Episcopal
JOURNAL

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3

NEWS **Curry fields queries from Reddit users**

8

NEWS **New saint lauded at Calif. church**

12

ARTS **Romantic art elevates landscapes**

Connecticut diocese seeks new dynamism through structural change

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Photo/The Episcopal Church in Connecticut

The Rev. Erin Flinn (left), North Central Region missionary for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, talks to participants during a "Wild Worship" outdoor Eucharist service.

For many years, reorganizing church structure and governance to be more efficient and effective has been suggested as a way for the Episcopal Church to adapt to societal changes. But the record of progress toward that goal has been mixed, at least on a churchwide level.

The Episcopal Church in Connecticut has taken its own action on structural reform by replacing its 14 deaneries — which were seen as outdated — with six regions, each served by a "region missionary" who fosters collaboration and engagement in the parishes of that region.

Two years after the first missionaries were hired, their positions have gone from part time to full time.

"The people and the parishes have faithfully chosen to realize the truth that the church and the world is changing … and there's only going to be more change afoot," Bishop Ian Douglas, the diocesan bishop, told Episcopal News Service. "Instead of licking our wounds or wallowing in loss and decline, the

continued on page 6

Advocacy group Integrity facing internal struggles

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Integrity, the nonprofit organization dedicated to LGBTQ advocacy within the Episcopal Church, is facing struggles with leadership, finances and communication — as well as questions about whether it is still relevant or necessary in 2019.

Many longtime members and former Integrity leaders have expressed frustration and concern at what they consider mismanagement and a lack of transparency, and with tension expressed recently on social media, board members say they are making a renewed effort to improve organization and communication.

"I have failed to be perfect … and I fear that the spiritual, mental, and physical health of Integrity has suffered because of it. For this, I am profoundly sorry for any part that I have contributed to with regard to the health of our organization," the Rev. Gwen Fry, president of Integrity, wrote in a statement posted on Facebook and Integrity's new website, which went live on Oct. 17.

Founded in 1974 by activist Louie Crew to help gay Episcopalians gain acceptance within the church, Integrity grew to have 58 local chapters and about 2,000 active members by 2011, the last year for which it released a complete annual report. With its official mission of full inclusion of all LGBTQ people in the sacramental life of the Episcopal Church, Integrity has been an active presence at General Conventions since 1977, helping draft resolutions and gathering support. Its primary goal was accomplished in 2015, when General Convention approved marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Photo/Integrity via Facebook

An Integrity chapter participates in a Pride parade in Portland, Ore., in 2012.

Fry's term as president has been marked by instability and uncertainty, but Integrity's struggle to stay afloat in a radically changing environment runs deeper. According to IRS filings, Integrity had $516,152 in net assets at the start of 2013 and had been taking in well over $200,000 per year for the preceding several years.

By 2015, the last year it filed a full return to the IRS, Integrity reported $134,029 in net assets. That year, it reported just $54,574 in revenue, but $225,225 in expenses. In January 2018, Integrity laid off the last of its paid staff. Fry, the previous vice president of national affairs who formerly served in the Diocese of Arkansas, was elected president for a three-year term in June 2018, and during the Integrity Eucharist at that year's General Convention, she announced that Integrity had been renamed the Episcopal Rainbow, though that change has apparently not taken effect.

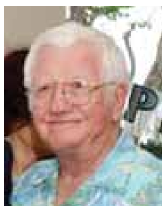
Much of the confusion expressed by Integrity members focuses on who is actually in charge of the organization. In late 2018, between March and June, Deanna Bosch, treasurer, Letty Guevara-Cuence, secretary/communications director, and Brent Cox, vice president of national affairs, all resigned, leaving Kay Smith Riggle, vice president of local affairs, as the only remaining elected board member.

"It really had to do with other things going on in those people's lives and they realized they just didn't have the time," Smith Riggle told Episcopal News Service. "We weren't really trying to hide anything. Things were moving really quickly and it was difficult to respond to what was happening in addition

continued on page 7

CONVERSATIONS

A reflection on racism and forgiveness



By Bob Libby

I HAVE HAD A cross burned on my lawn, but I am a racist.

I have an award from the Hollywood Radio and Television Society, that honors me for creating "The World's Best" radio public service announcement on racism. But, nonetheless, I am a racist.

Oh, like many parish priests, I have quoted the moving Rodgers and Hammerstein ballad from "South Pacific": "You've got to be taught to hate and fear."

But I am a racist.

While there's a lot of truth to that song, I believe there's more to racism than learned behavior.

President Obama often contended that racism was in our nation's DNA.

I would expand that to suggest that racism is part of our human DNA. Is it not part of our basic human primitive instinct? We feel most secure in our own "comfort zone," where we are among others who talk like us, eat like us, smell like us, etc.

Here I am at the conclusion of a long and exciting ministry, and I am convinced that racism has its roots as an unavoidable element of our human development. Could it be that racism is a contemporary expression of what our spiritual ancestors called "original sin?"

Several years ago I shared these thoughts with the Miami Herald's African-American columnist, Leonard Pitts Jr.

In an e-mail, he thanked me, adding, "I was particularly taken with your forthright expression of self-evident truth so many of us refuse to acknowledge: namely that tribalism is so ingrained in the human experience that even the best of us is only a bigot in recovery."

If we acknowledge that racism is a spiritual problem, we also need to ask if there a spiritual remedy.

I am inspired by the work of Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu in developing the peace and reconciliation process for South Africa. Tutu summed it up succinctly with, "there is no future without forgiveness."

Forgiveness is a major theme in both Judaism and Christianity. In the fall, Jews celebrate their High Holy Days, the most prominent of which is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Atonement is "at-one-ment," bringing back together that which has been separated.

Forgive or forgiveness appears dozens of times in Christian scripture. In the Lord's Prayer, it has two parts: 1) forgive us our sins and 2) as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

When I was being prepared for confirmation, I was taught that God would forgive me for the bad things, I had "done and left undone, providing that I was truly sorry, do my best not to do them again, and make amends, if and when that was possible. "Make amends?" Are we talking about "reparations?" Am I guilty for the sins of my great-great grandparents? Or am I called upon to mend the damage that has been done?

As reported in this periodical, the Diocese of Maryland and Virginia Theological Seminary are taking the reparations approach. While others, like the town of Key Biscayne, Fla., as reported here, are establishing creative relationships with inner-city neighborhoods like Miami's Liberty City.

On Oct. 20, a banquet, attended by national, state and municipal officials, honored Police Chief Charles Press, a member of Key Biscayne's St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, for his reconciling leadership with the residents of the inner-city Liberty City neighborhood.

> **"Racism and self-centeredness may be a part of human nature, but that's not all we are."**

Will Fonxiam, an African-American photographer covering Liberty City, reflected, "We still have a long way to go, but the cops and the people are beginning to trust one another and our partnering with Key Biscayne offers hope for our future."

Photo/Leo Quintana

Key Biscayne Police Chief Charles Press has led efforts to link affluent Key Biscayne with inner-city Liberty City.

Now, as regarding #2, "as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us," there are some real possibilities.

Back in 1992, when Cowley and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) published my book called "The Forgiveness Book," that idea became the cornerstone of my pastoral ministry.

I came to the conclusion that when one has been hurt, abused, defrauded, etc., it is important to acknowledge the offense, seek justice and healing — and finally grant forgiveness. Acknowledging victimhood is an essential pit stop on the road to healing, but it is not a final destination.

The most quoted paragraph from my book states, "When we define ourselves by the people who have hurt us or who hate us, we remain in bondage to those people until we are able to forgive them. When we are unable to let go of the past, our identity is defined by those moments of hatred and pain. But as Christians we are called to identify ourselves with one who loves us and was willing to die on the cross for us."

Racism and self-centeredness may be a part of human nature, but that's not all we are.

When Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, visited Charleston, S.C., recently, he noted that the forgiving response of the relatives of the slaughtered members of the Emanuel AME Church saved the city from potential violence.

Is forgiveness and love the answer to racism?

Bishop Curry stole the show at Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's royal wedding last year, with his proclamation of "the radical power of love."

The same theme was expressed by Rabbi Joel Caroline last October when our Key Biscayne community gathered with him in solidarity with the victims of the Pittsburgh synagogue bombing. "Love is stronger than hate," proclaimed the rabbi and the crowd shouted, "AMEN."

But what is love? A warm puppy? No. Love is a verb, not a noun. Love is action, not a warm feeling. ■

The Rev. Bob Libby is a retired Episcopal priest and author of "The Forgiveness Book."

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

THINKING ABOUT church governance is like taking medicine — boring but necessary. However, again like medicine, when you start looking at its effects, suddenly it becomes a lot more interesting.

For one thing, governance means money — where it comes from, how it is raised, how it is spent. Efficient governance, or as close to efficient as humans can get, makes good stewardship very real. Running things well means that mission can be expressed more deeply and on a wider scale. More people benefit.

As reported on page one, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut took a look at the way it was running things and had the courage to change. Ironically, it was inspired by a committee that recommended governance changes at the national level, but hasn't seen some of those suggestions implemented.

Episcopalians as a whole love rules and tradition, both of which find glorious manifestations in this church. However, tradition can also create fossils, and Connecticut decided to reorganize and trust in God.

If Connecticut has found the path to good change, then the opposite side of the coin is that not all structures can or should be revitalized.

Page one also features the story of another organization that may be reaching the end of its natural life.

Integrity was founded in 1974 by the irrepressible activist known then as Louie Crew. He's now known as Louie Crew Clay, having taken the last name of his husband, Ernest. It was a momentous year for the Episcopal Church, when 11 women were "irregularly" ordained as priests before it was allowed.

Louie Crew put forward the radical idea that gay people were worthy of God's love, fully baptized into the church, deserve to be accepted by their church and participate in all its sacraments and at all levels.

More than four decades later, there are many LGBTQ priests and gay and lesbian couples are being married in Episcopal churches. It's natural to grieve a group that has done such good work for so long, but now Integrity will have to re-examine its reason for being. There are new battles to be fought and perhaps it will take new leadership and a new organization to fight them. ■

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CONVERSATIONS

When a judge gives a Bible: Converting or consoling?

By Pamela A. Lewis

"THAT WOMAN IS *not* a heathen!" said my friend, practically coming through my phone receiver. She continued: "she was trying to convert her!" (With that statement I could almost make out my friend's head.)

"That woman" was Amber Guyger, the 31-year-old white former Dallas police officer who had been sentenced to 10 years in prison for fatally shooting Botham Shem Jean, a black neighbor, last year in his apartment. She claimed to have mistaken his apartment for her own and said she had believed that Jean was an intruder.

The "she" who was trying to "convert" Guyger was Judge Tammy Kemp (who is black), who presided over Guyger's trial. Following the officer's sentencing, Kemp spoke with and hugged Jean's parents. When she returned to the courtroom, she had her personal Bible in hand, which she gave to Guyger, pointing to John 3:16, a verse familiar to many Christians. Guyger embraced the judge, who returned the gesture.

The optics of the interaction between the white convicted murderer and the black judge were powerful, and social media was soon ablaze with video clips and comments. While some opined that the judge had injected a much-needed dose of compassion into what had been a very unusual and difficult case, others viewed the moment as inappropriate, and bordering on unconstitutional.

The atheist organization Freedom from Religion Foundation filed a complaint with the Texas Commission on Judicial Conduct arguing that Kemp's "proselytizing" was an ethics violation and that her "compassion crossed the line into coercion."

> 'There is "truth," and there is the Truth.'

Which brings me back to my friend, who was unmoved by Kemp's compassionate gesture. To her, Kemp had blithely disrespected and stepped over the hard line that divides impartiality from partiality. It was one thing for the judge to have hugged Guyger, but when she gifted her with the Bible and picked out a specific passage, that was the last straw. In my friend's mind, the gesture implied that Kemp considered Guyger to be a "heathen" in need of salvation, and the judge was effectively seeking to convert the convicted woman.

Admittedly, when I first saw the footage of Guyger and Kemp, I also wondered whether the judge had acted appropriately. While I was initially touched by her gesture, I began to question whether she was displaying the requisite objectivity as represented by the figure of Justice, blindfolded and holding perfectly balanced scales. Had she blurred, or even erased, the line between church and state? Was she subtly converting or proselytizing to Guyger?

Kemp had originally declined to comment on her actions, but she has now spoken publicly about what transpired between herself and Guyger, explaining that it was the latter's request for a Bible that moved her to get her personal copy and give it to the young woman.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "proselytize" as "inducing someone to convert to one's faith" or to "recruit someone to join one's party, institution or cause." Although it can have other meanings, the word's religious connotation has held most strongly since it entered English in the 17th century, and (at least these days) it often has a negative ring to it. The proselytizer is seen as a bully who exhorts others to yield to their viewpoint or risk being thrown to the outer darkness. From what I could tell from the video clip, the judge neither exhorted nor coerced Guyger.

Conversion is complex and differs for each individual who experiences it. It can take many forms, occur suddenly (see "Surprised By Joy," by C.S. Lewis), or play out over a length of time. However, understanding conversion as a move from one state of being or belief to another, I would argue that Amber Guyger experienced some sort of conversion and that Kemp facilitated it.

Guyger expressed fear as to whether God would forgive her and whether her life could still have purpose. Assuring her that these things would be possible, Kemp did not see a "heathen" or even the convicted murderer, but a broken human being who now faced 10 long years in prison. In that moment, the judge was no longer, as she has stated, "there for the law; my legal duties had been concluded." She was there as another human being and as a woman of faith who, through her assuring words and consoling hug, moved Guyger from hopelessness to hope. That, to my mind, is a moment of conversion.

A very smart person I know once said that there is "truth," and there is the Truth. A court of law is where "truth" is determined, and is what those who take the stand to testify swear to tell when placing their right hand on the Bible. But it is the greater Truth that encompasses mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, which every person wants and needs to receive even when they feel undeserving of them.

"No defendant presents himself as one single act," said Kemp. "The sum total is presented." This is the Truth she revealed when she gave her Bible and her hug to Amber Guyger, the Truth that is for all of us and which we can all believe. ■

Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith. She attends Saint Thomas Episcopal Church, Fifth Avenue, New York.

Presiding Bishop fields faith questions from Reddit users

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

He may have preached at a royal wedding, but he's never committed himself to answering whatever questions the users of the social network Reddit might throw at him — until now.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry spent the afternoon of Oct. 10 participating in his first "Ask Me Anything," a popular Reddit feature that goes by the shorthand AMA. The idea behind the AMA session is for a person of some renown or import — from Bill Gates to a local TV weatherman — to mingle with the average Reddit user and take any and all questions. Curry's AMA can be found on the r/Christianity subreddit.

"Looking forward to talking all things Episcopal Church, The Way of Love, Jesus Movement, and perhaps a little bit about that wedding," Curry said in his introduction.

Attached was a photo of Curry holding a sign that read, "Hello Reddit!" In the corner of the sign was a hand-drawn depiction of Reddit's alien mascot, Snoo, dressed in bishop garb.

Over about an hour and a half, the session generated 145 comments between Curry and his questioners. The questions touched on topics that included evangelism, devotional practices, preaching style, theological education, the Episcopal tradition and denominational decline.

"I find it helpful to remember that we are first of all not a religious institution. That we are first of all participants in the movement that Jesus began in the first century," Curry said. "And that movement of Jesus — a movement of people that gathered around him and his movement of love — that movement has been an underground movement in the first century. … It may well be now that we have returned to being an underground movement again. And that's okay, because our way is not the way of the world. It is the way of the crucified and risen One."

The "Ask Me Anything" coincided with the release of new episodes in the second season of The Episcopal Church's "Way of Love" podcast featuring Curry, according to Jeremy Tackett, Episcopal Church digital evangelist.

"We've been working for the past few months to find an opportunity for the presiding bishop to interact with the Reddit /r/Christianity community," Tackett told Episcopal News Service. "They're an active group, and we knew

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry holds a sign promoting his "Ask Me Anything" session on the social network Reddit.

there would be great questions and a chance to reach beyond our normal Episcopalian audience."

Some Reddit users asked Curry about his own spiritual growth.

"How has your relationship with Jesus changed over the years?" asked a user who goes by Ay_Theos_Meo. "How is your spiritual life different from your early days as Christian (if it is different at all)?"

"I have to admit that one of the things that really has changed is that Jesus really has a way of broadening my worldview and perspective rather than constricting and limiting it," Curry responded, in part.

Another user asked whom Curry would like to meet to discuss faith. "Of course the answer is Jesus," Curry said. He also added German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Fannie Lou Hamer, a leader in the civil rights movement.

Other questions were more lighthearted, and Curry was willing to play along.

lindsey7606: "Bishop Curry, what's your favorite corny bible joke?"

PBCurry: "Old preachers never die, they just go out to pastor!"

And at a few points the "Ask Me Anything" session turned personal. One user mentioned being baptized and confirmed by Curry when he was bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina. Another Reddit user, Tepid_Radical_Reform, told Curry that many years ago Curry's wife worked with the user's mother at a bank in Cincinnati, and the mother also babysat Curry's daughter.

"So, important question: Do you love Cincinnati Skyline Chili?" Tepid_Radical_Reform asked.

"I do," Curry responded. "Especially when I'm not dieting!" ■

AROUND THE CHURCH

New York cathedral makes progress on restoration

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine hosted the New York City Fire Department's annual memorial service on Oct. 10, and with a fire cleanup crew's scaffolding serving as part of the backdrop for the ceremony, Dean Clifton Daniel stood to offer a brief welcome.

Daniel noted that city firefighters had responded to significant fires at the cathedral twice in the past two decades, most recently in April on Palm Sunday. "On behalf of a grateful cathedral and a grateful city, thank you," he said.

Photos/Cathedral of St. John the Divine via Facebook

The Rt. Rev. Clifton Daniel, dean of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York, speaks Oct. 10 at the New York City Fire Department's annual memorial service, held at the cathedral.

The fire on April 14 prompted a sudden evacuation of the cathedral, where the 9 a.m. Palm Sunday service had just ended. The 11 a.m. service was moved outside as smoke billowed from the building. Church leaders initially expressed relief that no one was hurt and that most of the damage from the fire was confined to an art storage room in the cathedral's basement crypt.

The fire's severity paled in comparison to the damage sustained in a terrifying blaze the following day at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, but as with Notre Dame, recovery at St. John the Divine has been a slow, gradual process that still is disrupting some cathedral operations six months later.

St. John the Divine canceled its popular St. Francis Day Festal Eucharist, which typically draws more than 2,000 pets and their owners to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Even so, the cathedral was able to hold a St. Francis Day Fair on Oct. 6 outside, with pet blessings, a costume parade and children's activities.

Hosting the Oct. 10 memorial service for firefighters "took on a special meaning," the cathedral said in a Facebook post. "We saw firsthand their commitment, professionalism and respect."

Some artworks were damaged by the fire, but the continued disruptions primarily are due to the smoke. Right after the fire, crews cleaned everything below 10 feet to allow the cathedral to reopen quickly, but the greater challenge has been cleaning the walls, windows and ceilings above 10 feet.

"This work has required a great deal of flexibility, cooperation and patience on the part of staff, visitors, worshipers and the cleaning crews, as we moved services and adjusted public events to accommodate the needs of such an undertaking," the cathedral said in an update for its fall 2019 newsletter.

Access to parts of the cathedral has been limited as restoration workers raise lifts to clean the facility's heights. The scaffolding was brought in for the more complicated task of cleaning above the high altar.

The cleanup also has prompted some early closings and canceled services and disrupted the plans of the many sightseers who visit St. John the Divine to view its grand architecture. The cathedral, one of the world's largest churches, began charging tourists $10 admission about two years ago, but it reportedly has reduced the price while renovations are underway.

The cathedral, which also serves as the seat of the Diocese of New York, posts schedule updates on its website.

With several prominent areas of the cathedral's worship space closed, including the high altar, great choir and crossing, Sunday services have been confined to the nave. Daily services are held in a smaller area known as the medical bay. The cathedral's "Treasures of the Crypt" exhibition is also closed.

Crews clean the cathedral's stonework after it was damaged by smoke from a fire in April.

Its six pipe organs have been affected by the smoke as well. They must be taken apart and cleaned before they can be returned to use. Until then, a rented substitute will have to do. "We are blessed to have use of the finest electronic organ available," the cathedral notes.

The cathedral is expected to be fully restored by next year. Daniel told the New York Times last month that he hoped to have the stonework cleaned in time for Christmas 2019, and attention will then shift to the pipe organs. The congregation anticipates being able to resume its full St. Francis Day celebrations in October 2020.

That is a relatively short timeline compared to what the congregation endured after a fire in 2001. The six-alarm blaze a week before Christmas Eve burned through the timbered roof trusses, destroying the north transept and severely damaging the Great Organ.

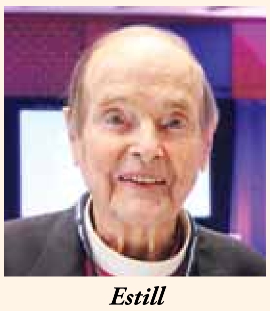
The damage required extensive restoration work, and the cathedral wasn't fully restored until 2008. ■

OBITUARIES

Bishop Robert Estill, 92

Bishop Robert Whitridge Estill, the ninth bishop of North Carolina, died on Oct. 9 in Raleigh, N.C.

After receiving a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Kentucky in 1949, Estill earned a Bachelor of Divinity at Episcopal Divinity School in 1952 and a Master of Sacred Theology (1960), Doctor of Ministry (1979) and Doctor of Divinity (1984) from Sewanee, the University of the South. He was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood in 1952.



Estill

Estill's service to the church began in his native Kentucky, where he served several churches. He then served in the D.C. area for several years as rector of St. Alban's Parish and a faculty member at Virginia Theological Seminary before moving to Dallas to serve as rector of St. Michael's and All Angels. From there he was elected bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of North Carolina in 1980. He succeeded Bishop Thomas Fraser as the ninth bishop of North Carolina in 1983. He served as bishop until his retirement in 1994.

As bishop, Estill sought to deepen and extend the ordained ministry of the church through a commitment to clergy continuing education, active encouragement of aspirants for Holy Orders, support for the ordination of women and the revival of the diaconate in this diocese.

Estill also sought to strengthen diocesan institutions and to honor long-standing mission commitments. He was a strong proponent of youth, campus and social ministries. A capital campaign conducted in the 1980s enabled the diocese to expand the facilities of the Camp & Conference Center.

In addition to his service to the Episcopal Church, Estill also served as the chair of the Kentucky Human Rights Commission and on the board of trustees of General Theological Seminary. He taught at Duke Divinity School, presided over the North Carolina Council of Churches, and chaired the Episcopal Church Board of Theological Education and the board of Kanuga Camp and Conference Center. He was also the author of "The Sun Shines Bright," a memoir published in 2017.

Estill is survived by his wife, Joyce, their three children, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

— Diocese of North Carolina

Former Springfield Bishop Peter Beckwith, 80

Bishop Peter Beckwith, who served as bishop of the Diocese of Springfield (Ill.) from 1992 to 2010, died on Oct. 4 at the age of 80, according to the diocese. In 2014, he left the Episcopal Church to join the Anglican Church in North America, becoming an assisting bishop in their Diocese of the Great Lakes.

Beckwith

Born in Battle Creek, Mich., in 1939, he attended Hillsdale College where he received a BA in 1961, having majored in philosophy and religion. Beckwith attended seminary at the University of the South, earning an MDiv degree in 1964. He also earned a Master of Sacred Theology from Nashotah House in 1974.

Beckwith served as a chaplain in the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1972-1999, and from 1996-1999 was the deputy chief of chaplains for total force as a rear admiral. He also served as chaplain to Episcopal inmates at Southern Michigan State Prison, the Marine Corps Reserve Association, the Illinois State Police and Hillsdale College.

— Diocese of Springfield

AROUND THE CHURCH

Two Episcopal churches to receive preservation grants

The National Fund for Sacred Places on Oct. 17 announced $1.9 million in awards to ten historic congregations across the United States. The ten are among the most significant sacred spaces in the U.S. and the grants will go toward repair and restoration, safeguarding physical legacies and strengthening the value they contribute to their communities.

"All ten are extraordinary places, with important architecture and consequential outreach," said Bob Jaeger, president of Partners for Sacred Places. "We look forward to working with each of them to preserve their buildings and make the most of them as assets for ministry and service."

The National Fund is operated by Partners for Sacred Places, a Philadelphia-based non-profit that helps congregations sustain and use older and historic properties, in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded non-profit that works to save America's historic places.

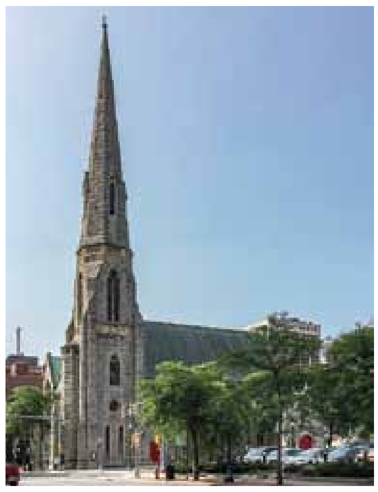
The Episcopal churches awarded grants are:

St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Syracuse, N.Y. The growth of St. Paul's paralleled the development of Syracuse from a canal-oriented outpost to an upstate urban center. South Sudanese refugee church members now count among those who use the space for community and religious activities. The parish is planning to repurpose underused space in its facility for mixed income housing units.

Trinity Episcopal Church in Abbeville, S.C. Prominently located on Abbeville's historic town square, this impressive church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The parish and its diocese are partnering with Preservation South Carolina to achieve major restoration projects at the site and manage the facility as a venue for religious and cultural activities.

Photo/Bill Fitzpatrick

Trinity Church, Abbeville, S.C.



St. Paul's Church, Syracuse, N.Y.

Photo/Kenneth C. Zirkel/Wikipedia

Since its launch in 2016, the National Fund has drawn greater attention to the challenges and opportunities America's faith groups face as they engage in community outreach. Between 6,000 and 10,000 sacred places close each year in the United States, and with them, important community programming.

The National Fund began with nearly $14 million in grants from the Lilly Endowment. Since then, the National Fund has awarded planning grants, training and technical assistance to 54 congregations and organizations. To date, the program has awarded over $4.7 million in capital grants, ranging from $50,000 to $250,000, to community-serving congregations representing 17 faith traditions in 29 states and the District of Columbia.

Grants assistance provided by the National Fund has not only helped congregations to preserve their sacred spaces but has helped them leverage more than $9.5 million in new funding for major building campaigns in their congregations and communities.

In 2019 the program received more than $15 million in additional funding, to continue the program through 2024.

This year's applicants had to demonstrate the significance of their buildings' religious architecture. Applicants also had to identify a compelling restoration plan and outline a capital campaign that detailed internal fundraising goals and strategies.

More information is available at **www.fundforsacredplaces.org, www.sacredplaces.org** and **www.savingplaces.org.**

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Collaboration will expand worship resources

The Bible and Common Prayer Book Society said it will collaborate with Church Publishing Inc. (CPI) to expand the availability of Episcopal worship resources.

This collaboration will provide complimentary access to CPI's RitePlanning, an online worship planning tool for liturgies and parish bulletins, to qualified worshiping communities.

RitePlanning includes the Book of Common Prayer, the Book of Occasional Services 2003, Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2006, the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, the Hymnal 1982 (including service music), Lift Every Voice and Sing II. It also offers customizable templates and content for special services and celebrations.

CPI is the publisher of official worship materials, books, music, and digital ministry resources for the Episcopal Church and a publisher and supplier to the broader ecumenical marketplace.

The Bible and Common Prayer Book Society provides prayer books and hymnals to eligible communities such as new congregations, parishes needing to replace worn-out books, financially struggling or expanding parishes, parishes which have suffered from natural disasters such as flood, fire or earthquake.

For instance, the society sent a large donation of prayer books and Bibles to the Diocese of Puerto Rico, still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria.

More information is at **www.biblesandprayerbooks.org**.

— The Bible and Common Prayer Book Society

United Thank Offering grants available

The United Thank Offering (UTO) board of directors announced the availability of the 2020 annual grants and the young adult and seminarian grants.

Annual grants are awarded for projects in the Episcopal Church and throughout the Anglican Communion with a different focus. For 2020, the focus is Bless: Share faith, practice generosity and compassion, and proclaim the Good News of God in Christ with hope and humility.

Young adult and seminarian grants offer start-up money for new projects. There are five grants of $5,000 each available to young adults age 19-30 and up to five grants of $5,000 each for Episcopal students enrolled in an ordination-track program at an Episcopal seminary or diocesan/regional training school.

The application deadline for young adult and seminarian grands is Feb. 7, 2020 and the application deadline for annual grants is March 6, 2020. For more information, go to **www.episcopalchurch.org/uto**.

Potential applicants are invited to participate in an informational webinar offered by the UTO board on Oct. 15, 2019 and on Jan. 14, 2020. More information is available at the UTO website.

For annual grants, contact the Rev. Canon Heather Melton at UTO, hmelton@episcopalchurch.org. For young adult and seminarian grants, contact the Rev. Canon Michelle I. Walker at UTO, miwalker@episcopalchurch.org.

The United Thank Offering was founded to support innovative mission and ministry in the Episcopal Church and to promote thankfulness and mission in the whole church. One hundred percent of thank offerings given to UTO are granted the following year. Awards have supported staff positions, conferences, the creation of educational resources, and building projects.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

NEWS

CONNECTICUT continued from page 1

people of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut have said, 'Let's look forward in faith and try on new ways of being the body of Christ.'"

The traditional deanery model — which hadn't been adjusted since 1984 — had become dysfunctional, diocesan leaders said. When asked what wasn't working about the deanery model, the Rev. Timothy Hodapp, canon for mission collaboration, couldn't help but laugh.

"We had 28 participating members in what was then called the diocesan Executive Council, so that was two representatives from each of the 14 deaneries," Hodapp said. "And of those 14, three were actually on the ground, active, doing a lot of really great work. The others — it would go from doing great work on one end to not participating at all on the other, and then kind of middling in between those two extremes. And so you might have your council come together and barely get a quorum, and the work of the council was oftentimes rubber-stamping what bishops and canons had already done."

Even though it was apparent to some in the diocese that the deaneries overall were not adding to the life of the church or the communities they served, it took a fresh set of eyes to make substantive changes in the oldest organized diocese in the United States. Douglas, who became diocesan bishop in 2010, was the first to be elected from outside the state since the diocese was created in 1784.

"So the Holy Spirit was up to something here in Connecticut as far as wanting change," Douglas said.

"There's been a tradition, particularly in Connecticut, that the diocese is embodied in the bishop and staff and diocesan structures," he added. "What I've underscored in everything that we do is the diocese is not the bishop and staff and council and standing committee, etc. The diocese is the united witness of the 160 parishes in Connecticut."

The need for a change started to become clear during the work of the Task Force for Reimagining the Episcopal Church in 2013 and 2014. The task force, also known as TREC, eventually issued a report that recommended consolidating church governance structures. Some the most significant recommendations, such as a unicameral General Convention, have not been adopted, but TREC's work inspired the diocese to start its own task force in 2014.

"The good work that was begun by the general TREC initiative, I think, was too bold and too far-reaching for the whole church, which is why it really wasn't picked up at General Convention," Douglas said, "whereas we in Connecticut said, 'Boy, sure makes sense to us. Why don't we do it?'"

The TREC report inspired the "four C's" that would eventually become the job description of the region missionaries: catalyze, connect, convene and build capability. Redrawing the deaneries into larger regions required the diocese to examine how each unique corner of the state has evolved over time, which ultimately yielded a surprisingly familiar result.

> **"We need to be more flexible, and we need to network differently, and we need to be in a world that has changed completely around us."**
>
> **— Bishop Ian Douglas**

Photo/The Episcopal Church in Connecticut

The Episcopal Church in Connecticut's region missionaries: Dylan Mello, Erendira Jimenez, George Black, the Rev. Erin Flinn (standing), Maggie Breen and the Rev. Rachel Thomas (standing).

"As we devised where these lines might be, to siphon off which chunks of villages are going to be in a region, we went back into the archives and we tried several different iterations," Hodapp explained. "But following the trunk highways and the river valleys, etc., we parsed it, and it almost matched perfectly to 1843 archdeaconries; there were six of them. And here it was. So we returned to our legacy in a real sense."

Along with consolidating the deaneries into regions and establishing the region missionaries, the diocesan task force also recommended abolishing all committees and commissions that are not canonically required. Those were replaced with "ministry networks," but it's not just a change in terminology; in keeping with the spirit of the task force, these new groups are organized from the bottom up, not from the top down. If any group of Episcopalians wants to act together on a particular issue, they can form a ministry network and get support from the diocese.

"There's no application for recognition, there's no canonical authorization; just do it," Douglas said. "And if people say, 'Well, how do we do the work, say, in prisons? Where's the diocesan committee on prison ministry?' We say, 'Go and do it. Organize yourself. You don't have to wait for us to give you authority. You have the baptismal authority you need.'"

Two teams of about 30 people worked on the topic over the course of two years, Hodapp said, and when they put every committee and commission up on a wall, they realized what had to be done.

"What's common to all of this?" Hodapp said. "And why do we have it established as a group that needs to be meeting with Robert's Rules of Order and taking notes when we need to be more flexible, and we need to network differently, and we need to be in a world that has changed completely around us?"

Each region gathers for a convocation at least once a year, during which they select one layperson and one clergy member to serve on the diocesan Mission Council — which replaced the Executive Council — along with a representative from each ministry network.

The task force's plan was adopted enthusiastically at the 2015 diocesan convention, and the region missionaries were the last piece to be implemented, with the first cohort of three priests and three laypeople hired in 2017. Their task, Douglas said, is not to be a stopgap to help keep struggling churches in business, although they do play an important role in the 67 percent of parishes without full-time clergy. Their task is to rethink how the churches operate in their communities, Hodapp says.

"Who else needs to be at the table? And that doesn't mean just Episcopalians. But who are our allies within this village or these three villages? How do we really engage the neighborhood in a meaningful way, for what it needs right now?" Hodapp said.

Maggie Breen, the missionary for the sparsely populated Northeast Region, spends each Sunday at one of the region's 16 parishes, and every Sunday is different.

"I have been bringing a map of the town" in which each parish is situated, Breen told ENS. "And I'll indicate where the parish is in the town, and I'll ask people to think about the town and tell me what things have they noticed that break their heart and what things have they noticed that really bring them joy. And we map those out, and then we brainstorm: What could we do about any of those?"

One of Breen's accomplishments in her region is a lay preaching class, which had previously been done in the Northwest Region. She also organizes a series of "Crafting as a Spiritual Practice" days, in which participants — including members of other churches — connect over their hobbies and their faith.

The North Central Region's missionary, the Rev. Erin Flinn, has organized a film and conversation series on racial justice and is working to connect wardens from different parishes so they can feel supported and share their experiences. She also is focusing on enabling parishioners to start mission work on their own.

"If you have a call, go do something," Flinn said. "One of the things that I think the region [model] is great for is if you have a call to go and do something, but you don't want to do it by yourself, contact me. Let me know what you're doing. I guarantee there's somebody else in the region that is doing the same thing."

Flinn, who was ordained to the transitional diaconate in June, said the regional model has been particularly beneficial to the small parishes, helping them join forces and accomplish more together.

"We have several small parishes that are now collaborating in new ways," Flinn said. "The mentality of regions and networks has really been a lifeline to our smaller communities that don't have a lot of resources and only have half-time or quarter-time clergy."

The region missionaries have organized and facilitated mission trips, spiritual hikes, communication workshops, garden projects, paddling trips, book groups and more, and they also serve as a liaison between parishes and the diocese.

"I spend a lot of time trying to build relationships," Breen said. "I frequently act as a sort of bridge between what's happening at the ground level in the parish and then what's happening at the diocesan house, bringing information from [the diocese] into the parishes, and then also bringing interesting things are happening the parishes up to [the diocese]."

Breen and Flinn were both in the original cohort of missionaries who started in 2017. After their two-year contract expired, three continued as full-time missionaries, while the other three chose not to stay and were replaced by new hires.

Hodapp says the diocese has gotten queries from other dioceses interested in their structural reforms. He says his vision for the future of the regions and the region missionaries is "to be open-minded and to see where God is going to take us. To fan into flame what's working, to fan into flame experiments, trying things on, watching things happen and fall apart, figure out what worked and what didn't."

"What I'm learning," Flinn said, "is that our churches are actually doing more than we realize. We just [weren't] good at telling each other what we're doing. … That was the biggest discovery." ■

NEWS

INTEGRITY continued from page 1

to getting the information out."

Integrity's bylaws specify that if the president is "unable to perform his/her office," the Stakeholders' Council (made up of Integrity's chapter- and diocesan-level leaders) elects a new president to serve the remainder of that term.

Smith Riggle told ENS that a new election was "under consideration" at one point but directed further questions to Fry, who did not respond to requests for an interview.

Photo/Integrity via Facebook

The Rev. Gwen Fry at the 2015 General Convention.

Over the summer, Integrity announced on Facebook that the Rev. Frederick Clarkson had been appointed treasurer, Lindsey Harts had been appointed secretary and director of communications, and Paul Horner had been appointed vice president of national affairs. Integrity's bylaws allow appointments to fill board member vacancies. It also announced that an internal audit of Integrity's assets and a new website would be completed by Sept. 1.

But by October, with no audit and the old website (featuring the previous board of directors, whose terms expired in 2018) still up, members began venting their frustration on the official Integrity Facebook group.

"This should be profoundly concerning for all of us who love and believed in this organization and its role within our church, and who play a role on the ground in our parishes and dioceses. We are a people who believe in resurrection. When can we have a serious discussion about what it would take to have a proper resurrection for Integrity USA? Is it better to officially close down, then choose to re-launch after this (long overdue) audit?" wrote Jason Crighton.

"The board seems not to have any funds to work with, and also seems to value a culture of secrecy and distancing itself from the membership. It may be time to let it go," wrote Frank Dowd, a view shared by other commenters.

Several commenters wrote that their dues checks had been cashed without any acknowledgment or confirmation, that the website's map of welcoming congregations had not been updated since 2014, and that commenters' questions were not being answered. Members have repeatedly expressed concern about Integrity's financial transparency, noting that it has not released a full financial report since 2011 or filed a full 990 return with the IRS since 2015, and have wondered whether the organization is in danger of losing its tax-exempt status.

Although most tax-exempt nonprofits are required to file 990 returns with the IRS annually, organizations that bring in less than $50,000 per year can file a 990-N, an "electronic postcard" listing the group's basic information and affirming its gross receipts have not exceeded $50,000, to satisfy IRS requirements. Integrity has done that for 2016 and 2017.

The internal audit, which was ordered by the board as part of the administrative transition and done by Clarkson and Horner, was completed on Oct. 13 and made available to chapters by request. A draft copy of the conclusion provided to ENS said that that "no discernible irregularities were discovered" and listed bank transactions for 2019 to date, all of which were for typical administrative expenses and disbursements to local chapters. Clarkson told ENS that Integrity has about $53,000 on hand as of Oct. 17.

"I think one of the things that most people aren't aware of — Integrity has no building," Clarkson told ENS. "Integrity basically was a box of documents that were sent to me and had to be reorganized. … Part of the issue that occurred is that Integrity's infrastructure, like its website, is ancient."

Along with the new website, Integrity announced that it is taking a census to figure out exactly how many active chapters and members it has, and that it will be distributing grants of up to $3,000 to censused chapters. Clarkson said that money comes from a bequest from an estate of about $30,000.

Smith Riggle said changes will be made to the payment system this week so that members paying dues will receive an automatic confirmation. The board is meeting by conference call every two weeks, Smith Riggle said, and further financial information will be posted on the new website.

Clarkson said he has dedicated his time to Integrity because he believes it is still needed — particularly for transgender people, and in more conservative areas of the country — and he wants to help local chapters succeed.

"The most effective thing that integrity can do is support its chapters, because they're really the ones who do the work."

Reaction to Integrity's recent statement has been mixed, with some calling it too little, too late and some grateful for the update but confused about what Integrity's purpose will be going forward.

The Rev. Susan Russell, president of Integrity from 2003 to 2009, told ENS she's disappointed at the state Integrity is in now.

"Where there's no vision, people wallow around and make decisions," Russell said. "I think that what we're seeing right now is sort of the last gasp of an organization that has outlived its legacy."

Russell says she cares deeply about Integrity and wants to see it succeed, but the board has a lot of "deferred maintenance" to do.

"I'm hopeful that something could come out of this. But in order for that to happen, there has to be some healthy leadership and there's got to be some transparency." ■

FEATURE

California congregation celebrates new saint

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A California congregation named for one of the Episcopal Church's newest saints, St. Anna Alexander, celebrated its namesake at an Oct. 6 worship service that included a visit from two members of the church that Alexander helped establish in Pennick, Ga.

Dwala Nobles, 59, and Zora Nobles, 65, cousins and longtime members of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Pennick, brought with them century-old relics from Alexander's work at Good Shepherd Church and its school, including Alexander's Book of Common Prayer.

Saint Anna's, located in Antioch, Calif., welcomed them as the congregation celebrated Alexander's legacy as the only black Episcopal deaconess.

"It was almost like coming home," Dwala Nobles told Episcopal News Service in a phone interview the day after the service. "We felt like we were home among family and friends."

Saint Anna's, the first Episcopal church to be named after an African American woman, was formed in March through the merger of two former congregations, St. George's in Antioch and St. Alban's in Brentwood in the Diocese of California.

Alexander had only a year earlier been confirmed as a saint in the Episcopal Church, when the 2018 General Convention voted to add her and her feast day, Sept. 24, to the church's calendar of saints.

Alexander was born in 1865 and died in 1947, and she spent much of her adult life ministering to poor black residents of Glynn and McIntosh counties in rural Georgia, particularly through education. She became a deaconess in 1907 in an era before the church allowed women to become priests or deacons. Among those she taught at Good Shepherd were Dwala Nobles' father and Zora Nobles' father.

Among the items they brought with them to California were Alexander's hymnal from 1878 and a Sunday school ledger from the early 20th century. Some of the materials include Alexander's handwritten notes on teaching methods.

"St. Anna was indeed the persistent force encouraging and urging her students to aim high," the Rev. Jennifer Nelson, a deacon in the Diocese of California, said in her sermon for the Oct. 6 service. Nelson is originally from Guyana and said Alexander reminded her of the caring teachers who encouraged her in her education.

"She had God's blessing as she continued to forge onward, blazing a path

continued on page 8

Photos/Kazuhiro "Kaz" Tsuruta

Zora Nobles, left, and her cousin, Dwala Nobles, present relics of St. Anna Alexander at a service at Saint Anna's Episcopal Church in Antioch, Calif.

St. Anna Alexander's relics, including her Book of Common Prayer and hymnal, are received by the Rev. Alberta Buller and placed on the altar during a service at Saint Anna's Episcopal Church.

Deacon helps parish face its history with slavery

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Though a number of Episcopal churches have worked to acknowledge and repent for their congregations' historic involvement with white supremacy or slavery, it's rarely as personal as it is for the Rev. Natalie Conway and Steve Howard of Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore.

Conway, a deacon serving the parish, discovered last year through a family member's genealogical research that their ancestors were slaves owned by the family of the man who founded the church in 1860, the Baltimore Sun reports.

It got even more personal when she realized that Howard, a parishioner she had known for years, was descended from that slave-owning family.

"My initial reaction was, 'Why should I stay at a place that enslaved my ancestors?'" Conway told the Sun.

But she did stay, and the result has been a transformative process of reckoning and healing for the mostly white church. Over the past several weeks, the parish has held a series of services and events that have examined its long history of promoting racism — which lasted into the 1960s — and sought to bring the community together in a spirit of atonement and forgiveness.

The Rev. Grey Maggiano, who has made racial reconciliation a priority during his three years as Memorial's rector, was as surprised as Conway was to learn of the church's painful history.

"When the truth came to light, the Rev. Conway was shocked. And so were the rest of us," Maggiano wrote in a letter to the congregation. "Frankly, as a church we did not know what uncovering this historical tie would mean, for Natalie, for Memorial, for any of us. However, we knew it was incumbent on us to share the truth, and prayerfully engage with it."

Photo/courtesy of Memorial Episcopal Church

The Rev. Natalie Conway, deacon at Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore, and Steve Howard, a parishioner, pour holy water into the ground near the slave quarters at the Hampton estate in Towson, Md., where Howard's ancestors held Conway's ancestors as slaves.

That engagement took the form of a pilgrimage to the historic Hampton plantation in Towson, Md., a grand estate that was once owned by the family of the Rev. Charles Ridgley Howard, the founding rector of Memorial and a Confederate sympathizer. When Howard was buried there in 1862, there were more than 400 slaves on the property, including the Cromwell family, Conway's ancestors.

More than 50 members of Memorial and the nearby Church of St. Katherine of Alexandria — a primarily African American church established as an alternative to white-only parishes like Memorial, which did not admit black members until 1969, according to the Sun — toured the Howard estate on Aug. 18.

"We saw the grandeur of the mansion and the beautifully manicured lands. We visited the graveyard where the Rev. Charles Ridgley Howard is buried. We saw paintings of his grandparents and his in-laws. We learned what happened to only some of the enslaved persons held at Hampton. We saw rooms where the Rev. Charles Ridgley Howard and his family might have slept — and in contrast where Deacon Natalie [Conway]'s family might have slept. We saw the chains used to hold people," Maggiano wrote.

At the end of the tour, standing in a yard next to the slave quarters, the group said prayers, and holy water was consecrated. In a ceremony that Conway helped plan, she and Steve Howard — the parishioner who is descended from the Rev. Charles Ridgley Howard — poured the water into the ground together.

The act represented the "healing and restoration of relationship between two very different families, and a public

continued on page 8

FEATURE

ANNA continued from page 8

that gives us a window that now shows us the courage and tenacity she would need to overcome the bigotry and discrimination in her time."

Photo/Diocese of Georgia

Deaconess Anna Ellison Butler Alexander ministered in rural Georgia, focusing on the education of poor black children.

During the service, Alexander's Book of Common Prayer and other relics were placed on the altar. The cousins from Alexander's Georgia church presented the congregation at Saint Anna's with a framed picture of Alexander that was propped against the altar. Saint Anna's reciprocated by giving Dwala Nobles and Zora Nobles a silver chalice that had been used by one of the two congregations that merged to form the new church.

A video of the service was shared on the church's Facebook page.

Alexander was "imbuing us with her spirit," the Rev. Jill Honodel, the congregation's long-term supply priest, told ENS. She described it as an emotional and joyous day, centered around highlighting the life and works of an Episcopal saint who is only beginning to receive the full recognition she deserves.

"It felt like together, from coast to coast, we are taking what has been hidden and invisible all these years and we have the privilege and the honor of revealing it," Honodel said.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, who visited Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in January 2018, also addressed those gathered at Saint Anna's through a brief video he recorded for the service. He alluded to a resource center established by Saint Anna's.

"I rejoice in the fact that you, Saint Anna's Episcopal Church, have focused on the needs of children and families in your community with a resource center for children and families," Curry said. "That indeed is God's work. That indeed is the work of Anna Alexander, deaconess of the Episcopal Church." ■

SLAVERY continued from page 8

symbol of who Memorial Church is today," Maggiano wrote.

Howard told the Sun he always knew that he was descended from slave owners but had previously "kept it at an intellectual level," and examining that history more closely felt like "a punch in the gut." But he and other congregants said it's also been illuminating and necessary.

"This has been a giant step forward," he said.

During a later Sunday service, Conway and Howard led a "litany of reconciliation" in which the parish prayed for forgiveness for the sins of slavery and racism. The church posted a public apology to the families who were enslaved by its rectors. And on Sept. 15, it hosted a community conversation on the legacy of slavery in Maryland, inspired by The New York Times' 1619 Project.

Similar efforts to recognize and heal from the history of slavery have taken place recently among Episcopal churches in the region, like a pilgrimage across Virginia's "Slavery Trail of Tears" in August, Virginia Theological Seminary's establishment of a slavery reparations fund and an upcoming pilgrimage to Jamestown, Va., where the first person of African ancestry born in the 13 British colonies was baptized. In June, Bishop Eugene Taylor Sutton of the Diocese of Maryland testified in support of a slavery reparations bill in a congressional hearing. ■

Photo/courtesy of Memorial Episcopal Church

Members of Memorial Episcopal Church and the Church of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Baltimore tour the Hampton estate in Towson, Md.

NEWS

Executive Council gathers in Montgomery, Ala., with theme of racial reconciliation

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church's Executive Council gathered in Montgomery, Ala., for a four-day fall meeting (Oct. 17-21) with racial reconciliation as a central theme, amplified by a city known for its prominent place in the histories of both the Civil War and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

The business sessions have been scheduled around a full-day pilgrimage on Oct. 19 that will include visits to the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, as well as a meeting with Bryan Stevenson, the death row attorney whose Equal Justice Initiative founded the two institutions in 2018 to tell the story of racial injustice and violence in the United States, from slavery to mass incarceration.

"It is the history of America, and this is important for us to remember," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in his opening remarks. "It's not just a Southern story, and it's not just a regional story."

In a homily, Diane Pollard, a lay member of Executive Council from the Diocese of New York, described Montgomery as "a city that is as simple and yet as complex as the shaping of the American dream. If the streets and buildings could only speak to us, what would they say?"

Montgomery is Alabama's capital and a city of about 200,000 people. It was the first capital of the Confederate States of America in 1861, and Confederate President Jefferson Davis worshipped at St. John's Episcopal Church here until the Confederate capital was moved to Richmond, Va.

> **"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived but, if faced with courage, need not be lived again." — Presiding Bishop Curry**

Photos/David Paulsen/ENS

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry gives opening remarks during Executive Council's meeting in Montgomery, Ala.

Montgomery also was where Rosa Parks was arrested on Dec. 1, 1955, for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. In 1961, the civil right activists called Freedom Riders were attacked by white mob at the Montgomery bus terminal. In 1965, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., after leading the voting rights march from Selma, delivered his "How Long, Not Long" speech on the steps of the state capitol.

Touring the city's historic sites was to offer Executive Council members a lesson in the country's terrible history of injustice, Pollard said. "These places will also provide us with a painful opportunity to ask ourselves why and how these events could happen," she said, and they will reveal parallels to present-day injustices.

Diane Pollard gives the homily during Morning Prayer at Executive Council.

Executive Council carries out the programs and policies adopted by the General Convention, and typically meets three times a year. During this triennium, it has set a goal of meeting once in each of The Episcopal Church's nine provinces.

Curry, as presiding bishop, serves as president of Executive Council. Vice president is the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, in her position as president of the House of Deputies. Jennings said in her opening remarks that she was eager to meet with and learn from Stevenson during a gathering at Church of the Good Shepherd.

"The deep injustices in our justice system are no recent invention," Jennings said. "Stevenson's work and witness teach us about the inextricable connection between the enslavement of Africans, the reign of terror known as Jim Crow and the modern-day systemic racism that leads to our country incarcerating more of its citizens than any other nation in the world."

Jennings also highlighted the work of St. John's to unravel a racist myth within its own walls. The congregation had long maintained a plaque on a pew that identified it as the place where Jefferson Davis once sat for worship, but research into the pew's history found that the connection to Davis was tenuous and its 1925 dedication steeped in racism. The congregation announced in February it had removed the plaque and pew.

"The history that most of us learned in school is riddled with stories — you might call them myths — that render invisible the way that race, or what we think of as race, has created and sustained our economy and our social structures, including our churches," Jennings said.

Curry, in his opening remarks, read a passage from Maya Angelou's poem "On the Pulse of the Morning."

"'History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived but, if faced with courage, need not be lived again.' That's the spirit of being in Montgomery," Curry said.

The presiding bishop continued by highlighting the positive responses he and his staff have received to the Way of Love, which offers resources centered around seven steps to help Episcopalians bringing Jesus to the center of their daily lives. Curry suggested it shouldn't be surprising that congregations are adopting the Way of Love, "because I think it reflects who we really are."

Curry also briefly eulogized Maryland Rep. Elijah Cummings, who died on Oct. 16. Curry held him up as an example of "just a good human being, who really did try to live out the social teachings of Jesus of Nazareth." Just as Cummings strived to work with lawmakers who disagreed with him, Curry said the Episcopal Church can be a force for seeking the good in each other, "not to change anybody's vote but to change how we relate to each other as human beings."

And Curry, whose sermons frequently quote Martin Luther King Jr., described plans for staging one of the Episcopal Church's ongoing series of revivals at a major venue in New York. Details of that event are still being worked out, but Curry said the church is embracing greater evangelism because it shares King's vision that we must "learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish as fools."

The Rev. Michael Barlowe, the General Convention secretary, announced future meeting locations for Executive Council through General Convention 2021. The next meeting will be Feb. 12-15 in Salt Lake City, and the other meetings will be held in Puerto Rico; Baltimore; Providence, R.I. and Cleveland. ■

FEATURE

Houston church's mental health ministry serves 800 people a week

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

It's a scene familiar to many clergy: Someone walks into the church office wanting to speak to a priest, clearly in distress. Within a few minutes of conversation, it becomes clear that the person is suffering from a mental illness.

For many priests who want to help a person seeking healing but simply aren't equipped to deal with mental illness, this experience can be agonizing — and can end with the mentally ill person feeling more dejected than before.

But at St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston, the scene has been rewritten.

When someone walks in needing mental health care, a priest can simply walk them next door to the Hope and Healing Center and Institute, where the person can be evaluated and receive a comprehensive array of services, all for free. And the center's training programs are now helping clergy and church leaders around the country identify and respond to mental illness in their communities.

Since it was established by St. Martin's in 2012, the Hope and Healing Center and Institute has grown rapidly to fill a significant portion of the unmet need for psychiatric and addiction treatment in Harris County, where the county prison is the largest mental health facility in Texas. Today, the center on St. Martin's campus serves over 800 people a week, in addition to the patients it refers for treatment to its network of external providers.

How did a church start such a successful and complex operation?

With a membership of 9,500 (that used to include Barbara and George H.W. Bush, whose funerals were held there), St. Martin's is the largest parish in the Episcopal Church and has abundant financial resources. When the Rev. Russ Levenson became rector in 2007, he was drawn to this sentence in the parish profile: "We want to be known as a church that increasingly helps those broken by life's circumstances."

St. Martin's already had long-running mission programs serving the hungry and needy of Houston, in partnership with other Episcopal churches. But its location in a wealthy enclave of the city didn't make sense for, say, an on-site soup kitchen. Soon after Levenson took the helm, the church bought the property next door and thought about how they might use it to serve the community.

"It doesn't take long to be in a church to realize those issues that every church deals with: family dysfunction, aging parents, addiction, mental and emotional health care, depression," Levenson said. "We already had several support and recovery groups on campus. … So we said, have we ever kind of put all those things together under the umbrella of the church? … What would it look like if we developed a healing agency that would bring together the facets of emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health?"

Photo/HHCI

Director of Clinical Services Madeline Stiers discusses one-on-one dynamics during a training event at the Hope and Healing Center and Institute on the campus of St. Martin's Episcopal Church.

With support from big names like the Bushes, former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and actor Sam Waterston of "Law & Order," St. Martin's raised enough money to build the Hope and Healing Center and Institute, which features treatment rooms, lecture halls, teaching laboratories and meeting spaces. Under CEO Matt Stanford — an expert in the intersection of faith and mental health — the center has expanded and is now an independent nonprofit with a staff of about 25 people, though it is still housed on St. Martin's campus.

The center offers individual treatment for severely ill patients, mental health coaching, tele-psychiatry, case management and 38 weekly support groups. People with less serious concerns can be evaluated and referred to one of the nearly 1,000 pre-screened partner providers within the Houston area. Treatment is designed to be as holistic as possible, in order to get the patient on a path to sustainable wellness; therapists, case workers and psychiatrists collaborate on the course of a patient's treatment. And clients are encouraged to talk about their spiritual health as much as they want to.

"We're engaging them at a level beyond just the fact that they are a set of messed-up symptoms or an illness. We're engaging them as people. And we recognize that people have spiritual issues and they often want to talk about those," Stanford said.

continued on page 14

FAITH AND THE ARTS

German Romantic painters elevated spirituality of landscape

By Dennis Raverty

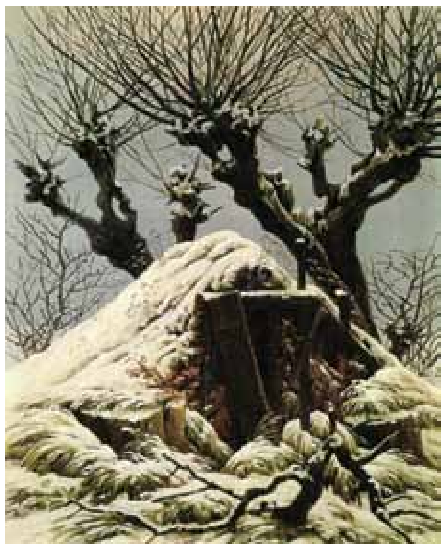
It is often claimed by art historians that early 19th-century Romanticism represented a secularization of subject matter, long after the pinnacle of religious art had been reached during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The rise of landscape painting at the beginning of that century signaled the end of the era of great Christian art, it is said.

But the German Romantics transformed and elevated landscape painting from the minor genre it had been up to that point, to be the bearer of the kind of serious and sublime content that had formerly been reserved for biblical or mythological subjects alone. Artists such as Caspar David Friedrich did not abandon the sacred but instead radically redefined it and expressed spiritual aspirations and moral lessons in terms of an implied but ambiguous narrative found within the work — a narrative often characterized by the theme of going on a journey, an excursion laden with mystical allusions in these haunting, and in a sense sacramental landscapes.

The "Winterreise," a Romantic song cycle by Friedrich's younger contemporary Franz Shubert, tells a tale through music of a young man's wintertime travels. The word "romantic" comes from the root word "Roman," which in both French and German means "novel." It is this novelistic quality, this sense of storytelling, that informs the lieder cycle, where, ultimately, the protagonist represents the listener, and his wanderings embody the traveler's destiny as it unfolds over the course of his lifetime--his spiritual journey, his very own *Roman,* the "novel" of his life, so to speak: his personal "Winterreise."

In the extraordinarily subjective world of early 19th-century painter Casper David Friedrich, we are almost always positioned before a landscape that strongly suggests our presence, whether by placing us directly on a path into the forest, or even in the much subtler evocation involved in a painting like "Bushes in Snow," which seems to invite us to enter and inhabit the space with our presence, like a roadside shrine honoring this humble and easily overlooked bit of shrubbery.

The scene is nonetheless an entire world unto itself in Friedrich's romantic realm, precisely because it is designed to be visually and imaginatively entered and "colonized" by the viewer, thereby re-enchanting the mundane and making the very act of representation itself sacramental, while the experience of a sympathetic viewer of the picture then becomes almost mystical.



Paintings by Caspar David Friedrich: Above, "Winter Landscape with Church," far left, "Bushes in Snow," left, "Hut in the Snow."

Often the narrative is both more complicated and more ambiguous in Friedrich's work, as in "Winter Landscape with Church." Here, the artist has depicted an actual outdoor shrine with a crucifix in the shadow of a small cluster of evergreens, echoing the Gothic church steeples in the distance shrouded in a mist of light snow and fog during the last few minutes of twilight, before darkness descends on the scene. The destination of the wanderer/viewer seems to be the distant church, representing, perhaps, his spiritual quest, his highest aspirations — and yet it seems so far away as to be almost unreachable, like a vision or hallucination.

In the right foreground lies a crutch in the snow, and a little further on, another crutch. Following the trajectory of these abandoned crutches, we notice a small figure sitting in the shelter of the rock, his hands folded in prayer, his face gazing rapturously at the crucifix. We are aware that the artist is representing some sort of a narrative here, but the exact nature of that narrative remains unclear. Why has the man left behind his crutches? Why does he stop here? A miracle cure could be one possible answer, with the grateful restored man giving thanks to God afterwards.

But one could just as easily interpret the scene entirely differently. Perhaps the man is finally giving up all hope of ever reaching his destination before darkness descends, and so, throwing away his crutches, he collapses in the snow, praying for the forgiveness of his immortal soul during these final moments or hours before hypothermia ends his life. The narrative is purposely left unclear by Friedrich, so as to permit a variety of such possible interpretations.

Despite the references to infirmity and death, it is not merely a despairing, hopeless vision of the ultimate futility of all human endeavor, but rather, its lesson seems to be almost the opposite. Namely, in the voyage of life, beset as it is with various obstacles and diversions, you may very well never reach your highest aspirations. But regardless of whether the seeker actually reaches his destination or not, the painting seems to say, it is the journey *itself* that is of paramount significance: a process where the striving is more important than the achievement.

In "Hut in the Snow," the hunter's hut has been long since abandoned; the door hangs open and unhinged, with only blackness inside. Long unkempt grasses surrounding the hut bend beneath the weight of the heavy snow. Apparently no one has walked here for years. As if to underscore the references to the absent hunter, a large branch of a dead tree has fallen to the ground, blocking our way to the empty hut. The hunter is either too old to enjoy the sport any longer or (perhaps more likely) he's dead.

The strange trees behind the hunter's hut, which branch off so oddly from the lower, much thicker branches, are an indication that the tree had been cut back at a certain point and new branches have sprouted from where it had been truncated by the saw — it looks like quite a few years previously. And if these "resprouted" trees were not enough to make his point, it will be noticed that a few pink blossoms have sprung up just to the left of the dark doorway — a detail almost too understated to notice.

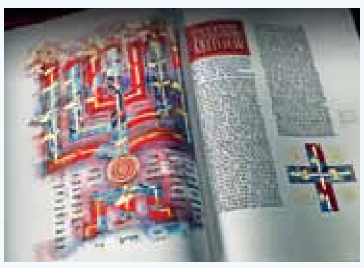
The viewer's presence in this scene is as a witness; the narrative is implied rather than stated directly by suggestive elements such as the fallen branch, the abandoned hut, the sprouting trees and the blossoms in the snow. The significance in Friedrich's sublime painting of this humble and easily overlooked hunter's hut, then, is exactly the same as in the traditional iconography of the three astonished women at the empty tomb of the resurrected Christ early that Sunday morning. ■

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

Pennsylvania church to celebrate handwritten Bible

Episcopal Journal

Christ Memorial Episcopal Church in Danville, Pa. has announced a year-long program in which it will display a rare handwritten and illuminated "heritage edition" of the Saint John's Bible.



Photo/courtesy of Saint John's University

A page from the Book of Matthew in the Saint John's Bible.

This Bible, which measures two feet by three feet when open, was the inspiration of Wales-based calligrapher Donald Jackson, who served as artistic director for the project, which took place from 2000 to 2011. The work was commissioned by Saint John's Abbey and Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minn.

Christ Memorial will begin its year with the Saint John's Bible at a festival and open house on Sunday, Nov. 3, coinciding with its All Saints Day remembrances and thanksgivings. Members and guests will be able to see, touch, and read the Gospel and Acts volume and there will be artistic activities for children.

"We're excited to begin our year with the extraordinary work of art and biblical imagination that is the Saint John's Bible," said the Rev. Jim Strader-Sasser, Priest-in-Charge at Christ Memorial.

The work was created in Jackson's scriptorium in Monmouth, Wales by a team of calligraphers writing with quills and Chinese stick ink on stretched calfskin vellum, using gold and platinum leaf. There are 299 signed and numbered seven-volume sets of the heritage edition, with 100 in private hands. ■

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Grandma's songs set overture to Presiding Bishop's faith journey

By Matthew MacDonald
Episcopal News Service

As a child, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry would listen intently as his grandma sang hymns at the kitchen sink.

Familiar tunes gave meaning to holy words. Even in her darkest moments of despair, as her daughter lay dying in the hospital following a brain hemorrhage at 44, Grandma Nellie Strayhorne would sing.

As she prepared dinner for the family, those melodious interludes would sow an important seed for the 14-year-old Curry, feeding his love of music and ultimately influencing his journey along the Jesus Movement.

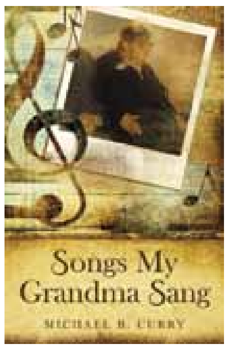
"That memory of her singing those songs imprinted itself profoundly on me," Curry told an audience gathered at Canterbury Cathedral's Clagett Auditorium on Oct. 2. "Thinking about it now, I realize she was singing those songs, cooking food for her grandchildren and her son-in-law, while her own daughter was in a coma. … [I thought] any woman who has figured out how to do that in that set of circumstances knows something that I want to know about this Gospel, this Jesus, about this God."

Curry later told ENS that the power of music is multilayered, and these particular songs in the midst of sorrow were clearly meditative. They brought healing and strength, not just for grandma, but for the whole family.

Invoking a West African saying, "Without a song, the gods will not descend," Curry told his Canterbury audience, "There's something about song that speaks on multivalent levels in us. And sometimes the song, the hymn, can reach down in crevasses deep down inside of us, that words by themselves don't necessarily reach. … It has the power to evoke something. It is like some music can speak to the soul."

The Very Rev. Robert Willis, dean of Canterbury Cathedral and a composer, hosted the conversation with Curry. He pointed out that the sermons you remember "are few and far between, but the hymns are actually embedded in your head and heart."

Following the success of Curry's book "Crazy Christians," Church Publishing Inc. encouraged the presiding bishop to write another. CPI's Vice President for Editorial Nancy Bryan told Curry she had noticed that whenever he preached he would often quote a hymn. "When I looked back at my sermons, I realized there was a pattern to them, and many of the hymns I was quoting were actually the hymns that grandma used to sing," Curry said.

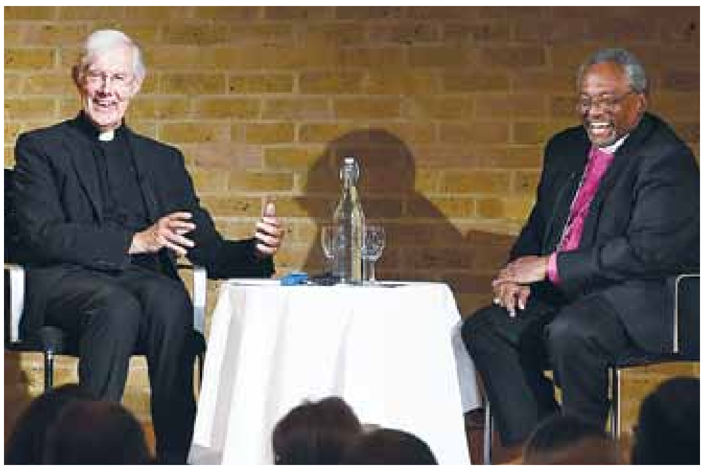


This realization led to the 2015 publication of "Songs My Grandma Sang," which provided the theme for the Canterbury event.

Many of the hymns Curry references in his book — such as "Just As I Am," "Amazing Grace," "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," "I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me," "I Come to the Garden Alone" — had been an integral part of U.S. culture, particularly in the southern states.

Curry's father was an Episcopal priest and his grandma was a "rock-ribbed" Baptist, "so I grew up with those two very different worlds in one sense, but at their deeper level very similar, and that has formed me as much as anything," Curry said.

Growing up in Buffalo, N.Y., Curry said that his father was active in the civil rights movement and remembers a series of meetings with black preachers of various denominations that he later realized had been the planning for the buses that would transport them to join the March on Washington in 1963.



Photo/Adrian Smith/Canterbury Cathedral

The Very Rev. Robert Willis, dean of Canterbury Cathedral, hosts Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry for a conversation about the importance of music and the songs his grandma sang.

"So I grew up in this world that was really about making the world and life something closer to God's vision and God's dream for all of us," he said.

The songs and sayings that pervaded the lives of Curry's grandma and her generation — who lived through the Jim Crow years of enforced racial segregation — "reflected a deep faith and profound wisdom that taught them how to shout 'glory' while cooking in 'sorrow's kitchen,' as they used to say," Curry writes in the first chapter. "In this there was a hidden treasure that saw many of them through, and that is now a spiritual inheritance for those of us who have come after them. That treasure was a sung faith expressing a way of being in relationship with the living God of Jesus that was real, energizing, sustaining, loving, liberating, and life-giving."

Curry recalled hearing Andrew Young Jr., a leader in the civil rights movement and a close confidant to Martin Luther King Jr., say that there would have been no movement had they not had songs.

"What I think he was saying was that something had to keep people marching when they were scared to death," Curry said. "It's sort of like a mantra, something that you can keep singing, that can keep you focused and then you can handle whatever is coming at you. … When cultures stop singing, something is missing."

Willis acknowledged that "Amazing Grace," with text by English priest and abolitionist John Newton, is one of the few hymns or songs widely known throughout the Anglican Communion. But he recently learned that the text of the final verse, which begins, "When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining like the sun," actually came from the United States, around the time of the American Civil War. According to sources, the verse was written by American abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe. "It was written as a verse of hope … but it's a nice thing to think that the two cultures came together in that one hymn," Willis said.

Even in the most tragic circumstances, music has the power to uplift and regenerate.

Curry remembers reading a speech from the director of the New England Conservatory of Music, who told his

continued on page 14

FEATURE

North Dakota diocese to welcome pilgrimages at Standing Rock interpretive center and lodge

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A new lodge at an Episcopal youth camp on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota will double as a Native American interpretive center, highlighting local history and culture for visitors drawn to the region by an interest in the indigenous rights advocacy there.

The Episcopal Church was a prominent supporter of tribal demonstrators who in 2016 tried to block construction of part of an oil pipeline that they feared could threaten Standing Rock's drinking water. Despite their objections, the Dakota Access Pipeline was allowed to cross the Missouri River just north of the reservation, and oil began pumping in June 2017.

Since then, the Diocese of North Dakota has welcomed various outside groups interested in learning about the fight for indigenous and ecological justice at its St. Gabriel's Camp in Solen, North Dakota, a few miles west of the Missouri River on the northern edge of the reservation. Disciples of Christ youth groups have visited in each of the past two years. A group from Dayton University in Ohio visited in May, and another is coming in November from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn.

The Rev. John Floberg, rector at the diocese's three congregations serving Standing Rock, has worked with other church leaders to accommodate such pilgrimages as best they can, including by setting up visits with tribal officials and residents. That spirit of welcome is about to swell with the development of the 2,700-square-foot Star Lodge at the camp to serve as an interpretive center.

"We're looking at trying to help people translate what is here to their own communities," Floberg told Episcopal News Service.

The lodge at St. Gabriel's Camp is named after the Rev. Terry Star, a 40-year-old deacon and member of Executive Council who died suddenly in 2014 while studying to become a priest. The Rev. Angela Goodhouse-Mauai, who was ordained as a deacon with Star in 2007, said in an interview with ENS that she thought of him as a brother.

"That was a big loss for us," Goodhouse-Mauai said.

Star's great-grandfather was Chief Red Hail, whose name had graced the camp's previous lodge, until it was struck by lightning and burned down in August 2018. Now, with the help of a United Thank Offering grant and additional funds scheduled to be approved this week by Executive Council, the new Star Lodge will not only restore what was lost in last year's fire. It also will incorporate geothermal heating and solar power, while expanding the diocese's capacity to host youth groups in the summer and other church groups year-round.

The overall project costs about $280,000, Floberg said, and the structural shell of the new lodge already has been built with money received through the diocese's insurance after last year's fire. The $58,000 grant from United Thank Offering, or UTO, and about $20,000 from Executive Council will be used to complete the inside of the lodge and install the renewable energy sources.

Photo/John Floberg

Youth camp participants pose for a group photo in July in front of the new Star Lodge at St. Gabriel's Camp in Solen, N.D.

Without the sustainable energy upgrade, the diocese wouldn't be able to afford to keep the lodge open in the cold winter months, said Floberg, who also serves as president of the Diocese of North Dakota Standing Committee. The diocese already upgraded one of its Standing Rock churches, St. James' Episcopal Church in Cannon Ball, to geothermal and was able to reduce its winter heating bills to about $130 a month, a small fraction of what propane heat had cost.

The size of Star Lodge is another big upgrade. Its meeting hall alone will be as large as the former lodge, and the diocese is in the process of converting the building's additional space into a self-contained apartment with three bedrooms, bathrooms and a kitchen. The bedrooms will be able to house up to 16 guests, and the meeting hall can be converted to sleeping quarters to accommodate larger groups.

In addition to its primary use hosting youth groups, the former Red Hail Lodge was the site of trainings for local residents interested in becoming deacons and priests. Developing Native American leaders for service in the church will continue to be part of the mission at Star Lodge, Floberg said.

Star Lodge's mission mirrors the dedication that its namesake deacon showed to the work of guiding young people in their spiritual development to become church leaders, Goodhouse-Mauai said. At the same time, she is heartened to have the expanded lodge as a resource for visitors "to learn the history of Standing Rock and learn from the people of Standing Rock."

To that end, the diocese aims to develop racial reconciliation pilgrimages, with programs for 10 to 30 people at a time, through Star Lodge's interpretive center. One of its core themes, according to the UTO grant application, will be the treaties signed more than a century ago between American Indian tribes and the U.S. government, emphasizing the promises made to the country's native peoples.

The broader movement to draw attention to those promises gained steam on Oct. 14 as the federal holiday known as Columbus Day was celebrated by a growing number of Americans as Indigenous Peoples Day.

Floberg, speaking to ENS last week, sought to put Christopher Columbus' 1492 landing in perspective.

"Every acre of this land on this continent was already spoken for," Floberg said. "There was no vast wilderness where there weren't people already inhabiting territory. … We're all on Indian land." That makes it all the more important, he added, for the church to take the lead in learning about and listening to America's indigenous residents. ■

HOUSTON continued from page 11

Too often, Levenson said, churches offer spiritual help to those suffering from mental illness without connecting them with the substantive treatment they need to get better.

"There are churches that think that all people need is spiritual health," Levenson said. "All they need is somebody to hold their hand and pray with them. Well, that doesn't help a person who's seriously addicted or has a serious mental or emotional diagnosis. Yes, they need the hand of God, but yes, they need therapeutic care!"

Aside from treating patients, the center at St. Martin's focuses on training and educating mental health professionals and faith leaders. Its Gateway to Hope training program addresses the problem of clergy and parishioners being unequipped to identify and address cases of mental health in their congregations.

According to the National Comorbidity Survey, nearly one-quarter of people who are looking for help with a mental health condition will go to a clergy member first, before seeking help from psychiatrists or general practitioners. Gateway to Hope trains clergy and parishioners to recognize and respond appropriately, embracing their role as the front lines of the mental health treatment system.

Levenson

People in faith communities need "to know how to properly introduce that person into the mental health system," says center board chairman Lee Hogan, "to recognize whether or not this is someone who's a danger to themselves that day, or whether it's someone who needs counseling, or whether it's someone who needs a support group. And so where do you send them? The overwhelming majority of priests and ministers and rabbis and imams and so forth simply don't have the ability and the training to recognize the symptoms." ■

GRANDMA'S SONG continued from page 13

freshman students not to think about music as a frivolous add-on to life. The music director was in New York when 9/11 happened and said he saw a city silenced. "The first sign of life was when the symphony [orchestra] played music and people sang," Curry quoted him as saying. "Don't think music is a frivolous thing. It speaks to the soul."

Similarly, Willis said he was moved by seeing people singing and lighting candles in Paris as Notre Dame was ablaze.

The Canterbury event marked the first time Curry had been invited to speak publicly about his book, "Songs My Grandma Sang." He told ENS that it was a special moment to be able to reflect on his grandmother's indomitable faith and profound influence that paved his pathway toward ordination.

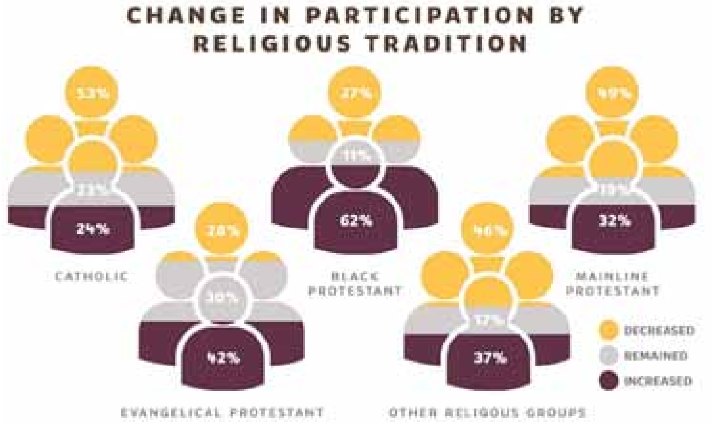
Following his royal wedding sermon that was watched by 1.9 billion people, Curry confessed that his grandma had been in St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. "She was there in the room singing hymns. I could hear her voice in the back. She was saying: 'I gotta see this, I gotta see this.'"

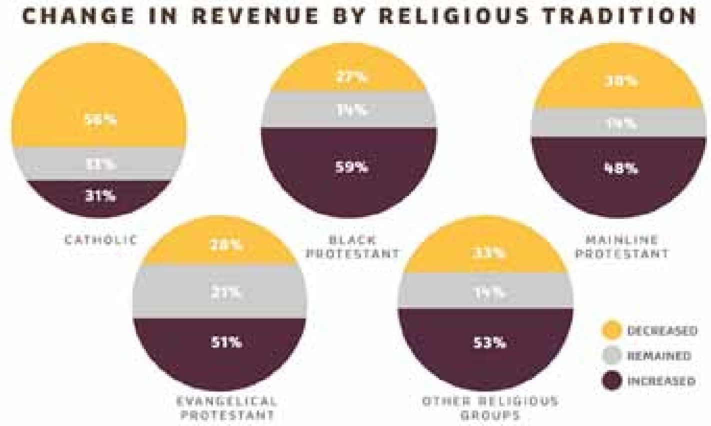
As he reflected further on her life, Curry shared that during a very difficult time in college when he was pursuing a path toward political advocacy, his grandma's face appeared, and that started his discernment for the priesthood. He started to read some of the writings of Martin Luther King Jr. and "that's when it all began to crystallize," Curry said. "Well, if you want to have an impact on the world where we live, maybe your way is to become a priest."

Although Curry's grandma didn't live to see him ordained, she knew he was in seminary. Curry said that when she found out, she joked, "Now Baptist preachers ain't get the call; they start preaching. How come you've got to go to school?" ■

NEWS

Study: Religious attendance flatlining, but giving remains strong





Graphics courtesy of NSCEP

By Yonat Shimron
Religion News Service

All the available hard evidence — not to mention a look around many houses of worship — shows that religious congregations are declining. As congregants increasingly head for the exits, younger Americans, who say they have no religion, are far less likely than previous generations to join a church.

But a new nationally representative study from the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy finds that revenue is not necessarily declining along with attendance. In fact, the study finds that nearly half of America's estimated 380,000 congregations saw an increase in giving from three years ago.

The study, which included a representative sample of 1,231 congregations — including churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship — found that 48% of congregations saw an increase in revenue, 35% saw a decrease and 17% said giving remained the same.

The median annual revenue for a religious congregation was $169,000 in 2017. (The study was fielded in 2018 and consisted of a questionnaire completed by the congregational leader, or financial administrator.)

The news about giving is surprising given that the study found that participation remained flat. In the study, 39% of congregations reported an increase in participation, 38% reported a decrease and 23% saw no change.

The study, titled "National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices," found that Roman Catholic churches face the greatest challenges, with more than half of all parishes declining in both size and revenue over the past three years. Mainline Protestants fared slightly better. While participation remained flat in mainline churches, 48% reported growth in revenue and another 14% reported revenues had remained the same.

White evangelicals and black Protestants fared best, with 62% of African-American congregations reporting an increase in regularly participating adults and 59% reporting increases in revenue.

"We're not hiding the fact that there are many congregations experiencing decline, or that it's a major success to be simply maintaining," said David P. King, director of the Lake Institute and a co-director of the study. "But despite a narrative of decline for religiosity in America, there's a wide diversity of what's happening. A decline in participation does not necessarily equate with (a decline) in finances."

Or as the study succinctly states: "Among congregations that are declining in attendance, there is not necessarily an automatic corresponding decline in revenue."

The reasons for the seeming anomaly are complicated and vary from one congregation to another. It may be that fewer people are shouldering a greater share of the congregation's donations. Or it could be that congregations are finding alternative streams of revenue, from renting their facilities for weddings or conferences to operating schools or day care centers. Others saw revenue from bequests or gifts, or, in the case of more established historic churches, from their endowments. (The study found an average of 34% of congregations have endowments.)

But there may be a simpler explanation, said Brad Fulton, a sociologist who co-directed the study. If the old maxim that 20% of a congregation's participants give 80% of donations remains true, it might explain why giving has stayed steady or increased.

"The people who are really committed tend to give a lot more," Fulton said. "If you remove the people who don't give much, the average amount per person is going to go up."

In 92% of congregations, passing the offering plate on Sunday accounts for the majority of a church's income.

Congregations spend nearly half of their revenues on paying religious leaders and staff, another 23% on their facilities (including maintenance and mortgages) and about 16% on programs and dues.

Congregations spend 11% on missions, or outreach outside of the walls of the building, whether locally, nationally or internationally, though the study found that the largest share of that money is spent locally, within the community.

That's significant, said Fulton, who estimated that the nation's 360,000 congregations spent $10.6 billion annually on missions, service and charity, including, for example, help with disaster relief. (The average amount of money congregations allocated to missions and benevolence in 2017 was $27,702.)

"What's the average amount corporations donate to philanthropy?" Fulton asked. "I'm almost certain it's not 11% of their revenue."

But if there's one area where congregations could improve it was in the area of asking for money, the study concludes. Most congregational leaders don't teach about the theology of giving, hesitate to ask for money and don't do a good enough job of thanking those who give.

"Nonprofits are being much more explicit about the ask and the acknowledgment of the contribution and storytelling and impact/outcome measures," King said.

Some religious groups understand the challenge. Larry Strenge, who coordinates a program for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America focused on cultivating generosity, said he encourages pastors to see raising money as part of their spiritual practice.

If they neglect to do that they might miss out on a promising future, he said, noting that many older congregants are now in a position to give more at exactly the time when congregations need it most.

"There's a tremendous transfer of wealth taking place," Strenge explained. "What the study shows is exactly what we're observing — we need to position ourselves to be recipients of that transfer of wealth and we have not done a good job of that." ■

NEWS

Cleveland cathedral exhibit examines roots of housing discrimination

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

One of the most pervasive and insidious forms of systemic racism in the 20th century is still with us today: the once federally sanctioned practice of housing discrimination known as redlining. Its impact on American cities can still be seen – and even mapped — in the glaring inequities in access to education, health care and other resources based on where people live.

But many Americans don't realize that the demographic and economic makeup of the neighborhoods they live in can be traced back to racist government policies from the 1930s, making it difficult to address the root causes of the de-facto segregation seen in many cities.

That's why Cleveland's Trinity Cathedral, the seat of the Diocese of Ohio, invited a traveling interactive exhibit called "Undesigning the Redline" to set up shop there.

"This is a cathedral where the congregation and the staff really value our presence as being a part of the wider civic conversation," said the Very Rev. Bernard J. Owens, dean of the cathedral.

The goal, Owens told the Episcopal News Service, is "to create a space where folks can come in and really see the history for what it is and be changed by that. We're not trying to tell people what to think. We're just inviting them in to see what the history really is — how our city grid got made and how we forgot that process — so that we can actually begin to heal."

In the 1930s, federal agencies created "residential security maps" of hundreds of cities for mortgage lenders, indicating which neighborhoods they considered safe investments and which ones they deemed more risky. Demographics were a significant part of the criteria; areas with high proportions of African-American, Jewish, Asian and Hispanic residents were labeled less desirable and banks were discouraged from investing in those areas. Neighborhoods were color-coded: green for "best," blue for "still desirable," yellow for "definitely declining" and red for "hazardous."


"Undesigning the Redline" is on view through Dec. 20 at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland.

Redlining made it extremely difficult for residents of the "undesirable" neighborhoods to buy homes — one of the causes of today's racial wealth gap – and it lowered property values there, paving the way for "urban renewal" projects that often razed entire neighborhoods.

"Undesigning the Redline" connects the systemic racism of the past with the persistent inequities of the present. Photo: Trinity Cathedral via Facebook

The interactive exhibit, developed by a New York firm called Designing the WE, has previously been staged in other cities around the country that were affected by redlining. It includes the original 1930s maps distributed by the federal government, along with contemporary maps showing the lingering effects of redlining.

"You place a pin on the map where you live, and you can see visually how the cities were laid out and divided," Owens said. "Then it's got maps that list outcomes based on where people live today, so maps that look at access to transportation and health care, poverty, all of which are overlaid over these maps that were put in place 80 years ago.

"'Lingering effects' barely begins to state it. It continues to shape and impact the people who live there today," Owens added.


Photos/Trinity Cathedral via Facebook

The Very Rev. Bernard J. Owens, dean of Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, takes in the "Undesigning the Redline" exhibit.

Owens said the exhibit has elicited personal stories from members of the diocesan and cathedral staff who have been impacted by redlining, and it's changed the way he thinks about his own neighborhood.

"I can see the neighborhood where I now live, how it was zoned back in the '30s and how that has impacted who my neighbor is today. And it's important for me to look at that and now own that because that's now my history too," Owens told ENS.

The exhibit is on view from Oct. 7 through Dec. 20, and it includes a series of presentations and forums and a trolley tour through the city to see some of the starkest examples of redlined neighborhoods.

Owens sees his cathedral as a place "where we can all come and learn," and this exhibit is just one way of fulfilling that vision. ■