



Iowa Connections

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Faithful Innovations

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA



From the Bishop

The season of the long goodbye is a dreaded phase in a bishop's life. And yet this month our final official visitation schedule begins in earnest. I am aware that even after this coming Easter, we will have yet another Easter to celebrate together. The goodbye, however, is really a farewell. For over the next eighteen months that is my prayer for each of you as congregations—that you fare well in the work God is calling you to do. And that we seek God's blessing on one another.

Blessing and cursing are the two competing choices that mark our lives. There really is nothing in between. Indifference belongs to cursing. In an age when loose and hurtful words, or even epithets, are bandied about over social media without any thought to the consequence, we fast become a society that curses itself into alienation. The apostle Paul told the Christians of Rome that "anger does not fulfil the righteousness of God." And Jesus warned against the practice of calling someone "fool." He likened that hateful, despising, angry thinking that we are prone to as nothing short of murder.

In contrast, the way of empowerment is blessing. As John saw Jesus on the river Jordan, he exclaimed that the Lamb of God has appeared. God's instrument for transforming the world was humility, identity with suffering, and offering of one's innocence for others. The sword never played its part in the new thing God was doing in Jesus; and just because we have chosen to pick it up and wield it for centuries still does not alter that revelation of divine character. John honored what he saw as Jesus approached him. He engaged Him in the act of identification with sinful human nature in baptizing Him; and then God had God's say. "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Whenever we declare someone beloved, we bless them. Whenever we refuse to do that, we curse them. We are born to bless, to declare God's beloved, and as children of the new Adam to rename the world around us.

Roland Rohlheiser, in *Sacred Fire*, says that we all seek to be blessed. And ideally that is part of a healthy upbringing. He sees blessing as occurring within genders, and from older to younger generations. That's a thought that is getting farther and farther away from us as we explore our identities, and yet it is worth pondering. He quotes Bonhoeffer as "suggesting that a blessing is a visible, perceptible, effective proximity to God." In reality it is a speaking well of someone. You can understand why the opposite is a curse.

Jesus captured this in his Sermon on the Mount. In declaring as blessed the conditions of humanity which we often see as more the result of a curse, He tells us where God showers divine affirmation. And that none of us actually can avoid situations depicted in the Beatitudes, Jesus is telling us that we have it all wrong. God's joy is in the deepest sorrow—even when the

Son expresses His sense of abandonment from a cross; and is present for those overlooked in poverty and their sense of abandonment. This is why Mother Teresa would not allow her sisters of mercy to engage directly with the dying until they acquired the gift of joy.



Bishop Scarfe preaching.

This is not an easy perspective to grasp, let alone to embody. But it's where the Spirit of God seeks to lead us as we grow into the meaning of being children of God and followers of Jesus Christ. It's how we fare well and hug the future. It is what I pray for in this year of 2020, and finding the Simple Way.

Rohlheiser comments that blessing is seeing someone; blessing is speaking well of someone; blessing is giving away some of our own life that someone might have more life.

"In summary, we bless others when we see them, delight in their energy rather than feel threatened by it, and give away some of our own life to help resource their lives. Sadly, the reverse is also true: we curse when we demand that they see and admire us, and when we demand that they speak well of us, and when we use their lives to build up our own. A gesture of blessing feeds others; a cursing feeds off of them" (*Sacred Fire*, p.235).

All of this is aspirational, but it also needs to be much more. It is reclaiming Jesus. It is an invitation to a more mature level of discipleship. We know those who experience it because we experience their blessing. We also know how much we fall short. Yet isn't it wonderful to live a life that is always learning, and discovering that in the short comings there is grace, undeserved love that cheers us on and that in the end we are asked to do nothing other than that which God is already doing?

In the peace and love of Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa



The Simple Way

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

March

- 1 Central Chapter Meeting, St. Paul's, Grinnell 2:00pm
- 3 Episcopalians on the Hill, Iowa State Capitol, room 315 1:00pm
- 6-7 Bishop Search/Nominating Committee Retreat
- 7-8 Happening Reunion, St. John's, Ames
- 7 West Chapter Meeting, The Way Station, Spencer
- 8 Bishop's Visitation with All Saints, Indianola
Bishop's Visitation with St. Andrew's, Des Moines
- 14 North Cedar Valley Chapter Meeting, Trinity, Waterloo 9:30am
South Central Chapter Meeting, Trinity, Ottumwa 10:00am
Waterloo Cluster Gathering with the Bishop, Trinity, Waterloo 11:00-3:00pm
- 15 Bishop's Visitation with Trinity, Waterloo
Southeast Chapter Meeting, St. Michael's, Mount Pleasant 2:00pm
- 22 Bishop's Visitation with St. Martin's, Perry
- 28 Addressing Racial Bias in Churches, Old Brick, Iowa City, 10:00-2:30pm
Three Rivers Chapter Meeting, Old Brick, Iowa City, 2:30pm
- 29 Bishop's Visitation to St. Paul's, Marshalltown
East Chapter Meeting, St. Peter's, Bettendorf 2:00pm

April

- 4 Metro Chapter Meeting, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 4-5 New Beginnings #24 Staff Weekend
- 5 Bishop at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines
- 6 Chrism Mass, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 11:00am
- 9-12 Bishop at Trinity Cathedral, Davenport
- 17-18 Commission on Ministry
- 17-19 New Beginnings #24, St. Alban's, Spirit Lake
- 18 Dismantling Racism Training, Trinity Cathedral, Davenport, 9:00-3:30pm
Diocesan Board of Directors meeting, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 12:30pm
- 19 Bishop's Visitation with St. James', Oskaloosa
- 25 Faithful Innovations Training #1, Grinnell Public Library, 10:00am-4:00pm
Dismantling Racism Training, St. Michael's, Mount Pleasant 9:00-3:30pm
- 26 Bishop's Visitation with Good Shepherd, Webster City

Schedule subject to change. Visit iowaepiscopal.org for all of the latest schedule information.

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Front cover: Pictures from the Grinnell Cluster Gathering with Bishop Scarfe at St. Paul's, Grinnell

Iowa Connections

Spring 2020

The Rev. Meg Wagner, Editor

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Faithful Innovations

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA

From Bishop Scarfe:

I am excited to share with you the opportunity to participate in and embrace Faithful Innovations—a learning community process to help the Diocese of Iowa connect more deeply with God, each other, and our neighbors. You may have pondered, as I have: “Where is God taking us in our third year of follow-up since the Revival 2017?” I believe one such answer is to learn how to engage our neighbors more fully, and see what God is already up to. Faithful Innovations offers us a chance to do just this - to connect more deeply, and discover the unique story God wants to tell through the people and congregations of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa.

Faithful Innovations isn't a six month process to “complete”; rather, it is an ongoing way to be the church—a body of Christian people constantly in the process of seeking God in our lives and neighborhoods, listening carefully to our friends and our neighbors, and discerning what God might be saying to us in this moment and the next. I see it as a worthy ongoing follow up to the things the Spirit has been stirring up within us since the Revival 2017. It is a natural next step from Growing Iowa Leaders and Engaging All Disciples.

I invite you to learn more about Faithful Innovations and consider your congregation's possible participation. I look forward to discovering with you the story God wants to tell through our people and our diocese.

**"As we listen to God, one another,
and our neighbors, what future do
we imagine God is bringing forth
in our midst?"**

Deadline for vestries to inform us of their congregation's commitment is March 25. Find out more information and register at iowaepiscopal.org/faithful-innovations

How will my congregation benefit?

- Train effective lay spiritual leaders through workshops and coaching
- Learn to discern and respond to God's leading
- Deepen your congregation's spirituality
- Build connections with other congregations
- Engage and inspire your membership
- Affirm your faith that God has a vital role for your congregation to play

Is your congregation interested in joining? Here's what's required of each congregation:

- A Guiding Team of 4-8 members willing to engage in the three 2020 trainings
- Each Guiding Team will be responsible to help others from their congregation participate in the activities and learning that will take place between trainings
- Each vestry will need to discuss and approve their congregation's participation
- Each congregation will be asked to contribute \$150 to help cover the cost of meals (scholarship assistance is available)

2020 Training Workshops

Insightful Leadership: Begin by Asking Different Questions - April 25

Learn by Doing: Using Action Learning to Discover God's Leading - July 11

Sharing Our Learning: Intentional Reflection on Our Action - September 26

Bishop Search and Nominating Committee

by the Standing Committee

As of this writing, the work of the diocesan Bishop Search and Nominating Committee is beginning to get underway. The Standing Committee met on February 8, and took a careful look at all of those persons who had submitted their names for consideration as members. Thanks again to the Chapters for their prompt attention to meeting in January and forwarding those names to us. In the process, we began by considering those whose names had been chosen in each of the chapters. We looked at the materials they submitted, and then looked carefully at the particular gifts and skills each would bring to the process, as well as to the various demographics represented. We began the work with prayer, and chose as carefully as we could in order to balance various needs. We also looked at those others who had submitted their names to the chapters. This made it possible for us to balance the committee more broadly, with people we knew were interested in the work.

We wanted small and large congregations represented; we wanted to balance lay and clergy, as well as men and women. We worked for diversity in ministry settings, connections to and involvement in the diocese and the community at large, expressions of baptismal ministry, age, as well as in the other factors. With clergy, we considered formation processes, parish size, and previous vocations where applicable and with laity, we looked at professional experience and training. And we definitely looked at the skills and interests each person brought to the task. The members of the Bishop Search and Nominating Committee are:

Sara Early	St. Alban's, Spirit Lake
Steve Halstead	St. Stephen's, Newton
John Horn	Trinity Cathedral
Hannah Landgraf	St. Andrew's, Des Moines
Deb Leksell	Church of the Good Shepherd, Webster City
Andrew Petersen	Trinity Cathedral, Davenport
C. J. Petersen	Trinity Church, Carroll
Vincent Bete	St. Anne's, Ankeny
Paula Sanchini	Christ Church, Cedar Rapids
Holly Scherff	St. John's, Shenandoah
Jeanie Smith	St. Timothy's, West Des Moines
Fred Steinbach	St. Andrew's, Chariton
Jane Stewart	New Song, Coralville
Bonnie Wilkerson	St. Luke's, Fort Madison
Kevin Sanders *	St. Luke's, Cedar Falls

*Chair person

Updates on the search process will be available at:
iowaepiscopal.org/bishop-search

The work will begin with the Search Committee and the Standing Committee meeting together in Retreat with our search consultant, the Rev. Cn. Conrad Selznick. This time will be used to begin the building of a faithful, committed community for the work of listening to the diocese. We will be laying out a schedule for the work, and planning the task of listening around the diocese. Please watch for opportunities to be heard. Soon we will be able to tell you more about the details of this work. Please keep the BSNC and the work itself in your prayers; and we ask you to publicize the Prayer for the Search, and to include it where possible in your personal and corporate worship. Thank you so much.

From the Standing Committee

Karen Brooke, Aileen Chang-Matus, Greg Jones, Kathleen Milligan, Elizabeth Duff Popplewell, Anne Williams

Holy and gracious God; you love your Church and work for its perfecting. We thank you for the abundance of gifts you have given to the Diocese of Iowa. As we have come to this time of transition, open our minds and hearts to see your hand at work all around us, and to discern your purposes for this diocese in this time.

Bless those who have accepted the call to serve on the Search and Nominating Committee. Strengthen them for the task of faithful listening, to each other, to your people around the diocese, and most of all to the leading of your Spirit. Give wisdom to the Standing Committee, the Board of Directors and to the eventual work of the Transition Committee. Guide and strengthen the diocesan staff in their ministry during this time. And give wisdom to those who will ultimately bear the task of electing our next bishop.

Strengthen the faithful of this diocese as they continue to work and pray for our ongoing life and witness. As we look for what is over the horizon, may we continue to be faithful to the day to day work of God's people in Iowa. Bless Alan our Bishop and his ongoing vision and commitment to our work together. Keep Bishop Alan and Donna in your care during this season of change and discernment for their lives.

We praise your name our loving God, and we continue to trust that "all things are being brought to their perfection by Him through whom all things were made, your son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit." Amen.

Sharing God's Extravagant Love

by Beth Preston

Sharing God's Extravagant Love is the motto on the back of our T-shirts. That's the word that so aptly describes God's love for us: not just great or even abundant, but downright extravagant. And that's what we want everyone to know who comes through our doors, that God loves them with an over-the-top, extravagant love. We want them to experience that in our worship, hospitality, delightful décor and delicious food and coffee, our wealth of reading material and art supplies, and the way we love each person, enfolding them into our community of love.

Our ministry continues to develop in response to the Holy Spirit's leading and the expressed needs of the community. When we first opened in September 2018, we didn't know we would be serving youth. Now we couldn't imagine our ministry without them. Any given day might find volunteers playing board games, Statues in the Garden, or balloon volleyball with youth, sharing life stories over pizza or chili, or immersed in candle making or beading.

We began our Youth Service League (YSL) last summer. Our youth cleaned and worked in a family's garden. We volunteered at the local animal shelter and signed up to help at a care facility and community kitchen. The youth thought of making and giving out Kindness cards to neighboring merchants. One shopkeeper told me how much they brightened an otherwise gloomy day.

GPS is our youth worship on Thursday, the God Positioning System: Where is God? Where am I? And what path do I follow to get closer to God? We read from a Christian book, currently *Love Does for Kids* by Bob Goff. Then we listen to "God sightings" by taking turns sharing when, where, and how God has shown up doing amazing things in our lives. We pray. We laugh, we cry, and we shout with joy at our awesome God's amazing acts of love. Things like: a message given in math class not to seek revenge on a bully, because "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says the Lord; a brother who had been missing for six years and suddenly

showed up, unharmed; another brother who contemplated suicide but then told his sister he chose to live so she wouldn't be alone. One girl said after GPS one evening that she felt as if she had glimpsed a little bit of heaven, and she felt like a different person. Teachers at the school express the radical change they have seen in some of these youth after spending time at The Way Station. One young man cautions others to use wholesome speech, because "this is a holy place." He now wants to donate a sizeable amount of what he earns to The Way Station.

The youth are coming to Sunday services and some are bringing their mothers. The extravagant love of God is catching. It's catching in families, neighborhoods, and the entire community. Our aim is nothing less than changing the world. How about partnering with us?

The Rev. Beth Preston is the founder of The Way Station in Spencer, Iowa.



Youth singing at God Positioning System (GPS). Photo credit: Beth Preston



We are all family. Youth, friends, and volunteers, we share each others' joy and sorrows. Photo credit: Beth Preston

Summer Ministry School and Retreat & Small Church Summit June 26-28

The Summer Ministry School & Retreat has offered formation and learning experiences covering a variety of topics each summer for the past 30 years on the Grinnell College campus.

This year, the Small Church Summit will provide the focus for much of the time together. The plenary sessions will be dedicated to topics identified in the Small Church Quadrant gatherings as of interest to congregations at this time in the Diocese of Iowa. There will be four tracks related to these plenary topics. As in past years, tracks are varied and hopefully appeal to a wide range of interests.

How will it work?

Like in years past, adults sign up for one of 11 learning tracks to focus on during 7-8 hours of track time during the weekend. Four of the 11 adult tracks will have a plenary dedicated to the topic that will provide a broad overview of the topic. The plenary is intended to be of interest to everyone attending SMSR. These 4 plenary topics will each be explored more deeply during the track time. All participants will gather together for keynote speakers then separate into their tracks to explore their track topics. Those in the Summit tracks will gather as a large group on the final day, instead of in their tracks.

Childcare for kids up to entering grade 3 will be provided in the same building as the adult tracks. Children and Youth enjoy a “lock-in” just south of campus chaperoned and programmed by the Youth Ministry Development Team.

Eucharist, Worship and prayer together remains a treasured part of the weekend.

Where will I eat or sleep?

Delicious meals are served buffet style in the same building as the worship and learning/summit tracks and childcare. Air-conditioned dorms are a short walk across the field, OR a quick ride on a golf cart. You can reserve a private dorm room or share with a roommate or family members with shared bathrooms (single gender or family) on each floor. You must pay for your meals in advance and meal tickets for each meal will be in your nametag when you arrive!

Children and Youth entering grade 3 thru age 18 bunk lock-in style at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church just south of the Grinnell Campus only joining the adults for Eucharist and the optional Sunday lunch unless they are entering grade 10 or above and are in one of the 11 learning tracks.

What will it cost?

There is a base fee of \$80.00 per adult or \$30.00 for ages 8-18 who are in the lock-in. You then add your dorm room fee and the cost of your meals to determine your total cost which should not be more than \$225.00 per person for the whole weekend...but there are several special discounts that can bring down your costs substantially.

There are discounts for:

- Registering before Memorial Day! Save \$25.00 per adult
- Commuting option (does not include dorm lodging). Save \$20.00-\$50.00
- Bringing your own linens to the dorm. Save \$25.00-\$30.00
- Bringing your own continental breakfast to eat in your dorm. Save \$16.00 over both days

And scholarships are also available thanks to the donations of past participants in this wonderful annual event. Children in childcare attend completely cost free.



For more information and to register visit: iowaepiscopal.org/smsr

Schedule

Friday

- 1:30-6:45pm Adult/Family Check in
- 5:00-6:00pm Youth Check in at St. Paul's
- 5:15pm Dinner
- 6:15-6:30pm Welcome and Orientation
- 6:30-7:00pm "Authentic Love, Divine Power, Deep Connections: Theological Reflections on Small Church Life", Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook
- 7:00-8:00pm TRACK TIME
- 8:15pm Worship
- 8:30pm Social time

Saturday

- 7:30am Coffee hour
 - 8:00am Breakfast
 - 9:00am Gather and Worship
 - 9:30-10:00am "Quality of Life and Community Well-Being in Small Places" Kimberly Zarecor and Deborah Tootle
 - 10:00am-11:45am TRACK TIME
 - 11:50am Midday Worship
 - Noon Lunch and Free Time
 - 1-1:30pm "Organizing for Success: A Panel Discussion on Strategic Planning and Small Church Success Stories with Iowa small church leaders"
 - Options for 1:30-3:30pm
 - Participate in Open Space exploration and conversation groups
 - Personal time
 - 3:30pm TRACK TIME
 - 6:00pm Dinner
 - 7:00-7:30pm "Connecting our Communities through Fresh Expressions of Church" - William Poland, Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church
 - 7:30-8:45pm TRACK TIME
 - 8:50pm Celebration
- ### Sunday
- 7:30am Coffee Hour
 - 8:00am Breakfast & check out
 - 9:00am TRACK TIME and Small Church Summit World Café
 - 10:45am Holy Eucharist
 - Noon Lunch and Depart

Tracks

Track 1 Hope and Action: Cultivating Abundant Small Churches

This track will examine small church leadership from a variety of perspectives—stories, data, conversation, reflection, skills, and resources. Presenter: Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Track 2 Quality of Life and Community Well-Being in Small Places

Tools, research, and strategies to help churches mitigate population loss in Iowa. Presenters: Kimberly Elman Zarecor, Deborah Tootle

Track 3 How to Move Forward as Thriving Small Churches

How can you lead your tiny church congregation thru a process of developing an outreach program? Presenters: Sue Ann Raymond, Diane Eddy, Keila Eddy

Track 4 Connecting our Communities: Becoming New through Mission and Relationship

This track will focus on ways to reconnect with our communities and rediscover a missional culture that can bring renewal to our communities. Presenter: William Poland

Track 5 Advocacy for Sustainability

Give yourself the tools, insights and inspiration you need to join with others to make a difference in the world. Come to this class to learn how to become a part of the solution to the problem of Climate Change. Presenter: Matt Russell

Track 6 Back to the Bible: Basics

Come and explore the Bible, its various themes and promises and how this can be of value in your life today. Knowledge will be gained, faith strengthened and fun will be had by all. Presenter: Donna Scarfe

Track 7 The Bible and the Quran

The Bible and Quran have given comfort and joy to generations of believers...and have also been misused and misunderstood by even their own followers. Learn what these tomes have in common and how understanding them can give comfort and joy in this deeply polarized age. Presenter: Kate Campbell

Track 8 Prairie Pilgrimage

Take time to be "in the world," walking softly in our environment, and enjoying with praise and thanksgiving the handiwork of our Creator. Presenters: Jenn Latham and Daryl Smith

Track 9 Liturgy and the Hope to Which We are Called

We will be exploring the movement of our Liturgies from Formation, through Thanksgiving, to Habit and then to Mission. Presenters: Jean McCarthy and Kathleen Milligan

Track 10 Developing a Spiritually Vital Church

The track will feature a mixture of practical ideas, spiritual exercises, and planning tools to help your congregation take the next step in spiritual growth. Presenter: Kevin Goodrich, O.P.

Track 11 Solo Retreat

Track A Childcare (entering grade 3 and younger)

Track B YMDT Program (grades 4-9)

Youth entering grades 10-12 attend a numbered track and join the YMDT group for chaperoned Saturday swimming and Friday/Saturday "lock-in" accommodations at St. Paul's

Voting Rights Restoration

by Jean Davis

The Engaging All Disciples, Public Policy Cohort is working to raise awareness on the topic of voting rights restoration for Iowans with felony convictions.

Voting is front and center in 2020 as Iowa hosts the first in the nation presidential caucuses. We Iowans are proud of this status and we take this responsibility quite seriously by studying the candidates, their positions and by engaging in public events and conversations on the issues.

Although Iowa enjoys first in the nation caucus status, Iowa also has the dubious distinction of being the only state in the nation to permanently ban felons from getting their voting rights back after their release from incarceration. Under current law, voting rights restoration requires approval from the Iowa Governor.

Based upon current estimates, more than 52,000 Iowans with felony convictions are currently prohibited from voting. (*campaignlegal.org.*, November 22, 2019.) That number is greater than the population of 89 of Iowa's counties and represents 2.17% of the voting age population in Iowa. (Id.).

Upon their release from prison, these Iowans return to work, pay taxes, enjoy rights afforded under our federal and state constitutions yet they are denied the right to engage in a fundamental expression of citizenship.

Last year, the governor proposed an amendment to the Iowa Constitution that would automatically restore voting rights upon release from prison. In addition, the governor indicated that she would explore ways to improve the current process used for voter rights restoration. In March 2019, the Iowa House voted 95-2 to approve the governor's recommendation for a constitutional amendment. However, that resolution stalled in the Senate.

In December 2019, the governor reaffirmed her position favoring a constitutional amendment and the Iowa Department of Corrections implemented an improved, automated process for voter rights restoration for inmates being discharged from correctional facilities. At the same time, the governor pledged to timely review all pending restoration applications with an emphasis on ensuring participation in Iowa's upcoming caucuses.

Voting is fundamental to participation in our democracy. Thomas Jefferson said this about voting: "We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." Voting is an opportunity to participate, to have one's voice heard, and to affect policy choices and actions.

The Public Policy Cohort of the diocesan Engaging All Disciples initiative is now working to raise awareness of the ongoing legislative and executive branch efforts to remedy Iowa's "only state in the nation" status on voting rights restoration. The Rev. Jeanie Smith, Deacon at St. Timothy's Church in West Des Moines, and Jean Davis, a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Des Moines, have been engaged in meetings and discussions with elected officials and conversations with Iowans with felony convictions adversely affected by the current law. If you are interested in this issue or in joining the ongoing efforts, please contact the Rev. Jeanie Smith at deacon@sttimothyiowa.org or Jean Davis at jeanmdavis9@gmail.com.

Ms. Jean Davis is a member at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Des Moines.



Episcopalians on the Hill

Tuesday, March 3 at the Iowa State Capitol

Join other Episcopalians from across Iowa at the Statehouse on March 3, and have an opportunity to learn about bills our public policy ministry is following and take an opportunity to speak with your own Iowa lawmaker. Iowa Senator Rob Hogg, and Iowa Senator Bob Kressig will join us. Afterwards you are invited to Tasty Tacos to visit with your fellow Episcopalians and for a tasty post-advocacy snack.

We will meet at 1:00 PM at the capitol in room 315. To learn more follow the "Faith in Action" group on Facebook.

Voter Education and Engagement

by Meg Wagner

Over the winter, Beloved Community Initiative has worked with the Johnson County Interfaith Coalition (JCIC) to host the first of several Voter Education and Engagement events aimed at increasing voter participation. Working with the Johnson County Auditor, we began in the section of Iowa City with the historically lowest voter turnout.

One of the JCIC member churches in that area, The Kingdom Center, along with the South District Neighborhood Association, helped survey residents about their primary concerns. The issues that were at the top of their lists included: education, employment, affordable housing, health care, and immigration.

In addition to the South District Neighborhood Association, JCIC also partnered with the League of Women Voters, the Center for Worker Justice, the NAACP, and Black Voices Project.

Beloved Community Initiative produced flyers for the event that were translated and printed in the six languages commonly spoken in the South District—Arabic, Spanish, French, Swahili, Lingala, and English. The flyers invited neighbors to a night of food, education, and entertainment where they could register to vote and learn more about how the Democratic and Republican caucuses work.

On January 16th, 2020, while it was about 8 degrees outside, almost 200 neighbors and volunteers gathered at The Kingdom Center. Tables lined the edges of the hall with voter registration provided by the League of Women Voters, Census information, tables for the Democratic and Republican parties with caucus information, and Inside Out volunteers with information about restoring your right to vote after incarceration.

Interpreters for five languages were stationed along the south wall of the Center where guests could converse with a volunteer fluent in Spanish, French, Swahili, Lingala, or Arabic and get an interpreter's assistance at the other tables. Also available in all five languages and English were free, colorful infographics that BCI developed for JCIC (see example page right) that highlighted the district's concerns that had been named in the surveys—along with the message that the remedies to these concerns evolved from informed voting.

Lady Gerri Allen and Pastor Vince Allen from The Kingdom Center opened the program. Lady Gerri welcomed everyone and gave time for the interpreters to share information in their languages. Pastor Allen reminded those gathered of the power in voting and the responsibility of citizens to make a difference through voting. He was followed by a beautiful gospel performance by the Charisma trio. Pastor Tony Smith of New Creations International Church and Chair of JCIC acknowledged the contributions of those who conceived of, planned for, and made the evening a success. North Liberty Council Member RaQuishia Harrington spoke about what can happen when people of color register, vote and run for public office themselves. She reminded people that state and local elections really make a difference in people's lives.

The program part of the evening ended with Caleb Rainey, a poet and spoken word performer. He shared a poem that he had written about how a teacher's biased-based low expectations can infect educational settings and, in turn, influence the outcome for students of color.

After the program, the food provided by the social enterprise chefs at the Center for Worker Justice and a local African



North Liberty City Councilwoman, Ms. RaQuishia Harrington, encouraging people to register and vote. Photo credit: Meg Wagner.



Iowa City's Mayor Pro-tem, Ms. Mazahir Salih talking with Clinton's former Press Secretary, Mike McCurry (center). Photo credit: Wagner.

Voter Education, *continued*

American caterer was served and people visited with each other and the different booths.

Beloved Community Initiative hosted a group of seminarians from Wesley Seminary in D.C. who were in Iowa studying Public Theology with their teacher, former Clinton Press Secretary, Mike McCurry. Mike McCurry was assisted by Rochelle Andrews, Associate Director of the Center for Public Theology, a colleague of Susanne's at the Public Theology and Racial Justice Institute at Vanderbilt Divinity School. The group spent the afternoon at BCI and attended the event as an example of faith communities engaging their faith in the public square.

As your congregation looks toward election engagement in November, please feel free to contact Beloved Community Initiative if you would like issue infographics tailored to your location. Examples of all five infographics produced for the voter education event are available at becomingbelovedcommunity.org/advocacy. Also remember that The Episcopal Church each year offers a toolkit called Voting Faithfully and this year has added a census toolkit to help congregations encourage participation. Materials are available on the Office of Government Relations website, episcopalchurch.org/OGR/general-advocacy-resources

The Rev. Meg Wagner serves as the diocesan Missioner for Communication, Reconciliation, and New Initiatives and is one of the co-founders of Beloved Community Initiative along with the Rev. Susanne Watson Epting.



Poet and spoken word artist, Mr. Caleb Rainey entertains some of the children before things get started. Photo credit: Wagner.

If you care about EDUCATION

your VOTE MATTERS!

981 STUDENTS

981 of the 2248 Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, and Native American students in the Iowa City school district are NOT grade-level proficient in reading (43%) compared to their white classmates, only 12% of whom are not proficient.

source: iaschoolperformance.gov.

43%

SUSPENSIONS

697



697 of the 967 students that were suspended last year from Iowa City Schools were Black, Hispanic, or Multi-Racial (72%) yet those students only make up 36% of the students in the district.

source: iaschoolperformance.gov

28TH

IN SCHOOL FUNDING

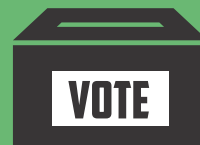
Iowa is 28th in the nation for school funding. Over 90% of school funding comes from state and local legislatures. The decisions that those bodies make directly affects the quality of education our students receive. Overall, state funding for education in Iowa has declined by 17% since 1998.

Source: Iowa Policy Project 2012, Iowans for Public Education, 2019



VOTER TURNOUT

14.20%



of eligible voters in Johnson County voted in the last city-school board election. The school board sets policy, oversees employment processes, plans and approves the budget, monitors student success, and sets goals and expectations for the district.

source: Johnson County Auditor

Information provided by: Johnson County Interfaith Coalition
organizeiowa.com

Available for download at becomingbelovedcommunity.org/advocacy

Developing a Rule of Life

by Kevin Goodrich, O.P.

For centuries monks have lived according to a rule of life. In recent decades, the practice has been embraced by Christians from many denominations and life situations. The word “rule” comes from the Latin word “regula,” meaning a rhythm or routine. A rule of life is a routine of spiritual practices. A rule of life may also be thought of as a spiritual fitness program, a guide to loving God and neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40), a description of the spiritual practices of a religious community or individual and, as a practical plan for remaining faithful to your vows (e.g. baptismal, monastic, marriage, priestly, etc.).

The rule of life concept comes from the monastic tradition. The rule helps to guide the individual and corporate lives of the monks. It provides a structure for their lives. It shapes the daily and annual schedule of the community. Perhaps the most famous monastic rule is *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, written by the saint of the same name in the sixth century (his feast is July 11 on the Episcopal calendar). Benedict was layman seeking a deeper relationship with God. He first pursued this relationship alone as a hermit. However, in time, others joined him and this necessitated the development of how Benedict and his followers would order their life together.

The Rule of Saint Benedict remains widely influential, being a source of inspiration for present day monastics, as well as thousands of people who live by themselves or with their families. I commend it to you. While Benedict’s rule was written for monks, there are other rules that are intentionally written for Christians living outside the monastery. One example is the Rule of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis. One part of their rule states, “The Holy Eucharist: Since we see the Eucharist as the heart of our prayer, our personal rule would call us to frequent participation in this Sacrament.”

Today, many individuals have created their own rule of life covering a range of practices and concerns from daily prayer, to regular exercise, to time with family and more. The great gift of a rule of life is that it provides a structure for pursuing a serious and intentional spiritual life. It also provides a starting point for serious reflection about how you are living out your baptismal vows as a disciple of Jesus. For Episcopalians, a natural starting place for considering a rule of life is the Baptismal Covenant (BCP, 304-5). Shared reflection on the Baptismal Covenant might also allow a congregation to create a parish rule of life (something we’ve done at St. John’s).



The Rev. Dr. Kevin Goodrich

The development of a personal rule of life would help many Christians immensely, and I commend this possibility to you. While there are lots of online resources for creating a rule of life, I strongly urge you to meet with a priest or spiritual director to discuss this possibility first. There are pitfalls to creating and observing a rule of life and having a simple conversation with someone can help you to avoid them. At the Summer Ministry School and Retreat in June, I, and a team from St. John’s, will be offering a track on “Developing a Spiritually Vital Church.” This track will include conversations about rules of life for individuals and congregations.

The Rev. Dr. Kevin Goodrich, O.P. is the Rector of St. John’s, Dubuque and is an Anglican Dominican friar.

Trinity Iowa City Hosts a 335th Birthday Concert for J.S. Bach



Trinity, Iowa City will host a concert at 3:00 pm on March 29 to celebrate the 335th birthday of Johann Sebastian Bach. A group of artists including musicians from the faculty of the University of Iowa’s School of Music will perform works by Bach for organ, piano, voice and other instruments. Refreshments in the parish hall, including birthday cake, will follow the one-hour program.

Trinity Church is located at 320 E. College Street in Iowa City. All are welcome to attend. There is no admission charge, but a free-will offering will be received.

The Episcopal Service Corps

by Sara Fread

My life drastically changed in August when I hopped on a plane to New York City for the first time and began my journey as a fellow in the New York Service and Justice Collaborative (NYSJC), a program of the Episcopal Service Corps. This year-long young adult service program focuses on social justice education, intentional community, leadership development, faith formation, vocational discernment, and serving others. By committing to this program, each fellow agrees to serve 35 hours a week in a church, social service agency, or non-profit organization, become part of the host church community through participation in their ministries, and develop intentional community within the house through sharing meals, weekly group reflection and education, and creating a Rule of Life together, a living document that dictates how the community will function. I am currently living in intentional community with four other fellows in the Trinity House, the rectory of Trinity Episcopal Church in the Morrisania section of the South Bronx, while serving at The New Life School just a few blocks away

Living in the South Bronx has truly been an eye-opening experience. Morrisania is within the poorest congressional district in the United States. The median income for the 21,320 residents living in the neighborhood is \$29,000. Thirty-seven percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Forty-nine percent of the children in the South Bronx live in poverty. Trinity House is located on the edge of the “projects,” a large system of New York City Housing Association apartment buildings. Just a block or so down the street in both directions are homeless shelters where dozens of people seek refuge each night. It has been difficult to swallow the fact that I’m living in a spacious three-story house rent free while my surrounding neighbors are struggling every day to provide housing for themselves and their families. I also consider my housemates and myself extremely lucky to live within two blocks of a large grocery store. Many people in the South Bronx live in food deserts, areas without access to affordable or quality food such as produce. The bodegas, small corner stores, all over the city are more comparable to a convenience store than a grocery store, which makes

it extremely difficult to provide healthy food for a family on a budget. Our local grocery store is a huge blessing.

The South Bronx is home to a mostly black and Latinx population. Morrisania in particular has many first or second generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the West Indies. It is uncommon for me to hear English spoken on the streets or even see another white person as I walk through the neighborhood. The demographic of the area didn’t always look like this however. The South Bronx began as a hub for German and Irish immigrants. By around 1930, the area was known as the “Jewish borough” due to its 49% Jewish population. When white flight began to increase after WWII, the area morphed drastically from two-thirds white in the early 1950s to two-thirds black and Puerto Rican by the 1960s. This is when the South Bronx began to decay as poverty and violence rates rose. By the 1970s, the government determined that the South Bronx wasn’t worth saving and implemented a planned shrinkage policy, a strategy to stop spending money on deteriorating neighborhoods in order to invest more in communities that the government believed could still be saved. This plan closed all public services in the area, such as subway stations, schools, firehouses, and sanitation services. People began to realize that they could collect more insurance money if the buildings they owned were destroyed, so they began burning them down. By the mid-1970s, the South Bronx was averaging about 30 fires every 2 hours. Gangs ran the streets, violence and crime rates were sky high, and the opioid problem was one of the worst in the United States.

The South Bronx is incredibly resilient. Thanks to the urban renewal efforts of the late 1980s, crime rates, gang



Sara’s ESC group with the Suffragan Bishop of New York at the ribbon cutting ceremony and blessing of Trinity House in September. Sara is second from left.

Episcopal Service Corps, continued

violence, and drug use has lowered significantly. It still has its hardships, but it is no longer the dangerous place it used to be. Many people attribute the importance of music to the perseverance of residents in the Bronx. The South Bronx was the birthplace of hip hop, and it was hip hop music that allowed people to feel hopeful amidst the burning of the Bronx. One of my favorite parts of living in the Bronx today is that there is always music playing somewhere.

During the week, I spend my time serving at The New Life School (TNLS), which is a state approved, non-public special education setting operated by Lutheran Social Services of New York for students in grades 3-12 or ages 8-21 from all five boroughs. Students come to TNLS for a variety of reasons: autism, learning or intellectual disabilities, behavior challenges, or emotional disturbance. The common thread between all 200 students is that the public school system wasn't able to provide the support or resources needed for the students to thrive. My students bring an incredible amount of emotional baggage with them to school. They deal with poverty, food instability, mental illness, abuse, emotional trauma, and/or neglect at home. Many are in foster care. Some are immigrants and/or non-native English speakers. Some are struggling through teen pregnancy. Some have been incarcerated or are likely to end up incarcerated. It is incredibly challenging to get students to focus on their schoolwork when they are distracted by hunger or can't keep their eyes open during class. Many take medication that makes them drowsy during the day, work multiple jobs after school to help their families, take care of siblings while their parents work night shifts, or stay up all night playing video games because their parents are out working or don't care what they do, so they are exhausted when they arrive at



South Bronx neighborhood. Photo by Sara Fread.

school. Several of the students become violent quickly, and fights (often involving police and hospitalization) happen daily. Teachers spend so much time dealing with behavior that academics get put on the back burner.

Because these kids have been mistreated by adults for most of their lives, it is difficult for them to trust or maintain healthy relationships. I am cursed out by students almost every day. I've been called every name you can think of. In some cases, it has been harder for me to gain trust because I am white. One student in particular only called me "white lady" and refused to be in a room with me because he assumed I was a racist and a member of the KKK. I have a quote written on the whiteboard in my bedroom that says, "You will never look into the eyes of someone God does not love." I read it every day before I leave for work and think about it often throughout the day. No matter what a student does or says, no matter how disrespectful they are, no matter how frustrated or angry I want to be, they are still a beloved child of God. I am still called to love, show compassion, be patient, and forgive. This is the hardest lesson I have had to learn, and every day I am provided with new opportunities to practice.

One of the most common questions I have been asked since I began my year of service is why I chose this path in the first place. Why would I choose to work in an intense and challenging school for very little pay and live in the poorest congressional district of the United States? My answer is simple: God calls us to work for justice. In college, I majored in religious studies and intercultural studies with a social justice emphasis, which meant I was talking about justice all the time. I read about and studied race, gender, socioeconomic class, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation constantly. I analyzed power dynamics, oppression, social construction, and privilege. As much as I loved that, I often felt like I was much better at talking the talk than walking the walk. I knew quite a bit about injustice but only from my privileged academic bubble. My decision to join NYSJC was a commitment to live and work in solidarity with those who are suffering the most from our broken systems. One of mentors in college used to say often that if something isn't good news to the poor and oppressed, then it isn't part of the Gospel. My time in NYSJC so far has helped me understand that even more. If it isn't good news to my neighbors living in the projects, it isn't Gospel. If it isn't good news to my students suffering under a system they had no say in creating, it isn't Gospel. If it isn't good news to the man who lives on the park bench by my house or the woman asking for money on the subway, it isn't Gospel. As I wake up each day and face the harsh economic and racial inequalities of our country that I previously had the privilege to ignore, I am challenged in new ways of acting justly, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Ms. Sara Fread was a member of St. Luke's in Cedar Falls and served in ESC in 2018-2019.

Iowa City Parishioner's Interest in Cathedrals Takes a New Direction

by Lauren Lyon

Three stories came together in Paris on the weekend of September 13-15, 2019 at a celebration marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of France by allied forces in World War II. Mike Klug, a parishioner of Trinity church in Iowa City was there. His decades' long interest in the art and architecture of European cathedrals led him to the intersection of those three stories and the invitation to attend the anniversary event.

In August, 1944, the cathedral city of Chartres was on the route of Patton's Third Army. Suspicion that German machine guns might have been placed in the cathedral tower to slow the army's advance had done precisely that. Impatience with the delay prompted an order to shell the medieval gothic structure. The stained glass windows were not at risk. They had been removed already, some transported to a safer location, others hidden in the crypt. Artillery fire would not have brought the cathedral crashing to the ground but it would have destroyed 700-year-old art on its exterior walls.

Colonel Welborn Griffith, a member of the Third Army, believed that the Germans had already vacated the cathedral and proposed a search of the building. He volunteered to do so, alone. He entered and climbed to the tower, not knowing what or whom he would find. In fact, the tower was deserted. He returned to his superiors with the news and the order to shell the cathedral was called off. Later that day, allied forces fought a battle for the city of Chartres. Colonel Griffith was killed by sniper fire in the nearby town of Lèves. Its citizens commemorated his courage in the successful effort to preserve their cathedral with a plaque

embedded in a building near the spot where he fell.

The life of Griffith's aide de camp, Corporal Eugene Schulz, took a very different path. He survived the war and lives to this day in the Milwaukee area. Last summer he was honored with a

distinction as a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. Only French nationals may be members of the Légion, but citizens of other countries who have served France and exemplified the ideals the Légion upholds may receive its recognition. As a participant in the breakout from Normandy and subsequent action that

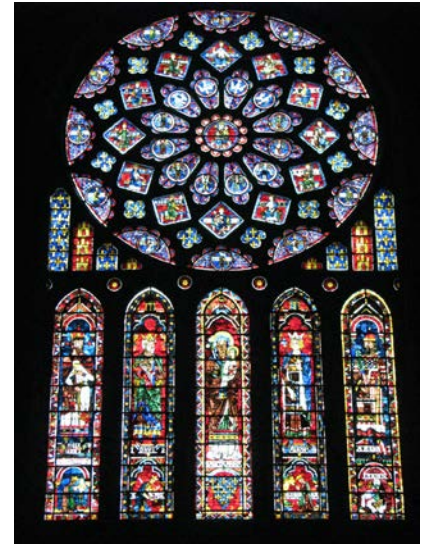


West facade of Chartres Cathedral. Photo credit: Mike Klug.

Cathedrals, *continued*



Eugene Schultz (grey hair, front left) at the wreath laying ceremony. Photo credit: Mike Klug.



North Rose window and Lancets at Chartres Cathedral. Photo credit: Mike Klug.

liberated France, Eugene Schulz was accorded that honor last September 13.

Mike Klug's interest in Chartres and the art and architecture of European cathedrals began in an undergraduate course at St. Louis University. Mike was researching new material to incorporate into a presentation about Chartres at the Senior Center in Iowa City when he came across the story of Colonel Griffith. The story of Griffith's search of the cathedral and his subsequent tragic death led Mike to Gene Schultz, who happens to live in Mike's home town of Milwaukee. The two met to talk and in the course of their growing friendship, Mr. Schultz invited Mike to be present at the September 13 ceremony.

As a result of his research and the resulting trip to France, Mike's interest in sharing the art and architecture of Europe's cathedrals has found a new direction. He became acquainted with Dominique Lallement who, after a career in economic development primarily with the World Bank, now serves as president of American Friends of Chartres, a non-profit organization with the mission of restoration and preservation of Notre-Dame de

Chartres Cathedral. The group has been instrumental in a recent project to restore some of the cathedral's stained glass windows.

Mike will be making presentations about Chartres Cathedral on behalf of the group in various Midwestern locations. His presentation will feature a 50-minute documentary about

the cathedral's restoration entitled Light Restored, along with his own photographs. Mike blogs at <https://mikejklug.wordpress.com>. If your congregation is interested in hosting a presentation, contact Mike at mikejklug@aol.com.

Mr. Mike Klug is a member of Trinity in Iowa City.



Christ surrounded by four symbols of the evangelists (the Tetramorph) at Chartres Cathedral. Photo credit: Mike Klug.

So That's the Money You are Asking For

by Mark Holmer

I was just a year into a new parish when I asked my congregation of over 600 members what people thought should take priority in getting the church to move well into the future. There were over 60 suggestions. We were able to make 42 of them happen. The major projects included a new roof, add a narthex, install air conditioning in the sanctuary, have a canopy where cars can drop off people, and remodel the kitchen. The estimated cost was \$750,000.

We hired a fundraiser to guide us. I decided to be the person to ask for the dollar support. I led a dozen sessions in private homes attended by well

over 100 people. I showed a video that pictured the architects vision for what we were going to construct. That was followed by a question and answer time. As I was wrapping up the presentation I said that we needed to raise in pledges around \$400,000 over a three year period of time. It was then that I told what my wife Linnea and I were going to contribute. It was \$18,000. I allowed for some time for that to sink in.

As one of the financially better off members excited the room following the meeting, he said "Oh, that is the kind of money you are asking for." I said it was. He and his wife pledged \$10,000 for the campaign. Had I not

mentioned the Holmer pledge, he likely would have given two to three thousand dollars. Over all, the campaign was a success and all the planned work was completed.

I try to set an example. My wife and I tithe to the church, that's 10% of our income. We make our giving known to the congregation. What kind of example are you setting? I believe that out of what God has blessed us with, "That's the kind of gift God is asking for."

The Rev. Dr. Mark E. Holmer serves as the pastor at St. Thomas', Algona.

This Eastertide, we ask that you join those who have made their pledge towards Growing Iowa Leaders and Engaging All Disciples and prayerfully consider making your pledge towards our goal of 5 million dollars.

Gifts will SUPPORT the growth of leaders and new ministry initiatives, EQUIP congregations to thrive into the future, and STRENGTHEN our global partnerships.

This May, the grant process will open for congregations to apply for funding new worshipping communities, new ministries, liturgical space renewal, youth or adult formation, curacies, leadership development, evangelism initiatives, and expanding tools and/or technology. Visit iowaepiscopal.org/gilead-grants for more information.



SCAN TO GIVE
TO THE GILEAD
CAMPAIGN

Visit IowaShare.org/GILEAD



GILEAD CAMPAIGN
GROWING IOWA LEADERS, ENGAGING ALL DISCIPLES

Stewardship Share as of January 31, 2020

City	Church	Stewardship Share	2019 Pledge	Received to Date	(Over) Under
Algona	St. Thomas	\$ 3,237	4,008	4,008	0
Ames	St. John's	53,965	53,965	53,965	0
Anamosa	St. Mark's	500	1,500	1,500	0
Ankeny	St Anne's	16,487	5,733	5,732	1
Bettendorf	St Peter's	17,935	14,206	14,206	0
Boone	Grace	550	550	550	0
Burlington	Christ	22,449	20,408	20,408	0
Carroll	Trinity	550	550	550	0
Cedar Falls	St. Luke's	34,009	34,009	34,009	0
Cedar Rapids	Christ	47,715	47,715	47,715	0
Cedar Rapids	Grace	8,177	8,177	8,858	(681)
Chariton	St Andrew's	3,731	4,000	4,000	0
Charles City	Grace	2,388	2,388	2,388	0
Clermont	Saviour	1,971	<i>Pledge not received</i>		
Clinton	Christ	867	12,581	12,581	0
Coralville	New Song	22,545	22,545	20,273	2,272
Council Bluffs	St Paul's	4,058	4,058	3,044	1,014
Davenport	St Alban's	7,921	7,417	7,417	0
Davenport	Trinity	122,246	97,796	97,796	0
Decorah	Grace	6,970	5,500	5,500	0
Denison	Trinity	605	605	303	302
Des Moines	St. Andrew's	31,515	31,515	31,515	0
Des Moines	St Luke's	32,199	15,903	15,903	0
Des Moines	St. Mark's	5,965	3,520	3,520	0
Des Moines	St. Paul's	74,213	74,213	74,213	0
Dubuque	St John's	9,007	9,007	9,007	0
Durant	St Paul's	6,375	6,375	6,376	(1)
Emmetsburg	Trinity	2,739	2,739	2,739	0
Fort Dodge	St. Mark's	30,711	30,711	30,711	0
Fort Madison	St Luke's	4,388	4,560	4,560	0
Glenwood	St John's	724	724	724	0
Grinnell	St. Paul's	5,155	5,200	5,200	0
Harlan	St Paul's	605	300	300	0
Independence	St James	2,885	2,885	2,885	0
Indianola	All Saints'	2,167	2,167	2,167	0
Iowa City	Trinity	92,415	74,061	74,093	(32)
Iowa Falls	St. Matthew's	4,175	4,175	4,447	(272)
Keokuk	St. John's	11,921	7,200	7,200	0
LeMars	St George's	500	300	167	133
Maquoketa	St Mark's	3,208	1,200	1,200	0
Marshalltown	St Paul's	13,822	13,822	13,822	0
Mason City	St John's	12,164	12,164	12,164	0
Mount Pleasant	St Michael's	5,639	4,200	4,200	0
Muscatine	Trinity	18,072	18,072	18,072	0
Newton	St Stephen's	6,764	6,764	6,764	0
Orange City	Savior	500	500	500	0
Oskaloosa	St James'	10,900	10,900	10,900	0
Ottumwa	Trinity	11,826	5,000	5,000	0
Perry	St. Martin's	8,332	5,500	6,000	(500)
Shenandoah	St John's	605	605	605	0
Sioux City	Calvary	1,323	1,325	1,325	0
Sioux City	St Paul's	3,126	500	500	0
Sioux City	St Thomas'	15,246	9,500	8,556	944
Spirit Lake	St Alban's	8,366	8,366	7,669	697
Storm Lake	All Saints'	1,588	1,588	1,588	0
Waterloo	Trinity	14,480	14,480	14,480	0
Waverly	St Andrew's	5,592	1,000	1,000	0
Webster City	Good Shepherd	6,579	6,579	6,579	0
West Des Moines	St Timothy's	61,357	49,000	49,000	0
TOTAL		\$ 906,024	794,331	790,453	3,877

Episcopal JOURNAL

QUARTERLY EDITION WINTER 2020

Executive Council approves readmission of Cuba, selects Louisville for 2024 General Convention

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church's Executive Council, meeting Feb. 13-15 in Salt Lake City, formally approved readmission of the Episcopal Church of Cuba as an Episcopal diocese and selected Louisville, Ky., as the site of the 2024 General Convention.

The meeting opened with a presentation from several leaders in Native American communities on the deep and lasting impacts of the racist "Doctrine of Discovery."

Forrest S. Cuch and the Rev. Michael Carney of the Diocese of Utah, the Rev. Cornelia Eaton of Navajoland and the Rev. Angela Goodhouse-Mauai of North Dakota shared, through personal and historical narratives, how the church can be an instrument of oppression and erasure of native peoples or a source of strength and empowerment for them.

The council also heard a presentation from Kristine Stache, interim president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America affiliate. Stache spoke about how to interpret and respond to the Episcopal Church's membership decline, as depicted in the most recent parochial report data.

The 2018 reports show a 17.5 percent



Photo/Egan Millard/Episcopal News Service

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry embraces Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio of Cuba after the formal readmission of her church into the Episcopal Church at the Executive Council meeting in Salt Lake City.

decline in baptized members and a 24.9 percent decline in average Sunday attendance across the church between 2008 and 2018.

Stache said that if the rate of decline continues, the Episcopal Church will have no Sunday attendance in 30 years and no baptized members in 47 years. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has experienced a similar decline, with 35 years left until it runs out of baptized members and 23 years until it runs out of Sunday worshipers, if current rates continue.

But, she argued, other signs show a

church that is not dying but transforming.

"How is this measured? Through changed lives, which is not one of the questions, I believe, on the parochial reports of the ELCA."

Stache encouraged council to see this difficult transformation as a sign of God's presence, not God's absence.

A shift was already apparent in a discussion of potential changes to the metrics of parochial reports. "We're trying to get data on — what are the actual markers of vitality?" said the Rev. Chris Rankin-Williams, chair of the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church.

Rankin-Williams expressed a desire — shared by members of the Governance and Operations Committee — to move away from average Sunday attendance as the defining metric of a parish's health. Other metrics — like weekly service attendance, number of people involved in volunteer activities or the total reach of those activities — might provide a fuller picture, he said.

The committee also discussed having a section in which the parish can write its own narrative. The report could be a chance for a parish to do some valuable discernment and tell its own unique story.

continued on page 1



FEATURE
In Hawaii,
church feeds
bodies and souls



OPINION
Giving up
plastic products
for Lent



ARTS
Film dramatizes
Tubman's path
out of slavery

Two Southwest Florida congregations together work Benison Farm

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Martha Goodwill doesn't consider herself a master gardener, and though she serves as a deacon at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., her full-time job is as an accountant for the Diocese of Southwest Florida. But for the past year or so, she has been the driving force behind a lively farming partnership between her mostly white congregation and the historically black congregation of St. Augustine's Episcopal Church.

She credits her faith for the inspiration — and her grandmother.

"That general knowledge, I've always had from her," Goodwill told Episcopal News Service, describing how her grandmother taught her at a young age about varieties of plants and how best to grow them. "It's just always been a part of my life."

The two congregations are now working together to harvest the first fruits — and vegetables — of their joint ministry on back acreage at St. Augustine's, which was cleared and

prepared for farming with support from a \$63,600 grant from the Episcopal Church's United Thank Offering. The congregations gave it the name Benison Farm, incorporating the Middle English word meaning "blessing."

The first round of planting has produced collard greens, mustard greens, turnips, beets, tomatoes, kale, cauliflower and broccoli. Goodwill and other ministry leaders have begun distributing that fresh produce in the farm's neighborhood, deemed a "food desert" because of a lack of grocers nearby. They envision a monthly farmer's market on church property for the farm's next phase.

Another measure of the ministry's success can be counted

in the many volunteers from both congregations who regularly come to St. Augustine's and build fellowship while working together at the farm, especially on Saturdays, planting, weeding, trimming and harvesting.

"We did it, and we did it together," said Hazel Hudson-Allen, who has been a St. Augustine's parishioner since 1992. She regularly volunteers her time at Benison Farm and sees it as a form of discipleship, "just seeing how a few hands together can make something happen."

Partnership was fundamental to creating Benison Farm because each congregation brought a different set of

assets and challenges. St. Augustine's is an aging congregation with an average Sunday attendance of about 50. Its members were interested in remaining active in the community but were limited in how much physical labor they could apply to clearing the congregation's overgrown lot behind the church.

When Goodwill was ordained as a deacon two years ago, she was assigned to St. Thomas, which is northeast of downtown St. Petersburg. On a good Sunday, about 200 people will fill the pews at St. Thomas. She saw an opportunity in that unused acre and a half at St. Augustine's about 15 minutes away on the city's south side.

"St. Thomas doesn't have any land, but they have people that want to volunteer," said Goodwill, 56.



Photos/Benison Farm, via Facebook

Volunteers in July 2019 help develop the grounds that would become Benison Farm at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg, Fla.



Benison Farm is a partnership between the host congregation, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, south of downtown St. Petersburg, Fla., and St. Thomas Episcopal Church, a larger congregation about 15 miles to the northeast.

continued on page E

With weekly feast, Hawaii church feeds community's body and soul

By **Mary Frances Schjonberg**
Episcopal News Service

It can be lonely in paradise.

The Big Island of Hawaii is a stunning combination of deep tropical canyons, wind-scrubbed hills, occasionally snow-capped mountains, high surf and active volcanoes, but it can be hard to live there.

Some of the 186,000 people who call the 4,000-square-mile island home live in multimillion-dollar houses. Others pitch tents on beaches. In a tourism-based economy, many residents work more than one job to make ends meet. Groceries cost 60 percent more than the national average.

Every Thursday evening, a group of staunch volunteers and one part-time paid coordinator use donations of food and money from Waimea-area businesses, farms and other organizations to feed the bellies

and souls of more than 350 people in 90 minutes at St. James Episcopal Church. Diners eat together at long tables in the open-air Savanack Pavilion on the church grounds while volunteers deliver meals to home-bound people.

The team's work and the parish's commitment to the ministry is getting a major boost. One of St. James' mainland visitors who considers the parish to be a second church home has pledged \$1 million toward the planning and construction of a gathering space to house the weekly meal and other ministries. The donation will allow St. James to go into the next phase of planning and preparing drawings for bids and permits.

"We are very grateful to the Lematta Foundation of Vancouver, Wash., for their trust in the Waimea Community Meal and their support of our dream,"

Junior Warden Tim Bostock told Episcopal News Service.

When the Waimea Community Meal began in December 2016, organizers wanted to help those who were physically hungry, the Rev. David Stout, rector of St. James, said in a recent interview.

Soon, however, larger needs became apparent.

sermon preached by doing.

Each Thursday evening, one of the three clergy associated with St. James — either Stout, the Rev. Marnie Keator or the Rev. Linda Lundgren — gathers in a circle the people who are present at 4:30 p.m. for a prayer. They are always there and "collared up," as Sherwood put it, so that people know who they are when they make the rounds.

The weekly gathering does not offer a bare-bones soup kitchen sort of meal. Think of it as more like a luau with an ever-changing variety of food, entertainment, social services and pastoral care. One night it's enchiladas with all the trimmings plus hula music. Another week it might be the Hawaiian dish called shoyu chicken served with broccoli soup, roasted carrot and celery salad, and folk music.

Some nights, diners can get their blood pressure checked or take a hot shower.

At every meal people from different backgrounds settle in for the Hawaiian tradition known as talking story, taking as much time as needed to discuss both the mundane and the profound. One recent night a Tesla-driving man talked story with another man who rode in on a rickety bicycle. Meanwhile, kids played outside and families visited the church's thrift shop.

"It brings us together even if it's for one night," DeleCruz told ENS. The meal's slogan is "building community one meal at a time." Every week, she said, the regulars show up and often there are new people.

The idea of a meal came to fruition after a congregational process to discern the parish's call to ministry. Stout credits Bostock and Sherwood with being "the visionaries" of what became



Photo/Jeanne Savage

Members of the local Girl Scouts troop flash the shaka sign of aloha during a break from serving dinner at a recent Waimea Community Meal at St. James Episcopal Church in Waimea, Hawaii.

Meal organizers realized that people in and around town "were not only hungry in belly but hungry in heart and soul," Stout said. "There is a lot of lonely eating on the island."

He invoked Mother Teresa, who once said that loneliness is the West's greatest disease.

"We decided very early on that we were not going to advertise this as a homeless meal and that we weren't going to emphasize the St. James Church thing," Jane Sherwood, who co-chairs the ministry with Bostock, said in an interview. "So, we are the Community Meal at St. James. While we are church-sponsored, we are not Bible-thumping. We're trying to live by example; our actions are louder than our words."

Community Meal ministry coordinator Sue DeleCruz says the meal is a

continued on page D

HAWAII continued from page C

the Community Meal.

While church growth is not the meal's goal, six adults and nine children or youths who have baptized into St. James had an initial connection through the Community Meal ministry, according to Stout and Susan Acacio, who heads the parish's ministries for children, youth and families. About 15 already baptized people have joined St. James through the same connection.

The meal's weekly orchestration combines food-service logistics with a bit of magic. The Community Meal Core Ministry Team plans the year's meals and then meets every Monday to fine-tune that week. They make changes based on what food donors have promised to deliver that week and which volunteer cooks are on board. Any needed basics are bought from a local food distributor.

Each week's dinner involves 80-85 pounds of protein, plus dishes that meet a growing demand for vegetarian and vegan offerings. The meal usually features three different salads and lots of vegetables.

"We've gotten pretty creative with kale," said Bostock. The team has introduced people to new foods. "More salads are being eaten by people who would not normally eat salads," said DeleCruz.

On Tuesday, a large sign inviting everyone to the meal gets hung up near the entrance to St. James on busy Kawaihae Road. Wednesday is food delivery day. Those deliveries include a weekly donation of expired but still-usable food from the island's only Costco.

As DeleCruz spoke to ENS recently, a new donor dropped off some microgreens. DeleCruz said she is "on 24

hours a day" connecting with people in her broad network of contacts, which she built while previously working for social service agencies across the island.

The parish recently increased DeleCruz's paid hours because the weekly meal was receiving more food than it could use. She was spending extra time farming out that food to smaller meal programs and food banks so that none would go to waste. Now, that part of her ministry is officially part of her job.

Every week an outside organization pays \$600 to help cover the meal costs. The groups often supplement their monetary donations with volunteers from their staff to help serve the meal.

Early Thursday morning DeleCruz is in the commercial kitchen at the back of the St. James sanctuary, setting up equipment and writing instructions for the day on a whiteboard. Soon the vegetable washing crew shows up, followed by the veggie and meat chopping crews. The afternoon is spent cooking, cleaning up, packing up meals for delivery and getting the pavilion ready for the 4:30-6 p.m. meal.

The effort takes about 50 volunteers.



Photos/Jeanne Savage

Above, co-chairs Tim Bostock and Jane Sherwood, center, partner each week with Community Meal ministry coordinator Sue DeleCruz, right, and a number of volunteers to bring the weekly meal to the table. Jaisy Jardine, left, is a frequent volunteer.



Above left, The Rev. David Stout, rector of St. James Parish, says the lay leadership of the Community Meal Core Ministry Team frees him to be a pastoral presence at the weekly meal.

"We always seem to get the right number" of volunteers, Bostock said, calling it a weekly miracle.

The youngest volunteer is a 7-year-old boy who often delivers meals with his grandmother and older brother, Bostock said. The oldest is Harry, a 93-year-old dish dryer. Community-building happens among the volunteers, not just the diners.

"The wonderful thing about these chop crews, as we call them, is that the conversations and the friendships that have developed around our tables is remarkable," Sherwood said. "They are people who are not church members for the most part but who want to be part of this group, who just come and have fun and chat, and know that they're part of the big community here in Waimea." ■



Photos/St. James via Facebook

The Shower and Vision Buses visit and diners can get their blood pressure checked, take a hot shower or have their eyes examined.

FARM continued from page B

The two congregations already had developed relationships through various joint events, such as Bible studies and youth group meetings. Goodwill's congregation loved the idea of creating a garden ministry, she said. She pitched the idea to lay leaders at St. Augustine's, who also were receptive, especially given the dearth of stores selling fresh fruits and vegetables in the church's neighborhood.

"The need for the fresh produce is there, so the goal of the farm is to give away 50 percent of what we grow and to sell the other 50 percent in that neighborhood so that the farm can be self-sustaining," Goodwill said.

After receiving the UTO grant in August 2018, as well as money from the diocese's annual Bishop's Appeal, the churches began clearing invasive plants, trees and shrubs from the lot.

They installed an irrigation system, 24 raised beds and 48 smaller planters known as earth boxes. Through summer 2019, volunteers from both churches filled the beds and boxes with organic soil and compost, and congregation members planted seeds and sprouted them at home so the seedlings could be planted at the farm.

Then in August 2019, St. Augustine's hosted a planting day, when the foster gardeners from each congregation brought their seedlings to the nascent farmland to be tucked under the rich soil — like "handling a little baby," Hudson-Allen said.

The church farm also has room for



Photo/Benison Farm via Facebook

fruit trees, and so far the congregations have planted mango, avocado and guava. Banana trees have taken root on their own, possibly tracing their origin to the community gardens that occupied part of the property years ago. "That was pretty cool," Goodwill said, "a surprise we didn't expect."

Benison Farm's latest additions include squash, zucchini and sweet potatoes. Because of the warm Florida climate, the farm should yield food nearly year-round, except for a break during the hot summer months. A core group of about 10 volunteers is regularly tending to the crops, while more parishioners join them for once-a-month workdays.

Since Benison Farm isn't yet at full capacity, the congregations are giving most of the initial harvest to a local food pantry, though they are starting to put plans in place to launch a farmer's market soon on the church grounds and ramping up that effort throughout the year.

Goodwill also sees the ministry as a form of one-to-one evangelism, "sharing your story with other people that you're digging in the dirt with and listening to their stories and understanding where Christ is in both of our lives."

"It's really life-giving. We've made good friendships," she said.

Hudson-Allen, a retired teacher and management analyst, is among the core volunteers. The farm has been a catalyst for other members of her congregation to get involved, even those with less time or physical ability. "There is a role there pretty much for everyone," she said.

She also is drawn to gardening's spirituality, which she senses even when she's alone working in the dirt. "The Holy Spirit has had many conversations with me in the garden on the farm." ■

By January, some of the crops at Benison Farm were ready for harvest, though the farm is not yet at full capacity.



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Florida church to offer same-sex marriage in diocese that previously refused to allow it

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The General Convention resolution aimed at making marriage rites available to same-sex couples in all the church's domestic dioceses took effect more than a year ago, in December 2018, though the pace of implementation has varied in the handful of dioceses that previously had refused to offer the rites.

Supporters of the new rites were particularly critical of Diocese of Florida Bishop John Howard, accusing him in January 2019 of failing to honor the intent of Resolution B012 in the process he established to comply. Howard denied those allegations.

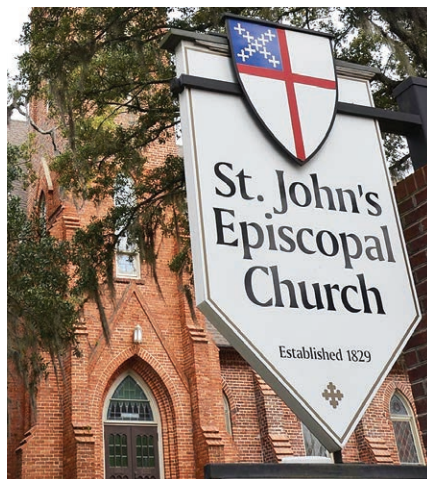
A year later, a congregation in Howard's diocese, St. John's Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, is now moving forward with plans to offer the rites to same-sex couples.

After an extended process of discernment, a committee of nine church members issued a report in December in which most of the group recommended offering the rites, and the vestry decided in late January to accept that recommendation.

"We want to do our very best to care for God's people at St. John's," the Rev. Dave Killeen told the Tallahassee Democrat. Killeen, the rector, was one of the nine members of the consultation group. "All couples will be treated equally... We want to make sure everyone feels comfortable and has a place here at St. John's — that they know they are loved and valued."

Howard had been one of eight diocesan bishops who, citing their theologically conservative views on marriage, initially refused to allow clergy in their dioceses to use the trial rites that General Convention approved in 2015 for use in same-sex weddings. In 2018, General Convention passed B012, calling on all bishops to make provisions for allowing the rites in any jurisdiction where civil law allowed same-sex marriage.

Some of the eight holdout bishops, including Howard, announced processes



Photo/St. John's, via Facebook

The vestry at St. John's Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, Fla., voted last month to offer marriage rites to same-sex couples.

that relied heavily on one provision of the resolution that specified they should ask outside bishops "as necessary" to provide pastoral oversight when congregations request to use the rites.

Howard's canon to the ordinary, the Rev. Allison DeFoor, referred questions directly to Killeen, who told Episcopal News Service by phone that Howard planned to delegate another bishop to oversee matters relating to all marriages at St. John's. That bishop has not yet been identified, Killeen said, and Howard will continue to provide pastoral oversight for St. John's on all other matters.

Howard "was very, very supportive of the process itself," Killeen told ENS.

The St. John's vestry approved use of the rites in a majority vote on Jan. 28, according to the church's website. The decision partly drew on the input collected from parishioners at three forums, held in June, September and October.

"Our clergy has been in touch with Bishop Howard to share the St. John's vestry's decision," the church said on its website. "Bishop Howard has pledged to continue to wholeheartedly support the missions and ministries of this church."

At least one other congregation in the diocese has gone through the same process. St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Fernandina Beach notified Howard late

in 2018 that it intended to offer the rites to same-sex couples, and Howard said he would delegate another bishop to provide oversight there, the Rev. Stephen Mazingo, rector at St. Peter's, told ENS. He said he made the decision to move forward with the support of lay leaders, though no same-sex couples have yet asked to be married in the church.

Change came much faster to the Diocese of Dallas, where Bishop George Sumner agreed after General Convention in 2018 to allow same-sex marriage under Missouri Bishop Wayne Smith's oversight. In January 2019, less than two months after B012 took effect, the Dallas diocese's Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration and Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle held services to bless the unions of 24 gay and lesbian couples who previously had been forced to marry outside the diocese or in civil ceremonies.

Same-sex couples in the Diocese of Albany, meanwhile, have yet to benefit from a change in policy, because Bishop William Love continues to refuse to allow the rites for their weddings in his northern New York diocese. Love's decision now has become the focus of disciplinary proceedings against him, under the Episcopal Church's Title IV canon. A hearing in that case is scheduled for late April.

The Diocese of Springfield, in the mostly rural southern half of Illinois, is another conservative diocese where same-sex marriage had been forbidden. Bishop Daniel Martins responded to B012 by reluctantly agreeing to a process similar to the one Sumner adopted in Dallas, though its implementation last year drew less fanfare.

Martins allowed the Chapel of Saint John the Divine, at the University of Illinois in Champaign, to use the trial marriage rites after delegating pastoral oversight of the chapel to Fond du Lac Bishop Matt Gunter, as Martins outlined in an October letter to the diocese.

Later that October, the chapel posted congratulations on its Facebook page to "Andrea and Sarah on the blessing of the marriage today!" ■

St. Louis church included in historic register for LGBTQ advocacy

By Michael Shepley
Diocese of Missouri

Trinity Episcopal Church in St. Louis' Central West End has become the first site in Missouri to be named to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its significance in LGBTQ history. It is the first and only such site in Missouri and the only Episcopal parish in the country so honored.

Trinity was recognized in particular for the years 1969 to 1993, which include its early support of gay rights, its embrace of LGBTQ parishioners and community members, and its compassionate response to the first AIDS patients in the 1980s.

The recognition of Trinity is part of an effort by the U.S. Department of the Interior to document a more complete story of the gay rights movement, a project announced in May 2014 by Secretary Sally Jewell.

The NRHP is the U.S. federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects deemed significant to American history and worthy of preservation. Currently there are 93,500 sites across the country, with LGBTQ sites numbering less than 20.

"Trinity, as a progressive Episcopal church, continues today as an energetic supporter of LGBTQIA+ worshippers," said the Rev. Jon Stratton, rector of the church. "We are honored by the NRHP recognition and wear this designation proudly."

A formal dedication ceremony, including the installation of a plaque on the exterior of the church at 600 N. Euclid Ave., will be held on Saturday, June 13. Bishop-elect Deon Johnson, whose ordination is planned for April 25, will be an honored guest and speaker. Johnson will be the first openly gay bishop to serve in the Diocese of Missouri.

"Trinity's longtime support for the LGBTQIA+ community dates back to

its serving as the meeting space of St. Louis' first gay rights organization, The Mandrake Society, in 1969," said Steven Brawley, founder of the LGBT History Project in St. Louis.

The NRHP designation came after a concentrated period of reflection, recol-

lection and research by members of the church and those involved in the preservation of St. Louis' early gay and lesbian history.

Aiding the application process were longtime Trinity parishioners who are keepers of parish records and institutional memory for the years cited in the NRHP designation — Ellie Chapman, wife of the late Trinity rector Rev. William Chapman; Etta Taylor, church archivist; and Jym Andris, community historian. Their work was supplemented

by Ian Darnell, curatorial assistant for the LGBTQ Collection at the Missouri History Museum, and Steven Brawley. University of Kansas professor Katie Batza wrote the application as an extension of a current book project and as part of her ongoing work with the National Park Service LGBT Heritage Initiative. She said that as the application took shape, Trinity Church's ties to the LGBTQ community were inspirational.

"It was encouraging to see how committed Trinity was to the rights of all of its gay and lesbian parishioners at a time when these rights largely were unknown to the mainstream," she said. "The first Mandrake Society meeting at Trinity was one of a handful of local, national and global political actions and protests in 1969 — including the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village — that marked the start of a new civil rights movement."

Trinity Episcopal Church, founded in 1855, has stood at the corner of Euclid and Washington avenues since 1935. Trinity is urban, socially progressive and Anglo-Catholic in its worship. Its rector is 35-year-old Jon Stratton, a social justice activist involved with the Clean Missouri campaign and a member of the leadership team at Missouri Jobs with Justice. ■

Michael Shepley is a member of Trinity Episcopal Church.



Trinity Episcopal Church members march in the 1991 St. Louis Pride Parade.

Photo/Trinity Episcopal Church

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Lent 2020: A Call to Prayer, Fasting and Repentance Leading to Action

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry invites Episcopalians and people of faith to turn and pray on behalf of our nation during the season of Lent:

“In times of great national concern and urgency, people of faith have returned to ancient practices of repentance, prayer and fasting as ways of interceding with God on behalf of their nation and the world. This is such a moment for us in the United States.

“On Ash Wednesday I will join with other Christian leaders observing this Lent as a season of prayer, fasting and repentance on behalf of our nation, with continued fasting each Wednesday until the Wednesday before Advent begins.

“Our appeal comes during a time of profound division and genuine crisis of

national character. This is not a matter of party or partisanship, but of deep concern for the soul of America.

“The group of religious “Elders” who share this commitment — the same group that over a year ago published the “Reclaiming Jesus” statement — includes Evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant leaders. While we hold diverse political affiliations and positions on many issues facing our country, we find common ground in two shared convictions:

First and foremost, we are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, and his way of love as our primary loyalty.

Second, because we love our country, we are concerned about its moral and spiritual health and well-being.



“For me, this call is rooted in my personal commitment to practice Jesus’s Way of Love, by which I turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go and rest in the way of our savior. Especially now, drawn together by love, hope and concern, and recalling the wisdom of our ancient traditions, I am grateful to join others in the spiritual practice of prayer, fasting and repentance for our nation. If you feel called to join us in this practice, the invitation is attached. The full text, together with the “Reclaiming Jesus” document can be found on the Reclaiming Jesus website, www.ReclaimingJesus.org.”

Your brother,

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Forty days (and more) without plastic



By Linda Brooks

IN THE PAST, I usually didn’t give up anything for Lent mainly because of what I heard other people giving up — Facebook, favorite TV shows, cigarettes, beer. Somehow giving up what could be considered a “luxury” of our modern life didn’t seem to make much sense in the way of sacrifice and soul-searching.

But last year was different. It seemed like the whole world was on fire and there was nothing I could do as one individual that would make any difference. Then I came across a news item stating that in 2018, the Archbishop of Canterbury asked Anglicans to give up plastic for Lent. Last year, many Episcopal dioceses did the same. I eagerly joined in.

I thought it would be easy. In our household we were already carrying our own reusable grocery bags to the farmers’ market, reusing vegetable plastic bags, and recycling. So I was prepared to be just a little more aware whenever I purchased something. Aware yes. Easy, not so much.

I found I would have to loudly announce to supermarket cashiers that I had my own bags or they automatically started filling up the plastic ones. Over time I boldly inquired why they didn’t ask first if a customer had their own bags

before they started. The answer was disturbing — most customers would be annoyed or insulted.

Sharing the message with friends that I was giving up plastic for Lent was met with enthusiasm. Most agreed it was a good idea but thought it too difficult. I was suddenly aware that almost every item that can be purchased involves plastic wrapping or containers. Some could be avoided, but not all.

Not deterred, I continued my search for plastic-free items, choosing paper-wrapped items over plastic or not purchasing some items at all.

Vegetables can be bought in bulk, not wrapped. Milk can still be found in glass bottles and eggs in paper containers. At the farmers’ market, the returned containers are appreciated. On the Internet, there were endless suggestions for purchasing non-plastic wrapped items (more things we don’t need).

Helpful tips for household cleaners made from everyday items helped eliminate many under the sink counter purchases. Vinegar, lemon juice, baking soda are not just for cooking. Petitions to manufacturers to cut back on plastic usage appeared in my email inbox.



Forty days became 90 days and has continued. Not purchasing anything wrapped in plastic has become our normal routine. But after a year I have become a little lax. So Lent is upon us again and I will re-pledge myself to doing more. This year it will be a little easier. Beginning the first of March here in New York, no plastic bags will be given away at markets. It is a start.

I have learned a great deal from my small experiment last year of trying to do something for Lent I felt was important to myself and the world around me — that even a little change can make a big difference over time.

The decisions we make, no matter how seemingly insignificant, can over time change the way we think and how we relate to others. Nothing should be taken for granted. I believe that is what our faith teaches us.

Our weekly garbage now consists of a small bag of mostly non-recycle plastics and ice cream containers. I have to work on that. Maybe this year I should give up ice cream for Lent too. ■

Linda Brooks is Episcopal Journal’s art director.

COUNCIL continued from page A

The council approved Louisville as the site for the 81st General Convention in 2024. The Rev. Michael Barlowe, secretary of council, said Louisville and the two other finalists — Detroit and San Juan, Puerto Rico — were in the same range in terms of cost, but Louisville stood out for a few reasons.

The last time General Convention met in Province IV — which contains the Diocese of Kentucky — was in 1982 in New Orleans. It’s also Curry’s home province, and this will be his last General Convention as Presiding Bishop.

Louisville is within a day’s drive of 60 percent of the U.S. population, Barlowe said, and the convention center, several hotels, the Episcopal cathedral and an arena are all within a five-minute walk. The convention will also present a chance



Photo/Egan Millard/Episcopal News Service

Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio of Cuba expresses thanks to Executive Council.

Deputies voted to readmit Cuba, which the House of Bishops had expelled from the church in 1966.

“Our friends from the Episcopal Church in Cuba have been exemplary,” Barlowe told council, “not only in their extraordinary ministries undertaken in such difficult circumstances over the years, but in all of our conversations over

to highlight the city’s “breathtaking” work on racial reconciliation, Barlowe said.

Barlowe also formally certified that the Episcopal Church of Cuba had met the requirements for readmission as a diocese. At the 2018 General Convention in Austin, Texas, the House of Bishops and House of

the last five or six years as we’ve moved toward this moment.”

Cuba Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio addressed council in Spanish through an interpreter.

“Each one of us has been living [through] a very emotional time in our life in the Diocese of Cuba,” Delgado said, “because the church lived for more than 50 years all by itself.

“I want to express my gratitude to each one of you ... who has worked so ardously to achieve this moment. ... We will continue serving our people, our country – however, we will do it in your company.”

Other resolutions adopted by council included a statement urging Episcopalians and political leaders to fight misinformation and enact election security measures in the United States and elsewhere, an assessment waiver for the Diocese of Alabama, and the adoption of a Covenant for Care of Creation.

The next council meeting is scheduled to take place June 8-11 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. ■



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New Orleans church, home to ‘murder board,’ eyes new tribute to victims

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Though far from a good year, 2019 was a statistically better year for New Orleans: The city recorded 119 homicides, the fewest in nearly 50 years, further distancing itself from its reputation just a decade ago as the unofficial “murder capital” of the United States.

But the recent decrease in deaths has not alleviated the human toll that violence, particularly gun violence, takes each year on the people of New Orleans. They still are murdered at a higher rate than residents of all but three other major U.S. cities. Their deaths still leave holes in the lives of surviving loved ones and the community.

And their names continue to be added to the “murder board” at St. Anna’s Episcopal Church. Since 2007, the congregation has maintained and updated this memorial list outside the church in the city’s Tremé neighborhood just north of the French Quarter. The memorial now contains more than a thousand names of people killed in and near the city, and even with homicides decreasing, more than 100 new names are posted each year.

“That’s still an intolerable amount,” the Rev. Bill Terry, rector of St. Anna’s, told Episcopal News Service by phone. “We have a large part of our community that lives in a deep longing and a deep and profound sadness,” he said, and the church’s lament for that loss of life transcends any public policy success extolled by government leaders.

The permanent memorial at St. Anna’s, covering a fence next to the church, lists each victim’s name, age, date of death and method — “shot” is the most common — but it only covers 2007 to 2012 because the congregation ran out of room on the fence. So, the current year’s homicide victims are written in marker on a separate board attached to a nearby church wall. The congregation envisions a new memorial large enough to commemorate all the victims, by representing them as a sky full of stars on the ceiling inside the church.

Joel Dyer calls it “Stargazers.” He is

the local artist who came up with the idea for the new memorial and now is trying to raise money to install it at St. Anna’s, where he has been a parishioner for most of the past decade. The ceiling of the nave and sanctuary would be painted blue, and 2 1/2-inch gold stars would be arranged in a grid, with enough estimated room to memorialize up to 5,000 murder victims.

“I thought ‘Stargazers’ would imply a little hope,” Dyer, 74, said in an interview with ENS, adding, “our hope is to keep our kids off that ceiling.”

One star will shine particularly bright in the eyes of this diverse congregation on Esplanade Avenue. Robert Atkins, 21 years old when he was shot and killed on Oct. 20, 2016, grew up attending the church and had served as an acolyte since he was 5 — a “perfect little boy,” his mother, Althea Atkins-McCall, remembered in a phone interview.

The connection between her family and St. Anna’s goes beyond a name on a memorial. “It’s a little deeper for me because we actually were very much involved in the church,” Atkins-McCall said, and though she now lives in Louisiana’s capital city of Baton Rouge, she still has “just a great appreciation for the level of commitment that Father Terry has for the community and the members of his church.”

Atkins’ murder remains unsolved, and his mother is grateful for ways “of keeping my son’s name alive.” Though his killing was too recent to be included on the permanent list at St. Anna’s, Atkins-McCall donated a bench in his name that was installed next to the sidewalk in front of the church memorial, so anyone who visits can sit in contemplation and remembrance.

Terry had only been rector at St. Anna’s a couple of years when Hurricane Katrina dealt a devastating blow to New

Orleans in 2005. Once a city of nearly 500,000 people, New Orleans lost more than half its population in Katrina’s aftermath as it struggled with recovery efforts, but the number of homicides remained high. When murders reached 209 in 2007, the city’s estimated per capita murder rate topped that of any other major American city.

Early in 2007, thousands of people marched in New Orleans to protest the killings and what they saw as public officials’ inadequate response. After the march, Terry began talking to a deacon about what St. Anna’s could do. They came up with the idea of publicly nam-



Photo/David Paulsen/ENS

St. Anna’s Episcopal Church in the Tremé neighborhood of New Orleans, has posted the names of the city’s homicide victims on a wall outside the church.

ing each of the victims, and “we’ve really been doing that ever since,” Terry said.

In addition to writing the names on a display outside the church, St. Anna’s began incorporating a reading of the latest victims’ names into Sunday services, which typically draw about 120 worshippers. Church staff members scour local media outlets each week for reports of killings and follow up with authorities to obtain information about the victims.

Other churches asked to receive the names compiled by St. Anna’s, and now the lists are sent out every week by email. They include people killed outside the city limits, in communities that are part of greater New Orleans.

The church is “literally on the border between two worlds,” Terry said, be-

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NEW ORLEANS continued from page J

tween some of the city’s wealthiest neighborhoods and those struggling with deep poverty. That intersection is reflected in the congregation, which Terry said includes parishioners from a mix of backgrounds, many of them middle-class or low-income residents.

Crime is driven by a range of factors, and fluctuations in crime rates defy easy explanations. Terry, though, noted that extreme poverty, an affordable housing



Photo, right/Luigi Mandile

Artist Joel Dyer, a parishioner at St. Anna’s Episcopal Church, sketched the design on the left for a future Stargazers’ tribute to murder victims, which would be displayed on the ceiling of the church, shown in the photo on the right.

shortage and limited job opportunities continue to plague New Orleans, and the local black community, which had made up a significant majority of city residents, has been greatly diminished since Katrina.

The church regularly gets visitors to the homicide memorial. Terry recalls a police sergeant who spent about 15 minutes one day looking over the names before approaching the rector in tears: “I saw four of my high school friends on your murder board,” he said.

Mere numbers can dehumanize crime victims, Terry said, and “most of these people live in poverty. They have no memorials.” He thinks simply sharing their names is a step toward giving them some dignity in death, though the congregation doesn’t stop there. St. Anna’s also supports neighborhood children and their families through its Anna’s Place program, and it is raising money now for an ambitious expansion of those efforts called the Dodwell House.

“The ‘murder board’ is a memorial. It’s a public spiritual statement to the world that life matters. But that’s not

good enough,” Terry said. “We have to become disrupters in cycles of violence, so the Gospel begins to take shape in the community.”

As the “murder board” grew to include more than a thousand names, the list stretched across the church’s fence, eventually running out of room. Terry said one option the congregation is considering is to reinstall the permanent memorial so it is configured to fit nearly 3,000 names, but that still would only hold the names of victims through 2017.

The longer-term solution is the Stargazers project.

The ceiling of the church is large enough to accommodate stars for all the victims since 2007. Plans also include a computer kiosk, so visitors can search victims’ names and find where on the ceiling each victim’s memorial star is displayed.

And there will be room for more residents of the New Orleans area succumb to deadly violence.

“It can be discouraging because it’s so common,” Atkins-McCall said.

Her family was fortunate in many ways. She and her family immigrated to the United States from Guyana in 1989 and settled in New Orleans, where her mother made sure they attended church, first at Christ Church Cathedral and then at St. Anna’s.

“We had this very strong Christian-based upbringing,” she said, and she instilled the same in her son, who was born in 1995.

Robert Atkins was “everything you wanted in a kid,” she said, but tragedy struck early in his life. His father, who had been Atkins-McCall’s high school sweetheart, was shot and killed a few months after their son’s first birthday.

Despite that loss, Robert grew into a gifted student who loved art and football, his mother said, and St. Anna’s “became home and became part of our family.”

Atkins was taking a break from college in 2016 and working an overnight security job when he was murdered. He would call his mother after getting home from his shift, and when he didn’t call that morning, she grew worried. Later that day, she learned from his girlfriend that he had been shot in a car, pushed into the street and left for dead.

The killing was all the more jarring because it came at a time of celebration: Less than two weeks earlier, Robert Atkins had been all smiles while attending his mother’s wedding at St. Anna’s. Terry, who presided at the wedding, later led a candlelight vigil with the family at the scene of Atkins’ murder.

Atkins-McCall still holds out hope that police will find who killed her son, and she sometimes checks in with investigators, to see if they have any new information and to remind them that she still wants answers. ■





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Faith made Harriet Tubman fearless as she rescued slaves

By Robert Gudmestad

Millions of people voted in an online poll in 2015 to have the face of Harriet Tubman on the US\$20 bill. But many might not have known the story of her life as chronicled in a recent film, “Harriet.”

Harriet Tubman worked as a slave, spy and eventually as an abolitionist. What I find most fascinating, as a historian of American slavery, is how belief in God helped Tubman remain fearless, even when she came face to face with many challenges.

Tubman was born Araminta Ross in 1822 on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. When interviewed later in life, Tubman said she started working when she was five as a house maid. She recalled that she endured whippings, starvation and hard work even before she got to her teenage years.

She labored in Maryland’s tobacco fields, but things started to change when farmers switched their main crop to wheat. Grain required less labor, so slave owners began to sell their enslaved people to plantation owners in the the Deep South.

Two of Tubman’s sisters were sold to a slave trader. One had to leave her child behind. Tubman too lived in fear of being sold.

When she was 22, Tubman married a free black man named John Tubman. For reasons that are unclear, she changed her name, taking her mother’s first name and her husband’s last name. Her marriage did not change her status as an enslaved person.

Five years later, rumors circulated in the slave community that slave traders were once again prowling through the Eastern Shore. Tubman decided to seize her freedom rather than face the terror of being chained with other slaves to be carried away, often referred to as the “chain gang.”

Tubman stole into the woods and, with the help of some members of the Underground Railroad, walked the 90 miles to Philadelphia where slavery was

illegal. The Underground Railroad was a loose network of African Americans and whites who helped fugitive slaves escape to a free state or to Canada. Tubman began working with William Still, an African American clerk from Philadelphia, who helped slaves find freedom.

Tubman led about a dozen rescue missions that freed about 60 to 80 people. She normally rescued people in the winter, when the long dark nights provided cover, and she often adopted some type of disguise. Even though she was the only “conductor” on rescue missions, she depended on a few houses connected with the Underground Railroad for shelter. She never lost a person escaping with her and won the nickname of Moses for leading so many people to “the promised land,” or freedom.

After the Civil War began, Tubman volunteered to serve as a spy and scout for the Union Army. She ended up in South Carolina, where she helped lead a military mission up the Combahee River. Located about halfway between Savannah, Ga., and Charleston, S.C., the river was lined with a number of valuable plantations that the Union Army wanted to destroy.

Tubman helped guide three Union steamboats around Confederate mines and then helped about 750 enslaved people escape with the Federal troops.

She was the only woman to lead men into combat during the Civil War. After the war, she moved to New York and was active in campaigning for equal rights for women. She passed away at the age of 90.

Tubman’s Christian faith tied all of these remarkable achievements together.

She grew up during the Second Great Awakening, which was a Protestant religious revival in the United States. Preachers took the gospel of evangelical Christianity from place to place, and



Photo/Benjamin F. Powelson via Wikimedia Commons

A “carte-de-visite” photograph shows a young Harriet Tubman seated in an interior room. The photo dates from approximately 1868-69 and is jointly owned by the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Library of Congress.



Left, Cynthia Erivo stars as Harriet Tubman in the film “Harriet.” This year, Erivo was nominated for Oscars in the categories of Best Actress and Best Original Song. She wrote the lyrics to “Stand Up.”

church membership flourished. Christians at this time believed that they needed to reform America in order to usher in Christ’s second coming.

A number of black female preachers preached the message of revival and sanctification on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Jarena Lee was the first authorized female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is not clear if Tubman attended any of Lee’s camp meetings, but she was inspired by the evangelist. She came to understand that women could hold religious authority.

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Filmmaking ministry with Episcopal roots tells stories of faith journeys

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

As an Episcopalian, Brian Ide has been fixated recently on the passage in the New Testament that describes the brief period — estimated to have been about 10 days — between Jesus’ ascension and the Pentecost, during which the apostles were alone and uncertain about their path forward, praying together in “a room upstairs” in Jerusalem.

As a filmmaker, Ide wants to share that story and its spiritual implications with movie audiences. The tentative title of his film-to-be: “The Upper Room.”

“We can see ourselves in those unique 10 days,” Ide told ENS by phone. “It’s that challenge of stepping into faith, even when we’re burdened by fear and uncertainty.”

Ide, a member of All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills, Calif., drew on his career as a movie director to help form a ministry at the church with other parishioners who work in the Hollywood film industry.

In 2018, their efforts culminated in “This Day Forward,” a feature-length film about an Iowa family’s struggles with cancer and faith, for which they took a grassroots approach to finding audiences, hosting individual showings at theaters and churches around the country.

For “The Upper Room,” Ide envisions something bigger, both for the movie and the underlying ministry. His filmmaking team traveled to the Holy Land last year to flesh out a story for the new movie, for which they are budgeting nearly \$3 million, with hopes for a wider theatrical release. And Ide has overseen the creation of Grace Based Films, a non-profit with a long-term plan for turning spiritually rich stories into thought-provoking movies.

“I can’t wait to see how it all comes out,” said the Rev. Anne Mallonee, who serves as chief ecclesiastical officer at Church Pension Group. Mallonee was



Photo/The Upper Room, via Facebook

Director Brian Ide, left, and cinematographer, Kyle Ramsey Moe discuss production design ideas while looking at a first-century model of Jerusalem.

among a handful of clergy members who joined the filmmakers on their Holy Land trip last July. She said in an interview with ENS that Ide’s energetic work mirrors a trend she has noticed: lay Christians finding creative ways of putting their talents and abilities in service of “the ministry that comes from being baptized.”

“The Spirit really does seem to be inspiring all kinds of people to be thinking in terms of mission,” she said.

That inspiration was evident in “This Day Forward,” which is heading toward an official release June 1 on streaming services and DVD. The movie was backed by donations, and Ide and his team from All Saints’ kept the production on a modest scale.

“We didn’t have the resources of a big studio to just throw money at it. Instead, it was just sweat equity for us,” Ide said.

They worked hard not just making the movie, but also promoting it during

a 53-city tour in fall 2018. Ide estimates he and his team drove 17,000 miles to introduce the movie to audiences, and they embarked on another limited tour with the film last year through south Australia.

The filmmakers have planned a few additional showings of “This Day Forward” in the coming months, prior to its digital release, and with this distribution deal, Ide thinks the movie “will have a long life, which is great.”

His primary focus, meanwhile, has shifted to development of “The Upper Room.” The initial idea came to Ide while he was with a group from All Saints’ on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Toward the end of the trip, he started thinking about how the experience might shape his next film project, and he was particularly intrigued by a passage in the first chapter of Acts of the Apostles: “When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying.”

The chapter continues by relaying that, after Jesus ascended to heaven, his apostles “were constantly devoting themselves to prayer,” but they had yet to receive the Holy Spirit and begin their ministry in the world.

“You can’t help but imagine that there would be a range of emotions, of fear and anticipation and imagination,” Ide said.

He began sketching narrative outlines for a possible script, and in April 2019, Virginia Theological Seminary hosted a kind of theological focus group for Ide and his fellow filmmakers that provided them with input from Mallonee, the

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Offering free legal aid, Pennsylvania attorney visits Episcopal churches

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The individuals and families who visit the weekly food pantry at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral in the Diocese of Pennsylvania — usually about 150 households, according to Dean Judith Sullivan — know if they come hungry on a Monday morning, they can leave with an assortment of canned goods, fresh produce and frozen meats to help get them through the week.

The food pantry has been a ministry of the cathedral for years, but in recent months, participants have been able to take advantage of one additional benefit: free legal assistance, courtesy of Steve Chawaga, a local attorney and the founder of Episcopal Legal Aid.

Chawaga launched the nonprofit in November as a ministry of the diocese and serves in a paid position as its executive director. In Episcopal Legal Aid's first two months, he counseled 54 clients on civil law questions during his 10 clinics held at the cathedral and a handful of other Episcopal churches around the Philadelphia area. He estimates about half of the questions relate to landlord-tenant disputes or property matters, such as setting up wills, while the other half cover a range of topics, from immigration issues to personal injury incidents.

"They're not life-or-death questions, but they're questions that they're not going to find another lawyer to answer," Chawaga said in an interview with Episcopal News Service.

That's because many people of moderate means who would benefit from meeting with an attorney either can't afford one or don't have the time to look for one, Chawaga said. Other social service organizations offer pro bono legal assistance, but he sees Episcopal Legal Aid as unique in leveraging church gatherings



Photo/courtesy of Steve Chawaga

Attorney Steve Chawaga, executive director of Episcopal Legal Aid, greets a client during his free clinic at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

to reach people where they already are.

"People come in for other services and supports and find out that he's there, and they have been very appreciative," said Sullivan, who also chairs the nonprofit board of Episcopal Legal Aid. She thinks Chawaga's ministry fits naturally with the cathedral's broader mission of serving the community in a variety of ways, such as through clothing drives and medical checkups.

"We have this beautiful intersection with the values of our faith, with our way of love, with our way of sharing the Gospel in this world and caring for every seeking soul, loving our neighbors as ourselves, seeing Christ in one another," she told ENS.

Chawaga began forming the idea of a service like Episcopal Legal Aid when he was turning 60 and planning to step away from a career in corporate law. "If I want to do something else, I better get going," he told himself.

And that something else became clearer to him at the November 2018 convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania,

for which he has long served as parliamentarian. Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez, while rallying the diocese behind the theme "Know Jesus, Change the World," urged congregations to find ways of putting their church buildings to use serving their communities on the other six days of the week.

Chawaga thought free legal aid might fit that calling, and after the convention, he spoke to Gutiérrez about the idea. The bishop's response: Why not give it a try?

"He has got this deep and faithful heart," Gutiérrez said in an interview. "He started digging the ground and planted some seeds."

The diocese agreed to provide some startup funds, about \$20,000, and it hopes soon to provide some space in a diocesan building, mainly for storage and administrative functions — not for welcoming clients, since Chawaga's consultations are offered not in an office but in the community, at churches.

Chawaga grew up attending Church of Saint Asaph in the Philadelphia suburb of Bala Cynwyd, where he still is a parishioner. As the diocese's parliamentarian, he knows many of its clergy leaders and is familiar with some of their outreach efforts and regular community events. When he pays a visit, the churches may promote his services in advance, but his main tactic for courting new clients is to set up a table at the event and

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Photo/courtesy of Steve Chawaga

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral serves about 150 households at its weekly food pantry. Steve Chawaga sets up his legal aid clinic in the space one Monday a month.

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invite anyone with questions to take a seat with him.

For one recent outing, Chawaga traveled to St. James the Greater Episcopal Church in Bristol, Pa., which he described as “an old industrial town, very modest economic means” across the Delaware River from New Jersey. The church holds a free dinner once a month for anyone who needs a meal, and he said it sometimes draws people who live in a nearby tent encampment.

Since this was Chawaga’s first time visiting the St. James dinner, he figured he would just introduce himself and describe his services to the 60 or so guests, and then let them know he’d be back the following month to set up his legal aid clinic.

“And then these hands started going up,” he said.

Someone had a dispute with the Internal Revenue Service. Someone else had a question about setting up wills for herself and her husband. One woman said she was having problems with her doctor but her insurance company was no help. A man told Chawaga he was facing a noise complaint at his apartment but he wasn’t to blame.

Some of the questions could be answered easily that night, while others required follow-up work.

“By the time I left, I had taken on four new clients,” he said.

Because his former corporate job involved general litigation, Chawaga said he has a broad base of civil law knowledge, though for certain issues that he can’t handle himself, he will refer those clients to another lawyer with the appropriate specialty, such as immigration law or housing law. Either way, making that initial contact with his clients is a key advantage of the church-based clinics.

Chawaga, as executive director, is Episcopal Legal Aid’s only paid staff member. As the ministry grows, he may look to hire someone to provide administrative help, though the more substantive growth will involve scheduling more clinics at church events where people who are struggling on society’s margins gather.

“If they have to go across the street, let alone another town, they won’t ask,” he said. “I’m having beef stew with them and not occupying an office and asking folks to come find me.” ■



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Historian Kate Clifford Larson believes that Tubman drew from a variety of Christian denominations, including the African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist and Catholic beliefs. Like many enslaved people, her belief system fused Christian and African beliefs.

Her belief that there was no separation between the physical and spiritual worlds was a direct result of African religious practices. Tubman literally believed that she moved between a physical existence and a spiritual experience where she sometimes flew over the land.

An enslaved person who trusted Tubman to help him escape simply noted that Tubman had “de charm,” or God’s protection. Charms or amulets were strongly associated with African religious beliefs.

A horrific accident is believed to have brought Tubman closer to God and reinforced her Christian worldview. Sarah Bradford, a 19th-century writer who conducted interviews with Tubman and several of her associates, found the deep role faith played in her life.

When she was a teenager, Tubman happened to be at a dry goods store when an overseer was trying to capture an enslaved person who had left his slave labor camp without permission. The angry man threw a two-pound weight at the

runaway but hit Tubman instead, crushing part of her skull. For two days she lingered between life and death.

The injury almost certainly gave her temporal lobe epilepsy. As a result, she would have splitting headaches, fall asleep without notice, even during conversations, and have dreamlike trances.

As Bradford documents, Tubman believed that her trances and visions were God’s revelation and evidence of his direct involvement in her life. One abolitionist told Bradford that Tubman “talked with God, and he talked with her every day of her life.”

According to Larson, this confidence in providential guidance and protection helped make Tubman fearless. Standing only five feet tall, she had an air of authority that demanded respect.

Once Tubman told Bradford that when she was leading two “stout” men to freedom, she believed that “God told her to stop” and leave the road. She led the scared and reluctant men through an icy stream — and to freedom.

Harriet Tubman once said that slavery was “the next thing to hell.” She helped many transcend that hell. ■

Robert Gudmestad is professor and chair of the history department at Colorado State University. The article was previously published at The Conversation, www.theconversation.com.



Photos/Courtesy of Focus Features

“Harriet” features the life of activist and abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

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seminary’s dean, the Rev. Ian Markham, and a range of other Episcopal leaders.

With that group’s encouragement, Ide recruited Mallonee and a few others to join his filmmaking team on their own trip to the Holy Land, with the goal of developing ideas and supplying inspiration, accuracy and depth to the ultimate work of the writer and filmmakers.

It was Mallonee’s first trip to the Holy Land, and she said she was particularly moved by the group’s visit to an archeological dig where researchers were uncovering a temple where Jesus was believed to have taught.

“It helped to envision life there,” she said, and she also felt a direct connection between past and present. “Jesus is here, God is here, we are here. God’s love is here now, and we’re a part of it. It was really powerful.”

The Rev. Greg Millikin, rector at Grace Episcopal Church in New Lenox, Ill., also joined the pilgrimage, his second to the Holy Land, and he described it as different from the overly-scheduled tours that many pilgrims experience. This was more contemplative, particularly during the two days they spent in the garden of Gethsemane, he said.

“It really kind of zaps you back 2,000 years, and you can feel it,” he said.

Millikin has known Ide for about 20 years, since both attended All Saints’ in Beverly Hills, and Millikin has professional roots in the film business. He worked in studio marketing for 10 years before leaving his job in 2012 to attend Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 2016 and has served at Grace Episcopal Church for two years.

Now, as an informal adviser on “The Upper Room,” he sees himself as part of Ide’s theological “think tank,” and he thinks Ide’s story is mining fertile spiritual ground. “What does it mean for these disciples to have a leader leave, and that they have to kind of find a voice amongst them or some kind of direction or path forward that would end up becoming the church?”

While Grace Based Films is raising the money needed to turn “The Upper Room” into a high-caliber professional production, the writer on Ide’s team, Nick Schober, is working on finalizing a script that will draw on the pilgrimage experience and input from participants. ■

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