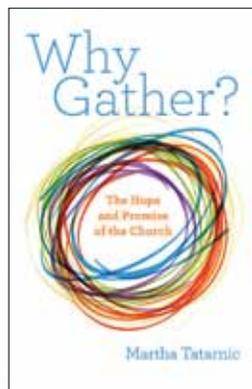
"The cathedral's message is clear. For the people of God the most important and indeed radical thing we can do is to love and to remember."

—Jon Meacham, from the Foreword

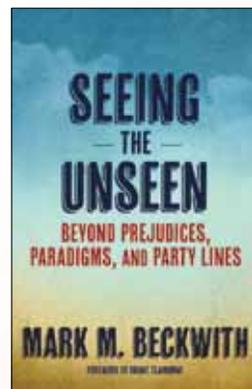
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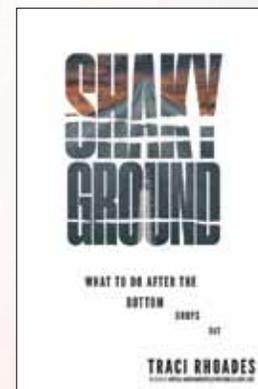
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GENERAL CONVENTION



Newly-formed House of Deputies caucus takes up the mantle of LGBTQ+ advocacy

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Among the groups with a presence at this year's General Convention will be a new self-organized caucus of LGBTQ+ members of the House of Deputies. The group of over 100 members is working in small groups as the July 7-14 convention scheduled to take place in person in Baltimore approaches, identifying priorities and developing potential resolutions that could advance the cause of LGBTQ+ inclusion across the church.

The LGBTQ+ Caucus, one of several groups of deputies who have organized themselves around common identities and interests, was formed around the idea that "there's still plenty of work to do in the Episcopal Church" for LGBTQ+ people, the Rev. Susan Russell told ENS. Russell, a longtime advocate for LGBTQ+ Episcopalians, is one of seven members of the caucus's planning team.

Among the caucus's priorities are issues relating to transgender and non-binary people — such as introducing gender-expansive language and opposing anti-transgender laws — and ensuring that existing canons on equal access to the sacraments are consistently followed across the church.

In some ways, the caucus is taking up the work that was pursued by Integrity



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS

In the General Convention worship hall on June 26, 2015, the Rev. Susan Russell celebrates that day's U.S. Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage.

USA, the former LGBTQ+ advocacy organization that has been essentially defunct since 2018, when General Convention approved a resolution granting full churchwide access to same-sex marriage rites. That resolution marked the achievement of Integrity's decades-long goal of full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the sacraments — at least on paper — some LGBTQ+ Episcopalians point out that some dioceses and parishes are still not LGBTQ+-affirming in practice.

The Rev. Charles Graves IV, another member of the planning team who is not a deputy but a member of Executive Council, hatched the idea for the caucus

last summer after being interviewed by ENS for a story about the next phase in the campaign for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

With General Convention approaching, Graves asked himself, "Is there anybody who's organizing around policy?"

After asking the office of the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, he got his answer: "No, nobody's doing that. But would you like to?"

There are several other caucuses organized around ethnic identities, which

Convention," Jennings told ENS, adding that she owes her ordination as a priest to the now-defunct Episcopal Women's Caucus, which pushed General Convention to open the priesthood to women in 1976.

General Convention "needs to include the voices and perspectives of LGBTQI+ people, whose journey to full inclusion has been slow and is still unfinished," Jennings said. "Caucuses help ensure that those voices are heard."

Graves started by creating a Facebook group for LGBTQ+ deputies and Executive Council members. Jennings' office assisted by adding a question about LGBTQ+ identity to a demographic survey of deputies intended to connect them with caucuses they might want to join. Just over 100 deputies opted to join the caucus, out of the House's 800-plus members.

"It surprised us when we were able to see how many folks were interested and willing to be not only self-identified as LGBTQ, but to actively be part of a caucus that would advocate for moving the church forward to making full inclusion not just a resolution but a reality," Russell said.

Graves and deputy Jon Rania from the Diocese of Delaware invited the respondents to an online plenary gathering in November, at which Jennings and the Rev. Michael Barlowe, General Convention secretary, offered the opening remarks. The members were organized into nine working groups addressing topics including marriage and ordination, political advocacy and employment practices.

continued on page 9



Photo/Cynthia Black

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings and Integrity founder Louie Crew Clay at the Integrity Eucharist during the 2015 General Convention.

also work together under the Deputies of Color caucus. The caucuses are self-organized, not official branches of the House of Deputies or General Convention "because they need to be able to maintain independence," Graves said. "Fortunately, we have in Gay a president who's an incredible advocate."

"Caucuses are the lifeblood of General

Episcopal-Methodist full communion partnership on hold

By Melodie Woerman
Episcopal News Service

The timeline for a full communion partnership between the Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church remains on hold as the latter has postponed its quadrennial General Conference until 2024, when it will consider a vote to split the 12.9 million-member denomination over disagreements on the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ members.

That vote was to take place in 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was postponed first to 2021 and then to 2022. It's now been rescheduled a third time due to ongoing virus concerns and visa delays for its members traveling from some 130 countries outside the United States.

In the meantime, the Episcopal Church General Convention Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations recently discussed Resolution A093, which commends the ongoing work of the Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue and its proposal for

full communion.

During the legislative hearing, the Rev. Rowan Larson, curate for formation and mission at Grace Church in Newton, Mass., asked committee members to recommend that the Episcopal Church not move forward with any proposal until the United Methodist Church addresses its current ban on LGBTQ+ clergy and the marriage of same-sex couples.

As it stands, the full communion proposal, "A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness," does not address LGBTQ+ full inclusion; rather, it "is an effort to bring our churches into closer partnership in the mission and witness to the love of God and thus labor together for the healing of divisions among Christians and for the well-being of all."

When the UMC finalizes its separation plan, any plan for full communion will be with those who are LGBTQ+-affirming, the Rev. Margaret Rose, deputy for ecumenical and interreligious relations for the Episcopal Church, told Episcopal News Service.

A093, Rose said, would be an assurance to them "that we want to continue in

the struggle for justice with you."

It remains unclear, she added, whether the United Methodists would take up a full communion proposal at the 2024 meeting, where the denomination will also finalize its proposal to allow conservative Methodists to leave and form new denominations.

In any event, she said the Methodists would vote first on full communion, and then it would be considered by General Convention.

Two other resolutions being considered by the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations would create other new full communion partnerships: A091, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, and A092, creating a four-way partnership between the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada.

The Episcopal Church currently has six existing full communion partnership



Photo/Kathleen Barry/United Methodist News Service

Demonstrators at the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, Fla., silently display their desire for full inclusion in the church.

agreements: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces); the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, India; the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht; the Philippine Independent Church; and the Church of Sweden. ■

Melodie Woerman is a freelance writer and former director of communications for the Diocese of Kansas.

GENERAL CONVENTION

Input sought on \$101 million 2023-24 church budget; General Convention also to consider process changes

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Approval of the Episcopal Church's triennial budget is one of the core responsibilities of General Convention, the church's bicameral governing body. Bishops and deputies are set to meet July 7-14 at the 80th General Convention and church leaders are welcoming public input on the draft \$101 million budget.

The biggest difference from past triennial budgets is that this budget will cover just two years. Because the pandemic forced postponement of the 80th General Convention from 2021 to 2022, Executive Council previously approved a single-year budget for 2022 and now is recommending the 2023-24 budget for consideration.

The proposed two-year budget is now under review by the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance.

The committee, which met online in October and February, is accepting written feedback online through April 8. An online public hearing will be scheduled for early May, followed by an in-person committee meeting later in the month.

"We want the church to have an opportunity to give us feedback," said the Rev. Mike Ehmer, the Program, Budget and Finance chair. "We will guarantee somebody from our committee will give you a personal response."

Ehmer noted in an interview with Episcopal News Service that this budget contains a significant change in how the church would calculate the assessments that dioceses pay to support churchwide operations.

In the past, dioceses have been assessed at a rate of 15% of their operating income, with the first \$140,000 of income exempted. The proposed budget

would raise that exemption to the first \$200,000 in income.

The difference may seem insignificant for larger dioceses with multimillion-dollar budgets, but "to small dioceses it's a lot," said Ehmer, who serves as canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of North-west Texas.

The postponement of the General Convention was one reason the church ended the 2019-21 triennium with a surplus of more than \$15 million, of which about \$2.5 million was shifted to the 2022 budget to cover the expense of gathering this year in Baltimore.

Expenses were further reduced during the pandemic because of restrictions on staff travel and in-person gatherings, and the church also received \$3 million as one of the many U.S. employers that qualified for assistance from the federal Paycheck Protection Program.

Church leaders don't expect the annual surpluses to continue, so they asked departments of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the Episcopal Church's corporate entity, to look for ways to cut 5% from their budgets while maintaining churchwide staffing at 152 employees.

On Jan. 27, Executive Council voted to use up to \$5 million from the past triennium's surplus to balance the proposed 2023-24 budget that it sent to the Joint Committee on Program, Budget and Finance. Council is still deliberating over what to do with the remaining surplus, a topic it will take up at its April meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Program, Budget and Finance's 27 members are appointed by the presiding bishop and president of the House of Deputies, with one bishop and two deputies chosen from each of the church's nine provinces. After reviewing and seeking input on Executive Council's budget proposal, it will present a final

2023-2024 Budgeted Expenses \$100.7 million



draft for consideration and approval before a joint session of the 80th General Convention.

Separate from the financial discussions, the 80th General Convention will consider resolutions that seek to simplify the church's budgeting process while maintaining transparency and improving continuity and efficiency.

The Task Force on the Budget Process developed the plan to address what it concluded was the redundant and wasteful expense of enlisting members of the Joint Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to review details of a budget that already had been developed and thoroughly debated by Executive Council

and its Finance Committee.

The Task Force is proposing, in resolution A048, to eliminate Program, Budget and Finance and instead empower Executive Council to present its budget proposal directly to General Convention.

Executive Council would form a standing budget committee. Among its duties, it would be tasked to review all actions of General Convention that have financial implications and propose further revisions to the approved budget "so it better reflects the priorities and actions of General Convention."

The hope is that this would address situations in which General Convention approves resolutions with expenses that haven't been included for funding in the final budget.

Executive Council still would have the authority during each triennium to make further changes to the budget as necessary through its authority as the church's governing body between meetings of General Convention.

The task force argued in its report that "streamlining the budget process so that one entity, broadly representative of the church, is responsible for the whole of the budget development process will be a better use of human and financial resources with less duplication of efforts. It will also allow for clarity in communications." ■

LGBTQ continued from page 8

The caucus leaders have identified several proposed resolutions that they might support, including one from the Diocese of Los Angeles calling for the Episcopal Church to conduct an audit of the state of LGBTQ+ acceptance and inclusion across the church, inspired by the racial justice audit released in 2021.

The proposed project would document the history of LGBTQ+ people in the church and identify areas where the church is currently falling short of full inclusion. The goal, Russell said, is to "be honest about, and be able to celebrate, the progress we've made, but also to own how much work there is left to do."

One important part of that work, caucus leaders say, is "closing the loophole" in marriage equality created by General Convention Resolution B012 in 2018. The resolution guarantees same-sex couples access to marriage rites wherever it is legal. However, it also allows bishops to formally reject same-sex marriage in their

dioceses and have another bishop provide any oversight that might be necessary — an arrangement known as DEPO, or Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight.

A bishop's oversight is normally not needed for a marriage (though it is in cases involving divorce), but the canons of some dioceses still officially ban same-sex marriages, including Albany, Dallas and Central Florida.

"The liturgies are available but with conditions, so it's a separate but inherently unequal status for same-sex couples," Russell said.

Russell said there isn't yet a proposed solution to that loophole, but it is one of many ideas the caucus's working groups are considering. Other ideas under discussion include creating a churchwide LGBTQ+ ministries office, encouraging churches to make their buildings inclusive to all genders (such as by changing bathroom facilities) and supporting LGBTQ+ people in non-U.S. dioceses "in a way that is culturally sensitive and not paternalistic." ■



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FEATURE

Lay preachers bring everyday perspectives to Episcopal pulpits

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

If you attend Episcopal worship services and assume the preacher always wears a clerical collar, consider lending your ear to Salem Saloom on a Sunday morning. As a lay preacher in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, he might broaden your expectations.

Saloom, 74, is licensed by the diocese and typically preaches once a month at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Brewton, Ala., where he has worshipped since 1979.

Although he never attended a seminary, Saloom completed a lay preaching course through the diocese's School for Ministry and now is participating in the two-year test phase of a churchwide curriculum developed by the Episcopal Preaching Foundation.

The experience has been "really enlightening," Saloom told ENS. To him, writing and delivering a sermon means "trying to find the way to make the Gospel come alive, and preach so that the listeners in the congregation can see how alive the Gospel is in their daily lives."

As an increasing number of Episcopal congregations forego full-time clergy and lay members take on more parish responsibilities, some dioceses are encouraging lay people to bring their voices to the pulpit.

"Dioceses are recognizing the value of lay preaching," said the Rev. Charles Cesaretti, president of the foundation, though he noted the phenomenon has old roots. "Lay preaching has always been in the church. It starts in the book of Acts, so it's in our DNA."

Central Gulf Coast, which includes southern Alabama and part of the Florida Panhandle, is one of six dioceses

that were selected to test the foundation's new lay preaching curriculum. The other dioceses are East Tennessee, Lexington, Minnesota, Nebraska and North Carolina.

For its initial phase in 2021, the foundation developed a program to train the trainers and began getting the word out to dioceses. Sixteen applied to test the curriculum, and each of the six finalists recruited two trainers and formed a cohort of about six students.

Last January, the dioceses' trainers began guiding their cohorts through all aspects of preaching, from close examination of Scripture to effective use of body language during sermons. By the end of this first year and throughout the second year, most of their time will be spent writing sermons, preaching to their peers and receiving feedback.

The curriculum "is brilliantly created. It is inviting and very spirit-filled," said Jenny Beaumont, one of the two lay preaching trainers in the Diocese

'We're finding different ways to engage people rather than have them be passive recipients of programming.'

— Rob Garris, Leadership Development Initiative

of North Carolina, where she serves as missionary for adult formation and lifelong learning.

In an interview with ENS, she described a range of weekly assignments that participants complete on their own, such as watching videos and writing reflections. Then the group meets twice a month, once on Zoom and once in person.

They discuss how to parse the meaning of religious texts, and they practice reading their writing out loud. "It really is helping people to reflect on their lives



Photo/St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Salem Saloom preaches at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Brewton, Ala.

and their walk with God and how they can bring their voice to that journey," Beaumont said.

Lay leadership development and lay preacher courses are expanding against a backdrop of declining church membership and attendance, trends in the Episcopal Church that mirror what is happening in other mainline Protestant denominations.

At the same time, parish leadership is changing. Data compiled by the General Convention Office shows that the number of parish priests in full-time positions declined from nearly 60% in 2010 to about 54% in 2020.

The foundation received \$400,000 in grants from Trinity Church Wall Street in New York to launch its Lay Preaching Training Initiative.

Trinity Wall Street aims to help all people of faith "develop their leadership skills so they can be effective in their work in ways that are truth to their faith," said Rob Garris, managing director of the church's Leadership Development Initiative.

The goal isn't to fully replace clergy, Garris told ENS, but rather to prepare and empower lay leaders to take on greater responsibilities in the church. "We're finding different ways to engage people rather than have them be passive recipients of programming," he said.

For most of its 34-year history, the foundation has sought to raise the standards of preaching in the Episcopal Church by working with seminaries and dioceses to enhance training of seminarians and priests.

Now, the time is right to expand that scope beyond clergy, said the Rev. Stephen Smith, a priest in the Diocese of Southern Ohio who is coordinating the training initiative.

"Both the interest and the need are meeting right now," Smith told ENS. Rural dioceses, in particular, have expressed a need for training lay preachers to assist in small congregations that don't have full-time priests, Smith said. Churchwide, lay

leaders have shown a willingness to step up and help guide congregations through the upheaval of the past two years. Some see preaching as a fulfilling new ministry opportunity.

Congregations also benefit from hearing a diversity of perspectives from the pulpit, Smith said, not just sermons by bishops, priests and deacons. "The lay person preaches to talk about the role of the Gospel in everyday life."

In the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, preaching is one of three tracks, in addition to worship and pastoral care, that lay people can choose when attending the 10-month lay leader program offered by the School for Ministry.

The diocese launched the program in 2020 and graduated 24 lay leaders in its first year, including 10 in the preaching track. This year, nine of 20 students are completing the preacher training.

"We realized that lay people have something to say to one another, especially when we're going through something as big as a pandemic," said the Rev. Joy Blaylock, dean of the School for Ministry and diocesan missionary for discipleship. "Sometimes the lay voice can speak outside the institution."

The foundation's curriculum is longer and more intensive than the School for Ministry's program, but both will culminate in participants being licensed to preach in the diocese, with approval of Bishop Russell Kendrick.

Even before the pandemic, some of the diocese's congregations were struggling to recruit, pay and retain permanent priests.

A third of the diocese's 62 churches don't have full-time clergy, Blaylock told ENS, so training lay people can make a big difference locally. And lay preachers "just have a whole different perspective to bring that sometimes enlivens and gives hope in a totally different way, in a beautiful way," she said.

On Feb. 27, the lectionary's appointed Gospel reading was Luke's account of Jesus' Transfiguration. After the reading, Saloom stepped up to the pulpit at St. Stephen's and began his sermon by invoking fond memories of hunting.

"In about three weeks, spring turkey

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NEWS

Prison chaplains find jail visits even more urgent, rewarding in wake of pandemic

By Pat McCaughan
Diocese of Los Angeles

For Prism staff and volunteers, the need to be companions and to share Communion with those in local jails and detention centers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has never been more urgent or more rewarding.

“People are daunted by the issue of incarceration, but that’s not what we’re doing,” says Ann Noble, program coordinator of Prism, the restorative justice ministry of the Diocese of Los Angeles. Often, she says, “it’s just one human being talking to another human being and sharing a story. So, it’s the biggest deal, and yet it’s not a big deal. It feels like it requires so much and all it requires is the greatest gift you have, which is your presence, and everyone can give that.”

While visiting those confined to Twin Towers, the Men’s Central Jail and the Century Regional Detention Facility in Lynwood can seem scary, “an encounter can be sitting one-on-one with one person,” she said. “It can also be participating in a small service, a Mass, just a small group of people in a circle.

“We don’t preach at them, we share. So it feels much more communal. We don’t get up at a podium and talk at them, we sit with them.” With Eucharist, she said, “there’s an opportunity to share the bread, an opportunity to anoint with oil, an opportunity to sit and chat.”

Continuing COVID restrictions have limited the Sunday gatherings to about 10 people, and “that really cuts our numbers down,” according to Sharon Crandall, Prism director. But as soon as the jails reopened to visitations, Prism was back, she said, because “it’s about the people we serve.”

Prism has recently shifted its base of operations to All Saints Church in Pasadena, a move that the Rev. Mike Kinman called “a natural partnership.”

“One of the first things I did when I got here, before I officially started as rector in October 2016, I went to a Prism



Sharon Crandall, director of Prism, prays with an inmate at Men’s Central Jail in Los Angeles.

fundraiser and learned about the ministry,” he said. “Literally, the next day I called [the Rev.] Dennis Gibbs and said, this is something I feel I need to do, particularly as a congregation that skews wealthier and more privileged.”

Since then, former Prism directors Gibbs and the Rev. Greta Ronnigen, co-founders of the Community of Divine Love, have relocated their monastery to the San Luis Obispo area. After their departure, Noble and Crandall, who were long-time volunteers, assumed leadership roles.

“If we’re truly going to be God’s beloved community, then we need to be actively involved in places where some of the least privileged members of our society are,” Kinman said. “And not in terms of ‘we need to go help them,’ but because that is where Jesus is.

“I am hoping that this is a ministry that draws our congregation more and more into those places where Jesus lives,” he added. “It’s also a ministry of the Diocese of Los Angeles and any way that All Saints Church can reach out and help the mission and ministry of the diocese, that’s something we need to do, because we’re all in this together.”

Crandall said having a home base is

“That light is in you and reflected in creation,” Saloom said. “It’s about listening to God’s voice.”

In addition to serving his church, Saloom is a surgeon, a tree farmer and a lover of the outdoors. He told ENS that he draws on those experiences when he writes a sermon. “I think that everybody, no matter ordained or lay, brings something special to the table, and it’s got to be from your own experiences and your own way of doing things.”

Not everyone may feel comfortable standing before a congregation and preaching, but Saloom said he feels a personal calling to this ministry. “Everyone has a ministry, whether they know it or not, and preaching may be one of those ministries,” he said. ■

important, both logistically and spiritually. “When we do a church service and talk about community and share the bread that was consecrated that morning at the church, it means something to those we visit. I think we underestimate the power of that kind of connection for



Anne Noble of Prism reads a poem during noonday prayer at Diocesan Convention 2021.



Photo/contributed
Crandall

people who are incarcerated.”

For example, “a man named George, who was baptized in the jails, is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. We baptized him at the jail. He just lights up when he shows people that baptismal certificate and tells people he’s a member of the church.

“It’s important for someone like George, who knows he’s going to spend the rest of his life in prison, to feel connected to a greater spiritual community.”

Crandall added: “Now, without the monastery, we need that support. This is not necessarily easy work to do. When I go into the jails, I’m by myself most of the time during the week and it’s nice to feel like you have that community of support behind you.”

Episcopal ministry uplifts LGBTQ+ inmates

All Saints parishioner and Prism vol-

unteer Tim Hartley says his experience in the jails helped form his decision to seek ordination.

“It is an amazing, fulfilling ministry,” Hartley said. “The people who come to the service seemed moved by it, and I was changed by it.”

For many of the incarcerated, especially the LGBTQ+ community, Prism brings “genuinely good news, because there are a lot of organizations that will go in as chaplains to the jails in order to convert people to their denomination or particular faith, with the idea of saving souls,” he said.

“Prism is one of the few organizations that will send chaplains in the LGBTQ floor of Twin Towers.”

He recalled a county-led training session for volunteers, where prospective chaplains were hesitant to call inmates by their preferred pronouns, especially if those pronouns “might differ from the way they look or the jail they’re in. One even asked if they could just call them by their inmate number.

“All that is to say the work Prism does is bringing genuinely the good news that we’re supposed to be bringing as Christians.”

Prism volunteer Jonathan Stoner, 40, who also serves as a City of Hope chaplain, agreed, saying he jumped at the chance to return to the jails once COVID restrictions were lifted.

“How cool, to be part of a ministry truly serving the least of these, that even other churches don’t want to minister to. Those experiences, doing services with folks who are LGBTQ+ in the jails, have been really meaningful.

“The folks who come to the services are so hungry, so open, so involved, and serious. They’re engaged in reading. They ask great questions and bring their own knowledge of the scriptures and their own experiences in the conversations.”

Social justice and the ministry of Prism is “part of All Saints’ DNA,” Stoner added. With Crandall and Noble as leaders, and with Mike Kinman at the helm of All Saints, “Prism is going to be championed and hopefully we can get more people involved and even expand to other jails and other prison systems,” he said.

“We can continue to reimagine what this ministry could look like and what the Spirit could be moving us in this season of pandemic.

Serving those in jail “feels like a sacred obligation, a calling,” he said. “It is a reminder to me that each of us has dignity as human beings. Each has worth as children of God, regardless of what we’ve done, or will do. We are all worthy of love and deserve a second chance, a third, a fifth chance.

“There is this sense that this is where I need to be on Sundays, with the people Jesus would be hanging out with.” ■

LAY MINISTRY continued from page 10

season will open in Alabama,” Saloom began his sermon, which was livestreamed on Facebook. He recalled the sensations of walking into the woods as dawn approached, the sounds and smells of wildlife around him, the feel of the cool air, the sight of the brightening sky.

It is “a magic transformation,” Saloom said. “A transformation from darkness into light awakens the world. And one literally feels God’s presence touching one’s spirit.” Jesus may not be revealed to us as the son of God with the same drama that the apostles experienced, he said, but our everyday moments can be revelatory if we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit.

FAITH AND THE ARTS

In Ukraine, art is cultural memory

By Elizabeth Lev
The Pillar

When visiting the Roman church of San Luigi dei Francesi, I often show a black and white photo of Caravaggio's "St. Matthew and the Angel," and see the horror in people's eyes when I tell them the painting was destroyed during the Second World War.

That altarpiece is but one of a long list of artistic casualties caused by armed conflict.

At Reims Cathedral in France, the smiling angel on its façade became the symbol of art's precarious fate during war, having survived the 1914 bombing that destroyed the apse. Loss and looting form a legacy of artistic trauma perpetrated by battle going back even further than Emperor Titus' destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Art has long been a victim of war, and there is no reason to expect a gentler treatment of Ukraine's art.

Amid bombs and skirmishes, art professionals, students, and aficionados wait in trepidation to see which Ukrainian works will wind up as a photograph and a memory.

It may seem frivolous to talk about art during such a grave humanitarian crisis, but art is an essential part of the humanity of a culture, exploited by invaders and destroyed by barbarians to strike at the heart of a people's identity.

As the Ukrainians fight to retain their national sovereignty, their art — their unique expressions of creativity — is an integral part of that identity.

Much like the flag that rallies citizens to the defense of a nation, Ukrainian art is a beacon to recall the Ukraine that was, and to spotlight the Ukrainian people that will be, no matter the outcome of Putin's war, provided the populace can cling to their national identity.

The artistic treasures of Kyiv, Lviv and other cities are too numerous to list, but a few masterpieces boast aesthetic significance, and at the same time reveal some of the travailed history of Ukrainian national sovereignty.

Perhaps it speaks to the centuries of invasions that the most significant works of art in Ukraine are churches: places of gathering, of worship, where the Ukrainian people forged their identity before God.

Most distinguished among these are the churches and monasteries built from the 10th to 12th centuries during the Princely era, the Golden Age of Ukrainian art, that took place shortly after the country's conversion to Catholicism.

This was the era when wooden folk buildings gave way to great stone constructions like St. Sophia in Kyiv, begun by Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise 1037. Modeled after the Justinian's Basilica of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, its symphony of domes crowned with golden lanterns rises like a pyramid towards the heavens.

The interior of St. Sophia pioneered



Photo/Rbrechko via Wikimedia

St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral is located in Kyiv.

Left, the original St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral was demolished by the Soviets in 1935-1936.



Photo/Wikimedia

a new decorative style of frescoed walls leading to dazzling apse mosaics that would become common in Ukrainian churches.

Alongside the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, a stunning monastery that began as a series of underground caves and mushroomed into Baroque splendor, St. Sophia is a magnificent document of the architectural history of Ukraine.

The museum of micro miniatures in the 1,000-year-old cave monastery is a wonder to behold, with tiny carved objects like a convoy of camels parading through the eye of a needle.

More churches sprouted in the wake of St. Sophia: the Dormition Cathedral rose atop the Cave Monastery 1078, followed by Saint Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery (1108) and then Church of Saint Cyril's Monastery (1146).

The churches are still standing today, but their structures recount the tale of Ukraine's sorrows.

St. Cyril's monastery was transformed into an insane asylum by the tsars, St. Michael's Church was bulldozed by the Soviets in 1936, while the Dormition Cathedral was destroyed by mines during the Soviet retreat in 1941.

All three were rebuilt by the indefatigable Ukrainians and the few fragments of frescoes and ornaments that cling to the walls link the modern structures to the ancient faith.

The city of Chernihiv contains more treasures from Ukraine's artistic apex.

The luminous Cathedral of the Transfiguration, built in 1034, features the careful craftsmanship of man-made bricks intertwined with natural stone and contains an amazing array of frescoes, gilt carvings and princely tombs.

Lviv was the epicenter of the Ukrainian Renaissance. The interesting Italo/Ukraine hybrid of the Dormition Church in Lviv, built in the 17th century, fuses bulbous Eastern domes around stern Roman arches: the solid Renaissance order serving as a foundation for the billowing cupolas, symbols of the spiritual.

Religious Renaissance art is best seen in Lviv's Andrey Sheptytsky National



Photo/Maria Prymachenko Family Foundation

"Our Army, Our Protectors," by Maria Prymachenko, was created in 1978.

Museum, founded by the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in 1905.

The museum holds the largest collection the world of Ukrainian ecclesiastical art spanning the 12th–18th centuries, in particular its priceless collection of over 4,000 icons. This treasure of Ukrainian heritage is being hastily packed away for safekeeping in the face of the Russians advance. Not only are these venerable works under threat, but the thriving schools keeping the icon-writing tradition alive

today are menaced by the invasion.

Sheptytsky's neighbor, the National Art Museum of Lviv, is Ukraine's largest art museum, and suffered terribly at the hands of the Soviets, who in their determination to eradicate symbols of national identity arrested and murdered its director in 1946.

During its head-spinning series of invasions over the last 200 years, Ukraine has produced compelling modern art.

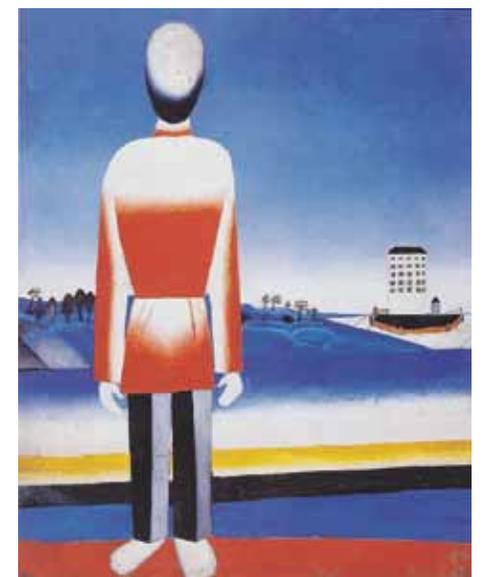
The Ukrainian avant garde movement produced painting and sculpture during the era of Soviet censorship to exalt their national identity. The movement was led by artists like Alexander Archipenko, and Kazimir Malevich, the latter officially banned by Stalin from making art.

By contrast to those artists, the work of Maria Prymachenko (1907–1999) extolled the folk traditions of Ukraine: her bright colors and cheerful patterns celebrated Ukrainian identity without overtly contesting the Soviet regime.

Her works, salvaged last week from a fire caused by Russian bombing in her native region of Ivankiv, are growing into a global symbol for the call for peace.

One might wonder whether it makes sense to worry about these small remnants of an artistic tradition that has been decimated time and time again, but these works speak of a people whose very identity has been repeatedly challenged and yet through fracture and destruction has held together.

St. John Paul II emphasized the importance of art as a foundation of cultur-



Photo/Wikimedia

"Sensation of an Imprisoned Man," by Kazimir Malevich, was created in 1930.

al identity. in his 2005 memoir, "Memory and Identity."

Recalling his own experience in Poland, whose neighbors, he wrote, "have condemned [it] to death several times but which has survived and remained itself. It has kept its identity, and it has kept, in spite of partitions and foreign occupations, its national sovereignty, not by relying on the resources of physical power, but solely by relying on its culture."

Ukraine's culture is essential to the future of the nation, no matter the outcome of the invasion.

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Episcopalians learn pysanka as a form of hands-on prayer for Ukrainians

By Shireen Korkzan
Episcopal News Service

When Russia invaded Ukraine just before the start of Lent, many Episcopalians began praying for the Ukrainian people. The attacks prompted Dontie Fuller, who was already scheduled to teach the art of pysanka — Ukrainian Easter egg decorating — at Church of the Nativity in Indianapolis, to amend her informational event to educate attendees about the attacks and to use the ancient art to offer hands-on prayer for Ukraine.

“This is my first time teaching Ukrainian egg decorating at Church of the Nativity, but now it seems rather poignant this year to be doing this,” said Fuller, a retired youth ministry coordinator and Christian formation director in the Diocese of Indianapolis. Thirteen people attended Fuller’s pysanka event on March 12.

Russian forces invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, in an ongoing conflict that has killed hundreds of civilians and driven millions of refugees to flee the former Soviet republic. Russian attacks have leveled cities and towns across Ukraine, creating



Participants in the pysanka class learned to make Ukrainian Easter eggs using a traditional wax-resist method. The eggs are dipped in different-colored dyes from lightest to darkest with melted beeswax applied between layers.

an ever-growing humanitarian crisis.

“I’m struck by the courage and the determination of the people in Ukraine. I cannot fathom being a mother with small children and having to leave my

husband behind to fight for the country, but then take my children someplace where it’s safe,” said Helen Byler, a parishioner of Church of the Nativity who attended the event.

“The timing of the egg event and the war is really eerie. Making pysanky can be used as a form of prayer, and prayer’s powerful and it’s something that can bring us all together. I will be praying intently for the Ukrainian people this Lenten season,” she said.

According to Fuller, who has been making pysanky (plural form of pysanka) for 35 years, pysanky are made using a wax-resist dye method, which requires the eggs to be dipped in different-colored dyes from lightest to darkest with melted beeswax applied between layers with a design tool called a kistka.

The beeswax preserves the color underneath when dipping the eggs in new colors. Once the designs are complete, the wax is melted and scraped off, revealing the final designs.

Church of the Nativity isn’t the only parish to host a pysanky event during the Lenten season. All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Richland, Wash., also hosted a pysanky class on March 12. The Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross in Dunn Loring, Va., St. John’s Episcopal Church in Wake Forest, N.C., and Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Dallas, scheduled pysanky events in March and April.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church officially split from the Russian Orthodox Church in 2018. A majority of Ukrainian Christians identify as Orthodox.

(On March 11, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry joined other Christian leaders in calling on the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church to reconsider his support for the war.)

Pysanka art originated from Ukraine’s pre-Christian era when eggs were decorated in early spring as symbols of Earth’s rebirth.

When Christianity was introduced to Ukraine in 988, making pysanky turned into an Easter gift-giving tradition that



Photos/Dontie Fuller

Finished pysanky were made by students who participated in Dontie Fuller’s Ukrainian Easter egg decorating class at Church of the Nativity in Indianapolis.

includes customizing eggs for loved ones and praying for them throughout the dyeing process. Christian symbols are common motifs in pysanka art.

“As the wax melts off and you watch this amazing transformation, it’s like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. It’s an absolutely fascinating process,” said Byler, who grew up in the Romanian Orthodox Church and joined the Episcopal Church in 1986.

“It’s like waiting for the resurrection of Christ, like going from Good Friday to

Easter morning is the best way I can describe it,” she said.

Parishioner Colleen Patrick signed up to learn the art of pysanka when she learned that the egg decorating process can be a hands-on source of prayer.

“Prayer for the Ukrainian people right now, I feel, is extremely important because God can work miracles; and if we pray for their health and for their safety and their well-being and for all of this to end quickly, I believe that God can truly do anything,” Patrick said.

“There’s all kinds of charity work going on, humanitarian efforts we can donate to and figure out if there’s anyone local and families you can directly help,” she added.

Fuller said she isn’t one to get political, but she hopes that peace prevails over aggression. “I feel helpless, but prayer is one thing we can do,” she said. ■

Shireen Korkzan is a Midwest-based freelance reporter who primarily writes about religion, race, ethnicity and social justice issues. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram @smkrm5.

ART continued from page 12

“A nation exists,” said Pope John Paul II to UNESCO in 1980, “‘through’ culture and ‘for’ culture, and it is therefore the great educator of men in order that they may ‘be more’ in the community.”

Ukraine’s ever-dwindling trove of art attests to John Paul II’s words.

Perhaps the most important work of art in Ukraine sits inside St. Sophia, the icon of the “unbreakable wall,” an 18-foot-tall mosaic of the Mother of God, hands raised in prayer. She has withstood centuries of raids, fires and bombing, unshaken and unharmed.

The inscription next to her is from Psalm 46: “God is in her midst and does not move.” She invites believers to invoke the Lord in this difficult hour, “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” ■



Photo/Wikimedia

The Virgin Orans is seen in the “Unbreakable Wall” of St. Sophia’s cathedral.

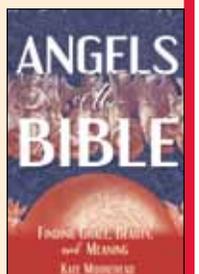
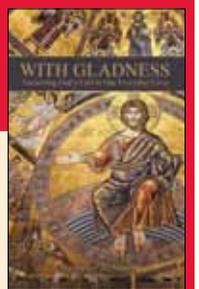
Elizabeth Lev is an art historian living in Rome. This article was originally published on The Pillar.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Searching for a deep and lasting peace

Review by Pamela A. Lewis

This fifth and latest in the series of “The Way of” anthologies is a compilation of poems, stories, essays, and prayers authored by a diverse group of past and contemporary figures on the subject of peace.

Though the work and reflections of some of the most renowned names in literature, social justice, and faith traditions — Maya Angelou, John Lewis, Thomas Merton — are included in these pages, unexpected ones — Paul Simon, Alicia Keyes, and Frank Sinatra — get to weigh in.

The offerings may be of unequal intellectual weight, but each one underscores the book’s premise that peace of heart extends itself to peace on earth, while emphasizing that only God makes that possible.

“The Way of Peace” is organized into three parts comprised of major readings, amongst which, under the heading “Pause for Peace,” are tucked short reflections.

Narratives, poetry, and practices conducive to engendering inner peace are the point of departure in part 1, “Peace

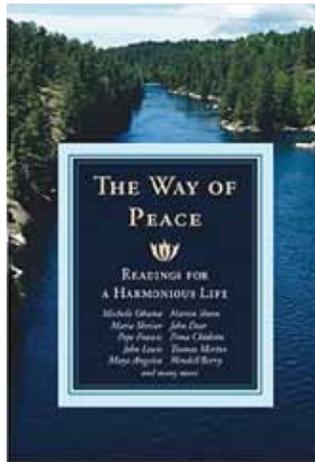
of the Heart.” Brother David Steindl-Rast’s “The Music of Silence” tells of the new Buddhist abbot whose wristwatch beeps during his ordination ceremony at Riverside Zendo in New York. He had purposefully set his watch to beep at noon so that he could interrupt it to think thoughts of peace.

Being, thinking, and speaking for peace, are three of Deepak Chopra’s specific actions in his “Seven Practices for Peace,” one designated for each day of the week. Although simple to carry out and very brief, these practices are not spiritually “easy.”

Conservative rabbi Amy Eilberg, in her “Pray for Peace,” tells of feeling as if she had “gotten very fat” with loving-kindness resulting from wishing the best for everyone she encountered, a practice she learned on a retreat.

Individuals who have been sowers of peace in their communities and in the world are the focus of part 2, “Peace on Earth.”

Here, being interested in peace must be inseparable from becoming an instru-



The Way of Peace: Readings for a Harmonious Life

Michael Leach,
Doris Goodnough,
Maria Angelini,
editors

Orbis Books,
214 pp., \$20.00

ment of peace. In their contributions, Pope Francis (“The Good News”) and his immediate predecessor Benedict XVI (“The Magna Carta of Christian Non-violence”) both return to Jesus’ teachings that stress the importance of nonviolence as a way of being and not merely a tactical behavior in response to evil.

Eighth-grader Riva Maendel instructs us via her honest and award-winning essay “It Starts With Us,” about the need for “creative and active” nonviolence. Attaining peace on an international level must begin in our daily relationships: “If I had offered to do the dishes,” she admits, “I would be promoting peace!”

Greg Darr’s unflinching reflection on racism, justice, and peace, “Honoring George Floyd on 38th and Chicago,” is the author’s story of having been subject to a race-based attack in the wake of Rodney King’s beating by L.A. police officers in 1992. Several days after the murder of George Floyd, Darr (who is white) recalls his violent experience when grace was extended to him by an

unexpected figure.

Part 3’s “Prayers for Peace” offers poems and prayers by writers from various faith traditions, who address the anxieties our tumultuous age has wrought.

Joyce Rupp’s comforting words “In the Night of Weariness” bid the reader to put trust in the “Resilient One,” who is always near.

American Jesuit priest and antiwar activist Daniel Berrigan’s “Prayer for the Morning Headlines” is a raw cry for mercy on behalf of “women and children, homeless in foul weather.” It is also a memorial in verse to some of history’s war-defiled places, a list to which Ukraine would undoubtedly be added were Berrigan alive today to compose this wrenching poem.

Placed toward the end of the anthology, “Interfaith Prayers,” all by unknown authors, are beautiful supplications by Baha’i, Hindu, Native Africans, and others. In words that come from the souls of these peoples they are a collective entreaty to the Creator for peace.

A few contributors are represented more than once in the collection, and some fine poems are shortened, such as Maya Angelou’s majestic “On the Pulse of Morning,” which the author read at the first inauguration of President Bill Clinton in 1993.

These are minor complaints, however, in that “The Way of Peace” offers a diversity of voices that tell us a harmonious life is not only within our reach, but that it is attainable. ■

Based in New York, Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith.

Viewing Bible stories through a different lens

Review by Linda Brooks

The much-loved Bible stories that teach us about God’s love have become smoothed and simplified over time to include only a few characters and offer only one perspective.

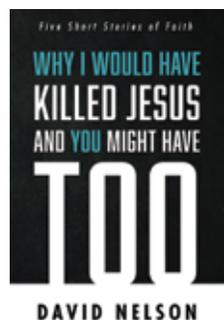
What if there were more characters and the plots offered different angles and therefore ask more questions than they answer? This is the premise of David Nelson’s book “Why I would have killed Jesus and you might have too: Five short stories of faith.”

The five stories are dialogues of imaginary people living in biblical times who encountered or heard of Jesus of Nazareth. They are pragmatic in their faith and beliefs and are confused by this man who offers a different point of view but is adored by people who they believe should know better than to follow this “rebel.”

There is the young widow who feels oppressed by the Romans, a fisherman who wants to help Jesus reach a wider audience, a protective grandmother teaching her young charges how the Scriptures should be followed, a Roman soldier who follows the rules of law and a Pharisee following the rules of his faith.

They become frustrated because Jesus’ teachings don’t fit into what they understand is the proper way to act or treat others. The characters come from different walks of life and would be typical of the time period but speak in a modern English that is relatable to our own times.

This is indeed a story of our times. Rather than retelling already familiar stories, Nelson forces us to think about



Why I would have killed Jesus and you might have too

By David Nelson

Resource Publications
88 pp., \$11.00

our recent modern world that is splitting into an us/them, either/or mentality.

He points out that if we are too pragmatic and limited in our observations, we could miss that which is most important.

It is the characters that offer their stories but it is up to the reader to hold up a mirror and question how we perceive others in our own time. Bible quotes are referenced throughout the book, offering a familiar context.

“Whether we realize it or not, even if we claim to be followers of Jesus, at times his presence threatens our deeply-held values including social status, biblical interpretation, patriotism wealth, family and more,” Nelson writes in the conclusion to the book.

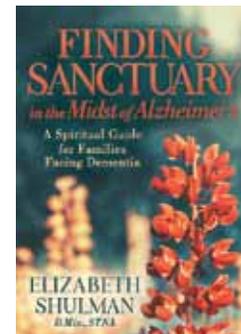
“Some readers may feel their values are under attack while others may welcome the chance to consider new perspectives and deepen their faith. Some may resent this effort to reimage the biblical narratives while others may gain new insights about the gospels,” the author adds. This is an excellent book to use for a Bible study reference and ask the big questions — what would you do then, and what do you do now? ■

New Bible study offered for dementia caregivers and their churches

By Episcopal Journal

“In *Finding Sanctuary*, Dr. Shulman seeks to match church members’ gifts and caregiving families’ needs. Each party has the responsibility to come forward. Shulman’s guide makes it possible.”

— *The Caregiver’s Voice*



Finding Sanctuary in the Midst of Alzheimer’s: A Spiritual Guide for Families Facing Dementia

By Elizabeth Shulman

Morgan James Publishing
156 pages \$12.99

There are more than 16 million people caring for someone with dementia. Caregivers often endure stress and may struggle to find meaning in their role as a caregiver. “Finding Sanctuary in the Midst of Alzheimer’s” addresses common challenges that caregivers face, using Scripture and personal narratives.

Done in a Bible study format with separate sections for spouses, adult children caring for a parent, and those who want to support a caregiver but don’t know how, “Finding Sanctuary” equips churches, retirement communities and dementia support groups with the tools to help caregivers find comfort and teach non-caregivers how to better support

their caregiving friends.

Elizabeth Shulman has more than 30 years of experience as a pastor, university researcher and hospice chaplain. Her devotions for caregivers have appeared in *Guideposts’ Strength and Grace*, and she frequently speaks to churches, retirement communities, and other community groups on dementia and caregiving.

A spousal caregiver for eight years, she trains congregations and other community groups to be more comfortable and confident in serving families affected by dementia. Shulman’s workshops, *Mary and Martha Caregiving* and *A New Pair of Glasses*, cover the challenges of caregiving and offers hope to caregivers by providing new ways to reframe their experience. ■

FEATURE

Holy wars: How a cathedral of guns and glory symbolizes Putin's Russia

By Lena Surzhko Harned
The Conversation

A curious new church was dedicated on the outskirts of Moscow in June 2020: The Main Church of the Russian Armed Forces.

The massive, khaki-colored cathedral in a military theme park celebrates Russian might. It was originally planned to open on the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany, in May 2020, but was delayed due to the pandemic.

Conceived by the Russian defense minister after the country's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, the cathedral embodies the powerful ideology espoused by President Vladimir Putin, with strong support from the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Kremlin's vision of Russia connects the state, military and the Russian Orthodox Church.

As a scholar of nationalism, I see this militant religious nationalism as one of the key elements in Putin's motivation for the invasion of Ukraine, my native country. It also goes a long way in explaining Moscow's behavior toward the collective "West" and the post-Cold War world order.

Angels and guns

The Church of the Armed Forces' bell tower is 75 meters tall, symbolizing the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. The dome's diameter is 19.45 meters, marking the year of the victory: 1945. A smaller dome is 14.18 meters, representing the 1,418 days the war lasted. Trophy weapons are melted into the floor so that each step is a blow to the defeated Nazis.

Frescoes celebrate Russia's military might through history, from medieval battles to modern-day wars in Georgia and Syria. Archangels lead heavenly and earthly armies; Christ wields a sword and the Holy Mother, depicted as the Motherland, lends support.

'Cradles' of Christianity

The original plans for the frescoes included a celebration of the Crimean occupation, with jubilant people holding a banner that read "Crimea is Ours" and "Forever with Russia." In the final version, the controversial "Crimea is Ours" was replaced by the more benign "We are together."

When Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated, calling Crimea the "cradle" of Russian Christianity. This mythology draws on the medieval story of Prince Vladimir, who converted to Christianity in the 10th century and was baptized in Crimea. The prince then imposed the faith on his subjects in Kyiv, and it spread from there.



Photo/Andrey Rusov, Defense Ministry Press Service

Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill, center, attends a ceremony consecrating the Cathedral of Russian Armed Forces outside Moscow.

The Russian Orthodox Church, also called the Moscow Patriarchate, has long claimed this event as its foundational story. The Russian Empire, which linked itself to the church, adopted this foundational story as well.

'Russian World'

Putin and the head of the Russian church, Patriarch Kirill, have resurrected these ideas about empire for the 21st century in the form of the so-called "Russian World" — giving new meaning to a phrase that dates to medieval times.

In 2007, Putin created a Russian World Foundation, which was charged with promotion of Russian language and culture worldwide, such as a cultural project preserving interpretations of history approved by the Kremlin.

For church and state, the idea of "Russian World" encompasses a mission of making Russia a spiritual, cultural and political center of civilization to counter the liberal, secular ideology of the West. This vision has been used to justify policies at home and abroad.

The Great Patriotic War

Another planned mosaic depicted the celebrations of Soviet forces' defeat of Nazi Germany — the Great Patriotic War, as World War II is called in Russia. The image included soldiers holding a portrait of Josef Stalin, the dictator who led the USSR during the war, among a crowd of decorated veterans. This mosaic was reportedly removed before the church's opening.

The Great Patriotic War has a special, even sacred, place in Russians' views of history. The Soviet Union sustained immense losses — 26 million lives is a conservative estimate. Apart from the sheer devastation, many Russians ultimately see the war as a holy one, in which Soviets defended their motherland and the whole world from the evil of Nazism.

Under Putin, glorification of the war and Stalin's role in the victory have reached epic proportions. Nazism, for very good reasons, is seen as a manifestation of the ultimate evil.

The rhetoric of this militant religious nationalism has been on display as Russia threatened to and ultimately did invade Ukraine.

During a speech on Feb. 24, Putin bizarrely called for the "de-nazification" of Ukraine. He also spoke of fraternal relationships between Russian and Ukrainian people and denied the existence of the Ukrainian state. In his view, Ukraine's sovereignty is an example of extreme, chauvinistic nationalism.

Putin's claim that Ukraine's government is run by Nazis is absurd. However, the manipulation of this image makes sense in the framework of this ideology. Painting the government in Kyiv as evil helps to paint the war in Ukraine in black and white.

Messianic mission

Tangible geopolitical issues may be driving Putin's war in Ukraine, but his actions also seem motivated by a desire to secure his own legacy. In his vision of "Great Russia," restored to its former size and influence, Putin is a defender who must vanquish its enemies.

The Russian president himself appeared in earlier versions of the cathedral's frescoes, along with Minister



Photo/ASLuhn via Twitter

Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, appears in a mosaic design for the church, but it was not installed after Putin reportedly said it was too early to celebrate the current leadership.

of Defense Sergei Shoigu and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. However, the mosaic was removed after controversy, with Putin himself reportedly giving orders to take it down, saying it was too early to celebrate the country's current leadership.

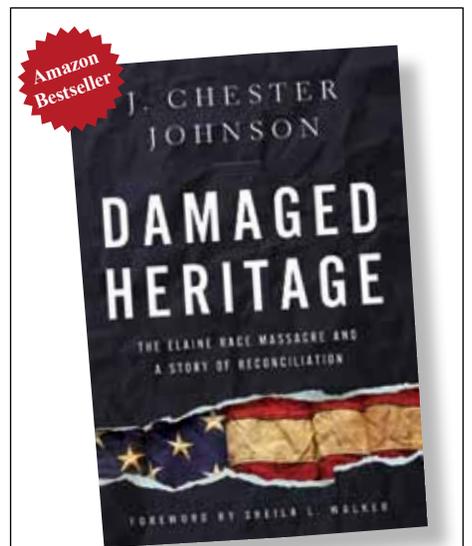
Patriarch Kirill, who has called Putin's rule a "miracle of God," said the new cathedral "holds the hope that future generations will pick up the spiritual baton from past generations and save the Fatherland from internal

and external enemies."

This volatile religious nationalism manifests itself in the militarism unfolding in Ukraine.

On Feb. 24, the day the invasion began, Patriarch Kirill called for a swift resolution and protection of civilians in Ukraine, while reminding Orthodox Christians of the fraternal connection between the two nations. But he did not condemn the war itself and has referred to "evil forces" trying to destroy the unity of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church. ■

Lena Surzhko Harned is assistant teaching professor of political science at Penn State University. This article was originally published at *The Conversation* (www.theconversation.com).



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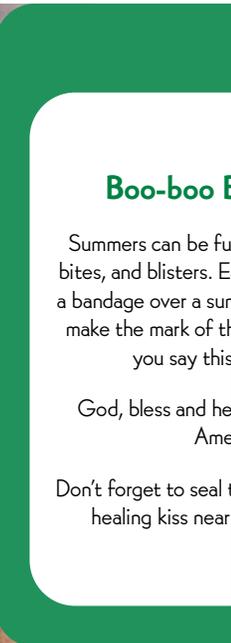
Last Day

Invite your friends to a Bonfire to kick off the summer. Gather around a fire pit, campfire, or bonfire. Roast marshmallows and s'mores. Burn school papers you've collected. After Jesus was resurrected with two followers, how their hearts were changed for them (Luke 24:34). Observe fire safety and use a water hose.



Boo-boo E

Summers can be full of fun, bites, and blisters. E... a bandage over a sunburn. make the mark of the cross. you say this... God, bless and heal. Ame... Don't forget to seal the healing kiss near...



Encouraging Chalk Walk

Follow the instructions of the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and go on a mission to write uplifting notes to neighbors. Target walkways and driveways to write specific notes with sidewalk chalk for friends or inspire passersby with colorful messages like, "You're not alone!" or "Have a great day!" Simple notes and happy drawings can turn around even the most difficult days.