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#### WELCOMING EVERY BODY

"Every body holds a story, a path to God, a key to the body of Christ, unique to all others. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he states, "There are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you."



#### **GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING**

"As we reimagine what church looks like in the coming years, we might be able to glean some wisdom from the season of Advent. A chorus of voices alerts us to the challenges we face and the many distractions drawing us away from God's call to embrace new things. But this season of transition is different. We are called to be intentional and more deliberate. Perhaps we are called to trust that God is up to something new and this is a good thing."

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#### **COVER:**

Children prepare for the annual Christmas pageant at Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Colorado Springs.

Photo courtesy Br. Steve Starr



reetings, Episcopal Church in Colorado! It is my privilege and joy to be with you as we learn from one another and discern how God is working in and through us.

I recently heard Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie share a Talmudic parable. 1 It's a parable about a sailing ship with many passenger cabins. A passenger in one of the cabins on one of the lower decks decided to dig a hole in the floor of his cabin, and does so, because he felt like it. And, as one might expect, the ship began taking on water and started to sink. The other passengers, realizing what's happening, went down and found this guy with a hole in the floor of his cabin. And they said to him, "What are you doing?" And he replied, "Well, it's my cabin. I paid for it." And down went the ship.

As I have been about the work of being the Bishop of Colorado (for lo these six months), I've spent time praying over what witness the Episcopal Church in Colorado might be called to make. What does it mean for us to be called together in this time?

In this time in our nation when the chasms between us seem ever more fixed and unbreachable: the chasm between rich and poor, the chasm between people of different skin colors, and the evergrowing chasm between people of different political persuasions. In this time where so many are hellbent on doing whatever they want, because they want to, regardless of how it negatively affects those around them or the viability of our planet. In this time when contempt seems the norm and the notion of "it's my cabin; I paid for it" is all too real.

#### Jesus never called us to "be big," nor did Jesus ever call us to be powerful according to the world's standards; Jesus has called us, and is calling us, to be faithful.

What then, does it mean for us to be the Episcopal Church in Colorado? For many people, being "a diocese" means doing whatever it takes to prop up an institution. For others, it means ringing one's hands over "the numbers" or despairing about a smaller church.

And while the Episcopal Church in the United States of America is shrinking, we should acknowledge that we have never been what you might call "big."

Whether by circumstance or by design, we Episcopalians have never had the numbers or the name recognition of the Baptists or the Roman Catholics. (I cannot count the times people have asked what church I belonged to, and when I said "The Episcopal Church." I've gotten blank stares). Nonetheless, our influence has always been disproportionate to our size. The Episcopal Church has always, according to Richard Parker, "boxed above its weight class,"2 enjoying prominent voices in the halls of power: in Congress, in the White House, in the Supreme Court.

In recent years, that has shifted. The Episcopal Church no longer has the power positions "on lock." We are no longer the primary power brokers of the nation state. And to that I say, "Yay for us!"

Because now we have the profound gift and opportunity to find our hearts and recover our souls. Jesus never called us to "be big," nor did Jesus ever call us to be powerful according to the world's standards; Jesus has called us, and is calling us, to be faithful.

In this world of division and hate, of chasm digging and wall building, it seems to me that a faithful church would be one that reflects the heart of Jesus. A faithful church is one that is *committed*.

A faithful church is committed to Jesus Christ and Christ's teachings (especially all that stuff we like to ignore: serving others; doing to others as we'd have done to us, giving our possessions). A faithful church is a community committed to walking the Way of Love (to turn, learn, worship, pray, bless, go, and rest), to the daily practice of discipleship,

recognizing that faith is not a possession but rather something we do, a way we live.

I want to acknowledge that I sometimes make some Episcopalians nervous. I make some Episcopalians nervous with the way I talk about Jesus-like I actually know him. I get that. I also know that I make other Episcopalians nervous because I believe that 'all' means ALL and that 'every' means EVERY. So that when my country promises "liberty and justice for all," it means ALL people, not just the rich ones or the native-born ones, or the ones with certain color skin. And when I promise to "seek and serve Christ in all people" and to "respect the dignity of every human being," it means EVERY human being, not only the ones we like or feel comfortable around. I understand that makes some people twitch. And that is part of being faithful.

In our commitment to being the faithful body of Christ, we are called to be a compassionate church.

A compassionate church is one that turns toward those who are suffering, speaks for those with no voice, and makes space for all of God's beloved children. A compassionate church recognizes that when we look more like the diverse kingdom of God we are better. A compassionate church understands that our God is not a trickster or a grumpy judge simply waiting to hit the SMITE button, but a loving parent who wants nothing more for us than our flourishing: a parent who is willing to connect the divine self to our mortality for our redemption. When we are compassionate, we turn our hearts to practicing more curiosity and less judgment.

I heard a story once about a kid who had two apples. And the kid's mom asked if she might have one of them. The kid pondered the apples, one in each hand, then took a bite out of one. The mother waited and watched in dismay when the kid took a bite out of the other. Trying to hide her disappointment, the mother began mentally preparing a lecture on the importance of sharing. Then the kid held out an apple, with a bite missing, and said, "Have this one. It's the sweeter one."

It is all too easy for us to convince ourselves that

we know what other people think, or their motivations. Faithfulness bids us to be curious as we practice the compassion of Christ Jesus.

As we cultivate compassion, faithfulness will call us to be a connected church: connected to God, connected with one another, and connected with our community. A few months ago, before I arrived, churches were asked to fill out congregational vitality assessments (not "surveys" because, well, we are Episcopalians) and when the results came in, one of the assessment points stood out to me. While most everyone who took the assessment considered a relationship with God "very important," the majority of the respondents considered prayer and Bible study "not very important."

Now, I don't know how you do relationship, but over the past 30 years, I've found having conversations with my husband helpful, even essential, for the building and maintaining of our relationship. If one wants a relationship, starting a conversation is a really good beginning. I'm pretty sure giving God the silent treatment will not get us where we need to go.

The vitality assessment information begs the question: if we're not intentionally connecting with God, are we really connecting to one another? Do you know when your siblings in Christ are suffering? Is it okay for someone to show up at church when their life is falling apart? If we're avoiding praying in general, how then do we pray for one another?

And those questions spark even larger questions: how are we connected across this great state? The Episcopal Church in Colorado currently has 96 congregations, and while I've only visited a handful, I am learning what Bishop Rob meant when he intoned "the one hundred and five thousand square miles of this diocese." Each of our congregations is important and unique, yet our tradition teaches us that they are, by themselves, an "insufficient expression of lived Christianity." It is the bonds between our congregations that allow us to build and accomplish more for the kingdom together than even the largest congregation can do on its own. The more we can share our gifts, talents, and resources, the better off we will be. If we are all as concerned about the whole ship as we are about what's going on in our cabin, we will sail further.



Finally, being connected includes our connection to the community outside our walls. How much do you know about what is happening in your community? It is a question I am starting to ask Vestries and Bishop's Committees when I visit, because the Episcopal Church is notorious for saying "we welcome everyone" when they mean, everyone who might show up at the right time and look the right way and either has the dexterity to juggle multiple books or have no objection to being lost in worship. (My husband once said our signs should say, "THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU ... NOT REALLY.")

In this new apostolic age, we don't have the luxury of telling ourselves that "people will find us" because, quite honestly, not many people are looking for us. We do not have time to sit around being "God's frozen chosen," being disconnected from "those people" around us. Why? Because "those people" are our mission field. "Those people" are the ones who are hungry for a word of hope. "Those people" are looking for connection and compassion. "Those people" long to know that they matter and that they are beloved. "Those people" are looking to see if we are in fact followers of Jesus.

What is most exciting to me is that so many congregations here are figuring this out already. There are lots of church folks who are walking this Way of Love, who are working to bridge the chasms, who are discerning what God is up to in their context.

I have been impressed to see how a church in a town of 6,000 souls is doing vital work for the Kingdom of God.

This past weekend, I was with the good people of St. Luke's, Westcliffe, and they shared with me how Custer County ranks fifth in the nation in income disparity, how they are engaged in ecumenical endeavors to serve those suffering in their community. I have so many other examples: The Chapel of Little Shepherd in Crestone which has per capita one of the most diverse congregations in the diocese. The clothing giveaway at St. Patrick's in Pagosa Springs. St. David's, Woodland Park, where on my visitation six people told me they were in church because a church member invited them!)

The Spirit of the Lord is moving in this place!

Throughout our annual convention, you heard stories from congregations who are intentionally discerning how God is calling them to live out their baptismal covenant, to incarnate Christ here and now. You heard from communities that are being called to care for this fragile earth; you heard from communities that are asking "Why are there no people of color in our church?" You heard from communities who have given themselves to struggling with how the baptismal vow to "seek and serve Christ in ALL persons" applies to inclusion of their LGBTQIA+ siblings. You heard from people who see the increase in suicide rates among Colorado youth and hear a call to action.

And the best news? These communities were already doing this work when I got here! I see my role, and the role of the Office of the Bishop, as working to figure out how we can support and equip you all as you walk the Way of Love in your context and to figure out how to help us share ideas and resources, foster best practices, and encourage one another. None of this work is patented: learn, borrow, steal it! Bend it, mold it, shape it. Take what is helpful and leave the rest.

This is the beginning of our journey together. We've got a good a ship. And Christ is with us. We have everything we need. ■

This article was adapted from the Annual Convention Opening Eucharist message given on October 3 at Christ Church, Denver.

- 1. Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie, interview, "On Being with Krista Tippet," first aired July 13, 2017, updated August 2019 https://onbeing.org/programs/ amichai-lau-lavie-first-aid-for-spiritual-seekers/
- 2. Richard Parker is an economist, Galbraith biographer, longtime political consultant, and cofounder of *Mother Jones*. He teaches at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.
- 3. According to Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, United Methodist Church.

## **ENGAGING THE WORLD IN LOVE**



# From Needy to Needed

The Power of a Good Dinner Party

BY ANTHONY SUGGS

nce there was a person up late at night doing what people often do when they can't sleep: thinking. So, they decided to start talking to God and asked, "What is the difference between heaven and hell?" God took them by the hand and showed them a hallway with two doors. The first door opened and inside was a large table. On top of the table was a huge pot of stew, and people sat all around it. The aroma filled the room, and there was plenty for everyone. But the people around the table looked emaciated as if they hadn't eaten in weeks. They all had spoons that were long enough to reach the stew in the middle of the table but were too long to put in their mouths. So, they sat there, unable to enjoy what was in front of them. "This is hell," God said. Then God opened the second door. The room looked identical to the first. Same table, same stew, same spoons, but the people around the table looked happy, healthy, and well fed. "This is Heaven," God said, "because these people learned long ago that the spoons work great if they feed one another."

Few promises in this life are more demanding than those we make in the Baptismal Covenant.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Very few things in this life are more powerful than individuals and communities living these promises. So, if we make these promises on such a regular basis, what gets in the way? What prevents us from keeping these promises and, more important, what enables us to move this covenant from a liturgical hope to a lived reality?

In many ways in our world of church and nonprofits and social justice, we have a culture of help. This culture of help doesn't lead to transformation, however, nor does it enable us to live into our baptismal covenant in transformative ways. In this culture of help, we have on the one hand groups

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

-Luke 14:1, 7-14

of helpful, needed people with lots of expertise, resources, and good will. On the other hand, we have groups of unhelpful, needy people with lots of deficits, needs, and problems. The needed spend lots of time and money doing good things for the needy and, usually, nothing really changes. The guest list and seating arrangement stay the same and life continues on as usual. Except in God's world there is no one we don't need and there is no one in whom God's Spirit is not already moving.

We are, for the most part, good at believing that in God's world, everyone is welcome; wanted, even. But there is a world of difference between being welcome and wanted and being needed. If everyone is needed and necessary, then there is no room for individuals to be exclusively helper or helped.

God hopes for a world where everyone gets to take part in building the wholeness and community that we desire. Our catechism says that the Church's mission is to restore people to unity with each other and God and that every single member of the Church is called to carry out that mission. In God's world, the work of community justice is not relegated to a small group of helpers but to every single person.

Jesus is portrayed at dinner far more frequently in Luke than in any of the other gospels. In fact, a banquet is one of Jesus' central motifs in portraying a world that has been redeemed and restored, one where everyone has a place at the table. For Jesus, the table is where we can most readily glimpse a world that looks as if God is in charge. But this is not so with the table portrayed in this passage from Luke.

Jesus was, without a doubt, a difficult person to have around, especially at dinner parties. He was not one to let an observation go unsaid, even if it directly called out other dinner guests or even the host.

Jesus is immediately struck by how presumptuous some of the guests are, assuming their importance and taking seats of honor for themselves. Dinner tables, especially ones like this, were where power and privilege were on full display. Dinner was where important connections, favors, and alliances were built and having the right seat meant access to power. Like many other places in scripture, we see here that Jesus is not interested in this kind of power; the power held by the "needed" of his time. Jesus is interested in those well-acquainted with the

margins, those who are not at the table; those who he says will soon come first.

At this point in time, in many ways similar to today, upward mobility and sustained social influence depended heavily on circles of favor. Inviting the right guests over for dinner would, in turn, get you

an invitation to the right places for dinner where you would meet the right people who you would invite over and so on and so forth. In this system of power and privilege dependent on proximity and favor, a person's worth is limited by the amount of prestige their presence can add to your life.

So, when Jesus invites us to throw banquets for people who cannot repay us, he is not offering a method for racking up points in heaven, as it may seem at

face value. In reality, Jesus is inviting us into a way of relationship and community that does not treat people like means to an end. The worth of an individual is not their ability to enhance your life with greater influence and the right connections; the worth of an individual is their ability to enhance your life with their inherent divine nature, their inherent 'neededness'—a divine nature and 'neededness' that exists within each and every one of us.

In scripture we are reminded to extend hospitality to all because, in some guests we may be entertaining "angels unaware." Our baptismal covenant goes even further, reminding us that not only do we encounter the occasional hidden angel, but that Christ, God incarnate, exists in all persons.

If we, then, are actually going to start throwing banquets at which everyone is welcome with no thought of material return-on-investment, then we must also be open to accepting invitations to spaces and places where we have nothing to bring but ourselves. If we are going to seek and serve Christ in all persons, then we must also be ready and willing to be sought and served ourselves.

The ability to serve and be served, to seek and be sought, to appreciate and be appreciated, is essential in making our baptismal covenant a reality. As we continue to pursue our calling of restoring all people to unity with God and each other through our various ministries, in the Church and the world, keep this truth at the forefront: there is no one we do not need in God's world, no exceptions. Every single person we encounter is

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endowed with gifts to bring to this world. I hope that we look for them, recognize them, name them, and put them to holy use as we build relationships of solidarity with those whom we encounter. This way of being calls us to resist the urge to see ourselves only as helpers; it calls us to cultivate an openness to true relationship, not just service.

Fr. Gregory Boyle well understands this way of being. His entire ministry of relationship with those

transitioning out of gang life in Los Angeles is built on mutuality and a desire to be with over the desire to help. "When you feel called to the margins," he says, "resist the urge to go there to help and transform (a polite word for fix) those who you meet there. Go to the margins in order to stand in solidarity and to be transformed yourself so that, in time, the margins cease to exist."

It is infinitely more convenient to just go with the flow and plug into the helper model. So, in this Advent season and beyond, be difficult to keep around just as Jesus was difficult to keep around. Remain open to transformation, and it will happen. In your daily life, work to seek and serve Christ and uplift the inherent neededness in all persons you encounter. Encourage those who travel with you to do the same. And allow yourselves to be sought and served as the dwelling places of God that you are. Because this whole reign of God thing works only if we start using our spoons the right way.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Advocacy & Social Justice Ministry in the Episcopal Church in Colorado, please visit episcopalcolorado.org/advocacy.



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#### BY WESTON MORRIS

this time last year, my body was just becoming acclimated to being alive in Colorado. After twenty-five years in the humid hills of North Carolina, moving to Steamboat Springs was a physical shock. My existence in northwest Colorado challenged my senses to witness God in new ways, whether that was praying that I would snowboard down the mountain safely through whiteout conditions or in my evening walks marveling at the aspens budding in the springtime. My senses introduced me to new sacred wonders: the perfect snowflake, a Colorado moonrise, mountain time, and new communities.

Through the Colorado Episcopal Service Corps in Steamboat Springs, I dove headfirst into the community that makes up the Independent Living Movement, a movement which aspires to bring the liberation of independence to people with disabilities. In my time at the NorthWest Colorado Center for Independence (NWCCI), I got a chance to support people as they achieved independence by graduating from high school, modifying homes to make them accessible, getting a job, and being proud, visible people in the community. The types of disabilities I encountered were diverse, and each one gave me a new perspective on what living in the world could look and feel like. I worked with stroke survivors, amputees, people with bipolar disorder, spinal cord injuries, autism, cerebral palsy, and more. The only certainty: Blessings were abundant.

I have been asked why I chose to work for disability justice. While I am a temporarily ablebodied person, my body has experienced the world differently. I started transitioning from female

to male when I was twenty years old, and my reality changed as I transitioned. My transgender body, like the bodies of disabled people, began to struggle to access spaces I had formerly taken for granted. I struggled to find a primarycare physician with adequate knowledge of or experience in hormone replacement therapy; my health insurance did not cover any care associated with my transition. I lived in North Carolina when House Bill 2 was passed, which made it illegal for me to use public bathrooms matching my gender identity. These examples are barriers that made my right to safety inaccessible. A person with a disability may have similar issues with accessibility, including finding quality affordable health care, accessible housing, a job that pays a living wage, and so on.

Accessibility is not just a physical issue, however: accessibility has spiritual, emotional, and cultural aspects as well—aspects that our churches have yet to adequately face. People with disabilities are major players in the narrative of Jesus, but our theology on those characters is lacking, focusing far too much on the attitude of the disabled and too little on the responsibility of communities to support them. Welcoming disabled bodies means embracing the unique dignity of the people in those bodies. Every body holds a story, a path to God, a key to the body of Christ, unique to all others. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he states, "There are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you."

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a tool we can use to acknowledge that communities are healthiest when every person, every part

of the body, is needed. ABCD comes from the perspective of abundance. We are all given gifts, strengths, and assets, and those assets can be used to respond to needs of the community. My experience as a transgender person has blessed me with gifts of uncommon empathy, compassion, open-mindedness, and joy, which are valuable to my mission of greeting Christ in every person. People with disabilities have been blessed with gifts, but unless we work to welcome every body into our lives, our homes, and our churches, we will miss out on those gifts.

Through our baptismal covenant, Episcopalians vow to serve the Christ in every person, which starts by acknowledging that there is Christ in every person. In the season of Advent, while we prepare to welcome Christ's body into the world, how can we prepare to welcome all members of the body of Christ into our church? Churches are not required by law to be accessible, which means that churches must take it upon themselves to become accessible. For your church that may mean printing large-print service bulletins, repaving the sidewalks outside of the sanctuary, removing a row of pews so that people in wheelchairs can sit among the congregation, or a multitude of other basic changes. A good place to start may be to learn if people in your congregation have disabilities. If so, you can begin by learning what changes would make church more accessible for them, and then make those changes.

In September I began my second year in the Colorado Episcopal Service Corps as the Organizer for Community Justice. During the coming year I will support the Episcopal Church in Colorado in its expansion of radical welcome to every body. If you have questions or need support in becoming a more accessible church, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, or Asset-Based Community Development, contact me at Weston@EpiscopalColorado.org. ■

**WESTON MORRIS** is the Organizer for Community Justice for the Episcopal Church in Colorado.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Advocacy & Social Justice Ministry in the Episcopal Church in Colorado, please visit episcopalcolorado.org/ advocacy.



Children of Valle Verde in front of their new school. Photo courtesy Pedro Vallejos

Do you want to get to know God's children outside the walls of your church community? Then pack a bag and hit the road. You will be transformed. And, not surprisingly, you will have fun too. Every time. We can't ask for more than that.

## **RADICAL GENEROSITY**



ravel. We often think of travel as something we do for fun. It's what we do when we go on vacation. But the travel we do for mission is something entirely different. It's what we do to form relationships with others whom we probably wouldn't get to know if we didn't go and visit. Travel is how we connect with our siblings around the world. It's how we learn. It's how we stay curious. Travel is what allows us to come to know God's other children, close by and far away.

Churches around the Episcopal Church in Colorado are traveling—across the state, the country, and the world. These church communities are hungry to learn. They cherish the opportunity to form relationships with others. They understand that through travel they will be grow, individually and collectively.

Do you want to get to know God's children outside the walls of your church community? Then pack a bag and hit the road. You will be transformed. And, not surprisingly, you will have fun too. Every time. We can't ask for more than that.

#### **TOUCHING LIVES IN HONDURAS:** ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, BRECKENRIDGE

by Maggie Ducayet

"Summit in Honduras" began 15 years ago as part of the outreach ministry of St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church in Breckenridge. This international outreach effort has touched people in our own church community as well as students from our high schools and people from around the country. What we do changes each year to meet the needs of those we serve in Honduras, people we now call family. Summit was started

as a medical outreach ministry, but it has become much more.

In 2018–19 Summit brought some of our local Colorado firefighters to work with a fire company in Honduras to offer training and bring firefighting equipment from fire stations all over Colorado. In May we traveled to Honduras with 23 amazing medical professionals to work in the orphanage we partner with, in villages, and at our partner clinic. In July we helped to build our sixth school, which will be ready to welcome students back to school in January.



Breckenridge firefighters teaching first aid. Photo courtesy Maggie Ducayet

At the end of October, we took 12 local students and their chaperones to build clean, smokeless stoves in a village where respiratory problems are significant. Working alongside villagers, the students built the stoves, which are sealed and

extremely fuel efficient, using an eighth of the fuel (usually wood) normally used.

Our outreach is modeled on the words of Mother Theresa: "It is difficult to do huge, great things, but we can all do small things with great love and change the world." We are continually grateful for God's grace in transforming what started as a small ministry at St. John the Baptist Church in Breckenridge into a 501(c)(3) organization that touches the lives of so many people in Summit County, across Colorado, around the country, and in Honduras.

#### **REFLECTIONS ON A WEEK IN HAITI: ASCENSION, DENVER**

by Jan and John Douglas

Our week in Haiti was unsettling, rewarding, informative, and impactful. It made us feel on a gut level that we are all one—that what happens to our neighbor in Petit Trou matters to us, and that we are part of the same human family, and that our family will thrive only if we all thrive.



A morning with watercolors at St. Paul's School. Photo courtesy Teresa Henry

The week taught us that we must be grateful and always react with love in our heart. We must not judge. We can help best by making opportunities available to our friends in Haiti but let them decide how to best use those opportunities to forge a better community.

We saw that life is hard for people in Haiti—only rarely is there electricity. Water must be hand carried. Sanitation is a goal but not achievable for most. Lines for gas are long. Things fall apart. It is hot. The mosquitos bite, and one must share what little one has with so many. Hope arrives and then vanishes when it turns out, once again, a politician is corrupt, natural disaster strikes yet again, there is no gas for the generator, the school must be rebuilt, or the plastic that makes life easier also ruins the environment.

We are thankful for the work of the Colorado Haiti Project (CHP). From the wonderful teachers and the principal at St. Paul's School, to the work CHP is doing to teach sustainable agriculture, to the help it is giving to the health clinic, or its hope to bring in carbon credits by planting more mangroves. Hope, energy, and knowledge are being shared from that community to ours and back again.

All of us from Church of the Ascension who traveled to Haiti received extraordinary gifts: the pleasure of each other's company, the opportunity to be inspired by our new friends, and the reaffirmation of what it means to live in one world and be common stewards of one creation. Those gifts not only changed us, but also, we are certain, changed our church community.

#### **NAVAJOLAND MISSION TRIP:** ST. MATTHEW'S, GRAND JUNCTION

by Chris Coolidge

I am standing in the Sacristy office, three steps below grade. The space is a bit damp, a bit musty,



Pastor Kay Rohde in her favorite armchair. Photo courtesy Kevin Bouwhuis

a bit neglected from the press of more urgent issues. Before me is a long, skinny shelf-maybe 20 feet? -spanning much of two walls in the room, every square inch packed with books.

"Can you help with this," I hear someone say, "while I go elsewhere?" Sure! I pack books in copypaper-size boxes. Someone else carries them to the new office across the lane.

Our group had traveled from St. Matthew's Grand Junction to

St. Christopher's Mission in Navajoland. We were tasked with setting up a new office for Pastor Kay Rohde, who heads up the ministry at the Mission in Bluff, Utah.

From dark and damp to sunny and clean, Pastor Kay's new office has three bookcases brought with us from St. Matt's. Pastor Laura assigns me the task of organizing this new library—she knows I've worked on several, including one in my own church. By noon the next day, a bookcase-and-ahalf of books have been sorted into broad groups for Pastor Kay to begin to use.

Half a dozen people helped transform the new office. I was proud and glad that we could give Pastor Kay a useful, clean, and happy new home to work in.

We shared other memorable moments—sitting in a Navajo hogan, throwing a spectacular Star Party, eating s'mores on the deck. Yet what sticks with me most is finishing one of the guesthouses, providing new furnishings, sweeping and mopping and then sweeping again, Kevin from our team walking Pastor Kay's favorite rocker to her new office, seat on his head, arms balanced on his shoulders. Perfect!

We were the guests of kind and loving people—it didn't feel much like work.

#### **VISITING BLACKFEET NATION:** TRINITY, GREELEY

by Lynette Humphrey

At Trinity Episcopal Church Greeley, we are a family pursuing, embracing, and living out being disciples of Christ. We are called to love God and to love each other. At Trinity, we have many ways of expressing our love of God and each other. Being disciples of Christ, we intentionally find ways to share God's stories.

This past summer, Trinity Youth Group members spent a week in Heart Butte, Montana, with the hope to share God's stories with people from the Blackfeet Nation. Our group experienced God's overwhelming grace and presence in being together with the people of Heart Butte. We ate together, prayed together,



A young boy receiving prayers for challenges on the reservation. Photo courtesy Lynette Humphrey

played together, created together, and worked hard together. We shared God's stories together.

The key in being a family of God at Trinity is sharing our lives together. It is in these relationships that we experience God's Kingdom here and now. This is where we grow in our faith in Christ and experience a sacred space that acknowledges Christ's presence in our midst. In Heart Butte, we learned that God's family goes beyond our Trinity family. A little bit of our hearts stayed in Heart Butte, Montana, and a little bit of their hearts came home with us.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about mission trips organized or supported by the Episcopal Church in Colorado, please contact Buck Blanchard, Missioner for Outreach & Mission, at Buck@EpiscopalColorado.org.





ow do you define Advent? I'm able to tell you what Advent is about and what we do during the four weeks of the season. But explaining what's stirring in my soul as we prepare for the mystery of Christ isn't as easy. If I try, I can say that, for me, Advent is anticipation of impending joy. It is awe at knowing the Light is coming into the world. It is thanksgiving for the chance, once again, to be renewed. It is a feeling of love for one another because we are all in this together, and the gift of Christ is a gift for each and every one of us. But Advent is so much more—something that can be fully known only with our hearts and be put into words only with difficulty.

So how can we live into this difficult-to-define season more fully? How do we avoid simply going through the motions, falling back on the ways the world has defined it for us?

We can turn, intentionally, to the coming Light with all our being, with our heads and hearts, even aligning our most challenging practice—our use of money—with our beliefs about the season.

At stewardship workshops over the past year, participants have been wrestling with how to integrate their rational minds and their spiritual selves, how to engage their heads and their hearts, when it comes to money. Advent is a time of year when choosing with the wisdom of both head and heart is particularly significant. It is a time when our hearts are often overcome by our thinking selves as we make to-do lists, try to make meaning by doing more, and aspire to unattainable perfection.

The Light is coming into the world!

Central to our workshops is taking time to create currency narratives—narratives that impart the teachings, experiences, and values we've heard and absorbed over our lifetimes. These narratives help to explain where we are now regarding money and how we choose to spend it, how we use time, and how we share our talent. After creating our narratives, we share them in groups of five or six. What stands out, we ask participants, in your

group's narratives? Is there a common thread, something unexpected, something surprising?

What stands out consistently each time we do this exercise, regardless of a participant's age, is that people notice their attitudes about money were formed primarily from lessons conveyed during their growing-up years, lessons typically imparted by parents. Participants are surprised by this, I think, because they feel themselves more responsible for their personal attitudes and ways of being in the world.

What this also means is that as children turned parents and caregivers, we deeply impact our young people. Sometimes, in our drive to provide experiences, formal education, social lives, and economic well-being for our children, we forget that the most important thing we give them is ourselves—ourselves as role models, nurturers, mentors, habit-makers, people of faith.

The lessons and examples of parents can be tremendous gifts to children as they grow up and go out into the world. I grew up with parents who gave me a strong sense of wants versus needs (by making me pull weeds, dust the house, and babysit most Friday and Saturday nights to buy whatever wasn't a need). They taught me to never talk about money, because it was considered bad manners. They taught me to avoid unnecessary expenses by taking care of what I owned. And they taught me to save. Creating a money narrative can help people see the source of their attitudes and also to assess which lessons are still serving them well and which have been outgrown.

Next we ask people to explore two things: their personal values and their beliefs about the Kingdom of God. We then invite them to *check* their alignment by looking at their purchases and how their purchasing decisions line up with these things. What many of us discover is that we tend to purchase things we feel we need, we want, or we feel pressured into buying. But do these things line up with our values and our beliefs about the Kingdom? For example, the last three things I purchased were a tank of gas, groceries, and a new piece of clothing for my daughter. How did these purchases reflect my values and beliefs about God's Kingdom? I value protecting creation, but when I filled my tank with gas, did I consider taking the

light rail to work more often, or consolidating trips? I value economic justice, but when I bought the shirt, did I consider the labor practices used to make it? I value food security, but when I shopped for groceries, did I consider the number of impulse items that ended up in my cart rather than picking up items for the food bank?

The fact is that the many decisions about how we use money can be incredibly powerful—powerful in helping us intentionally live lives that align with our values and beliefs about the Kingdom, powerful in allowing us to effect change in the world, and powerful in helping us live into our lives as beloved children of God. Each time we use our currency of money, we can say something about who we are, what we believe, and what matters to us.

At this year's annual convention, those who participated in the "Engaging Head and Heart" workshop used the following words to describe God's Kingdom: sharing, community, love, hope, family, freedom, peace, abundance, forgiveness, everybody flourishes, compassion, joy, serving one another, justice.

If this is the Kingdom we have committed to serve as disciples of Christ, is it also the Kingdom we are preparing for as we get ready for Christmas? This Advent season, how can we intentionally align our use of money with our beliefs about the Kingdom? How can the gifts we give and our practices during the season align with its values?

Christ is coming into the world! Not as a mature, thinking adult, but as a tiny, unformed child, vulnerable and open to all the lessons and experiences of being human. The same way each of us has since come into the world. Advent is a perfect time to remember that what we do and what we say have great influence. It is a season to remember to align our heads and our hearts, our money practices and our beliefs.

Now is a time of turning. In the language used in the spiritual practice The Way of Love, it means it is a time of pausing, listening, and choosing to follow Jesus—of striving to build the Kingdom of God here and now. It is a time of turning to the coming Light with all our being and ways of being in the world.

## **ALIGNING OUR GIFTS**

KINGDOM VALUES: SOCIAL JUSTICE, COMMUNITY, SHARING, EVERYONE **FLOURISHES** 

Several years ago, our son gave us a great gift. Frustrated with holiday shopping, he announced that he was bowing out of the Christmas business. He then requested a list of charities he would donate to on our behalf. We would then reciprocate in kind. We floated the idea by our daughter and soon-to-be husband. Both undergraduate students, they were short on time and money so quickly embraced the new plan. The idea was enticing. No more mall crawls or Black Fridays. No more fretting over finding the right present or one that at least wouldn't require the hassle of an exchange. We were all in!

We have kept the tradition ever since, deciding together on a donation that will serve those in need because of natural disasters or other calamities, or simply giving out of our collective concern about poverty, disease, or environmental conservation. Thus, we decided one year on an organization serving those who had suffered the devastation of Hurricane Sandy and another year gave to the victims of the fires in Colorado. This year, I suspect our dollars will go to those aiding refugees fleeing the violence in their Central American countries.

Giving to others who are truly in need is fitting for a season focused on the great gift of love embodied in the person of Jesus. While we all donate to charitable organizations throughout the year, doing so during Advent, in concert with one another, brings a sense of shared commitment and a greater understanding of Advent hope and generosity. It also allows more time for the kind of quiet reflection that is a cherished aspect of the season.

From Kathy Hendricks, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Centennial, in her contribution to the Advent Blog Your Greatest Gift.

#### KINGDOM VALUES: LOVE, JOY, FAMILY

On Christmas 2008, my husband and I gave our four grandkids each a special day to spend with us and a choice of how and when to spend the day. The intent was to plan these special days sometime during the following year. On their special day, we took photos of them with my husband and me, enjoying each other in the chosen activity. The photos were later given to them on a CD. It was simply an effort to show them and us the value of spending intentional time with one another doing things that bring closeness and intimacy. One chose to visit the Denver Zoo, one chose a day at the Botanic Gardens, one chose a train ride in the mountains around Leadville, and the youngest chose to meet the Budweiser Clydesdales then have ice cream. All of the special days were planned and came to pass. During that year, 2009, my husband was diagnosed with stage 4 bladder cancer. By November that year, on All Souls Day, he passed from this life surrounded by his family, grandkids included. Suddenly our thoughtful gifts took on an almost cosmic significance. Each one of those kids has an unbreakable love connection with their Granddad that was greatly strengthened by spending that special time together. And, it's a joy for me to see them remember him so lovingly. Through that experience of consciously loving and caring for each other, we were all gifted by God's unfathomable grace. I remember every Christmas, along with the birth of the Christ child, the birth of an extraordinary bond with each of my grandchildren and their grandfather, a bond that can be seen only as an incredible gift from God. Wishing you all the love and blessings of this Advent season.

From Barbara Miller, St. Brigit's Episcopal Church, Frederick, in her contribution to the Advent Blog Your Greatest Gift.

This season, consider a gift to Episcopal Relief & Development: https://www.episcopalrelief.org. ■

**TRACY METHE** is the Faith Formation & Development Coordinator for the Episcopal Church in Colorado. If your parish is interested in a Head and Heart workshop, please email Tracy@EpiscopalColorado.org.

## **MISSIONAL LIVING**



he Episcopal Church is on the verge of something new and exciting. If I had to choose a liturgical season that best describes where mainline denominations are in the present momentdenominations including the Episcopal Church—it would be the season of Advent. We have prophets like John the Baptist crying out that things are changing, and we cannot rely on the old ways of being God's people. Like Mary we are pregnant with something that will change the world as we know it.

In this changing reality, we can no longer rely on our denominational affiliation to save us or mark us as special. John the Baptist tells the people of his time: "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). Our modern-day prophets might tell us, "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We are the Episcopal Church'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up Episcopalians."

What gives me hope is that the characters of Advent like Mary and John trust that God was up to something. It was their job to prepare for God's arrival. They did not know what was going to happen, but they knew it was something big, new, and life-changing. Instead of fearing the future, they trusted God completely. Personally, when I am unsure of what is coming next, I get scared and excited. At my worst, I turn the imminent unknown into an impending disaster. The unknown future scares most people. Mary and John are the exception. Most of the rest of humanity panics and prepares for the worst.

A shift is underway across the wider church, and Colorado is no exception. Since I started my position as Canon to the Ordinary in August, I have also been coordinating transition ministry. That is, congregations in the midst of transitioning between clergy leadership. I am realizing that even after we hire a Canon for Transition Ministry, I will still be involved in transition. All Christian leaders are in the ministry of transition these days, whether lay or ordained.

As we reimagine what church looks like in the coming years, we might be able to glean some wisdom from the season of Advent. A chorus of voices alerts us to the challenges we face and the many distractions drawing us away from God's call to embrace new things. There have always been and will be distractions. There will always be people who fear the unknown and prepare for disaster. But this season of transition is different. We are called to be intentional and more deliberate. Perhaps we are called to trust that God is up to something new and this is a good thing.

During Advent we hear stories of people listening to God, even as others people who would or could not hear. We hear words like repent, trust, turn, and listen. Our old ways of being will be calling us to return to what we know and love, what we find comfortable. Familiar. Some of our practices we will need for our future, while others we shall have to leave behind. To know the difference, we will have to discern what is God's voice and what is the voice of a church structure or practice that no longer works.

A certain reorientation is required in the season of Advent: reorienting our perception of what our priorities are and of what we value. Those involved in the missional church movement are often told that "God's church has a mission." "Hold on, you've got it backwards" they say: "God's mission has a church." There are profound differences between those two statements. The Church is the vehicle in which God carries out God's mission. It is God who is doing something new, and it is our call to figure out what new things God is doing and to join in on this mission. This is the mindset of Advent.

In my short time here in the Episcopal Church in Colorado, there is not a doubt in my mind that God is working in our congregations and communities. At the same time, God is calling us into a new season as a diocese. Bishop Kym, and others, have challenged us to embrace new realities that may cause us some discomfort and sadness for church structures that no longer work in today's reality.

John the Baptist ate locusts and honey, wore strange clothes, called out religious political leaders, and hung out in the desert. Mary was a

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peasant girl who was unwed and pregnant in a patriarchal society. We often try to tame or sanitize these characters at our own peril. Discomfort and following God often go together. Our job is never to create church structures that make us who attend churches feel comfortable. Rather, our call is intentionally to seek out discomfort in the places where God is always working, often in the margins of society.

Advent is about preparing for the incarnation, God becoming flesh. It is a season of embracing the reality that God is at work in our lives, congregations, cities, towns, and world. As we live into this season, perhaps God is calling us to take risks. Be on the lookout for God at work. Be bold and fearless. And trust that God is always doing something new. ■

THE REV. CANON ALEX DYER serves as the Canon to the Ordinary for the Episcopal Church in Colorado.



## Walking the Way of **Love Across Colorado**

BY THE REV. CANON GREG FORAKER





Left: Delegates gather at convention. Right: The Rev. Patricia Lyons. Photos courtesy the Rev. Brian Winter

**Episcopal congregations** around Colorado are experiencing the movement of the Spirit in their communities and responding in compelling ways. They are walking the Way of Love with Jesus and engaging the realities that surround them.

alking the way with Jesus is a transforming way of life. This is a journey of entering deeply into the way a life and action that Jesus revealed to the first disciples. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, explains it this way:

> In the first century Jesus of Nazareth inspired a movement—a community of people whose lives were centered on Jesus Christ and committed to living the way of God's unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, and redemptive love. Before they were called 'church' or 'Christian,' this Jesus Movement was simply called 'the way.'

Throughout the centuries, followers of Jesus have sought to walk this way faithfully, within the everchanging and challenging contexts and realities of their unique settings and cultures. Every age and setting have brought new challenges for the faithful, as well as new invitations to engage their faith in the realities of the world around them. So it is for us today as we faithfully seek to walk with Jesus today across the Episcopal Church in Colorado.

Episcopal congregations around Colorado are experiencing the movement of the Spirit in their communities and responding in compelling ways. They are walking the Way of Love with Jesus and engaging the realities that surround them. In early October, Episcopalians from across Colorado gathered in Denver for our Annual Convention. There the Rev. Patricia Lyons, evangelist and

teacher, invited those gathered in Denver to reflect on their faith and engage in "Walking the Way of Love," a set of practice or "Rule of Life." This Rule of Life would bring Jesus to the center of their lives and empower all to witness Jesus' way of love to the world. Leaders from across the Church in Colorado echoed her call as they testified to the powerful ways in which they are being called to walk with Jesus within the realities of their communities.

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Church of the Nativity in Grand Junction has a humane backyard, a place that has become a haven for the transforming work of the care of creation. The Rev. Nature Johnston, rector at Nativity, reflects on their unexpected journey as stewards of creation in walking the way with Jesus:

The really amazing thing about this is that nobody planned it. Nobody designed it. It just happened. It happened when we started doing one small thing out of the treasure of our Anglican heritage—the Blessing of the Animals. After that humble start, it was just a matter of saying "yes" to what followed. May we have a memorial service twice a year for people to mourn their lost pets? Yes. May we inter animal ashes out back and mark the graves with a pretty stone? Yes. May we offer monthly lectures featuring local experts on Earth and Environment? Yes. There are two other measures of transformation to detail. One is the erasing of our church walls. People who aren't members or who aren't Episcopalians and may or may not even be Christians flow in and out of our building. They do the work of caring for creation with us and sometimes despite of us. The other transformation has been within usthe people of Nativity. Without even knowing it, we had held a narrow conception of what God loves. God's love extends to more than humans. It extends to plants, animals, water, soil, sea, and sky. God loves all that God has made. Yes, even mosquitos. Because of this Caring for Creation ministry, our ability to love has expanded. God's love is so vast that not even one sparrow will fall to the ground apart from our Father. To live, as a parish, in that love is transformative! (Matthew 10:29)

#### RACIAL INEQUALITY

St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Lakewood has embarked on a transformative journey to walk with Jesus in the work of race conciliation and justice. Lav leader Ms. Michelle Auerbach Cole shared reflections on their journey to becoming more fully God's beloved community:

> We are aware of two things at St. Paul's one is that we are lucky, privileged, and predominantly white—though not all. The other is that we are here to live out the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ, which is our mission. Our work on social justice and racial reconciliation [call upon] all the resources and help we could get. Engagement with the world through our Baptismal covenant right now is a wild calling. We knew we needed to address the systemic and cultural oppression in the world, and we knew this was a delicate subject. We were able, though structured thought, conversation, inner work, and prayer, to begin to grapple with what we learned, how we are part of structural oppression, and how we benefit from it, what privilege is, and how to begin to use it for good. One of the problems that people with privilege come up against is that racism is everywhere, in all of us, and that we are shaped by it. That can be a hard truth to face. That's why when we are asked over and over during a Baptism, "Will you?" We answer "Yes, with God's help."

#### **LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION**

The Rev. Cynthia Espeseth, rector of All Saints in Loveland, shared her insights about the journey of their congregation walking the way of Jesus, seeking to become a more welcoming and inclusive community to our LGBTQIA+ siblings:

> Our dream, our hope, is to create a worshipping and learning church community that is welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all God's people to be exactly who God created them to be. We began by meeting weekly as a small group for a several months, learning, listening, telling our stories, and hearing stories from others about our relationships with the LGBTQIA+ community. Following the

Way of Love, we are boldly putting our faith to work to proclaim that all people belong to God. That all God's people are not just welcome but included in the full life of God's love, our love, and the work of the church. We root this work in our baptismal covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being.

#### **SUICIDE CRISIS**

Lay Leader Mary Alex Dill, Chapel of Our Saviour, shared her congregation's transforming walk with Jesus in response the crisis of suicide across Colorado:

> Chapel of Our Saviour is set smack in the middle of our school district, and we have youth who attend other school districts throughout Colorado Springs as well. Our congregation is all too aware when our local schools must respond to a death by suicide. We are working with parish youth ministry leaders to instruct and empower them to talk openly, honestly, and faithfully with our youth in the wake of reports of violence and suicide in our community and in the national news. As we strive to express and embody these messages to those in crisis, we actually are transformed into those beacons of hope. As we work to light the way for others, we light our own ways in the process. We begin to discover new places of hope in our own lives as well. And we begin to light the way for those around us who are also engaged in this work of expressing and embodying this care and love.

All four of these congregations across Colorado have begun walking the Way of Love with Jesus in powerful and transforming new ways, called into faith and action in the context of the unique realities that have emerged in their communities. In response to the needs of these and other congregations around the state, clergy and lay leaders from across the Episcopal Church in Colorado have mobilized to gather resources and identify training to support leaders and congregations as they join in these transformative ministries.

## REALITIES INTENSIVE TRAINING WEEKENDS

How is God calling you into the emerging realities of your community? Are these or other realities bubbling up in your context? What will you need to respond to God's call to walk the Way of Love with Iesus in these realties?

Register now for Realities Intensive Training Weekends at Cathedral Ridge: cathedralridge.org/ sacred-offerings/adult-events-conferences/

#### **Realities Intensive:**

#### **HONORING & PROTECTING CREATION**

#### **January 10-11, 2020**

This is a weekend for educating, empowering, and equipping creation care leaders and advocates to implement effective creation care ministry. The weekend at Cathedral Ridge is led by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Missioner for Creation Care for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts; and hosted by the Office of the Bishop. This is a great weekend for clergy and lay leaders from congregations to attend together.

Cost: \$150 per person + \$75 for optional Saturday night

Climate Change Online Resources: episcopalcolorado.org/honoring-and-protectingcreation/

#### **Realities Intensive:**

#### **BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY**

#### January 31 - February 1, 2020

This is a weekend for educating, empowering, and equipping race justice and healing leaders and advocates to guide congregations in becoming beloved community. The weekend at Cathedral Ridge is led by Catherine Meeks, PhD, Chair of the Beloved Community: Commission for Dismantling Racism for the Diocese of Atlanta; and hosted by the Office of the Bishop. This is a great weekend for clergy and lay leaders from congregations to attend together.

Cost: \$150 per person + \$75 for optional Saturday night

Racial Inequality Online Resources: episcopalcolorado.org/becoming-beloved-community/

#### **Realities Intensive:**

#### **BRINGING HOPE, PREVENTING SUICIDE**

#### February 28-29, 2020

This is a weekend for educating, empowering, and equipping suicide prevention leaders and advocates in the work of bringing hope and preventing suicide. The weekend at Cathedral Ridge is hosted by the Office of the Bishop and a guest retreat leader from the wider Episcopal Church. This is a great weekend for clergy and lay leaders from congregations to attend together.

Cost: \$150 per person + \$75 for optional Saturday night

Suicide Crisis Online Resources: episcopalcolorado.org/bringing-hope-preventing-suicide/

#### **Realities Intensive:**

#### **LGBTQIA+ WELCOMING & INCLUSION**

April 17-18, 2020

This is a weekend for educating, empowering, and equipping LGBTQIA+ leaders and advocates to provide radical welcome and fully include LGBTQIA+ people in the life of our congregations. The weekend at Cathedral Ridge is led by the Rev. Canon Susan Russell, Canon for Engagement Across Differences for the Diocese of Los Angeles; and hosted by the Office of the Bishop and a guest leader from the wider Episcopal Church. This is a great weekend for clergy and lay leaders from congregations to attend together.

Cost: \$150 per person + \$75 for optional Saturday night

LGBTQIA Diversity Online Resources: episcopalcolorado.org/welcoming-lgbtq-people/

Contact the Office of the Bishop for assistance with these and additional resources, now available online: episcopalcolorado.org/living-out-our-baptismal -covenant/

THE REV. CANON GREG FORAKER is the Missioner for Faith Formation for the Episcopal Church in Colorado.



# Walking the Camino to spain oct 20-nov 3, 2020

FOLLOWING THE FRENCH WAY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA



#### A Camino Pilgrimage for Episcopalians across Colorado

Have you dreamed of making a pilgrimage walking the Camino to Santiago, Spain? For 2020, we have created an inspiring Camino Pilgrimage open to all Episcopalians across Colorado. On this journey we will experience the life-changing power of walking the Camino, build relationships across the Church in Colorado, and deepen our bonds with the Reformed Episcopal Church in Spain.

We will encounter God in the awe-inspiring landscape of France and Spain and witness the power of the Spirit revealed in pilgrims we will meet along the Way.

Our Camino journey will begin in France in the faithinspiring village of Lourdes, before traveling north to join the French Way, walking the Camino to Santiago, Spain. This pilgrimage invites pilgrims to experience their faith like never before.

Contact the Reverend Canon Greg Foraker, Missioner for Faith Formation, at Greg@EpiscopalColorado.org, or learn more at EpiscopalColorado.org/CaminoPilgrimage.

## **CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS**



## THE MAGIC & **MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS PAGEANTS**

FOREWORD BY CANON KATHERINE CLARK AND MEG GALLEGOS STORY BY JENNIFER WILLIAMSON

For many churches, a children's Christmas pageant has been an annual tradition for generations. These pageants run the gamut from small Sunday school programs to Broadway-type productions with live camels and donkeys. At the heart of them all, however, is our faith in the Incarnation; that God took on human flesh and was born as a baby and came and dwelt among us.

We often think of the story around the birth of Christ as part of God's unfolding plan—something that had been waiting to happen for a long, long time. We may need to remember, though, that the shepherds were not expecting to see angels and archangels in the field. The animals were not expecting to share their space with human beings, let alone a baby! And Mary and Joseph certainly were not expecting to have a baby out in the cold. Much of this story surprised the people and animals that were present as it unfolded. So as much as you

We gave our baby Jesus a bright green pacifier, while my very own Joseph ran to the church kitchen to warm a bottle of pumped milk. We were a mess. But somewhere in the chaos I began to look up and watch people's reactions. They weren't horrified at the crying baby or disappointed at our inability to deliver our prepared lines at the right time. Instead, they were moved. They cried. They spontaneously sang "Silent Night," their voices hushed. The children watched in awe, and at the end of our shift I was exhausted but also humbled to realize the Holy Spirit was conveying the beauty of the Incarnation through my imperfections.

know this story, and watch it unfold in a pageant, try to imagine it happening for the first time. Enter the spontaneity of the moment—the moment God chose to enter our world and our lives in a new and surprising way.

*In this story of Jesus' humble origins—the lowly* birth in a stable, the young peasant mother, the inclusion of poor shepherds—there is the idea that we all are called to adore Christ just as we are and that we have a God who chooses to work through ordinary means with ordinary people. And God calls us to be in community to hear this Good News-that we have a God Emmanuel, or God With Us. So as the busyness of the Christmas season comes to a peak on Christmas Eve and you're wondering if a pageant is even worth the fuss and bother, remember that nothing captures the magic and mystery of that first Christmas better than a pageant, despite the bent halos, giggling shepherds, and wandering sheep. The magic moves in our hearts. The following account describes some of the many ways in which this magic happens.

**HONORARY CANON KATHERINE CLARK, Diocese of** Northern Indiana and Trinity Episcopal Church, Greeley, parishioner; and **MEG GALLEGOS**, Director of Family Ministries, Trinity Episcopal Church, Greeley.

couple of months after I had my first child, a Lutheran pastor friend was organizing a live nativity for her church. She asked if my husband and I, with our new baby, would portray the holy family. Featuring real camels, pottery, donkeys, and stops at various stations, the nativity would conclude in a darkened room with a spotlight over a wooden manger. I persuaded my husband to say yes, and when the day came, we donned our costumes and took our positions. There were a lot of people, which was lovely. But I'd had no time to nurse my newborn, who liked to eat constantly. It wasn't long before my husband and I became a nervous, sweaty mess. My blue scarf was repeatedly falling off my head, while my husband's Joseph staff kept dropping to the floor as we tried everything we could to quiet our wailing infant.

Authenticity gave way to practicality. We gave our baby Jesus a bright green pacifier, while my very own Joseph ran to the church kitchen to warm a bottle of pumped milk. We were a mess. But somewhere in the chaos I began to look up and watch people's reactions. They weren't horrified at the crying baby or disappointed at our inability to deliver our prepared lines at the right time. Instead, they were moved. They cried. They spontaneously sang "Silent Night," their voices hushed.

The children watched in awe, and at the end of our shift I was exhausted but also humbled to realize the Holy Spirit was conveying the beauty of the Incarnation through my imperfections.

Years later, I walked my children, then ages two and five, into Grace and St. Stephen's for our first Christmas Eve there. As we arrived at the downstairs classrooms, the kids were taken to the room matching their age group. Stars, angels, animals, holy family, narrators, wise men, or shepherds. The choice of roles to play was vast. Soon they were in costume, joining the other children in excited halo and star-wand battles. It was crowded, the children had Christmas Eve excitement, and many visitors were arriving and asking where to go. There had been a rehearsal a few days before—all but forgotten among the young children. I left my kids to the children's ministry director and her hordes of loving volunteers and sat in the pews. We have a large and beautiful worship space, which we fill with incense, traditional organ music, old English hymns, and precise liturgy. Every Sunday the verger makes sure the procession is on point. I wondered how the chaos downstairs would translate into that space.

At the proper time in the service, the middle school narrators began the familiar story, interspersed with hymns and the processing young characters.

There were tears from some of the stars, disheveled halos falling over eyes, and timid sheep. As we came to the end of the story, the chancel was full of teens and children all arranged to make the nativity scene. A new mother nervously placed her baby into the arms of a 13-year-old "Mary," and the scene was complete.

I was in a new state, a new city, and a new church with new people when I sat down in the pew. All I could think about was how much I missed my family several states away and the traditions I'd grown up with. But when I saw those enthusiastic, reluctant, and sincere faces doing their best to tell this ancient story, I felt completely at home. It was just as it should be. The role of storyteller should not be limited to the ordained or even the literate. This story about God in newborn flesh was told by young faces and innocent hearts. I left that evening exhausted from keeping two small children from burning down the church when they got their candles for the singing of "Silent Night." I was also humbled to realize the Holy Spirit was conveying the beauty of the Incarnation through the chaotic surprise of adoring and adorable children.

**JENNIFER WILLIAMSON** is the Youth Pastor of Grace & St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs.





Do you want to increase your impact in the community? Do you want to learn and bring to life the gifts and dreams of your community? If so, the Office of the Bishop is pleased to invite you into the work of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). We are offering an array of workshops to introduce and deepen understanding of the core concepts and practices of ABCD. These workshops, when possible, will include our full facilitation team of Anthony Suggs (Missioner for Advocacy and Social Justice), Paul Alexander (Diocesan Missioner for Development and Financial Stewardship), and Mike Green (published author on ABCD and community organizer with 30+ years of experience). Please contact us today at Advocacy@ EpiscopalColorado.org to set up one of the following workshops for your faith community. We recommend starting with an introductory workshop and then following up with a continuing workshop:

#### **INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOPS**

- "ABCD 101": Learn the basics of ABCD including asset mapping, learning conversations, and radical welcome. 2.5 hours or half-day.
- "ABCD in Practice": Spend time learning and practicing essential elements of ABCD. Participants will leave with a full understanding of assets, asset mapping, and learning conversations, and how to connect them all together in meaningful action and relationship. Half-day or full-day.

#### **CONTINUING WORKSHOPS**

- "Community Organizing with ABCD": Learn how to fully implement ABCD as a community organizing tool with in-depth practice and planning. 2.5 hours.
- "Asset Mapping": Take a deep look at the assets of your faith community, neighborhood, and broader community in this hands-on workshop. 2.5 hours.
- "Welcoming the Stranger": Learn who is on the "outside," both within your faith community and in your neighborhood, and identify practices to build radical welcome into your life as a congregation. 2.5 hours.

#### ACTIVATING ASSETS RETREAT

Early 2020. All who have attended one of the above workshops are invited to attend the Activating Assets Retreat at Cathedral Ridge. This retreat will bring together faith communities, jubilee ministries, and nonprofits to meet, connect, and activate their assets in new ways. We will work together to connect the dots so that we can live into fuller life together and create stronger communities of care and support. Register at https://tinyurl.com/ ActivatingAssets.

For more information, please contact Anthony Suggs at Advocacy@EpiscopalColorado.org.







# Give the gift of a SUMMER ADVENTURE

#### Wizards Camp

Rising 6th-12th Graders, June 14-20

#### Cathedral Camp

Rising 3rd-8th Graders, June 21-27

#### Cosmos Camp

Rising 6th-9th Graders, July 19-25

#### Journey Camp

Rising 9th-11th Graders, July 19-25

#### **Bishops Choice: Family Camp**

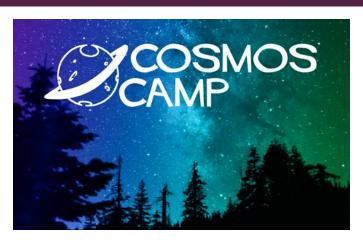
All Ages, September 4-6

#### Counselors in Training and Counselors

Age 15-17 and 18+ needed for Wizards, Cathedral, and Cosmos Camps

Registration and more information can be found at EpiscopalColorado.org.







### SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN COLORADO FOR OVER 35 YEARS

## 2019 END-OF-YEAR PI ANNING

#### **DON'T LET THE HOLIDAY RUSH KEEP YOU** FROM PLANNING AHEAD!

A checklist to assist you as you prepare for next next year:

- Review and update your will and any other end-of-life planning documents.
- Review and update as needed your beneficiary designations on life insurance and retirement accounts. Remember, your church can also be named a partial primary beneficiary in conjunction with your loved ones. For example: church 20%, children 80%.
- ► Check all insurance policies. Are there adjustments that need to be made? Any risks not covered? Policies no longer needed?
- Review and update investment goals and objectives (personal). It may be time to rebalance accounts.
- Review retirement plan savings for next year. Are you saving enough?
- Review your church's goals and objectives and re-balance investment accounts to target allocations as needed.
- Start a tax folder and gather paperwork.



#### **END-OF-YEAR STOCK GIFTS AND BOND/ EQUITY TRANSACTIONS**

- December is a busy time for broker/dealers; please transfer stock gifts as early as possible! Waiting until the last week of the year may not allow enough time if there are delays.
- Don't forget, buy and sells for your church's Bond and Equity accounts are due by December 31 at 10:00 am.

#### **HOLIDAY OFFICE SCHEDULE**

THE FOUNDATION OFFICES will be closed December 24 and 25; December 31 at noon; and January 1. Please take this into consideration as you get ready for your end-of-year planning.

Let us help you review your financial goals and needs. For more information, visit our website at COEF.org or contact Scott Asper at Scott@COEF.org.

The purpose of the Colorado Episcopal Foundation (COEF) is to strengthen capacity for mission and ministry by stewarding the financial resources of The Episcopal Church in Colorado.

Now in our 35th year of service, the Foundation supports the financial stability of Episcopal congregations and institutions so that vital ministries can be sustained.

Over the past 5 years, the Colorado Episcopal Foundation has handled over 400 stock gifts, totaling over \$5.1 million, to benefit congregations across Colorado. Stock gifts processed by the Foundation continue to grow year-over-year and offer our churches support in ministry, capital campaigns, and special giving.

1300 WASHINGTON STREET, DENVER, CO 80203 ● (P)303.534.6778 ● (F)303.534.6012 ● COEF.ORG

## **PERSPECTIVES**



**Above:** Cathedral Ridge Groundbreaking Ceremony on new and exciting projects that are now underway this winter. Learn more at CathedralRidge.org.

Right: The Rev. Canon Greg Foraker, Missioner for Faith Formation for the Episcopal Church in Colorado, and the Rev. Kim Seidman, Executive Director and Vicar of Cathedral Ridge share a moment of laughter at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Photos courtesy Fred Mast





Above: Cathedral Ridge hosted Episcopalians who are preparing spiritually and physically to walk the Camino de Santiago (Portuguese Route) in November. Photo courtesy Fred Mast Right: The Rev. Bonnie Spencer walks with the Rev. Peter Munson on Highway 50 near Austin, Nevada. The Rev. Peter Munson reached the milestone of 6 Million Steps for Kids on Wednesday, October 16. Photo courtesy the Rev. Bonnie Spencer

*Below:* The Rev. Gary Brower blesses animals at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church's annual pet blessing in Centennial. Photo courtesy Fred Mast





*Below:* The Rev. EJ Rivet blessing a boy's bird at St. Gabriel Episcopal Church's annual pet blessing. Photo courtesy Fred Mast





*Above:* The Rev. Chris Ditzenberger, Rector, and the Rev. EJ Rivet, Assisting Priest, of St. Gabriel Episcopal Church, Cherry Hills Village, at their annual pet blessing. Photo courtesy Fred Mast

*Below:* Allison Hickox, member of St. Stephen the Martyr, Monte Vista, is baptized in the Rio Grande River on October 6, 2019. Eleven parishioners were present to witness the baptism, conducted by The Rev. JK Melton, and assisted by Leila Hirtler. Photo courtesy Elizabeth Shank





1300 Washington Street Denver, Colorado 80203

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