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Christian groups raise alarm over Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church is joining a global chorus of Christian voices speaking against President Donald Trump's announcement Dec. 6 that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, reversing longstanding U.S. policy toward the city.

"Today we finally acknowledge the obvious, that Jerusalem is Israel's capital," Trump said at the White House. "This is nothing more or less than a recognition of reality. It is also the right thing to do."

Leaders of the Christian churches in Jerusalem, including the Anglican primate, released a letter to Trump on Dec. 6 before his announcement warning that the decision would "yield increased hatred, conflict, violence and suffering in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, moving us farther from the goal of unity and deeper toward destructive division."

The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations followed with a statement Dec. 6 backing

the Christian church leaders in Jerusalem and opposing Trump's vow to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem.

"This decision could have profound ramifications on the peace process and the future of a two-state solution, and it could have a negative impact throughout the region and with key U.S. allies," the office said. "The Episcopal Church Office is joining with Churches for Middle East Peace and many other organizations in opposing any effort to move the embassy."

Churches for Middle East Peace is an ecumenical coalition of 27 American denominations that includes the Episcopal Church

Trump, in changing U.S. policy on Jerusalem, was taking a step toward fulfilling a campaign pledge. Moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem has strong support among American evangelicals and pro-Israel Jews.

"The Israeli government, its parliament, courts and prime minister, have been located in Jerusalem since just after the birth of the state," the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an organization

This image of the Three Kings is part of a stained-glass triptych depicting the Adoration of the Magi at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Clifton, N.J.

The liturgical season of Epiphany begins Jan. 6 with the biblical story of the magi's journey following a star to Bethlehem to see the newborn king, Jesus, to whom they give gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



Photo/Sharon Sheridan

that represents 16 national Jewish agencies in the U.S., said in a statement applauding Trump's decision. "We agree with the president that Israel, like all countries, has the right to determine the location of its capital."

The Episcopal Church's stance on the issue was set by General Convention in a 1985 resolution-expressing the church's "opposition to the movement of the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, except within the context

of a broad resolution of Middle East problems, with the status of Jerusalem having been determined by negotiation and not by unilateral action by any one community, religion, race or nation."

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby tweeted that keeping the status quo on Jerusalem was "one of the few stable elements of hope for peace and reconciliation."

Earlier in the day, Pope Francis, in his weekly general audience at

continued on page 6



Photo/Abundant Harvest

St. Isidore's food truck missionary Molly Carr shows off the Abundant Harvest truck, the focal point of many of the church's ministries.

Food and Faith: Church without walls uses food truck to feed body, soul

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

It is hard to differentiate the feeding ministry from the work of spiritual enrichment underway at St. Isidore's Episcopal Church. That difficulty is by design.

St. Isidore's is a church built without walls but with a set of wheels that allows it to bring faith and food to several small communities of worshipers north of Houston. Some meet at a Taco Bell or a Panera Bread, others at a Laundromat. Central to the mission is the Abundant Harvest food truck, which serves as a focal point for developing Christian relationships while alleviating both physical and spiritual hunger.

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ANGLICAN DIGEST

Anglican Digest is a roundup of news from churches in the Anglican Communion. The following were reported by the Anglican Communion News Service.

Medieval Irish bishop's book part of online archive

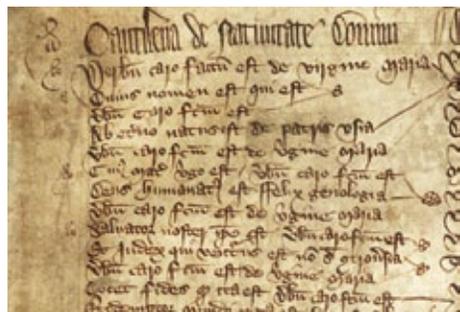
The medieval episcopal register of Richard Ledred, the tempestuous 14th-century bishop of Ossory in Ireland, has been digitized and made available as part of the Church of Ireland's historic archive at ireland.anglican.org/library/archive.

Richard Ledred — or Richard de Ledrede — was bishop of Ossory from 1317 until his death in 1360 or 1361.

The 79 vellum leaves, bound in red leather gave rise to the book's name the "Red Book of Ossory."

"Like other medieval episcopal registers, it contains a wide range of documents that defy classification, the choice of which depended on what was important to individual bishops, in this case by Ledred," the Church of Ireland said.

Contents include legal documents such as the provisions of Magna Carta;



Photo/Church of Ireland

This part of a Christmas song written by 14th-century Bishop of Ossory Richard Ledred is found in a copy of the bishop's ledger now available online.

lyrics of more than two dozen songs the bishop wrote related to the nativity; entries from the time of Elizabeth I; and a lengthy medical treatise on aqua vitae (cognac), the earliest known recipe for distillation known to exist in any Irish manuscript.

Ecumenical group to study role of diaconate

An international gathering of Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Ukrainian Catholics will discuss the role of deacons in the church at a May 10-13 conference in Regina, Canada.

"We hope lots of deacons are going to come . . . but it's a conference about the diaconate, and anyone who's interested in the diaconate is welcome to attend," said the Rev. Canon Michael Jackson, the longest-serving deacon in the Anglican Church of Canada.



Jackson

Speakers and panellists from Canada, the United States, England and Scotland will address the liturgical role of deacons, women and the diaconate, the prophetic role of the deacon, and relationships between deacons and other ordained ministers.

Jackson is the Anglican co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Covenant Implementation Committee. He said he hoped that the conference would lead to a better awareness and understanding of the diaconate, which he called a very "current topic" in light of the revival of the permanent diaconate in the Anglican and Catholic churches.

Church aids Mexican earthquake victims

Anglicans in Mexico are continuing to support the victims of September's 7.1 magnitude earthquake that killed 370 people, 228 of them in Mexico City.

In Jojutla, the Rev. Ericka Fierro is spearheading support efforts, even though she lost her house in the quake and was advised to leave town.

Fierro serves the communities of Santa Catarina in Jojutla and San Pablo in Zacatepec in the Anglican Diocese of Cuernavaca. Santa Catarina was dam-

Bears given to comfort refugees

Seven hundred teddy bears that sat on the steps of London's St. Paul's Cathedral early this year are now providing comfort to thousands of child refugees who fled their homes in South Sudan for sanctuary in Uganda. World Vision collected the 700 bears as part of a social media campaign.

Around 700 children a day cross the border from South Sudan into northern Uganda. Many are housed at the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement near Arua, Africa's largest refugee camp, now home to almost 300,000 refugees. Others are at the nearby Imvepi refugee settlement, where the 700 bears have arrived.

"Children will play with the teddies at World Vision's 31 Child Friendly Spaces in the settlements," the agency said. "The spaces provide young people with a safe place to play, get a basic education, engage in peace-building activities, learn about their rights and protection, and steadily recover from distress. They also allow children to return to healthy routines and start to feel normal again."

The children happily greeted the bears, said the charity's response director in northern Uganda, Paul Sitnam. "These children have already gone through so much — it's heart-warming for them to know they are not forgotten, especially during the festive period."

The teddy bears were last seen together in a Bears on Stairs "flash-mob"

outside St. Paul's Cathedral in London in July. The sit-down stunt on the steps of the cathedral was designed to highlight the plight of children fleeing conflict in South Sudan.

The Bears on Stairs initiative is just one way World Vision is working to support the 1.35 million South Sudanese refugees now living in Uganda. Some 63 percent of them — more than 600,000 — are children younger than 18. Most



Photo/Jiro Ose/World Vision

A child at the Imvepi refugee settlement in Northern Uganda with one of the World Vision bears.

of the rest are women. The rate of refugees crossing into Uganda has dropped from a peak of more than 2,000 a day to an average of 650 in October.

World Vision is distributing monthly food rations to refugees, as well as hot meals for new arrivals, and has built latrines and distributed sanitary kits for women.

Some of the child refugees arrive without their parents. World Vision has placed more than 3,500 children with trained foster families — who are refugees themselves. ■



Photo/La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico

The Rev. Ericka Fierro and her eight-year-old daughter, Kissel, explain the extent of the earthquake damage in Jojutla to the Rev. Juan Manuel Garay and his wife, Joselin, who delivered aid to the area.

disaster, the lost and, anguished look in their eyes is palpable. Faith-based relief can bring an extra dimension of spiritual nourishment — praying together, sharing Eucharist, experiencing a moment of centering and meditative quiet, calling upon God for extra strength.

It's the difference between supplying a shawl for warmth (valuable on its own) and sending a shawl that has been knitted with prayer as well as yarn.

Given the propensity of human beings for self-destruction, perhaps it should remain news when Episcopalians rise to the occasion in times of disaster, living out the eternal nature of church and faith. ■

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Looking back on the 2017 issues of Episcopal Journal, it's possible that the "story" of the year was a remarkable series of natural disasters — Mexico's earthquake, Hurricane Harvey's floods in Texas, Hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria's destruction in Florida and the Caribbean and wildfires in northern and southern California.

Church coverage of such disasters can become seemingly predictable — Episcopal Relief & Development sends aid, individual dioceses and churches clean up their own damage and/or become aid centers, parishioners help one another and their community.

Maybe it shouldn't even be news.

aged first by the earthquake, then by flooding when thieves stole a water pipe. Its damaged dome has been removed, and other buildings continue to be demolished. Piles of debris in the roads hamper traffic flow, and electricity remains to be restored in town.

The church houses buckets of provisions for earthquake victims. Some supplies are sent to the Emiliano Zapata colony, where 500 families are living in tents. It is one of four camps in the district that sprang up after the earthquake. ■

That's what faith groups do, isn't it, across all denominations and religions?

What distinguishes the faith brand — and the Episcopal branch — from organizations that do good works worldwide in dangerous situations — say, Doctors Without Borders or the Red Cross?

There is no question that tending to people's practical needs for food, shelter and clothing provides a powerful lift to the spirit, but faith-based — and specifically Episcopal — relief goes a few steps further. It follows the calling to be Jesus' "heart and hands" in the world, the prayer to act "in Jesus' name."

When we see television coverage of people who have been through a terrible

NEWS

Prince Harry will marry a divorced American — and the church is fine with it

By Catherine Pepinster
Religion News Service

A British royal marrying an American divorcee in 1936 threw the British monarchy and the Church of England into crisis, but that didn't happen when Prince Harry decided to marry Meghan Markle.

The announcement in London on Nov. 27 that Prince Harry is engaged to the American actress ended fevered speculation about the couple and was accompanied by statements of delight from Harry's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, and his father, heir to the throne Prince Charles.

It was so very different from the last time a British royal wanted to marry an American divorcee. That 1936 engagement led to the abdication of the king, Edward VIII, who decided he would rather give up the throne than divorced Baltimore socialite Wallis Simpson.

The sticking point in 1936 was the rule on divorce and remarriage in the Church of England, of which the monarch of the United Kingdom is head. The church's ban on remarriage for a divorced person whose previous spouse is alive applied to King Edward, and still held for Queen Elizabeth's sister, Princess Margaret, in 1953. She was told she could not marry the man she loved, Captain Peter Townsend, because the Church of England would not countenance it.



Photo/Eddie Mulholland/Pool via AP

Britain's Prince Harry and actress Meghan Markle pose for the media at Kensington Palace in London after announcing their engagement.

Her only path to marry him would be to renounce her right to the throne — and to effectively leave the royal family. She chose not to marry the Royal Air Force officer.

In 2005, the situation was different for the divorced Prince Charles, who wanted to marry the divorced Camilla Parker

Bowles. He was free to remarry as a divorced man because his first wife, Princess Diana, had died. But Parker Bowles' first husband was still alive. The prince married Parker Bowles in a compromise: They tied the knot in a civil ceremony and then had an Anglican blessing for their marriage in St. George's Chapel, at Windsor Castle, conducted by then-Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

By then the Church of England had agreed that in certain circumstances those divorced could marry in church, but not if the relationship of the couple wishing to marry had caused the divorce, or if the latest wedding could cause public scandal. On those grounds, the church felt it was inadvisable for Prince Charles and Parker Bowles to have a full church wedding.

Today, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby revealed no qualms about Prince Harry marrying a divorcee, a sign of how the Church of England has changed. "I wish them many years of love, happiness and fulfillment and ask that God blesses them throughout their married life together," said the archbishop.

"I am so happy that Prince Harry and Ms. Markle have chosen to make their vows before God," he said, suggesting that the couple already had settled on an Anglican wedding ceremony.

It would have been a lot tougher for Prince Harry and Markle had she turned out to be Catholic. There has been speculation that Markle is Roman Catholic because she was educated at Immaculate Heart, an exclusive Los Angeles Catholic

school. But press reports indicate that her parents chose it for its strong academics, rather than its religious character.

If Markle had indeed been Catholic she would have been unable, as a divorced woman, to marry in her own church unless it had declared her previous marriage invalid.

And until just four years ago, being Catholic also would have prevented her from marrying into the British royal family, unless the person she intended to marry renounced his right to be in the line of succession.

It was only in 2013 that the Succession to the Crown Act passed, enabling



Photo/courtesy of @HistoryFootnote, Twitter

Former King Edward VIII married American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

a Catholic to marry someone in line to the throne. What that act did not change was the requirement that the British sovereign be a Protestant.

But Britain's religious heritage — its roots in the break with Rome enacted by Henry VIII — still resonates in royal affairs today. Given that the British monarch is also by law the head of the Church of England, any further reform is unlikely, unless the monarch's role as head of the church is abolished. ■

Prince Charles, archbishop of Canterbury visit London attack site

Prince Charles; Camilla, duchess of Cornwall; and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby on Dec. 13 toured London's Borough Market before a "service of light" at neighboring Southwark Cathedral to remember the victims of the London Bridge terrorist attack.

Eight people were killed and 48 injured in the June 3 attack when ISIS-inspired terrorists drove onto the pavement on London Bridge in a van, mowing people down. They then used knives to attack people in the lively Borough Market area. Police shot dead the three attackers.

The royal couple toured the market alongside Welby and his wife Caroline. They met traders, many of them small-business owners, as well as survivors of the attack and those who helped the victims.

Schoolchildren and community leaders — including a local imam — joined survivors for the "service of light" commemorating St. Lucy.

"That theme of light, right next to Borough Market and in a cathedral where killing took place just by the walls, against the very door of it, is so important in presenting the truth that light has come into the world, and the darkness has not overcome it," Welby told ACNS. ■



Photo/Gavin Drake/ACNS

Charles, prince of Wales, left, and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby visit survivors at the site of a London terror attack.

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AROUND THE CHURCH



Photo/Mills Fleming

Diocese of Georgia Bishop Scott Benhase, center, poses near the 32nd marker on the state's Civil Rights Trail with the Rev. Michael White, left, rector of Christ Church in Savannah, and the Rev. Stephen Williams, right, senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Savannah.

Mayor honored for civil rights work

The summer of 1963 was a hot one in Savannah, Ga.; in the words of one observer, the city could have exploded. Instead, a coalition of the city's leaders accomplished a peaceful desegregation of Savannah before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That year, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. declared Savannah the most desegregated city south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

The Georgia Historical Society recently recognized one of those leaders, the late Malcolm Maclean, mayor of Savannah from 1960 to 1966 and lifelong Episcopalian, with the dedication of the 32nd marker on the state's Civil Rights Trail.

"Mayor Malcolm Maclean was a good man who fought to bring a real order of justice to Savannah during a turbulent time in the '60s. I am proud to have known him," said former Savannah Mayor Otis Johnson.

Maclean was a lifelong member of Christ Church in Savannah where his wife Frances still attends services.

"Savannah is a better place than it otherwise would be because of Mr. Maclean's witness," said Georgia Bishop Scott Benhase. "His commitment to doing what was right, regardless of the political costs, makes him an example to all who hold elective office in our country today. His Christian faith shaped his politics without him needing to trumpet it. His faith was simply who he was."

The marker can be found at the Atlantic Mall, 45th and Atlantic Avenues.

— Diocese of Georgia

Curriculum highlights biblical heroes

The Diocese of Maryland has designed a learning resource to show the connection of biblical heroes and heroines to more contemporary people of faith.

Called "Selected Character Traits Embodied in Biblical Heroes and in African-Americans in History: A Curriculum," the 53-page document lists 12 traits, including resilience, justice, perseverance and courage, with side-by-side comparisons of biblical and contemporary people.

The curriculum grew out of the work

of the diocesan Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "Early on, the commission recognized the importance of education," said the Rev. Angela Shepherd, canon for mission. "Seeing the Face of God in Each Other Antiracism Workshop' became a staple. But bubbling up from retired educators was a strong desire to create a resource for youth that would link persons found in the Bible to contemporary African Americans by way of character traits."

— Diocese of Maryland

Foundation grant to aid Zambia's children

Episcopal Relief & Development has received a \$200,000 grant from the Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF) to support its integrated Early Childhood Development program (ECD) in Zambia. It will enable the agency and a local partner, Zambia Anglican Council Outreach Programmes, to help approximately 17,520 children younger than 3, many of whom are affected by HIV/AIDS.

The support from the Episcopal Health Foundation contributes to the program's expansion to all five Anglican dioceses in Zambia. The program works with about 12,720 children younger than 3 along with 6,360 primary parents and caregivers in 53 communities in rural Zambia. The grant will enable the program to add 4,800 children and 2,400 primary caregivers and parents in 20 new ECD centers. Each center serves as a hub for 240 children and 120 primary caregivers/parents.

"Episcopal Relief & Development's Early Childhood Development program has shown success in increasing primary caregivers' nurturing care and in strengthening their connections to

services," said Katy Butterwick, program officer at the Episcopal Health Foundation. "This support of strong brain development is helping build a foundation for healthy lives."

In 2016, EHF supported the organization's Integrated Child Health programs in Ghana. Based in Houston, the foundation was created in 2013 by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas with a central mission of improving the health and well-being of the 11 million people in the diocese.



Episcopal Relief & Development's Early Childhood Development programs focus on fighting poverty, hunger and disease in children while promoting the health, development and financial well-being of families. This partnership with EHF helps fill a gap in addressing the needs of young children and their parents/primary caregivers in communities ravaged by poverty and HIV/AIDS. The program leverages the role of faith-based leaders in working directly with community members and families.

To learn more, visit the Early Childhood Development page at <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/>. ■

EPISCOPAL LIVES

Nathaniel Pierce elected to Pacifist Fellowship board

The Rev. Nathaniel W. Pierce, supply priest at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Trappe, Md., and ecumenical officer for the Diocese of Easton, was elected to the board of trustees for the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (APF), based in Great Britain.

Pierce was ordained a priest in 1973 and served congregations in California, Idaho and Massachusetts before coming to Maryland in 1991. He is the co-author of "The Voice of Conscience: A Loud and Unusual Noise — A History of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship 1939-1989." He was a member of the Episcopal Church's Joint Standing Committees on Peace and served as the first chair of the Standing Commission on Peace.

Established in 1937, APF is a sister organization to the Episcopal Peace Fellowship and has 1,100 members in more than 40 countries. It founded the Week of Prayer for World Peace and is a member of the Network of Christian Peace Organizations and of the International Peace Bureau.

Elected along with Pierce were

Cloud Mabaudi from Zimbabwe and the Rev. Nathanael Ruess from Australia.

— Episcopal News Service

Vermont bishop to retire

Diocese of Vermont Bishop Thomas C. Ely recently announced he intends to retire no later than Sept. 30, 2019. He will remain in his position until a successor is chosen and is in place.

Ely, 65, was consecrated the diocese's 10th bishop in 2001 after serving as a priest in the Diocese of Connecticut for 20 years.

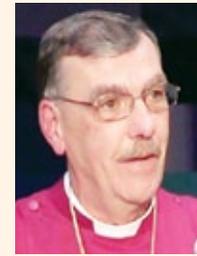
Ely has been a leader within the diocese and throughout the wider Episcopal Church on issues such as marriage equality, the ordination of LGBT clergy, increased gun safety and racial justice. He is also a leading voice on matters of environmental and economic justice.

Ely serves on the board of Cristosal, a nongovernmental agency based in El Salvador that works to advance human rights in Central America. He co-founded the Vermont chapter of Kids4Peace, a grassroots interfaith youth movement dedicated to ending conflict and inspiring hope in Jerusalem and divided societies around the world.

— Diocese of Vermont



Pierce



Ely

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Episcopal
JOURNAL

AROUND THE CHURCH

West Virginia church pays off toy layaway bills

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

An Episcopal church's century-old tradition of playing secret Santa for West Virginia children has received national recognition, including a mention by the White House.

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Wheeling, W. Va., made local headlines after it paid the Walmart layaway balances on toys for several families in its community. The congregation had intended to remain anonymous, but word got out after news of the donations spread on social media.

"It's just such a blessing, and I don't know if words can really describe how grateful we are and so very happy that someone would do something like this," Nathan Robinson, whose family was one of those benefiting from the layaway payoffs, told WTRF-TV.

The tradition is rooted in the grief of a local family who lost a daughter to illness more than 100 years ago, said the Rev. Mark Seitz, rector at St. Matthew's. They gave the church an endowment in their daughter's memory to be used each year to brighten the season for families in need.

"The criteria for this was that the people had to be residents of Ohio County, either Wheeling or Triadelphia, and they needed to have children," Seitz told WTRF-TV. "They needed to be buying toys."

The church paid off about \$5,000 in layaway balances in late November, helping several families who live in the area. About 50 accounts were paid off by the church, a Walmart store manager told The Intelligencer and Wheeling News-



Photo/St. Matthew's, via Facebook
Members of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Wheeling, W. Va., participate in an Advent procession of lessons and carols.

Register, and the newspaper articles added that a White House representative reached out to Seitz on Dec. 5 for more information.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders recognized the

church's good deeds at the beginning of her daily press briefing on Dec. 7.

"St. Matthew's Church wasn't looking for credit, and neither are so many others," Sanders said. "But these stories are important because they remind us what this season is all about, and that's the greatest gift of all, that a savior was born, and hopefully we can all focus and take time out of our busy schedules to enjoy the Christmas season or however you may celebrate."

The church pays for the toys each year with interest on the endowment initially established by U.S. Sen. Nathan Scott and his wife in memory of their daughter, Daisy, The Intelligencer and Wheeling News-Register reported. Scott, a prominent local businessman, represented West Virginia as a Republican from 1899 to 1911. ■

Migration ministry offers Epiphany curriculum

Episcopal Migration Ministries is offering an Epiphany Curriculum, which includes free resources.

"It was the story of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt as refugees that inspired Episcopalians in Southern Ohio in the 1930s to offer refuge to those fleeing Nazi Europe," said the Rev. Canon E. Mark Stevenson, director of Episcopal Migration Ministries.

"So, too, do we hear that same story this Epiphany season and recommit ourselves to ministry among the 65 million children, women and men who have fled their homes in our days because of violence or persecution. Each one of these children of God is a person with a name and a story, each with hopes and dreams, and all deserving of peace and opportunity. Through this educational resource,

Episcopalians can come to know

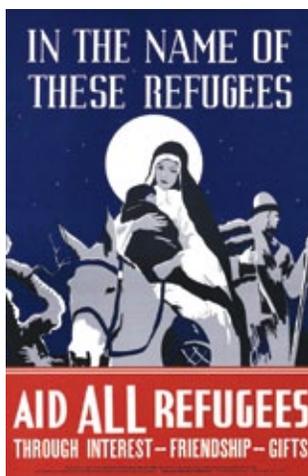
these stories, offer possibility to those hopes and provide for the realization of such peace and opportunity."

Designed for Adult Christian Formation, the six-week curriculum is appropriate for congregations, individuals, adult forums and discussion groups. "Participants will come away with a deeper understanding of Episcopal Migration Ministries, refugee resettlement, the stories of our new American neighbors and how God is calling each of us into this work," Stevenson said.

The curriculum can be found at www.episcopalchurch.org.

With 22 affiliate offices in 17 states, Episcopal Migration Ministries is one of nine national agencies responsible for resettling refugees in the United States in partnership with the federal government.

— Office of Public Affairs



'Sweatsuit ministry' brings comfort to Caribbean storm victims

By Don Plummer

Much attention has focused on providing relief to residents on Caribbean islands wrecked by this year's hurricanes, but many less well-known victims of these storms are now on the mainland.

Hundreds of residents from the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico living with chronic illnesses have been evacuated to continental U.S. cities for treatment. About 280, for example, were flown to Atlanta for dialysis and cancer treatments.

After learning that her brother was among the evacuees, Mary Abbot, a member of St. Teresa's Episcopal Church in Acworth, Ga., alerted other parishioners to their presence.

Abbot, the wife of a retired Episcopal priest from St. Croix, teamed up with two other women of the parish to provide culturally appropriate meals to those being housed at metro area hotels.

"They are getting the care they need but miss the foods they are used to," Abbot said. As they delivered the

meals and visited with the evacuees, the women soon became aware of another need — sweatsuits.

The food was a welcome reminder of home, but these medically fragile islanders are not used to sub-70s temperatures.

The women provided as many sweatsuits as they could afford, but many others remained in need of easy-to-wear warm clothing.

So Abbott's small team alerted other parishes in the diocese. Several responded with generous checks. Priests and parishioners from churches near the evacuees began making visits and providing Eucharist.

Armed with cash, the ladies' sweatsuit brigade kicked back into action. With the help of public health nurses assigned to the hotels where evacuees were housed, they gathered a list of sizes. Soon, more sweatsuits were bought and delivered. ■

Don Plummer is the media and community relations director for the Diocese of Atlanta and attends St. Teresa's Episcopal Church in Acworth, Ga.

General Convention vendor applications available

Applications are available for organizations and vendors interested in exhibiting at the 79th General Convention, July 5-13 at The Austin Convention Center, Austin, Texas.

The exhibit area serves as a marketplace and educational arena for attendees. New to General Convention 2018 is an option for vendors to participate

in the event either for nine or four days.

Discounts are available to groups affiliated with the Episcopal Church.

For information, contact General Convention Manager Lori Ionnitiu at lionnitiu@episcopalchurch.org or gcoffice@episcopalchurch.org.

— Episcopal Church Office of Public Affairs



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NEWS

JERUSALEM continued from page 1

the Vatican, called Jerusalem “a unique city, sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, where the holy places for the respective religions are venerated, and it has a special vocation to peace.” He raised concerns that changing the city’s status quo could lead to greater conflict.

The World Council of Churches, too, expressed “grave concern” over Trump’s move.

“Such a step breaks with the long-standing international consensus, and almost seven decades of established American policy, that the status of Jerusalem remains to be settled,” said the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, council general secretary. “It also preempts a negotiated resolution of this most difficult issue in any final peace agreement, which must be achieved between Israelis and Palestinians themselves.”

The Episcopal Public Policy Network issued a policy alert in February opposing relocation of the embassy. At that time, the Office of Government Relations advocated the church’s position to members of Congress in partnership with Churches for Middle East Peace.

On Dec. 5, the coalition repeated its objection to changing U.S. policy toward Jerusalem.

“Rather than being a broker for peace, the U.S. will be undermining trust and

making the resumption of meaningful negotiations and achieving a viable solution all the more difficult, if not impossible,” said the Rev. Mae Elise Cannon, executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace.

The National Council of Churches, of which the Episcopal Church is a member, issued a statement that in part rejected biblical, theological and historical justifications for the president’s decision on Jerusalem, saying: “Mr. Trump’s simplistic approach to the complexities of the region make a mockery of the hardships the people there — whether Israelis or Palestinians, whether Christians or Jews or Muslims — have suffered over the years.”

Trump, in his remarks Dec. 6, affirmed the United States’ commitment to helping facilitate Middle East peace and to a two-state solution that has the support of both sides. But he defended his decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital by saying past policy had not gotten the Israelis and Palestinians any closer to a lasting peace.

“We cannot solve our problems by making the same failed assumptions and repeating the same failed strategies of the past,” he said. “Old challenges demand new approaches. My announcement today marks the beginning of a new approach to conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.”

Laos church women commit to work against gender-based violence

ACNS

Women from Christian churches in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic have committed to strengthening ecumenical women’s networks in the country and to work with local community organizations to combat gender-based violence.

The commitment came in the closing session of a two-day late-November workshop organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), a regional ecumenical body, and the Lao Evangelical Church. The 60 women from different churches and areas of Laos heard about the immediate and long-term consequences of increasing violence against women and of gender inequality.

They discussed ways to empower communities to overcoming increasing violence against women in Laos; experiences of women’s general well-being; and things that prevent women from fully participating in society. “Violence not only has negative consequences for women but also [for] their families, the community and the country at large,” the CCA said.

The Rev. Chuleepran Srisoontorn of the CCA led the conference.

While changes to legal systems and social reforms to end domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of



The Rev. Chuleepran Srisoontorn of the Christian Conference of Asia with some of the church women from the Lao People’s Democratic Republic at the training workshop in Vientiane.

violence against women in several Asian countries had taken place, the CCA said, challenges “continue to remain in implementing such laws effectively, limiting women’s access to security and justice.”

“The participants shared experiences of local situations of violence against women in Laos and highlighted the importance of mobilizing church women in Laos to be engaged in advocacy on violence against women using national, international and regional mechanisms and instruments at various levels,” it said.

At the closing session, workshop participants affirmed: “The Lao Church women will participate in efforts for strengthening ecumenical women’s networks in partnership with local communities and organizations to combat violence against women and build peace in communities.” ■



Photo/White House via video

President Donald Trump speaks Dec. 6 at the White House, announcing his decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

Trump cited a law Congress passed in 1995 calling for the U.S. embassy to be moved to Jerusalem. Every president since Bill Clinton has waived that requirement six months at a time, citing security concerns, and Trump initially followed suit in February. Now, by recognizing Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, the president is putting embassy-relocation plans in motion.

For decades, the United Nations has insisted on Jerusalem’s unique status as an “international city” despite Israel declaring it as the nation’s capital in 1980.

Because of that history, 86 countries have their embassies in Tel Aviv, and none now has an embassy in Jerusalem, according to CNN. While most of the Israeli government is based in West Jerusalem, East Jerusalem is considered by much of the world to be an occupied territory, which the Palestinians hope someday will become the capital of a Palestinian state.

The city is considered a sacred place for Jews, Muslims and Christians, which Trump alluded to in his remarks on Dec. 6. “Jerusalem is today and must remain a place where Jews pray at the Western Wall, where Christians walk the Stations of the Cross and where Muslims worship at al-Aqsa Mosque.”

The mosque is at a site known by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and by Jews as the Temple Mount, and it was the focus of renewed tensions earlier this year between Israelis and Palestinians after a deadly July 14 shooting between Arab-Israeli gunman and Israeli policemen prompted the mosque’s closure.

It was the first time the mosque had been closed for Friday prayers in 17 years. Protests escalated when the mosque was reopened with new metal detectors, but the scanners were removed days later. ■

Curry: ‘Make music in the heart of the world’

Office of Public Affairs

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry issued his Christmas message for 2017:

In 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new is come.”

At a point in that passage, St. Paul says, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,” and he also says at another point in the same passage, “and we have been given the ministry of reconciliation.”

Have you ever gone to the movies or read a story or a novel, and the novel starts with the end, so you know where the story ends, but then the rest of the story or the novel is actually the story behind the story?

We know about Christmas. We know about Mary. We know about Joseph. We know about the angels singing, “Gloria in excelsis deo.” We know from our childhood the animals in the stable. We know of the magi who come from afar, arriving around Epiphany, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We know of the angels singing in the heavens, and the star that shown above them. Therein is the story.

But the story behind the story is what St. Paul was talking about. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and Jesus has now given us that same ministry of reconciliation. God was reconciling the world to himself by becoming one of us. The divine became human. God entered history. Eternity became part of time. God was reconciling the world to himself by actually living it himself.

In Jesus, God came among us to show

us the way, to be reconciled with the God who has created us all and everything that is. And God has likewise come in the person of Jesus, to show us how to be reconciled with each other, as children of the one God who is the Creator of us all. That’s the story behind Christmas.

God is showing us the way to become God’s children and, as God’s children, brothers and sisters of each other. God is showing us in Jesus how to become God’s family and how to change and build and make a world where everybody is a part of that family. Where children don’t go to bed hungry. Where no one has to be lonely. Where justice is real for all, and where love is the ultimate law.

Know there is a story behind the story, and it’s a story worth singing about and giving thanks for and then living.

One of my favorite writers, the late Howard Thurman, composed a poem many years ago about Christmas, and he says it probably better than I:

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
Then the work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace to others,
To make music in the heart.*

The story behind the story is that God so loved the world, and so loves you, and so loves me.

Have a blessed Christmas, a wonderful New Year, and go out and make music in the heart of the world. ■

FEATURE

HUNGER continued from page 1

"I think people need to be nourished body, mind and soul," said the Rev. Sean Steele, who started St. Isidore's in 2015 as a church plant through Trinity Episcopal Church in The Woodlands, Texas. It now supports eight distinct faith communities totaling about 80 people, as well as its Abundant Harvest ministries. "Feeding and eating is a huge part of everything we do."

St. Isidore's growth over the past few months has been driven largely by the congregation's relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. Steele estimates his parishioners and volunteers have served about 10,000 meals to people suddenly in need of food because they lost their homes in the late-August storm and subsequent flooding.

Although the urgent need for hurricane relief has decreased, the feeding ministry has maintained its momentum. Donations have increased. Its volunteer list has more than tripled. St. Isidore's likely will serve 750 meals or more each week through the end of the year.

Steele isn't the only Episcopal priest enlisting a food truck to disseminate meals and a gospel message, nor is he alone in the trend of holding spiritual gatherings outside of traditional church spaces. But his work is receiving national attention partly for his deliberate blend of outreach and Episcopal traditions,

and other staff and volunteers are deliberate about creating communion at the same time.

"It's really our idea not to just pop in and get people fed and leave again," said Molly Carr, the full-time food truck missionary at St. Isidore's.

"Ours is really about community, about building relationship around the table, and that is how we think Jesus built relationships. We're kind of following that lead."

Part of her role resembles that of a food-pantry coordinator, as she collects excess groceries donated by stores in the suburban Houston area to repackage for distribution through the food truck. That process becomes an opportunity to bring together another one of St. Isidore's communities: the volunteers who gather twice a week to help sort the food while also enjoying fellowship, Christian renewal and the meals that they bring back to their families at home.

In this, as in each of St. Isidore's communities, Steele said, the goal is to create



Photo/Abundant Harvest

Volunteers with St. Isidore's Episcopal Church's Abundant Harvest food truck distribute free meals as part of Hurricane Harvey relief efforts in Houston.

company was one of the largest in the world – but shortly before it collapsed into bankruptcy in 2001.

Suddenly out of a job, Steele said, "I had a sort of moment of clarity where I realized that's not the direction I wanted to take my life." Instead, he went back to school and got a master's degree in Roman Catholic systematic theology.

A fellow student in his program was an Episcopalian and introduced Steele to the Episcopal Church. From that experience, Steele embarked in 2006 on a six-year journey to ordination, as an Episcopal deacon in 2012 and as a priest in 2013 after graduating from the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas.

Trinity Episcopal in The Woodlands was his first church, where he served his curacy. In conversations with Trinity's rector, the Rev. Gerald Sevick, Steele already had ideas for starting a church plant. Steele said Sevick encouraged that thinking, as did Diocese of Texas Bishop Andy Doyle.

As Steele took on the role of associate rector at Trinity, Sevick gave him a few hours each week starting in early 2015 in which he was free to dream big, get creative, conduct research and search for the answer to what it means to be church in the 21st century.

By October 2015, he had a plan for St. Isidore's, with fundraising underway and an initial goal of purchasing a food truck. Named for the patron saint of peasant laborers, St. Isidore's started with one community of eight adults and five children, including Steele's own family, that met in a house.

Since then, it has grown to include groups that meet at restaurants, taverns, a boxing gym and spoken-word poetry events. Its monthly "laundry love" events at a local laundromat pay for hundreds of loads of laundry, but they don't end there. Mass is celebrated inside the laundromat in English and Spanish, and worshipers are offered social-service assistance, from flu shots to haircuts. And, of course, food is served.

The laundromat is one of the many regular stops on the Abundant Harvest truck's monthly route, which includes meals at a low-income apartment complex.

"We are a church that believes, at the heart, we are called to feed people," Steele said. "So, we create environments where communion is built around the table." ■



Photo/Warrior Church, via Facebook

The Rev. Sean Steele leads a gathering of the Warrior Church, a community of St. Isidore's Episcopal Church that meets for fellowship, worship and exercise at a fitness club in the Houston area.

which doesn't minimize sacramental connections.

"There's something to do with how we eat and who we eat with that says something about how we relate to God above," Steele said, adding that references to food permeate the gospels.

He cited Matthew 25, in which Jesus said those who care for the needy will inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus' list of those in need includes strangers, prisoners, the sick, the naked – and it starts with those who hunger and thirst: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink."

The idea behind St. Isidore's is to go beyond giving food to the hungry. Steele

a sacred space that maintains sacramental Christianity without depending on a church building.

"I love churches," Steele said. "I'm just not entirely sure we need to build many more of them."

Searching for the church economy

Steele, born in Omaha, Nebraska, spent most of his childhood in California, where his spiritual upbringing was "culturally Irish Roman Catholic," he said. His family moved to Houston when he was 16. He didn't initially hear a call to ordained ministry, going to college instead to study finance and accounting.

That training helped him land a job at Enron when the Houston-based energy

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FEATURE

Proposed trauma program aims to further Philadelphia church's work with oppressed people

By Amy Sowder
Episcopal News Service

As the church feeding program's lunch crowd dwindled, three men stood in a huddle and pulled out white boxing gloves. The Rev. Renee McKenzie-Hayward emerged from her office and greeted them.

Soon, the vicar was gloved, taking practice jabs and right hooks — and laughing.

"Fighting for the life of this community, we want to maintain the African-American rich cultural history. The Advocate is central for that. It's a hub for that," McKenzie told ENS the day before, as she sat in her violet-painted office. "People can come here to organize, and I say you come here to get stronger and then go out to work."

George W. South Memorial Church of the Advocate sits in North Philadelphia's Cecil B. Moore neighborhood, named after the civil rights activist and local NAACP president. The neighborhood is predominately populated by African-American and Puerto Rican residents who grew up there, but the ever-increasing influx of college students from nearby Temple University is changing the landscape. A Temple graduate and the university's Episcopal chaplain, McKenzie said she valued what the burgeoning college population could offer the community — and that she had watched gentrification change the neighborhood's fabric.

McKenzie's been facing this and other challenges for the church and its community since 2011. In May, she received a \$15,000 Episcopal Church Foundation fellowship for her proposed Healing Trauma project to further this work. She also won a \$43,005 Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Grant.

"We knew the Rev. Dr. Renee McKenzie would make an excellent ECF fellow for her important work on trauma-informed ministry, social justice and uplifting and growing leaders from African-American communities, both in her church and as a model for our church at large," said Donald Romanik, ECF president.

Now in the research and planning stage, McKenzie envisions a healing trauma center where people first meet with a social worker to assess their needs. They might participate in programs for basic survival, such as food and shelter.

Then, they could join programs addressing needs such as education, financial betterment, arts enrichment and cultural-political empowerment.

"How can we use the resources that the Advocate already has in place? How can we bring those all together under one umbrella so that we work in a common direction?" McKenzie asked. "People need physical, spiritual, mental and social healing. Asking how we bring that together, that's basically how the Healing Trauma project began."

What kind of trauma?

Trauma-informed work may address individual trauma, such as a person's ex-

perience as a victim of violence or as a

cate priest from 1962 to 1987. "It's not only a black-white thing," Easley-Cox said. "It's all oppression of any color, shape and size. For me, I always want to bring things to a more worldly view. Yeah, the Holocaust was bad for Jews; slavery was bad for us. But what makes you think it's over?"

These days, Easley-Cox volunteers at the church doing whatever is needed, from sorting clothing donations to cooking savory dishes for coffee hour.

"I come to service every Sunday because I like Rev. Renee's sermons," Easley-Cox said. "She gives you the gospel and translates it to modern-day and political issues."

In a November sermon, McKenzie targeted another systemic trauma when she addressed the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment, sharing some of her own experiences.

"It's not just women versus men," McKenzie said. "It's so many people who have a story of someone who had the capacity to overpower them because of their privilege."

The Healing Trauma project would work in three phases: developing awareness, unpacking trauma, and rejuvenating and empowering.

"You cannot address the problem until you can name the problem," McKenzie said. "First, we want to help people to name it and then to understand it — and then to become resilient against it."

The Advocate's history

The Church of the Advocate has been fighting for the rights of people, especially those systematically oppressed, since it was consecrated in 1897.

Built as a memorial to civic leader and merchant George W. South, the sprawling complex includes a chapel, parish house, curacy and rectory designed in the French Gothic Revival style by Charles Burns.

The Advocate was named a National Historic Landmark in 1996 and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1980.

The church was built in this grand scale specifically for the working class. The founders ruled that no pews could be rented, so everyone could afford a seat, and had no pews then or now. Today, lightly cushioned chairs line the nave.

The church played a prominent role in the civil rights movement and the struggle for women's rights. The Advo-

cate hosted the National Conference of Black Power in 1968 and the Black Panther Conference in 1970. In 1974, 11 female deacons were ordained as priests at the church. Those ordinations pushed the then-ongoing debate about women in the priesthood to a new level and led, slightly more than two years later, to the General Convention explicitly allowing women to become priests and bishops.

Advocate Café

Marvin C., 40, who asked not to use his full name, said he had taught at an Episcopal nursery school before he fell into a lifestyle that led him down the wrong road and eventually left him homeless. Then he found the free weekday lunches at the Advocate Café, a church ministry for 34 years. One day, he stayed to watch a documentary. McKenzie noticed him.

"I saw the spark in him, you know?" she said. The vicar immediately persuaded Marvin to teach an adult literacy class and participate in the after-school program.

Now, three months later, Marvin has a catering job while he pursues preschool positions and attends support groups. He's interviewing at the Advocate Center for Culture and Education to teach wellness classes like calisthenics. Marvin has a home. When he visits the café now, it's to help others.

"It's a great purpose to work with the young and old," Marvin said. "I was really meant to teach. This is a platform, regardless of how I walked in here homeless and just to eat."

When McKenzie arrived at the Advocate six years ago, the café served about 60 to 70 hot meals a day, five days a week. Now that daily crowd is 100 to 120.

On this December day, Elsie Vives dove her fork into her salad, concentrating on the day's lunch of spaghetti in meaty marinara sauce, yam-pineapple casserole, green salad and a clementine.

"I like the way they do the food. They've got good food every time. In fact, I come here every day," said Vives, who walks almost 2½ miles to reach the café.

Like many church feeding programs, the café offers more than food. It fulfilled more than 5,400 social services requests in 2016. Those services include clothing donations; ID procurement; referrals for jobs, housing and health care; access to resources such as computers, printers and phones; occasional musical entertainment and education workshops during the noon-2 p.m. mealtime; and professional visits from Temple University nursing students and other experts.

Willie Mae Williams has been with the café, in one way or another, for nine years. "I used to come here to eat, and one day, I asked if I could help out, and I've been here ever since," said Williams

continued on page 9



Photos/Amy Sowder/ENS

The Rev. Renee McKenzie-Hayward gets an impromptu boxing lesson as volunteers prepare to start a youth boxing program to add to the athletic offerings at the Advocate Center for Culture and Education, a nonprofit partner ministry of the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia.



In the nave of the Church of the Advocate, Valerie Anderson, a volunteer docent, leads educational tours of the 14 murals depicting African-American experience, history and culture.

perience and the lingering effects of rape, abuse and war.

"But in our community, it's also about systemic trauma," McKenzie said. "That's where the white-supremacy piece comes in. That's where the justice piece comes in for us — racial inequality; poverty."

Barbara Easley-Cox wants to focus on systemic trauma healing by addressing the need for decent housing. She's fought for this cause as a Black Panther since the 1970s and was helped into housing herself by the Rev. Paul Washington, Advo-

FEATURE

TRAUMA continued from page 8

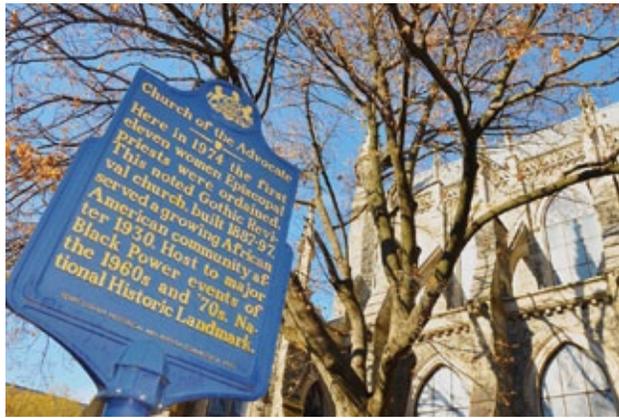
as she organized the clothing donations. “It keeps me busy. Why stay home and go crazy when I can come here and help out?”

During a recent lunchtime, Ta Abdullah held a Dunkin’ Donuts job application as he chatted with others hanging out at the café. He said he appreciated how staff and volunteers helped patrons with their job hunt and offered the use of a phone for work purposes.

“You’ve got people coming here from all walks of life,” Abdullah said. “It’s like a gathering. It’s a blessing to some people.”

Center for Culture and Education

The after-school and summer cultural program began about three years ago for youth in grades 3 to 12. It’s housed next door in a three-story former row home, where Adia Harmon, executive director, presides in the first-floor lobby as children pour in four days a week. In



Historically significant church-related, political and cultural events have occurred at North Philadelphia’s Church of the Advocate, which is built in a French Gothic architectural style, all of which lend to its status as a National Historic Landmark.

2016, the growing program served about 600 children.

“I am here solely out of passion,” said Harmon, a Philadelphia native who loves to witness the direct impact these programs have on a child’s life. “I can see it. The blessings come from when you serve people.”

The sports division started with age-grouped basketball teams that play in the prized gym built in 2004. Marvin plans to lead calisthenics as part of a wellness program that also includes drum circles and meditation and, in January, the new boxing program.

“Research on testosterone points to kids who showed less aggression in school and at home after a program like this, because they had an outlet to release that energy and frustration,” said Johnny Malin, an intern through the Servant Year program in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

“I’m not really a people person, and I feel like this program puts me out there to make friends, and it’s something new every day,” said Tori-Ann Kent, a teen student. “It really opens you up to what’s going on in the world.”

On the third floor, teaching artist Scott Bickmore recently led a class of younger children in an acrylic-painting project with an heirloom theme, tying together still-life paintings of salsa ingredients, based on a family recipe. The kids ate homemade salsa at the project’s end.

“Here’s my tomato painting,” said Jasiya Smith, 10, holding up her art. “I also did a lime, a garlic, cilantro.” She tasted cilantro for the first time and pronounced it “OK.”

The center also offers homework help and tutoring, college preparation, a drama and dance program that uses the stage next door at the church, and gardening out back when the weather allows. ■

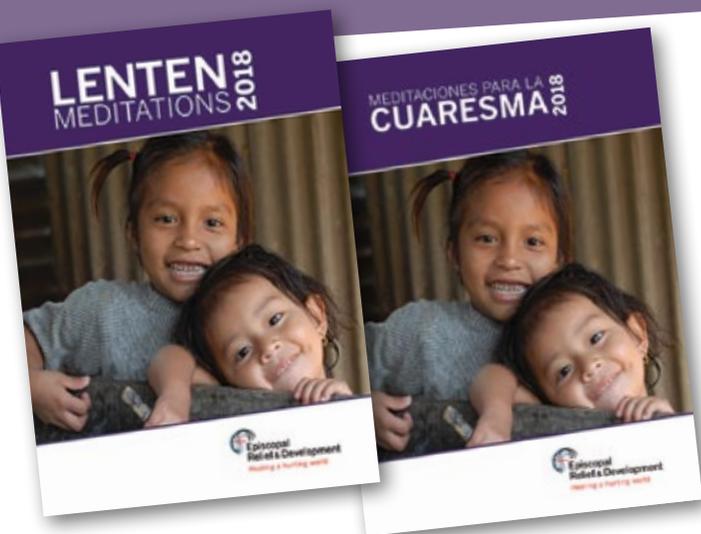


Elsie Vives enjoys hot meals, such as this pasta with meaty marinara sauce, yam casserole and green salad, five days a week at the Advocate Cafe at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia. The ministry feeds about 100 people a day.



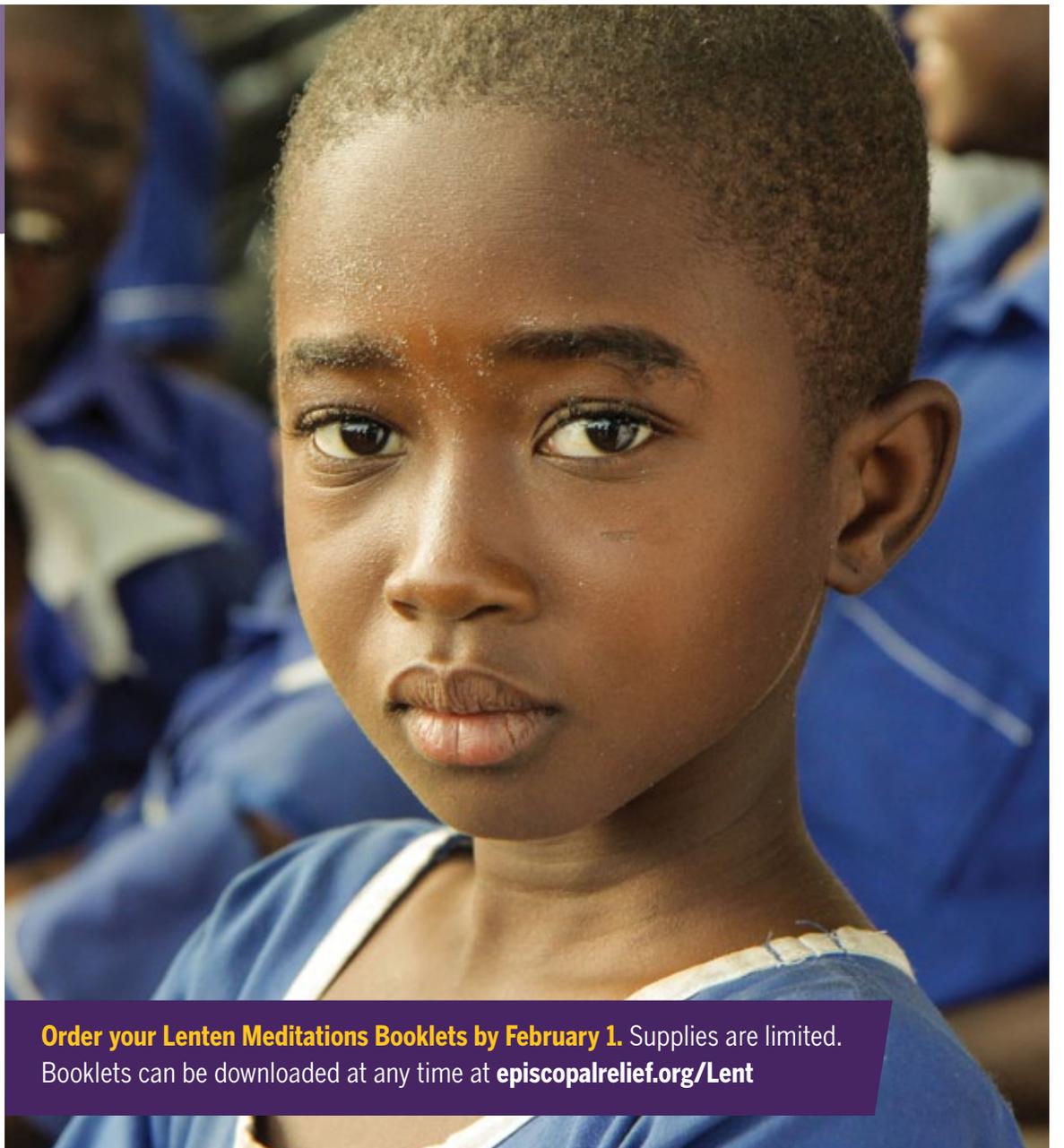
Former Advocate Cafe patron Willie Mae Williams now volunteers during the noon-2 p.m. mealtime, helping sort clothing donations and perform other duties.

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COMMENTARY

On the cake case, David Brooks gets it wrong

By Gene Robinson
Religion News Service

Let me get this right: A baker, in violation of Colorado law, refuses to provide service to a gay couple that he provides to everyone else, and, according to David Brooks, it's the couple's "bad" that they didn't invite him to dinner?



I am a long-time admirer of [New York Times columnist] David Brooks, and I look to him for a reasoned and well-articulated conservative perspective on public matters. But in his opinion piece about the Masterpiece Cake case before the Supreme Court, "How Not to Advance Gay Marriage," he is uncharacteristically naïve and gets it so, so wrong.

The gay couple should have taken the "neighborly course," Brooks admonishes, inviting the baker to dinner in their home, letting him get to know them and giving them the chance to prove their "marital love" to him. Which begs the question: Who else in America needs to cook dinner for a vendor before earning the right to purchase the vendor's wares?

Were Mr. Brooks denied service at a lunch counter because he is white, would he then invite the owner to his home for dinner so that gradually, over time, the owner's heart would be changed and

white people like Mr. Brooks would be served after all? If that were the right approach to civil rights, African-Americans would still be looking for lunch.

After Brooks rightly notes that the plaintiffs were "understandably upset" and "felt degraded," that "nobody likes to be refused service just because of who they essentially are" and that "in a just society people are not discriminated against because of their sexual orientation," he turns his back on what he's just written. He argues Masterpiece Cake is not about discrimination based on "who they essentially are" but rather about the baker's religious beliefs.

The Washington State Supreme Court, ruling on a similar case regarding a florist who refused to provide flowers for a gay wedding, explicitly wrote in its decision that providing flowers for a gay couple's wedding no more advocated for gay marriage than providing flowers for a Muslim wedding endorsed Islam or providing flowers for an atheist couple's wedding advocated for atheism.

But the most egregious assertion Brooks made is that "it's just a cake. It's not like they were being denied a home or a job, or a wedding."

Is it possible that Mr. Brooks is unaware that, in 29 states, one can be fired from a job for being gay and the

employee has no protection and no recourse in the courts? In those same 29 states, one can be evicted from an apartment just for being gay. And as for the right to be married, we should note that



Photo/AP/Jacquelyn Martin; caption amended by RNS
Lydia Macy, 17, left, and Mira Gottlieb, 16, both of Berkeley, Calif., rally outside of the Supreme Court on the day of the hearing for the Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission case on Dec. 5 in Washington, D.C.

in Alabama, former United States Senate candidate Roy Moore was the judge who tried his best to deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

What these cases are about is *dignity*. Systemic, societal dignity. Yes, the wedding cake might be obtained at a bakery down the street. But then again, African-Americans may have been able to find lunch at some other lunch counter down the street in the '60s. The principle at

stake is whether or not gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people are going to be accorded the same public dignity that is available to everyone else — whether or not such treatment is commensurate with the personal opinions and even theologies of the vendors.

Let me be clear: If the baker refused to bake a wedding cake for anyone who is divorced and is getting remarried — because Jesus clearly said that that is adultery; if he refused to bake a wedding cake for any couple who does not give a 10 percent tithe to their church — as commanded in Scripture; if he refused to bake a wedding cake for a heterosexual couple who has been living together before marriage (fornication) — if the baker refused to bake wedding cakes for anyone he deemed to be sinful, I'd be supportive of him (although sinless customers might be few and far between).

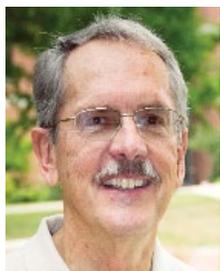
But this baker is *not* asking the court to ensure his freedom of religion; he is actually asking the court to ensure and protect his right to discriminate. Mr. Brooks, this case is about much more than "just a cake." ■

Gene Robinson is the retired bishop of New Hampshire and the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church.

Speak up, Episcopalians! Sing!

By John Stewart

Why is there all this talk in the liturgy? Outside church, we silently stare at our smartphones, smiling and frowning at Facebook and Instagram posts, thumbs flying in reply. But inside, lecturers read Scripture aloud, intercessors pause to let the people respond, sermons are spoken rather than distributed in written or electronic form, and we're even expected to sing together — out loud! Why can't we just worship in silent silos?



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks answers when he explains that speaking and listening is what makes the three Abrahamic monotheisms different. All of us believe that God acts in the world by speaking. "What makes Judaism, Christianity, and Islam different from other faiths is that they conceive of God as personal, and the mark of the personal is that God speaks," he says.

Through spoken words, God creates the world. Acting in the image of God, humans create order with spoken words.

The first thing Adam did was name the animals. Through spoken words, Adam also related to the first "other" in history — Eve — when he said, "This time I have found bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh."

Silence and silos

I notice that many 21st century Episcopalians forget the importance of speaking-listening contact when we worship. Some of us mumble when we read Scripture aloud, or we concentrate on the print version in the bulletin or on the screen rather than what's being spoken by the lector.

Sometimes we do this because the reader is hard to hear or understand, but often it's just habit. We forget that the point of having scripture read out loud is to re-create a version of the formative experience of our entire religion — God speaking and humans listening.

Some of us also recite familiar creeds and prayers without paying much attention to what we are saying out loud. Maybe we're forgetting the special power of speaking something in public. What you speak out loud, you own; When you speak in the presence of others, you get marked by what you say.

This is why most people don't say "I love you" without really meaning it,

and when they say, "OK, I'll be there," they realize that they've made a pledge. We know that a public utterance is a public commitment, and yet we mouth the words of prayers and creeds without thinking much about what we're saying.

Many of us also don't join in singing. When the Psalm is chanted, we skip it because the Gregorian-like tune seems strange. Many are silent during the hymns, because, we claim, we "can't carry a tune in a bucket."

We forget that Scripture asks us to "make a joyful noise," not to produce a professional performance. Rather than being strengthened and supported by the community-building power of group singing, we huddle in our silo of silence.

Am I being too critical when I say that this preference for strategic silence and solitude is un-Abrahamic? Or at least incompletely Episcopalian?

Hearing and making joyful noises

Our Creator originally entered the world by speaking to chosen humans — Moses, Abraham, Noah, Isaiah, Paul and many others. Most importantly for Christians, God spoke to us in Jesus' presence and Jesus' speech. This emphasis on speaking and its partner, listening, suggests a limitation to the translation of the Greek word "logos" as "word" at the

start of John's Gospel.

According to Strong's "Greek Concordance," *logos* did not just mean "word," in the sense of a symbol like "ball" or "democracy." *Logos* originally meant "reasoning expressed by speech ... discourse, communication-speech."

So, "In the beginning was the *logos*" means more than "In the beginning was the word." More adequate translations might say, "In the beginning was communication-speech."

John's gospel calls attention to the point Sacks makes. Speaking is God's unique way-of-being for us. Jesus is God's way of being present to us as God's speaking ("the Word"). This is a pretty unusual way to describe our Lord, and I think we should take it seriously.

To be made "in the image of God" is to be one who lives in language. Humans are uniquely, like God, beings who can listen and speak. To be God's people, children of God, is to engage these capabilities. Among other things, this means actively listening, singing and speaking at appropriate times in our worship. ■

John Stewart is a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in Dubuque, Iowa. His most recent book is "Personal Communicating and Racial Equity, 2nd ed.," and he blogs at www.johnstewart.org.

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

These artists use the Good Book as their medium

By S. Brent Rodriguez-Plate
Religion News Service

In 2015, Montreal-based artist Guy Laramée placed a large-format Bible from the 19th century upright with the spine open. Then, using a power grinder, he carved a landscape into the pages and painted along the curvatures, evoking the space of a cave whittled into a sheer mountainside.

It is a beautiful summoning of desert spaces, conjuring the place of the biblical prophets. It is, however, an unusual treatment of the Good Book.

And it is one that would never find its way to the \$500 million Museum of the Bible, which opened on Nov. 17 in Washington, D.C. That museum is dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the sacred text through the ages.

Laramée, along with a number of contemporary artists, has been working with books not as muse, but as medium. You could call these artists book lovers, but only in the way that you could call Michelangelo a marble lover or Edward Scissorhands a tree lover.

The trade-offs involved in this sort of love become much more stark when the book in question is someone's version of sacred scripture.

Artists such as Carole Kunststadt, Islam Aly and Jan Owen create their own sacred books, stitching together pages of handmade papers in creative ways, writing their own poems and prayers or carving symbolic designs out of the pages. The finished product is like a book yet also like a piece of sculpture. It's not clear if the works belong in the library or the gallery.

Other artists, such as Laramée, Brian Dettmer and Meg Hitchcock, do the opposite. They each work in books the way other artists work in oil or marble, cutting away unnecessary elements to make way for a final product. Some of the most striking are those that use religious texts such as the Bible, Quran and Torah.

Hitchcock's recent solo show, "10,000 Mantras," which was on view last fall in Brooklyn, N.Y., displayed some creative uses of Holy Writ that probably never occurred to religious adherents.

Her artistic process has been to take sacred texts, carefully cut out individual characters from them, and then paste those characters in another place to form new words and new sentences that constitute other sacred texts. In one example from the show, she cut up a Bible and turned the letters into the Buddhist mantra "om mani padme hum," repeated 10,000 times. In this way, one text is transposed into another.

Asked whether he and artists like him are engaged in the desecration of sacred books, Laramée countered, "I'm sacrific-

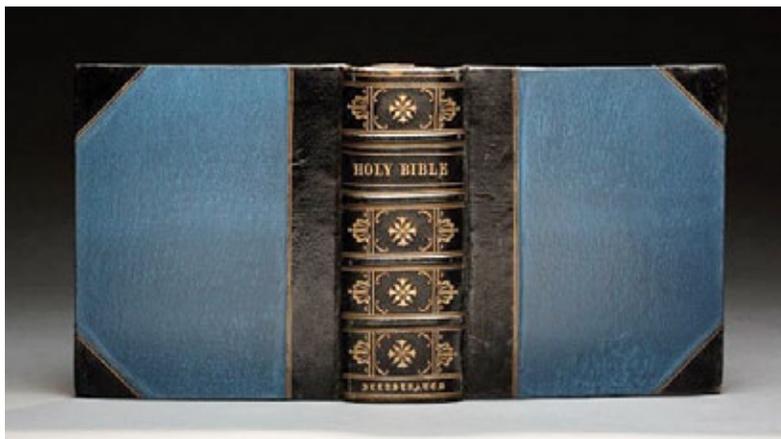
ing them, and like in any true sacrifice, the victim becomes sacred precisely because it is killed."

For her part, Hitchcock comes from a strict evangelical Christian upbringing, and so knows what it is to have a high regard for the Bible. As she moved away from the faith of her youth, she retained

into a Bible.

"I search for the common threads that run through all scripture," she said, "then weave them together to create a visual tapestry that speaks to our common ancestry and, ultimately, to our human condition."

continued on page 13



Photo/Alain Lefort/Courtesy of JHB Gallery, New York

Guy Laramée's 2015 work, "The Holy Bible (The Arid Road to Freedom)," looks like the original Good Book from the outside, above, but reveals a sculpted interior, below.

BOOK REVIEW

Comprehensive resource aids liturgy planners

Review by Sharon Sheridan

People often joke about Episcopal pew aerobics — the ritual calisthenics of standing, sitting and kneeling during a typical worship service. The now-common practice of printing bulletins containing the complete liturgy has reduced the added juggling of one or more hymnals, prayer book and bulletin. But worship leaders still must consult multiple sources to create the liturgies.

Church Publishing's "Planning for Rites and Rituals" simplifies this process by combining information in one, easy-to-use resource. Entries are provided for each Sunday, as well as special services such as Maundy Thursday or Ascension Day.

Each entry includes the appropriate liturgical color, a note on which preface to use, the day's collect, a brief description of the readings and psalm, suggested prayers of the people and a list of relevant hymns from The Hymnal 1982, Lift Every Voice and Sing II and Wonder, Love and Praise.

Helpful for preachers as well as liturgy planners, each entry also provides descriptions of images from the week's readings and several "Ideas for the Day." The entry for Epiphany, for example, describes themes of light, the magi's gifts and the role of monarchs. Among the suggested ideas is that "The Creator communicates through the medium of the creation," with references to scientific and theological resources.

There also are reflections on "Making Connections" and "Engaging all Ages" related to each week's themes. Weekly entries include weekday commemorations, listing the name, date, and a description of the individual or individuals being remembered.

The resource begins with background on the Year B lectionary Gospels of Mark and John. Each season of the church year includes a section on preparing for the season and one on seasonal rites. Among other topics, each preparation section includes an overview of the season; notes on assessing or changing the worship environment (for example, in Lent, "If your seating is flexible, consider orienting it

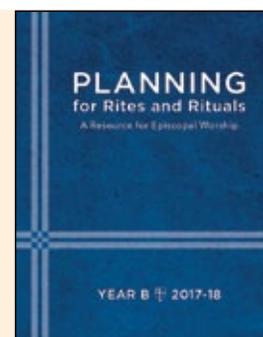
toward the font; alternatively, if the seating is fixed, can the font be moved to a more central place?"); liturgical rubrics and suggestions (for example, "The Gloria is not used in Lent. Consider instead 'A Song of Penitence'"); formation/activities (such as planning a Lenten program around footwashing); and a seasonal checklist.

Seasonal rites include collects and litanies for special occasions. Pentecost, for example, includes prayers for several national holidays; school occasions such as graduations and the blessing of backpacks; the International Day of Peace; "A Native American Thanksgiving for the Americas and Their People"; and Election Day. The section also includes a stewardship litany and chancel dramas on the Nicene Creed, St. Barnabas, and St. Francis and the Wolf.

The resource draws on a range of contributors — priests, educators, musicians, altar guild members and others, from churches large and small. "Our intention is to provide a similar mix of established writers, new voices ... in each new

Planning for Rites and Rituals: A Resource for Episcopal Worship, Year B, 2017-2018

Church Publishing
348 pages, \$39.95



volume of this resource over the years to come," Church Publishing says, adding that it welcomes feedback for preparing future books.

While not eliminating the need for the prayer book or other materials, the resource simplifies planning rites and rituals by bringing together many of the required elements, and it provides ideas to spark liturgical creativity, sermons and formation programs beyond Sunday morning worship. This resource would be helpful for lay leaders involved in liturgical planning as well as clergy, and includes material laity can use outside church, such as "Prayers for the Advent Wreath at Home." ■

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Art reflects creator's desire for inclusiveness, peace and love

By Jerry Hames

The peace marches and protestors during the Vietnam War prompted Karen Loew to create a monotype in the fall of 2016 as a political statement. “Symbols of the times were the hand peace sign and the daisies placed into the gun barrels held by soldiers and police,” she recalled.

The art, “Come Together,” also served as her Christmas card that year. “It is my update for our time in history, combining both visuals in a new way, to show my hope for inclusiveness of peace and love for all, united as in one hand, created by God and met in God. I want to encourage us all to come together, as



Karen Loew

human beings, on the same side, in favor of life and love and happiness for all humankind,” she said.

A member of the Episcopal Church & Visual Arts for seven years, she often contributes to the organization’s online exhibitions. She remembers painting when she was as young as 3 after her parents purchased art supplies for their children.

“I came from a blue-collar family — people said I’d starve to death if I became an artist — and so I decided to go into advertising art,” she said. “I graduated from The Art Institute of Pittsburgh, got a job with a top design agency in Pittsburgh, but I also continued with my artwork on the side, as often as I could.” Loew enjoys monotyping, or making prints by drawing or painting

on a smooth, nonabsorbent surface. The surface, or matrix, was historically a copper etching plate, but in contemporary work it can vary from zinc or glass to acrylic glass.

Loew, chair of the Coast Guard Art Program (COGAP) Committee of New York’s Salmagundi Club in New York and a member of the club’s board of directors, served in the Coast Guard at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in 2002 when she documented activities of Coast Guard Port Security Unit 305. She addressed the opening reception of the COGAP exhibition in Vlissingen, Holland, in 2009. Six years ago she received the Coast Guard Distinguished Public Service Award,

the highest recognition given to men and women who have made outstanding contributions in advancing the Coast Guard’s missions.

“Art can be healing for those who create it and for those who view it,” she said. “This is certainly true for me as an artist — great art therapy. I hope it works for my audience.” ■



“Come Together,” is a monotype by Karen Loew, chair of the Coast Guard Arts Program Committee of New York’s Salmagundi Club and a member of Grace Episcopal Church, Brooklyn Heights, in the Diocese of Long Island.

GOOD BOOK continued from page 12

Others have not been so convinced of the reverent intentions behind the artistic liberties taken with sacred books.

In 2005, when London’s Tate Modern was about to display John Latham’s “God Is Great (#2)” — a sheet of glass slicing through a Bible, Quran and Talmud — the museum pulled the piece from display, fearing negative reactions.

And in 2014, in Frankfurt, Germany, three men entered the Portikus Gallery, agitated the workers and stole the Quran from the middle of Latham’s installation “God Is Great (#4)”. This was one of the last works by Latham, the father of what might be called the “Scriptural Manipu-

lation Movement,” who died in 2006. could be “read,” but she also arranges the characters without punctuation or spacing, as she is “trying to discourage a literal reading.”

By downplaying the content of books — what they say — and emphasizing their form — their physical dimensions — these artists have found a medium that can be played with, sculpted, cut into pieces.

In contrast to Laramée’s power grinder, Brian Dettmer takes an X-Acto knife to the pages of books, carving through the leaves one by one to reveal layers of images and words throughout a book.

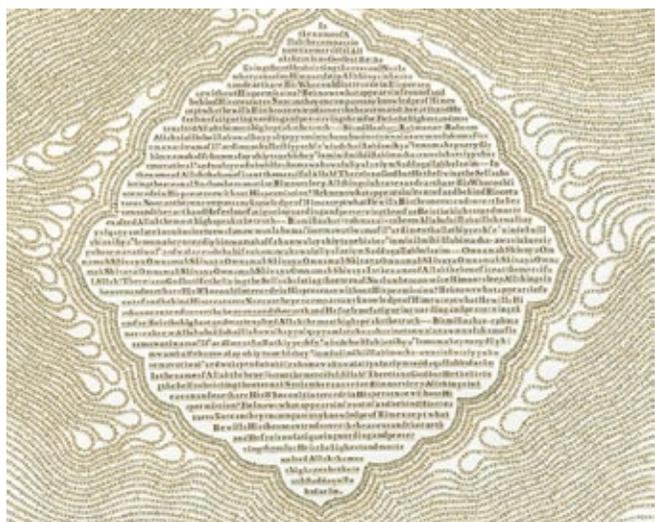
In a TED Talk in 2014, Dettmer said we could think of books as “living things.” Thus, “they also have the potential to continue to grow, to become new things.” Through the act of destruction, a new creation is born.

Between destruction and creation, the physical nature of letters, pages and bindings takes on new lives, in new forms.

By paying attention not only to the spiritual nature of the words and sentences in the holy books, but also to the very form of the book, these artists reinvent the sacred texts in new ways. As Hitchcock noted, even Bibles subject to standard use do not remain physically pristine or unaltered. Their pages, she said, “are stained with the tears and fingerprints of the devout.”

Through artworks such as hers, “words of God” truly become incarnate. ■

S. Brent Rodriguez-Plate is a writer, editor, public speaker and part-time professor at Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y.



Permission by Meg Hitchcock

Detail from Meg Hitchcock’s “Throne: The Book of Revelation,” created in 2012.

lation Movement,” who died in 2006.

Hitchcock, whose artworks now sell well enough for her to work full time in her studio in upstate New York, says that every once in a while her gallery owner gets an earful from some visitor about the potential sacrilege going on. Even so, most people tell her how much they appreciate her art, and this, she says, is “even from some pretty hard-core believers.”

Hitchcock said her work theoretically

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Historic Episcopal men and boys choir keeps welcoming tradition alive

By Amy Sowder
Episcopal News Service

begun in a private home in 1848, five streets south of its current Manhattan location, New York's Church of the Transfiguration has welcomed all sorts of people inside its historic doors.

It's called "The Little Church Around the Corner" because when the church arranged a funeral for an actor in 1870, a time when actors were considered immoral and disreputable, judgmental people whispered that there was a little church around the corner where "they do that sort of thing." Church legend says that Joseph Jefferson, the actor's friend who arranged the funeral, replied, "God bless the little church around the corner!"

The church's longstanding mission to welcome all visitors regardless of profession, race, nationality, reputation or status can be seen through its latest theatrical production featuring its Choir of Men and Boys. On Dec. 15, the group performed a fully staged and costumed production of Gian Carlo Menotti's opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors" with a full orchestra. The Italian composer created the Christmas opera specifically for children.

Luciano Pantano, 11, played the starring role of Amahl, a disabled boy who lives with his mother in poverty near Bethlehem in the first century, shortly after Jesus' birth. The three kings knock on their door in the middle of night asking for a place to rest. Then tales are swapped, neighbors gathered, gold stolen, generosity shown and miracles revealed.

Pantano said he was excited to sing Amahl's part but also loved being one among many in the choir, which in-

cludes about a dozen boys and 10 men. He commutes about an hour from Brooklyn to rehearse with the other boys twice a week after school, sing every Sunday and do special performances.

"It kind of opens up a new part of my life," Pantano told ENS. "I have a lot of new friends from many new, different places. I get to talk and socialize."

Built-in, unstructured playtime is part of the choir rehearsal program shaped by Claudia Dumschat, the church's music director since 1999 and the first woman to hold the position since the choir began more than 165 years ago.

She divides rehearsals into small groups to fit the students' varied schedules. At each Sunday's choir Mass and other performances, the men and all the boys unite their voices to create one layered, powerful sound.

"There's a naturalness children have when they connect to this music. They don't over-interpret it," Dumschat said. "It's how it was meant to be. It's thrilling. I used to work with adult [only] choirs, and this has really changed the way I interpret the music."

The church founder, the Rev. George Hendric Houghton, started the Choir of Men and Boys soon after the church formed. With a birthday in the mid-1800s, it's considered one of the oldest men and boys choirs in the United States.

The male-only nature of the choir



Photo/Church of the Transfiguration

Several of the Church of the Transfiguration's choirs form the Choir of Shepherds for Gian Carlo Menotti's opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors." Bottom row, left to right, are: Ben Thomas as King Kaspar, Charles Brown as King Balhazar, Jake Ingbar as King Melcior and Luciano Pantano as Amahl. Top row, left to right, are Jodi Karem as the mother and Alexis Cordero as the page.

stems from its European monastery roots.

"Eleventh-century monasteries had four-part choirs. The boys sang soprano and the men alto, tenor and bass," Dumschat said. "It's the basis of sacred music in Europe."

Because it wasn't customary for choirs to include women and girls at the time, composers such as Bach, Haydn and Mozart originally meant their music to blend with male voices.

In recent years, the New York church established the Girls Choir, the Cherub Choir for small children and the Lumines Girls Choir for teenage girls.

Both the boys and girls choirs were invited for residency in the summer of 2018 at St. Albans Cathedral in St. Albans, England, where they will sing in daily evensongs and a Sunday Eucharist. They'll also tour historic sites in London, enhancing their education musically and

spiritually.

Emily White, mother to choir member Kalmen "Bugs" Kelley, 11, of Washington Heights in northern Manhattan, said her son eagerly attended choir rehearsals.

"He always swears he doesn't like classical music, but he loves this," White said with a laugh. "He sometimes asks me to go over the words and music at home. He responds to the music. This is one of the things where he becomes himself."

Choir isn't a particularly "cool" extracurricular activity, especially for boys,

the director, the rector and parents say. But when these children leave their outside life and enter into the safety of their choir family, they say they feel free to enjoy it regardless.

"The music we sing is like a blast from the past, and you really don't hear this much. I mostly just listen to R&B, rap and pop," said Ambar Rosario, 16, also of Washington Heights. She likes the unified nature of choir singing, she said. "It's a way we can perform as a group, not just solo, and there's a togetherness. To set myself free in this way is amazing."

The ethereal emotion that beautiful music can evoke has long been rooted in Anglican Church tradition, said the rector, the Rev. John David van Dooren.

"The music isn't just beautiful. It shapes us as Christians," van Dooren said as he sat with ENS before rehearsal. ■

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NEWS Storm-tossed Virgin Islands still need aid

Food and Faith: Episcopalians invoke values in range of anti-hunger efforts

By David Paulsen



More than 41.2 million Americans and 12 percent of households are deemed food insecure because they lack access to enough food to maintain active and healthy lives, according to Feeding America's most recent "Poverty and Hunger Fact Sheet." More than half of all food-insecure Americans live in households above the poverty line. "For a lot of people that live below or close to the poverty line, they're left wondering where their next meal is going to come from," said Catherine Davis, chief marketing and communication officer for Feeding America.



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NEWS

As fires rage, Episcopalians help neighbors with the basics

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

As wildfires rampaged through Southern California, Episcopalians found basic but also creative ways to help their neighbors.

In many cases, they did so by way of existing ministries. For instance, Episcopalians in Ojai and Ventura, two hard-hit communities, have ongoing Laundry Love ministries. Laundry Love brings together congregations and homeless guests in laundromats where those who need help get their laundry done and has something to eat. With ash and smoke permeating everything, the need is even greater.

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ojai and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in downtown Ventura help run Laundry Love ministries in their towns. They, along with St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Emmanuel Lutheran Church in



The Thomas Fire decimated parts of the neighborhood around St. Paul's Episcopal Church in downtown Ventura, Calif.

Santa Paula, also have other ministries to homeless and undocumented people, the populations of most concern to the diocese in the midst of the fires.

The Rev. Michael Bamberger, a member of Episcopal Relief & Development's Partners in Response team and the diocesan disaster coordinator for Los Angeles, said understanding that the Laundry Love ministries need to get back in business soon was a good example of using an assets-based community-development approach to discerning a congregation's potential ministries.

On Dec. 12, Bamberger was preparing to travel to the burning areas with Bishop John Taylor and the Rev. Melissa McCarthy, the canon to the ordinary, to deliver money from an Episcopal Relief & Development grant and a diocesan appeal to expand those ministries. The grant also will help fund gift cards and spiritual care for homeless and undocumented people.

For those existing ministries, "all it took was a little bit of money to amp up their programs," he said. "It's an existing program that meets a great need, but with this disaster, it's even more important."

The fires, the first of which began Dec. 4, burned more than 263,000 acres, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Close to half of that acreage was burned by the first fire, the so-called Thomas Fire that burned down the hills from between Ojai and Santa Paula into

the city of Ventura.

The Rev. Anthony Guillen, the Episcopal Church's missionary for Latino/Hispanic ministries, who lives in Ventura with his wife, Guadalupe Moriel-Guillen, was forced to flee the night of Dec. 4 when the fires started. On Dec. 10, they were allowed into their neighborhood for an hour to check on their house.

Four other major fires were named the Rye, Lilac 5, Skirball and Creek. Nearly 9,000 firefighters and support personnel were fighting the blazes, the fire center said.

Air quality was a major issue "not only in the immediate area but all up and down the central coast area," Bamberger said. "There's ashes coming down as far north as San Luis Obispo and down into Ventura and Thousand Oaks and that area." That's a range of about 150 miles. People were advised to stay inside.

Unable to have Mass at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ojai on Dec. 11 because of air-quality concerns, the Rev. Greg Kimura celebrated Holy Eucharist via Facebook Live. He included announcements about the Thomas Fire's status.

He cautioned viewers that some fires they might be seeing around Ojai were backfires lit to prevent the main blaze from burning into Ojai proper.

"I want to remind folks that we are not out of the woods yet and that there are other communities that are at risk ... that are going to go through exactly what we are going through right now," Kimura said.

St. Andrew's often livestreams its Sunday Eucharist, but this time, Kimura, the rector, streamed the service from a hotel room. The Eucharist has had 393 views, both live and on-demand, and 42 people responded with comments.

Bamberger said the evacuations and, especially, the air quality warnings were affecting the area's vulnerable populations more than residents with greater access to resources.

"The affected areas are heavily agricultural and then, closer to the coast, most of the area is tourist-driven. When the tourist industry suffers, the undocumented people are the people who run the kitchens and clean the rooms; they'll be out of work," he said. "And many of them are reluctant to access government services."

That's because of fears and rumors that federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents will detain undocumented people who ask for help.

Bamberger said there were no verified instances of ICE agents entering shelters. "We have a very vague letter from the ICE director saying that they're not going out of their way to do anything more than their normal enforcement," he said. "But they're not willing to commit to the fact that they're not going to go into the shelters."

"We've not heard any stories of them



Photos/Melissa McCarthy

Los Angeles Bishop John H. Taylor, second from left, and the Rev. Michael Bamberger, a member of Episcopal Relief & Development's Partners in Response team and the Los Angeles disaster coordinator, far left, meet with Laundry Love participants in Ventura, Calif.

going to the shelters, but getting folks to commit to going to a shelter is hard enough. And then if you add the issue of whether or not ICE might be present just makes it all the more complicated."

Another population that worries Bamberger is people in addiction recovery who depend on 12-step meetings hosted by churches of all denominations. With churches included in mandatory evacuation zones and people being warned to stay inside because of the bad air, he wondered how those people are coping. "Sometimes we don't think about who the vulnerable communities are," he said.

As of mid-December, all of the Episcopal churches in the paths of the fires

were safe, albeit plagued by the smoke and ash affecting everyone. All Saints Episcopal Church in Montecito, near Santa Barbara, was in a voluntary evacuation zone and cancelled all activities because of that and the air quality.

"Our highest concern is the well-being of our parishioners and the safety of everyone in our community," the Rev. Aimée Eyer-Delevett wrote on Facebook. "We can each assist in ensuring public health and safety by cooperating with our public officials' instructions."

The All Saints rector advised parishioners to wear a N-95 mask for any "brief outdoor excursions." She also reported that clergy outside of the fire zones were organizing their parishioners who were willing to take in evacuees.

Meanwhile, Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara opened its parish hall to homeless people.

The Rev. Adam McCoy, prior of the Mount Calvary Monastery above Santa Barbara, reported Dec. 11 on Facebook that the evacuation zones around the city had nearly reached them. The monks of the Camaldolese Monastery of the Risen Christ in Los Osos, a little less than a two-hour drive away, were ready to take in the Order of the Holy Cross brothers if need be. ■

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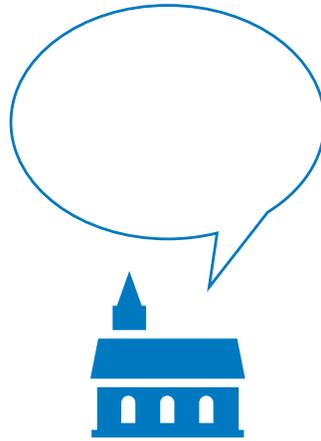
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