

SPECIAL EDITION

OUTREACH AS AN OFFERING



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IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITOR:

In the spirit of giving, we recognize that outreach is more than just an act of charity—it is a sacred offering, a way we extend God's love and grace into the world. When we serve others, we are offering ourselves to God, reflecting His boundless compassion and mercy. Whether it's through feeding the hungry, comforting the lonely, or standing in solidarity with the marginalized, our outreach efforts are acts of worship that transform both those who give and those who receive. As the Apostle Paul reminds us: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1, NRSV). This edition of the *Colorado Episcopalian* invites us to explore how our outreach becomes an offering, embodying the love and generosity of Christ. Let us come together as a community, offering our time, talents, and resources to build a more just and loving world.

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FEEDING THE HEART OF LEADVILLE

"For many years now, our sanctuary hasn't been filled with just pews. It is also home to crates of vegetables, boxes of beans and rice, and shelves of canned goods."



YOUTH SERVING & GROWING IN ALASKA

"Throughout the week, I saw the land we occupied become even more beautiful, not just through the plants we added or the benches we built, but through the community that grew simply from thirty youth with one shared goal: to serve. Serving with love and openness was our aim for all those we encountered on our trip, in the hope that we could share God's love with each of them."

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COVER: Young Episcopalians in Service (YES) on a service trip to Alaska.
Photo courtesy Kimberley Hubbs



HOSPICE FOR HOMELESS

BY BR. JAMES PATRICK HALL, BSG

For many years, I've worked in ministries to assist people experiencing homelessness. I've watched them struggle with life challenges, mental and physical health issues, and premature aging. I've attended the yearly memorial of people who died on the streets of the Denver Metro area and mourned those who passed that year. I knew that they often died alone, afraid, and in unmanaged pain.

However, in 2017, that all changed when a friend asked me, "Where do homeless people die?" I told her what I knew at the time. They die where they live, on the streets, in doorways, behind bushes, and if lucky, with some pain management in a hospital. That question sparked a conversation that led to the creation of the Rocky Mountain Refuge, now known for its end-of-life care.

I reached out to another Episcopal friend, and we started a conversation about ways to provide a safe,

**They die where they live,
on the streets, in doorways,
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management in a hospital.**

dignified, and sustainable place for individuals experiencing homelessness to live during their last days. We gathered more like-minded individuals and formed a working group to study the issues surrounding this problem. We learned that as Denver's homeless population was aging, there was a growing number of individuals who were left to face their last days alone, in environments that lacked dignity, and without the full support of hospice care.



Our friends from the streets don't need the expense of a hospital; they need a home and a family, so that is what we strive to provide.

combine to result in an average life expectancy of 30 years less than that of the housed population.

Moving forward with this information, we officially established a Board of Directors in 2018 and named the organization Lazarus Gate. This was based on the Gospel story of Lazarus dying at the rich man's gate. We were recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization on April 15, 2019. However, as we have always been a non-sectarian social service organization, we decided to change our name in late 2021 to the more neutral Rocky Mountain Refuge for End-of-Life Care.

Many of the board members are Episcopalians and view this work as part of our Christian tradition to care for those who are the most vulnerable. As we started up, we reached out to our various parishes, and one of our first supporters was St. Andrew's, Denver. As a downtown church and being acutely aware of homelessness issues, their outreach committee found our vision compelling. In early 2022, the parish held a fundraising program for us of Baroque music by the Fittz-Nowell Duo. This was our first introduction to the broader Denver community. They have remained a steadfast supporter of ours ever since.

We have reached out all across the diocese. While we are located in the Denver Metro area, we've been invited to speak at or received support from churches as far north as All Saints in Loveland and St. John's in Boulder and as far south as Grace and St. Stephen's in Colorado Springs. Bishop Kym has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Refuge since she first heard about our project. This past year, we've received grants from the Front Range Region, the High Plains Region, and the Oakes Trust of the Episcopal Church in Colorado. My own parish, St. Gregory's in Littleton, continues to be a rock of support for this mission. They worked very hard to hold a huge garage sale in the heat of the summer and gave half the proceeds to the Refuge.

We came to understand that people experiencing homelessness often don't have adequate access to hospice care, which most of our citizens take for granted. Difficulty in caring for people experiencing homelessness is magnified by all the typical problems people face when they are unhoused. Preexisting addiction, families who won't or can't support a client, mental health issues, and inability to store and manage pain killers, all these conditions increase the difficulty for hospice agencies to manage care for those who have terminal illnesses.

Inpatient facilities are few and far between. Skilled nursing facilities are difficult to access for the unhoused, especially since the need is often sudden and there's no time to replace lost identification needed for required paperwork. All these issues

While we are deeply grateful for the support from the Episcopal Church, and that remains our largest single component, we also receive funding from other faith communities, such as Spirit of Christ Catholic Church and Montview Presbyterian, among others. We continue to reach out to other faith communities as well.

At our current level of operations, we rent two rooms from Denver Rescue Mission in an old motel on Smith Road and can offer beds for a maximum of three residents. Just like in your home, we keep our residents clean, fed, and safe. This enables them to receive hospice care from our partner agencies.

Our friends from the streets don't need the expense of a hospital; they need a home and a family, so that is what we strive to provide. We offer shelter for end-of-life care regardless of a person's race, color, religion (or creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (or ancestry), immigration status, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status.

Denver's homeless shelters (like all shelters nationwide) meet immediate, short-term needs and are not designed to assist hospice patients who may require individual, custodial, family-style care for weeks, with privacy and control of medications that are simply not possible in a general shelter.

We first opened in February of 2022 and will stay open as long as our funds allow us to pay our caregivers. In 2025, we look forward to completing our first full year of operation with no service interruptions. The work of Rocky Mountain Refuge extends beyond the borders of Colorado. As members of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, we continue to be advocates for terminally ill people experiencing homelessness and needing end-of-life shelter care throughout the nation. This important topic must be advocated for and engaged by local, state, and federal governments, faith communities, and nonprofit service providers nationwide. ■

BR. JAMES PATRICK HALL, BSG, is the Executive Director of Rocky Mountain Refuge for End-of-Life Care.



Resident with a volunteer. Photo courtesy Katie Warnke



SMALL SPACES, ABUNDANT GRACES

BY THE REV. WAYNE A. EWING

I had driven by the Florence Care Home numerous times, not giving it much thought—just a glance and moving on. It sits quietly on a treed corner of West 3rd Street on the northwest edge of town, on the route I follow as the “back way” into Cañon City from my home in rural Custer County. Years ago, I had stayed in the historic Red Rosebud Bed and Breakfast kitty-corner from the Home in an out-of-the-way, slightly visited, pleasant-to-the-eye, mature, and aging neighborhood.

A couple of years ago, my iPhone pinged, and I recognized in the caller ID one of the lay

leaders, Bonnie, of historic St. Andrew’s, Cripple Creek. I have occasionally supplied there over the years, particularly during the drivable months, foregoing driving on the winding county roads in Custer, Fremont, and Teller counties during dicey winter weather. Over time, I had developed an affection for the sturdy folks who maintain a vibrant faith community there, in the midst of a burgeoning casino environment in the once-booming mining town. After we greeted each other, Bonnie informed me that a former parishioner there had become a ward of the state, now resident at Florence Care Home. Might I, rather close to Florence, visit her there? Of course, I ventured...

And thence a journey opened into and with God’s presence that in my late 80s I had never foreseen, imagined, asked for...

The assisted living home is privately owned and operated as just that: a home. There are 10 residents for the 10 rooms, all on a single floor, a wing having been added to the stately mid-20th-century house for that purpose. A common living room, the pantry and kitchen, the laundry room, and the dining area are all on the ordinary indoor pathways that mobile residents take. During my visits, nine of the 10 residents have been dependent on walkers or wheelchairs for limited mobility. A well-kept garden/lawn with a

Whom we may have forgotten, God has never.

furnished gazebo is in the rear of the facility.

I contacted the staff and then, in turn, chatted with the former St. Andrew's congregant, where we arranged a date for our first visit. I suggested that she invite her fellow residents to join us later for an eucharistic service in the cozy living room, where there was also a small upright piano. She thought that was a fine idea.

And so it began...

The residents are among the forgotten and lost. Few have living friends or family members who visit. The staff, largely, is their new family. Not necessarily abandoned, the residents are simply isolated, tucked away in a safe, caring place. They die there. They are immediately replaced by another mobility-challenged elderly person in need of supervised 24/7 care. My monthly "visits" became so much more than anticipated and originally conceived. The "Service" became so much more than a liturgical, devotional event. A Presence grew in these gatherings, something larger than the small sum of us. I have done my best to stay out of the way of what has developed and continues to develop.

Perhaps an anecdote best illustrates the sense of what a simple outreach of Word and Sacrament unleashes in the world of the needy and suffering, the sense of the vehicle of ministering as a fully fueled and revved engine of the Holy. On that first gathering, the elderly

man whose room adjoins the living room made a statement of shutting his door and keeping it shut. In subsequent visits, the door stood open, then next he maneuvered his wheelchair to the threshold—we met and chatted afterward—then next, he joined the six to eight residents who had come together that day and communed. But he also abruptly turned his chair and faced away from us. Afterwards, I quietly approached him, knelt beside him, and softly asked if he was alright. He turned his tear-streaked face to me, and I weep as I write his searing response: "I turned away because I was crying too hard; I did not know I was so loved." The gentleman has since died, surely into a Presence that awaited his so-late-in-life awareness of God's embrace, always there.

My homilies are conversational, and sometimes a resident will offer a thought, a query—"Is God in my pain?"—that bends our devotion into the even steeper breeze of the mighty Spirit amongst us. We have music. The former St. Andrew's parishioner, in spite of her arthritis, plays "Jesus Loves Me" as our opening and closing hymn. We happen to sing it in both English and Navajo. One of the nonagenarians who participates monthly was a teacher in a mission school in Navajoland for forty years. She tells us the story at every gathering, and we listen anew every gathering. She leads in Navajo, and we follow. The visiting team has grown over time. My oldest son accompanies me, retired at 65 and an active

member of my home parish, St. Peter the Apostle, Pueblo. He is a good man, listens attentively to residents, every one of whom he engages, and regales them with his own stories. Sometimes we laugh, sometimes we cry. I am also accompanied by a younger cousin from Colorado Springs who is in training to be a hospice chaplain; she currently volunteers at Pikes Peak Hospice. When we three debrief after the visit and service, we note how grateful we are for what God has opened for us in being in the midst of the lonely, side-lined folks we've come to cherish. I report the numbers to St. Andrew's for their parish records: 8, 6, 10, 7...

This is tiny, an infinitesimally small and hidden gathering, a silent blip in the immensity of the Kingdom's sprawling struggles towards justice, healing, peace. And yet the largeness of the dynamic of God's Triune Presence is there, unbidden and welcomed. One of my spiritual mantras is, "Ya never know..." And here we have come to know: the Lord Jesus, the hovering kiss of grace bestowed by the Spirit, the healing touch of God's good grace. Whom we may have forgotten, God has never. ■

THE REV. DR. WAYNE A. EWING

is semi-retired at age 88, having most recently served as resident supply priest at St. Luke's, Westcliffe, and currently supplies at St. Andrew's, Cripple Creek, and Ascension, Pueblo.

Photo courtesy Larry Farr on Unsplash



Follow Me

BY THE REV. SAMUEL H. PILLSBURY, DEACON

When I tell people about my prison ministry, they are often curious, wanting to know what I do. Often, I sense disquiet as well. Spending time with people convicted of serious crimes sounds scary. But inside is where I meet Jesus—I *was in prison and you visited me* (Matthew 25:36).

I started my ministry to the incarcerated in juvenile hall years ago. Jesus called and I followed -- but reluctantly. I had many doubts and told myself I could turn back anytime I wanted. Yet the farther I walked, the more I was changed. In caring for others and receiving their care, I felt—we felt—God's love.

We all have a call that we can hear if we open the ears of our hearts. We are called to care for strangers and be cared for in return. We are called

to give and, in giving, to enter God's kingdom. I don't know what your call might be. I can only say how I follow Jesus. Or try to.

Once a week, I drive from Colorado Springs to Centennial Correctional Facility in Cañon City. At this maximum-security facility, I meet men housed in close custody, maximum close custody, and a program for men with mental health issues. I see new faces and guys I know well. We often speak through closed cell doors, a challenge, especially for me, whose hearing is not great. We talk in day rooms, through the fence at the rec yard, and in the chapel. Once a month, I lead communion services. I also engage corrections officers, clinicians, and teachers.

Every day inside has its surprises, its ups and downs. I make connections—and do not. I receive

warm greetings and heartfelt appreciation from some; from others, indifference, even hostility. But not much of the last; that is unusual. Physically, the work is safe, certainly safer than the drive to and from. Spiritually, it takes a toll to open my spirit to those in turmoil. But that's the whole point.

Becoming a parent was my best preparation for the work. Being a father of two means giving myself away to loved ones, and living with their joys and accomplishments, as well as their sorrows and frustrations. A loving family models God's community: individuals bound in relation and care who do not judge each other's worth because they are yours and you are theirs.

I think God cares most about community, about relationship. While the Bible contains plenty of stories about individuals, fundamentally, it's about God's people. The way we judge individuals—by talent or grit, morality or faith, power, fame, or money—does not matter so much to God. God doesn't read resumes. God cares most about our relationships with each other and with all of God's creation.

In prison, I meet men who have fallen out of the community, or who never had it. This will not surprise you. That's why they're there, you think, and it's often true. But on the outside, you find much the same. Due to a lack of community, many suffer depression and anxiety, a sense of not belonging. These are hallmarks of modern life, creating the sea of hurt that feeds the storms of emotional and physical violence that sweep our land. Violence against others and against the self. More the latter than the former, actually.

Lack of connection represents a call to the faithful. How can you help heal people and the community? Where can you sit patiently, listen openly, striving to understand another, trusting to God to open the way ahead?

For me, the greatest surprise and wonder of prison work is prayer. After talking with a man for a while, I will usually ask if I can pray for him. I ask regardless of their faith or lack thereof, and more often than not, they agree. I shape a prayer from the strands of our conversation, from their expressed hopes and fears, from their situation and their possibilities, calling for God's presence and help. Afterwards, not always but often, something feels

Due to a lack of community, many suffer depression and anxiety, a sense of not belonging. These are hallmarks of modern life, creating the sea of hurt that feeds the storms of emotional and physical violence that sweep our land.

different. Like a fresh morning breeze, or the sun breaking through clouds. The day has changed.

From my ministry, I know that God throws no one away. This is wonderful news, but it makes life on the outside harder. Virtually every field of endeavor in America, from commerce to education, from science and technology to popular entertainment and the arts, runs on competition. On sorting the better from the worse. On ranking. To this, Jesus says no. Just, no. Another message mostly ignored.

As part of my prayers, I often ask that God help a man see his own goodness, that he may see the goodness in others. This can be hard in a place and a nation that doubts both.

Our faith calls us to give our attention and concern so everyone can be heard, seen, and understood. This is how we belong to strangers and they to us, and how we all belong to God. ■

THE REV. SAMUEL H. PILLSBURY, DEACON, is a chaplain at the Centennial Correctional Facility in Cañon City.

FEEDING THE HEART OF LEADVILLE

BY LAUREL BIEDERMANN

When I walk into the sanctuary at St. George Episcopal Mission in Leadville on Wednesday at 9:00 am, the first thing I notice isn't the stained-glass windows, the creak of the old wooden floors, or even the sense of sacred history that lingers in the air. What always strikes me first is the noise—the shuffle of pallets, the laughter of the gathered community, and the surprise piano concert offered by someone I haven't yet met.

For many years now, our sanctuary hasn't been filled with just pews. It is also home to crates of vegetables, boxes of beans and rice, and shelves of canned goods. Our food pantry is open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. We also have a mobile food pantry that visits a mobile home community one evening a week. We also host four community meals a week. I'm not a "church" person. I became part of St. George because I wanted to be involved in our food work. Even though I don't pretend to know a lot about the Bible, I believe our sanctuary full of food might be exactly what Jesus had in mind when He said, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me."



A client of the St. George Episcopal Mission Community Meals & Pantry prepares a plate.
Photo courtesy Luz Escalera

Last year, we served nearly 12,000 meals and had more than 15,000 visits to our food pantries. In a town officially designated as a USDA food desert, with only one grocery store serving 8,000 residents, those aren't just numbers—they're our neighbors. I think of Greg, a senior who has told us that without our community meal, he would always eat alone. Instead, he tells stories to the other people at his table about bow hunting and occasionally brings a homemade pie to share. I think of Robert, a former band roadie who now lives in an RV on the north side of town, smiling as he bounces baby Samuel on his knee. I think of Ted, a large, bearded mountain man with tattoos on his neck who calls the older women "dear" as he carries their groceries out to their car.

In 2024 alone, we distributed half a million pounds of food. Twenty percent of our budget went to local farmers and producers, because serving our neighbors means supporting those who grow our food, too. Our Latinx community has grown. We've

made sure the food we offer isn't just filling, but familiar—meals that taste like home and honor culture. One woman told our staff, "With my hours cut, money is really tight. I'm only able to put food on the table right now because of St. George."

People sometimes ask how many "members" St. George has. That's hard to answer. We don't really measure by membership—we measure by community. The people who "shop" at our food pantry also help set up the food and clean up afterward. The people who tear down boxes and take the recycling eat the community meal. Whether you come for lunch, pick up groceries, volunteer in the kitchen, donate online, or attend a solstice celebration or Sunday service, you are part of this living, breathing web of connection and grace.

In 2024, St. George was voted the best place to worship in Lake County. On the Sunday after the Best of Lake County list was printed in the paper, all the regular worshipers asked each other if they had voted for St.

George. No one had. I suspect that the people who voted were part of our extended community who eat with us, "shop" at the food pantry, and volunteer. They have experienced what I experience, the holiness of feeding the hungry and gathering in community.

Every day, I see the love of God lived out here. Volunteers lift boxes of produce, neighbors share meals, strangers become friends. It looks like God is multiplying our humble offerings in ways we could never manage on our own. These are challenging times. Nonprofits are facing cuts, families are bracing for reductions in SNAP benefits, and rural communities like ours are wrestling with high costs and limited access. But I've come to believe that God's abundance is measured in our willingness to show up for one another. ■

LAUREL BIEDERMANN is the Finance & Communications Manager of the St. George Episcopal Mission Community Meals & Pantry.



Left: Volunteers and staff organize food to be picked up. Right: "Moby," the St. George Episcopal Mission Community Meals & Pantry bus. Photos courtesy Luz Escalera

Each crust rolled and onion chopped becomes an offering of time and love to God and one another.

The Pasty Patrol at St. Bart's, Estes Park. Photo courtesy Nancy Pike Hause



Love Wrapped in a Pie Crust

BY NANCY PIKE HAUSE

I love to cook. But, as my mother always told me, I'm a messy cook—flour on my sleeve, sauce dribbled on the stove top, sugar spilled on the counter. My mother, an excellent cook, didn't even wear an apron in the kitchen. No spot, smear, or stain would have dared come near her!

When I joined the pasty patrol at St. Bartholomew's in Estes Park, I knew I was in the right place. For over 30 years, St. Bart's volunteers have spent one day a week in August and September making pasties in the church kitchen. I was welcomed with open arms, flour mishaps were brushed off (literally), and I got to wear an apron that said, "Have you hugged an Episcopalian today?"

Pasties are little meat pies, chopped meat and vegetables in pastry. They are of humble Welsh origin, traditionally made for Welsh miners to take into the mines for a meal. However, they do have royal connections, having been mentioned in a letter from the royal baker to Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife.

The pasty tradition began at St. Bart's with a fundraising luncheon and has evolved into pasties being made, baked, and frozen in quantity. In 2025, the pasty patrol sold 500 pasties, 120 of which were gluten-free. Buyers place orders online and then pick up their bagged orders at the church's Autumn Market in October. Profits from the sale go to the church's philanthropies, which have included local groups like the Estes Valley Crisis Advocates and Estes Park Salud Family Health Center, as well as national organizations such as Episcopal Relief and Development and the Citizens' Project.

But the offering is more than money. Nothing makes you realize that you're in a church family more vividly than when your neighbor at the work table, who is chopping carrots, reaches over and gently wipes your eyes, which are streaming as you chop onions. Each crust rolled and onion chopped becomes an offering of time and love to God and one another.

Volunteers have changed over the years, although some, who bring their own rolling pins, are in their eighties. Couples often work together, and, supposedly, years ago, a romance started with hands covered with dough. Someone always brings treats, usually cookies, aware of who can eat nuts and who can't, and who likes chocolate and who doesn't.

When the pasties are served at luncheons, it brings locals together after the tourist season to break bread, share in each other's lives, and give thanks. Now townspeople can come to the Autumn Market, have a cup of coffee, get their pasties, and still share in each other's lives. When COVID shutdowns began, the church received many local calls from people worried that pasty-making would be cancelled. It wasn't.

"They will know we are Christians by our love." At St. Bart's, even love wrapped in a pie crust becomes an offering—nourishing bodies, building community, and extending God's grace far beyond the kitchen. ■

NANCY PIKE HAUSE is a member at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Estes Park.



BRIGIT'S VILLAGE: VISION TO MINISTRY

BY EILEEN B. BISGARD

St. Brigit Episcopal Church in Frederick began in 2009 as a mission planted by two local churches. The initial development of the mission included an extensive process of discernment and visioning. The process included an assessment of the surrounding community's needs, as well as the creation of a vision that utilized the 7.5 acres of available land for the church. The needs assessment revealed a pressing need for affordable housing, as well as a shortage of meeting spaces in our town.

Frederick had no apartments at all, and the entire Carbon Valley area (comprising three towns) had only 20 affordable units, which were located in a neighboring town and housed only senior women.

The vision that was developed for the land included the construction of affordable housing to meet the clear need of the Carbon Valley community. Ideally, it would also have space for community use. We needed to figure out how to create affordable housing.

We began in 2014 by creating a non-profit corporation, Brigit's Village, which was a diocesan

institution. With financial support from not only our own region but also another, we subdivided the property and hired an architect to design the building. We publicized our plan and obtained strong support from the community. We started an interest list of people who would like to live there. Then we set out to raise the money to actually build the building—and we hit a brick wall. We quickly realized that we couldn't obtain enough money without utilizing federal tax credits, so a board member took classes to learn what that meant and how to apply for them. The bottom line, we finally realized, was that those credits are only awarded to people who know what they are doing—in other words, have a track record of successfully building and managing affordable housing. We couldn't get the tax credits

as a church with only a basic understanding of the process and no experience.

We were introduced to BlueLine Development Inc. in 2019, and they offered to partner with us. They would bear the initial financial burden and take the lead in applying for federal funding. Once the tax credit period was completed (15 years), we could buy them out for minimal cost, compared to the value of the building (essentially, the amount of their tax impact). We agreed. Ultimately, for several reasons, BlueLine was unable to continue; however, they put us in touch with Jon and Carey Peterson, who stepped into the role that BlueLine had created and became our partners. BlueLine remained involved and eventually partnered with the Petersons. The Petersons and BlueLine applied to the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority for Low Income Housing Tax Credits. They also worked with us to get funding through the Colorado Division of Housing and Community Development Block Grants.

Our initial work on the project brought us partnerships with the town of Frederick and the Weld County Housing Authority. Frederick ultimately waived nearly half a million dollars' worth of fees, and the Housing Authority granted us 16 Section 8 vouchers for our 40-unit building. We also learned from our partners that by giving the Housing Authority a very small percent of ownership in the building, we would not have to pay property taxes. This will be crucial in the future as we strive to keep our rents at 30% of the renter's income

while maintaining the facility's financial stability.

Our original vision was for senior housing, but over time, that changed to an intergenerational model. We were able to make the building multi-purpose by creating a large room with an outside entrance for community use. By the spring of 2025, our "interest" list was over 200 people. The building features 22 one-bedroom, 15 two-bedroom, and 3 three-bedroom apartments, along with common areas that include a kitchen and a workout room. The final cost was approximately \$20.2 million.

An important lesson that we learned—almost too late—was that Brigit's Village needed to have its own 501(c)(3) status. We had been using the nonprofit status of the diocese, but that was not sufficient for the millions of dollars in grant money that we received and then loaned to the project as long-term, interest-free loans.

Federal Tax Credit funding was awarded to Brigit's Village in May of 2023, and construction on the building began in the spring of 2024. The grand opening of our beautiful 40-unit intergenerational affordable apartment building was held on August 26, 2025. It sits in the corner of the 7.5-acre lot, where the original vision placed it. It's next to the labyrinth and the one-acre giving garden, Brigit's Bounty, which is also a non-profit ministry of St. Brigit Church. The members of the church have put together welcome baskets with cleaning supplies and goodies for each resident family. They are looking forward to filling all the units and determining how best to support the residents' needs. Brigit's Village will be a center for ministry for the church for many years to come. ■

EILEEN B. BISGARD is a member at St. Brigit Episcopal Church in Frederick.



A kitchen in one of the Brigit's Village apartments. Photo courtesy Eileen B. Bisgard



Sacred Ground, Shared Grace:

SERVING AMONG THE DINÉ

BY THE REV. GARY DARRESS, DEACON

I recently had the profound honor of serving in Navajoland at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Farmington, New Mexico. Ministering alongside Provisional Bishop Barry Beisner; the Rev. Canon Cornelia Eaton, Canon to the Ordinary; the Rev. Inez Valarde, priest in the Episcopal Church in Navajoland; and Karla Schapansky, Lay Pastoral Leader from St. John the Baptist, Breckenridge, was both moving and humbling. As a deacon, I was blessed to walk alongside the Diné (Navajo) people and witness firsthand how their faith and cultural

heritage are beautifully interwoven into the liturgy of The Episcopal Church.

One of the most powerful aspects of my time there was experiencing worship through sacred Navajo prayers and songs. The service was enriched by the rhythms, language, and spirit of the land—reminding me of the Holy Spirit's presence across all cultures and expressions of faith. Standing at the altar with Bishop Beisner and Canon Eaton, I felt the unity of our diverse traditions merging

in worship, rooted in reverence, resilience, and profound communal grace. It was a sacred moment of listening, learning, and mutual service—one that will remain with me always.

I was especially touched by how the Diné community envisions Jesus as one of their own. In the community center hangs a painted image of Jesus—depicted as a Native American man. This Jesus was not exclusive or foreign but familiar, welcoming, and kind. To see Christ depicted in a way that reflects the identity and story of the people was profoundly moving. It spoke to the universal truth that Jesus comes to all people, in all places, and is not bound by one cultural expression.

Another moment that deeply resonated with me was hearing the community sing familiar hymns in their native language. Though I did not know the words, I recognized the melodies and could sing along. It was a beautiful expression of unity in diversity—a reminder that we worship the same God, even when our tongues differ.

During my visit, I also had the pleasure of meeting Mike Kaddel and his wife, who founded The Owen Project in memory of their son Owen, a young missionary who passed away on Christmas Eve 2006. Owen had a passion for sharing his faith and helping others, and his legacy lives on through this outreach ministry. The Owen Project, part of the mission program at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in the Diocese of West Texas, provides laptops and Starlink internet access to the Diné community in Farmington. This initiative plays a vital role in helping residents stay connected in a region where access to basic resources—such as electricity, internet, and Wi-Fi—is often limited or unavailable. In a world increasingly dependent on digital connections, this ministry stands in the gap, ensuring that the people of Navajoland are not left behind.

I am deeply thankful to Bishop Kym Lucas for allowing me to serve in Navajoland and for her commitment to walking alongside our sisters and brothers in this sacred place. It is through building genuine relationships and entering into the lives of others that we begin to dispel fear and misunderstanding. We begin to see each other as fellow children of God, united in our shared humanity and faith.

I strongly encourage others in our Church

Serving in Navajoland was not just a ministry experience—it was a journey of the heart.

to learn more about the Episcopal Church in Navajoland and to seek opportunities to walk in companionship with the Diné people. When we enter into relationships with others from different backgrounds, we embody the teachings of Christ—loving our neighbors, embracing our differences, and discovering that we are not so different after all. We may speak other languages or come from various traditions, but we all face similar struggles, hopes, and longings. In our faith communities, we can come together, support one another, and see the face of Jesus reflected in every person we meet.

Serving in Navajoland was not just a ministry experience—it was a journey of the heart. It revealed the beauty of a people whose faith is resilient, grounded in tradition, and alive with the Spirit of God. I carry their songs, stories, and strength with me, grateful for the sacred gift of walking with them, even for a little while. ■

THE REV. GARY DARRESS is a deacon at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs.

The Episcopal Church in Navajoland was created in 1977 as a unique area mission, bringing together portions of the dioceses of Arizona, Utah, and the Rio Grande to serve the Diné (Navajo) people. For decades, its bishops were appointed by the wider church, reflecting its missionary status. Over time, Navajoland developed strong local leadership and ministries rooted in Navajo culture and spirituality. In 2022, General Convention authorized the creation of a governing constitution, and in June 2025, Executive Council approved it—officially recognizing Navajoland as a missionary diocese, a historic affirmation of Indigenous self-determination and spiritual resilience.



I saw the land we occupied become even more beautiful, not just through the plants we added or the benches we built, but through the community that grew simply from thirty youth with one shared goal: to serve.

YOUTH SERVING & GROWING IN ALASKA

BY ALEXANDRA SIROKY

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.'

—Genesis 1:14

This summer, Young Episcopalians in Service (YES) offered youth from around Colorado the opportunity to travel to Alaska for a week-long service trip, spent living, working, and worshipping on the grounds of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Anchorage. Throughout the week I saw the land we occupied become even more beautiful, not just through the plants we added or the benches we built, but through the community that grew simply from thirty youth with one shared goal: to serve. Serving with love and openness was our aim for all those we encountered on our trip, in the hope that we could share God's love with each of them.

While the week may have been centered around the service, we had a few uniquely Alaskan experiences. One of the coolest things I learned was that Alaska has several minor earthquakes every day, and while we never felt one, the Chugach Mountains, God's awe-inspiring physical remnants of all those earthquakes, surrounded us on every side in Anchorage. While it may not seem as though these two things, earthquakes and mountains, go together, I believe the relationship between them is remarkable. I find the connection inspiring because, despite the unsteady ground, these mountains stand tall, remaining unmovable. I believe that these

mountains were a constant reminder throughout the week of how our faith and our service should, and hopefully does, look in the world today.

Mountains are formed from the shifting and movement of tectonic plates, causing collisions and buckling that push the plates upon one another, creating ridges in the Earth's crust. This chaos is a metaphor for the way our lives look in this day and age. Our world today is riddled with hatred, violence, unrest, and constant conflict. All these things make for a very unsteady world, a world that is constantly changing, a world in which my peers and I have grown up, a world around which our faith has been formed. We are the mountains of Alaska. We are formed on unsteady ground, yet we stand strong, grounded in our faith. Moreover, when we stand together, we are even more powerful. Perhaps that's why the concept of service is so impactful to my generation.

Youth ministry this summer marked a sacred time. Even though we spent a week in Alaska

without true nighttime, we had this innate desire to provide light, to leave the world better than it was given to us, a desire to shine upon others boundless opportunities to build up their relationship with the Lord, just as so many opportunities have been provided to us. While we may have spent the week providing St. Mary's with new trails and benches, the parishioners of their community were quick to respond with outreach of their own. First, the youth of St. Mary's were eager to assist in our physical labor. We built community, not only through service, but also through play, taking advantage of the evening sunlight to play games and laugh with one another. Second, a couple from the community who

work as dog mushers provided us with the opportunity to ride summer dog sleds and learn about the history of dog mushing. And of course, no one turned down the chance to cuddle sled-dog puppies.

This week helped stabilize the foundation of my faith, as I'm sure it did for many of my peers. We worshipped with nightly compline services and encouraged each other to complete a hike to the top of an Alaskan peak. Each night felt like the last supper, especially during meals, as we surrounded a long table spanning the length of our living space like we were with all God's disciples.

I am beyond thankful for this

week in the Last Frontier and the community and memories I made along the way. Experiences for young Episcopalians went beyond even this summer's Alaska mission trip and included summer camps at Cathedral Ridge and a pilgrimage at Duncan Park, which allowed opportunities for the Episcopal youth of Colorado to grow their faith and their friendships. Thank you so much for your constant support of us and the youth ministry of The Episcopal Church, helping to build firm foundations and raise the mountains of our faith towards the heavens. ■

ALEXANDRA SIROKY is a youth member of Christ's Episcopal Church in Castle Rock.



Youth dinner in Alaska. Photo courtesy Alexandra Siroky

PERSPECTIVES



Top Left: 27th Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Bishop Kym Lucas at the opening worship service for the 138th Annual Convention. Photo courtesy the Rev. Brian Winter

Top Right: Peace with Creation Retreat at Cathedral Ridge, September 26-28. Photo courtesy Tracy Methe

Left: Jonah William Phelan Heiser and Michael James Kornelsen are ordained at Christ Church, Denver. Photo courtesy William Weeks

Bottom Right: Bishop Kym Lucas speaks at the 2025 Clergy Gathering in Avon. Photo courtesy the Rev. Brian Winter





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