Together in the
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE RIO GRANDE

The Time Is Lent: Finding Your Way Back To God And To Your True Self

These are a few of the sacred signs of daily life in Christ. As you walk your Lenten journey into Eastertide and beyond, I encourage you to embrace the following rule of life:

**First:** Set aside time for quiet, deep reflection and meditation concerning your accountability to God and the surrounding community of God’s people by consciously living your baptismal vows.

Today we seem to be living in a very fragmented, mostly social and political time of growing isolation. Pundits attribute this cultural isolationism to irreconcilable differences caused by cultural, ethical, religious, sexual difference and ethnic diversity. I regard this interpretation as mundane and uninspired. Jesus talked about reconciliation of all differences, godly unity within the diversity of the body and unconditional love of neighbor.

Communion and Community are God’s gracious gifts to us. They are not a construct of our myopic and imperfect beliefs as reflected in the governance of Church and State. I believe Christians in America are fearless, courageous and faith-filled people trusting in God. We are NOT becoming more hasty and now afraid of new spiritual and political frontiers. American Christians fully believe in and are convinced of the grace, mercy and beneficial blessings of a more Perfect Union. Our very nation and our Episcopal Church polity are founded on this Constitutional spiritual principle.

St. Paul reminded the Romans to boldly live their lives believing that there are no breaches separating God’s people; that our unity is not uniformity but being one in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are all God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” (Romans 8: 17)

**Second:** Be open to study in community. I would encourage you and groups in your congregation to reflect on the study course prepared by the House of Bishop’s Theology Committee, on which I served these past three years. This spiritual journey of study, discussion and learning is titled: "Repairing the Breach: Discipleship and Mission in a Global Economy - Mediations for a Holy Lent.”

There is no doubt that there is a tremendous amount of suffering, injustice and inequality in the world today and the body of Christ must be willing to address and act in alleviating the sufferings of Christ’s people. While Lent acknowledges and reminds us that there are things done and left undone, the observance of a Holy Lent includes self-examination and repentance, and Eastertide embodies us to accept God’s Grace in the Resurrection of Christ.

**Third and finally:** Commit to searching for your true self. For those of you who find Father Richard Rohr’s writings helpful, like Henri Nouwen I believe he is also a renowned spiritual guide and counselor. I would encourage you to read or reread his book, Immortal Diamond. In this book Fr. Rohr talks about our journey into God and into ourselves. He explores the issues of the true self, made in the image and likeness of God, and the false self, distorted by our self-centered ego. Fr. Rohr says in chapter one: “I promise you that the discovery of your true self will feel like a thousand pounds have fallen from your back. You will no longer have to build, protect or promote any idealized self-image. Living in the true self is quite simply a much happier existence…”

Through the season of Lent we find our way back to God and to our true selves. I challenge you to take this journey through Lent and discover the Mercy and Grace of our loving God. I also challenge you to search for new realities and to find those places and times where transformation takes place. Prepare for the Great Feast of Easter Joy. At Easter we will celebrate the Grace of transformation and rise up to a new reality where no breaches can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessings and may God’s Mercy be always with you.

• Bishop Michael

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In the book Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life (HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), Henri J.M. Nouwen is described as “the world renowned spiritual guide and counselor, [who] understood the spiritual life as a journey of faith and transformation that is deepened by accountability, community and relationships.” Over the years reading Nouwen’s writings, I have always been drawn to his descriptive spiritual paradigms of seeking, searching, journeying and finding one’s true self in discovering the divine presence of God. Where would God be found or perceived if not within our fragile humanity, our history, our complex and hidden journeys and in the realities of the cosmos and the world around us? God in Christ Jesus of Nazareth came into our history, into our human life and into our death to enable us to experience knowledge of revelation in the transfiguring power of Easter. The Church’s observance of Lent focuses our lives to seek our way back to God and to our true selves.

Henri Nouwen once wrote, “Lent is a time of returning to God. It is a time to confess how we keep looking for joy, peace and satisfaction in the many people and things surrounding us without really finding what we desire. Only God can give us what we want. So we must be reconciled to God. … The Season of Lent helps us in a special way to cry out to God.”

I would add that Lent initiates the journey to find our way back to God and our true selves, which continues in Eastertide. As we continue our Lenten sojourn I urge you to deepen your journey of faith and transformation with intentionality by affirming your vows of accountability to God, by fully engaging the community of the faithful, and by seeking the joy of healthy loving relationships.

Bishop’s Recommendations for Reading

Bishop Vono has been delving into reading matter over the past seasons, and is making the following recommendations to the members of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande.

If you’d like to order any of these titles, you can contact Episcopal Bookseller Mrs. Rickie Sherrill at rickie@goodbooksnewmexico.com, or call her at 505-955-8550.

**Discernment by Henri Nouwen, Harper Collins Publishing Co, NY, 2013**

**Not in God’s Name - Confronting Religious Violence by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Schocken Books, NY, 2015**

**Being Christian - Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer by Rowan Williams, William & Edmonson Publishing Co, 2014**


**Taking the Quantum Leap - the new Physics for Non-Scientists by Fred Alan Wolf, Harper & Row, Publishers, NY, 1989**

“…For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 8: 38-39
The Fractal Nature of the Paschal Mystery

By The Rev. Jean Campbell ©2016
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The 1979 Book of Common Prayer made two significant changes that are often overlooked. They are the centrality of the Paschal Mystery and the understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ. The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is called the Paschal Mystery. It is the divine action of God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that created the Church, the Body of Christ. The Paschal Mystery permeates who we are as the Body of Christ. It is the DNA of who we are as Christians.

Some years ago I had the privilege of working with a group of priests in a cluster ministry of 5-6 parishes. One woman, Claire and her husband had two young boys and they were expecting their third child. I was deeplyshocked to be asked to be Godmother, then they said that one of my duties was to be present and assist them with the birth. At the time I was a member of the Order of St. Helena, a community in the Episcopal Church, and my only response was, “I don’t know what ‘birth’ baby means.” The birthing day arrived. I picked up the two older brothers and began to wait with them at the birthing center. At one point a man came through and asked, “Who’s Claire’s Godmother?” I replied, “the priest and the Godmother.” He said, “you’re a useless as I am.” I agreed.

After several hours of labor, frightened children and one terrified Godmother, Adam was born, resolving all the anxiety and pain of the labor. After much prayer and reposicing, and sharing some champagne and strawberries, the Mid-Wife came in and asked, “Have you ever seen the inside of a placenta?” She turned it inside out - and there was an image of a placenta. I came to see the connectedness of all life in the image of the veins of the placenta.

It was like looking into the mystery of God and in an instant, the pieces fell into place.

I came to see the mystery of God that moves us, nourishes us, enfolds us, and gives us life summed up in the paschal mystery. The mystery of dying and rising of Christ that lives out in our own lives.

It is like a fractal equation. These are simple equations which when repeated, randomly create patterns that are discernible to infinity. The shapes that fractals create are predictable, they are built into the equation. But randomness leads to the creation of the pattern at different levels of scale. Being neither a mathematician nor a scientist, I don’t pretend to understand fractals on a deep level. But if the same equation is unfolded with the same shape and form, maybe it is what we are baptized into.

In Baptism we share in the very life of Jesus Christ, as Paul says in Rom 6:3-4: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” It is a faithfulness to journey in and through this pattern of death and resurrection, individually, and as the Body of Christ, the Church.

You might compare it to broccoli. The shape and pattern of a head of broccoli are repeated in each stalk, in each branch, even to the smallest floret.

Lent a time to prepare for the Paschal feast; this wondrous Easter sacred of not only a beginning but also an end. It is a time to remember that we have come from the earth and our civilian duty is to live as God’s own. In and through the Paschal Mystery we remember what God has done in the past: Creation, the Passover of the people of Israel from slavery to freedom, from being no people to being people of God; the promise of hope in the voice of prophet, and in the culminating event of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We who believe have seen, we have heard, we have touched and been touched by the living God in the Spirit of the Risen Christ.

As Paul writes in Galatians 2:18-20: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

This paschal mystery is our DNA, which gives meaning and order to our lives.

We remember it over and over again in story, and we renew it every time we gather on Sunday and proclaim: “Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again.”

“Let us remember his death. We proclaim his resurrection. We give thanks to God.”

The Paschal Mystery is grounded in the event of Easter, but it continues to live in this wondrous Body of Christ, the Church. We see and touch it Sacramentally, and it is seen and touched in the lives of all who proclaim the Gospel of the Risen Christ. The journey of faithfulness is the pattern of dying and rising, which we do individually and as communities of faith.

One of the tasks of Lent is to ask ourselves: Where are we in the journey? Where do you experience the mystery of dying and rising in your life today? Are you the Cross today? Are you the Tomb? Are you on the mountain top of the Transfiguration? or on the Via Dolorosa, carrying your cross? Or are we desperately clinging to our Cross, unwilling to die? Or walking out of the tomb like Lazarus, waiting to be unfrozen and set free?

No matter where we are in the journey, Jesus has gone before us and we are not alone. It is why we make a yearly journey with him. Remembering the journey of the Paschal Mystery, the event of Jesus in the past, will shape our lives, will give meaning to the journey, and will give us the courage to live into the future hope.

Collect at Eucharist Easter Vigil

Almighty God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to death on the cross, an by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and for ever Amen. - BCP p. 295

The Renewing, Remaking and Transformation of the World

The other day during my morning walk I was thinking about the 18 years I spent in the city of Rome. I still have vivid memories of how remarkable that time was - especially the high holy days like Ash Wednesday and having a spiritual feeling a being significant Christian, that is a sign of a Christian.) Needless to say the experience was overwhelming and the memory of the experience was rich.

On the way home on the bus a little boy kept staring at me with curiosity.

The Paschal Mystery permeates who we are as the Body of Christ but also “whose” we are. Where the mark is made is significant, and I will tell you why.

So, I told you earlier that where the mark of the ashes is applied, it is a sign of our partners in the Rite of Ash Wednesday. It is a mark of our mortal nature then that we enter the observance of a Holy Lent, continuing to renew our Christian faith and repentance in these next 40 days to reconcile ourselves to God. As Henri Nouwen wrote: “Only God can give us what we want ... so we must be reconciled to God.” I believe, we are reconciled to ourselves as creatures born of God, loved by God, uniquely designed by God, and ultimately valued by God.

I encourage you to take the disciplines you heard in the teaching of the Gospel for Ash Wednesday evening. Do these disciplines not for self-justification nor to be noticed, but rather to acknowledge God and the wonderful gifts of God’s Grace, Love and Mercy.

The Paschal Mystery permeates who we are as the Body of Christ. It is the DNA of who we are as Christians. How is that possible? What makes that possible? Is it because the mark of ashes is a reminder of our mortality or because of the power of God to reconcile us to ourselves as creatures born of God, loved by God, uniquely designed by God, and ultimately valued by God.

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More than 50 clergy gathered at the Bosque Center for the Annual Clergy Retreat on the Friday following Ash Wednesday. The Quiet Day featured talks on the Paschal Mystery by the Rev. Jean Campbell and provided a Lenten time away.

Bishop Vono welcomes the clergy to their retreat

Clergy line up for GoodBooks with Rickie Sherrill

Speaker Jean Campbell discusses content with Beth Noland

The clergy dined quietly on a delicious lunch

Clergy make use of the walkway benches
Clergy in the South Retreat to St. Alban’s

By the Rev. Dr. Jeanne Lutz

On Friday, February 12th, 19 clergy from the Southwest and Southeast deaneries came together at St. Alban’s, El Paso, for the annual Lenten clergy retreat. The Rt. Reverend Jerry Lamb (ret), Assisting Bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande, preached and presided at the opening Eucharist in the Lady Chapel, assisted by Deacon Susan Hutchins.

Three clergy gave talks on “What informs my spirituality and gives me joy in my worship life.” The Rev. Daniel Cave of St. Luke’s, La Union, talked about Rite I; Father J.J. Bernal of St. Christopher’s, El Paso, reminisced about his training in the Roman Catholic Church, and the disciplines instilled in him as a lay person and a seminarian. Deacon Hutchins of Borderland Ministries told of her finding her joy in service to the poor and gave examples.

The talks were interspersed with times for private prayer and meditation, and many clergy took advantage of the lovely weather to sit in the garden. Noon was devoted to Stations of the Cross in the church.

Lunch was a meatless feast featuring various kinds of enchiladas, prepared by professional chef, Rosario (Mrs. J.J.) Bernal. The day ended at 3:00 with prayer and a benediction from Bishop Lamb.
The Rt. Rev. Christine Harman

Woman Bishop takes seat in House of Lords

Did you know that there are Jr. Daughters of the King? Any girl ages 7-21 can become a Jr. Daughter. Jr. Daughters do not have to be Episcopalians, nor even baptized. This is a wonderful evangelistic outreach to the girls in your parish and community. The Jr. chapter of St. Brigid in Albuquerque welcomes new members. They gather monthly for prayer, study, and fun. Contact Kathy Yinson (katinson@comcast.net) or Martha Ernest for more information.

Parishes that currently have a Daughters of the King chapter can form a Jr. Chapter under the guidance of any Daughters. The Order of the Daughters of the King is an international sisterhood of women and girls who take life-long vows of prayer and service founded in 1885 as an extension of a women's Bible Study group. Jr. Daughters take the same vows and follow them in their own way through learning to pray, helping to serve, and sharing their joy with other girls.

In 2016 there are opportunities to meet Daughters of the King and learn more about what an Order is, who the Daughters are, and why they are vital components of parish life. Make plans to attend an Ice Cream Social on May 14 at St. James’, Taos. Interested women and girls are also invited to Tea on August 5 with Daughters from around the diocese, at Good Shepherd Church in Silver City.

If you have questions about Daughters of the King, contact diocesan president Cindy Davis (cindydevan@comcast.com), or your parish priest. You can also visit www.dkgDaughters.blogspot.com, to learn about Daughters in the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

[Anglican Communion News Service] Bishop of Newcastle Christine Hardman on Jan. 26 became the second female bishop in the Church of England to take her seat in the U.K.'s House of Lords – the upper house of the U.K. Parliament. The ceremony took place the day after her neighboring bishop secured a Lords' victory over the government on child poverty reporting.

Bishops have played a part in Britain's legislature since before the era of democracy; and today some 26 bishops have seats in the upper chamber. The archbishops of Canterbury and York and the bishops of London, Durham and Winchester are automatically members of the House of Lords. The remaining 21 places are taken by the most senior diocesan bishop by length of service. However, under transitional arrangements, for the next nine years the most senior female diocesan bishop will jump the queue and leapfrog their male counterparts.

At the start of business in the House of Lords this afternoon, Hardman was led into the Lords' Chamber by Bishop of Southwark Christopher Chessun and was followed by Archbishop of York John Sentamu. Immediately prior to becoming a bishop, Hardman served the Diocese of Southwark as an archdeacon. Her new diocese, Newcastle, is in the Church of England’s Province of York.

Her Wife of Summons – the Queen’s instruction to sit as a bishop – was presented to a House of Lords official who read it out loud. Hardman swore the parliamentary Oath of Allegiance. She was then taken to her place on the bishops’ benches, shaking the hands of the Lords’ Speaker and the Leader of the House of Lords on the way.

"Joining the House of Lords is a great privilege and responsibility," Hardman said before the ceremony. "God cares about the world as a whole – not just about the Church. I look forward to engaging and working with other bishops and with key partners for all that leads to the flourishing of communities. I will make the most of this opportunity to speak on behalf of those whose voices are not always heard, and particularly alongside the Bishop of Durham to speak up for the North East."

[By Ms. Christine H. Johnson]

United Thank Offering, My Thoughts

United Thank Offering (UTO) is an integral part of my life as a daily reminder of Thanksgiving for what God has given to ALL Persons, not just me.

In Baltimore, Maryland, at Holy Trinity where I was confirmed, during Confirmation Classes for the adults, our Rector Fr. Robert Powell, emphasized the missionary duty to our local community, but also to worldwide care where the Episcopal Church gives to Victims of Disaster, Hunger in the Third World countries, especially Africa where our missionaries are, clean water, and Grants for Special Projects targeting children and the homeless.

Back in the 60s and 70s many Episcopal churches "of color" were Beacons in their community, because of their commitments to show sincere concerns for those in need of basics—Food Shelter and Clothing. Giving daily pocket change into the Blue Box mounts up, and is visible, concrete and a consistent way of saying to God, who gives you and me life and the basics, "Thanks for allowing us to share!"

May you consider using a Blue Box for your pocket change and saying "Thanks" during this Lenten Season.

"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased". Hebrews 13:16 (NIV)
Together in the
EPISTOLAR CATECHISM OF THE RIO GRANDE

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Bishop’s Ridge thawing for Summer preparations
By Ms. Katie Teleyhony
Director, Bishop’s Ridge: Stoney Camp and Recreation Center

If you are a kid, and you live in a small town like Alamogordo, a trip to Walmart is a big deal. It’s where the toys are. I’m 11, and I still ask my mother if I can check out the toy department. When you walk down the aisles of toys, you hear grown-up shoppers say things like, “I want to be a kid again,” and you look at all the cool toys they have now. We didn’t have anything like this when I was a kid.”

Ask any grown up over 40 and they will tell you they would love to go back and visit a day in their childhood. At my age now, I have lots of grown-ups telling me that it’s a shame kids grow up too fast today. I am a tricky age, balancing the requirement to behave more in a “more mature manner” and being a kid. It is at this age we are expected to give up kid toys. I am told by society that the cool thing to do is to get a phone with internet capability and join the virtual world.

I probably the only kid in a youth group I attend, that don’t come to the meeting, at myself down and give my eyes and thumbs to a smart phone. I don’t go there to watch people surf the internet on their phones, I go there to see real live people and have actual personal conversations with them and build real friendships, not collect facebook followers.

It seems as though the transition from kid to teenager is from toys to smart phones. We go from playing with stories in our heads with toys we touch, to living out fantasies on our phones in a world we can’t touch. And then we see in the news, in the year 2016, that met some college kids in North Carolina on the internet on a dating website, that her parents had no idea she was involved in, we see the worst case result of such choices – a young girl wanting to be grown up too fast gets murdered. This is the age we are encouraged to change our priorities in life from the need to play with children’s toys to the need for “more mature choices.”

Just what is mature behavior at 13? It doesn’t need to be a snap judgment. Mature behavior is all about what the television is talking to a situation with what the television warns call “adult subject matter”, or “mature content”. If you have not seen the schedule, please check it out and head on over to www.bishopsridge, weebly.com for online registration. Please note that the medical forms have changed this year and require a physical by your child’s doctor.

The M’Issa Rule Fund will be providing scholarships again this summer. Scholarship application forms should be returned to the Fund, not to the camp. Forms should be received from the hand of the child or his/her family member. (All Ages; parents required)

Session 3: June 13-18
Harry Potter Camp: $200/camper (Grades 5-8; Ages 10-14)
A fantasy camp that explores the Christian themes found in J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter, through Skit creation and Bible Study and growth, this is a family camp that reinforces themes learned in our youth classes and growing in their faith together. This camp provides a great way for intermediate youth to connect with the camp and the church to come back.

Session 6: July 10-16
Summer Camp: $250/camper (Grades 3-5; Ages 8-11)
A traditional summer camp program that includes Bible, worship, worship, Worship and Bible Study as well as spend the week reenacting one of C.S. Lewis’ iconic books through costumed skits.

Session 9: June 26-July 2
Session 4: June 19-25
Session 7: July 10-16
Session 8: July 19-25

Camp Stoney 2016 Summer Schedule
The camp fee is $200 per camper.

Camp Stoney is a 501-c3 non-profit organization. All sessions will include traditional camp activities as well as various activities related to the theme for that week.

Session 1: June 6-10
College Camp: $200/camper (Grades 10-12; Ages 15-18)
A traditional week of camp including hiking, archery, worship, Worship and Bible Study. Open to all college students or those of college age.

Session 2: June 9-12
Family Camp: $250/two of four, $25 for each additional family member. (Grades K-8; Ages 6-14)
Family Camp: provides a great way for younger children to get to know Stoney Camp and the church to come back.

Session 3: June 12-18
Harry Potter Camp: $200/camper (Grades 5-8; Ages 10-14)
A fantasy camp that explores the Christian themes found in J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter, through Skit creation and Bible Study and growth, this is a family camp that reinforces themes learned in our youth classes and growing in their faith together. This camp provides a great way for intermediate youth to connect with the camp and the church to come back.

Session 4: June 19-25
Session 5: June 26-July 2
Session 6: July 3-9
Session 7: July 10-16
Session 8: July 19-25

If you have a question or concerns please direct them my way, I welcome all feedback and will answer all questions to the best of my ability. The office phone is (505) 820-1166.
More than 120 clergy, wardens, treasurers and vestry and Bishop’s committee members gathered at the Bosque Center for a workshop in governance and proper financial management during the first weekend in February. Starting with supper on Friday evening, when participants became acquainted over refreshments in the Gathering Space, the workshop kicked off Saturday morning with a session from the Diocesan Chancellor in the North, Ms. Karen Aubrey, Esq., covering the legal obligations priests and members of vestries and Bishop’s committees assume when elected or appointed to leadership positions.

Further sessions covered Fair Share and audit requirements, and Diocesan Business Manager Lisa Katz-Ricker explained the new fillable on-line audit forms that will soon be available for parishes and missions that are required to complete their 2015 audit by committee. Following lunch, two breakout sessions took place Saturday afternoon in which...
Assistant Diocesan Treasurer Vic Rizzo led a seminar for treasurers and Diocesan Treasurer Guy Gronquist spoke on the responsibilities of vestries and Bishop's committees: spiritual, legal, financial, managerial, administrative and fiduciary.

The workshop, which is offered annually, is highly recommended both for individuals new to leadership positions and as a refresher course for those with experience, allowing effective networking and sharing of solutions to common challenges. The 2016 workshop experienced the highest turnout ever. According to a number of participants who completed the anonymous feedback survey the day was described as: “well organized;” “clear, succinct, helpful;” “a lot of good ideas to take back to church;” “timely;” “clarity in each presentation;” “useful content.” Look for the 2017 date later this year!
For the eighth year in a row, San Gabriel’s “wor- 
shipped” on Christmas Day by preparing, serving, and 
sharing a feast with the 88 men who are transitioning 
out of homelessness at Albuquerque Opportunity Cen-
ter’s Rebuilding Home Shelter. 

More than 30 parishioners participated at the site and 
a dozen others provided ham, turkey, enchiladas, pecan 
pie and countless other homemade delicacies. After 
all were fed, the refrigerators at AOC were filled to the 
brim with enough leftovers for at least three more days 
of feasting. 

One parishioner commented, “We had a big gathering 
with relatives yesterday and it was wonderful. Today 
we chose to be here, with these men and with our 
church family. You know, today feels more like what 
Christmas is supposed to be.”

Bishop Michael Vono was welcomed with open arms at Church of the Holy Cross, Episcopal, in Edgewood on 
the First Sunday of Lent. The day combined the celebration of his visit, Valentine’s Day, and the Confirmation 
and Reception of five parishioners. 

Confirmed during the 10 a.m. service was Caroline Everett and Jonathan Sneglo. The Bishop received into 
the Communion of the Episcopal Church Kim Serrano and Eric and Lynn Tros. 

Following the service the Women of the Church feted the Bishop with a brunch and celebration of his ministry.

St. Andrew’s Launches Food Pantry for Pets

By Donna Addison
Director of Ministries for Children, Youth & Families
St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Roswell, NM

St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church announces the launch of a new community ministry, “Four Paws Pet Pantry,” to assist individuals and families with care for pets during tough economic times and emergencies. Various organizations and ministries in Roswell, including St. Andrew’s own “Andy’s Community Breakfast,” are working to mitigate food insecurities, but at present, this will be the first effort to offer food assistance specifically for family pets.

“We know how important pets are to the health and well-being of individuals and families because they provide unconditional acceptance, companionship, and comfort. For Roswell residents experiencing homelessness, pets may also provide a sense of security,” said the Rev. Dale Plummer, Rector at St. Andrew’s. “When money is tight or emergencies stress finances, pets suffer along with their human companions.

“We want to do what we do so that pet stewards can avoid having to surrender or abandon pets simply because the resources aren’t there to feed them,” Father Dale continued. “By providing a limited supply of dog or cat food to bridge uncertain times, we hope to keep pets where they are loved and cared for, in their forever homes.

“Once a month on the third Wednesday of the month, we will have a food pantry for pets,” said Sally Wistrand, Pet Pantry coordinator. “People who can’t afford to get food for their cats and dogs will receive a limited amount of food, hopefully enough to carry them over the rough spot.”

The food bank will be set up from 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month beginning on February 17 in the church’s main office located at 505 N. Pennsylvania Avenue, across 5th Street from the Post Office.

“We hope people who really are in need will come here rather than surrender their pets,” Ms. Wistrand continued. “The pantry will be open one evening each month from 4 until 7 or until available supplies are gone, whichever comes first.”

The community is encouraged to donate food so that the pantry will be well-stocked prior to its launch. “We are encouraging individuals with the means and local businesses who sell pet food to donate what they can. We are so grateful for the support we are already seeing as we launch this ministry. Pulling together as a community, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of our neighbors,” she said.

Anyone wanting to donate money to purchase food and supplies, including any Episcopalians in the Diocese of the Rio Grande, please make checks payable to St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church and put pet pantry in the notes field. Cat and dog food contributions will be accepted in the church office between 9 a.m. and noon or 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Wednesday or at other times by appointment. A food donation box will also be available on Sunday mornings in the foyer of the church. Volunteers are welcome and needed; please contact Sally Wistrand through the church office, 575-622-1358, for more information.

San Gabriel Serves 88 for Christmas

For the eighth year in a row, San Gabriel’s “wor-
shipped” on Christmas Day by preparing, serving, and 
sharing a feast with the 88 men who are transitioning 
out of homelessness at Albuquerque Opportunity Cen-
ter’s Rebuilding Home Shelter. 

Many parishioners from St. Andrew’s were born or 
grew up in the South. Many parishioners from St. 
Andrew’s were born or grew up against the fence separating the parking lot and the 
courtyard of the church. But the lemonade part was yet 
unknown to the Rector’s discretionary fund; the other half will 
be shared as part of the meal.

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Rector celebrated at St. Francis

Bishop Vono lines up with participants at St. Francis Episcopal Church, Rio Rancho, January 30 for the Celebration of New Ministry for the Rector the Rev. Alexander Lenzo. From left to right are: Alex's parents Gary and Gay Lenzo, Alex's wife Becca, Fr. Lenzo, Bishop Vono, the Rev. Deacon Patty Soukup, and Ms. Christine Johnson of the Standing Committee.

Chile Spices up the Annual Meeting

Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Edgewood spiced up the attendance at the 2016 Annual Meeting with its Ninth Annual Chile Cookoff on January 31, the Sunday between the Playoffs and the Superbowl. Though all the chili dishes entered were delicious, voted favorites by the congregation gathered were Carol Thompson and Dennis Kirby. Runners-up by one vote were Susie Fordyce and Mike Kelly. The winners received hand-blown glass chiles from the rector, the Rev. Canon Raymond Raney.

Shrove Tuesday at Denny’s

Parishioners from Desert Springs Lutheran, 1685 Caballo Road, Truth or Consequences, gathered for Shrove Tuesday pancakes at the local Denny’s under the guidance of their priest Fr. Peter Cacopardo. It certainly saved on the cleanup, the congregants agreed.
For What Are You Running?

By the Rev. Steve Caldwell

I'm writing this on the day of the Iowa Caucus (as far as I can tell a completely incomprehensible component of our presidential election system), whereby the process of electing the next president of the United States of America begins...I think. Whether or not there is substance to the “Corn Husker” Caucus, I leave to your own conclusion. As far as I can tell, it leads only to more speculation and no indication as to how it will go with whom during the political party conventions this summer and ultimately in the November presidential election. But what do I know? In any case, I digress.

All of us might pause to reflect on what the theologians call “election,” a theological term attempting to describe eternal relationship with the Lord our God.

SMMA Parishioner Artists Create Stations of the Cross

By Mr. Lawrence Baker

St. Michael and All Angels

This year St. Michael and All Angels took a unique and artistic approach to the traditional “Stations of the Cross.” Realizing the great deal of talent dwelling within the congregation, a project was planned in which volunteers would pick a station and portray it in their own special way. The offerings came from all mediums: oil painting, photography and even fabric sculpture, each one as individually amazing and heartfelt as the next. Once gathered the works of art tell this most revered story in a different way. It is helpful to me, as a Christian, to see the story of Lent. Everyone experiences Lent in a different way only the hearts of believers can. The paintings and the love and support received from the Bishop and the Diocese, particularly in the recent past, and, hopefully, in the days ahead. We are a small, struggling congregation, and the Diocese’s assistance is absolutely crucial as we continue to progress in the days ahead.

The painting is unique, in that it is a natural sand painting, made of local sand which has been purified and refined. No dyes or other additives are used in the process. It depicts Mr. Taylor, the inactive volcano that towers over Cibolo Country. The artist, John Boomer, who is also a sculptor, has a reputation for excellence, with works appearing in galleries, museums and private collections throughout the world.

All Saints’ Episcopal Church was established in the mid-1950’s, during the days of the Uranium boom. It has provided Northwestern New Mexicans love and spiritual support, without interruption, for over fifty years. The relationship with the Lord our God.

But “election” does have something to do with our own relation to God Almighty. An important subject for reflection during the remainder of Lent and at all seasons is, “Am I this day, by my thoughts, affections and actions, electing (choosing) to be what I am: a child of the living God, having been chosen and redeemed to dwell forever as a faithful member in the household of my Father?” This, of course, has nothing to do with God electing us, but our electing God. How do you vote? Have a spiritually productive Lenten-tide, one and all! May it be a memorable lap in your winning the race for complete, fulfilled, eternal friendship with the Lord our God.

Church is located at 600 State Highway 605 in Milan. Its website is allsaintsgrants.com

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All Saints, Milan/Grants, donates painting to Diocese

A small delegation of members from the All Saints’ Episcopal Church located in Grants/Milan, New Mexico, presented a painting by local artist, John Boomer, to the Rt. Rev. Michael Vono, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande at Diocesan headquarters earlier today. The painting was gratefully accepted by the Bishop and two of his associates, The Rev. Cn. Daniel Gutierrez and The Rev. Cn. Raymond Rainey.

According to All Saints’ Bishop’s Warden, Jim Fisk, “the painting is a token of love from all Saints’ in appreciation for the love and support received from the Bishop and the Diocese, particularly in the recent past, and, hopefully, in the days ahead. We are a small, struggling congregation, and the Diocese’s assistance is absolutely crucial as we continue to progress in the days ahead.”

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Northeast Deanery

Holy Faith • Donna Lukacs • donna@holyfaithchurch.org

Looking (way) ahead — It’s a month out of break mark your calendars for Saturday, June 4. That’s the date that has been set for Fr. Albert Haase’s visit to Holy Faith, Ordained a Franciscan priest in 1983, Albert Haase, OFM, (www.AlbertOFM.org) is a teacher of spiritual formation and spiritual direction. For five years, he was the co-host of the weekend show, “Spirit and Life,” heard in 17 states on the Relevant Radio Network. A former missionary to mainland China for over 11 years, he is the author not only of the audio CD series, THE LORD’S PRAYER: A Summary of the Entire Gospel, but also of nine best-selling books on spirituality. He is also the presenter on four best-selling DVDs: CATCHING FIRE, BECOMING FLAME: A Guide for Spiritual Transformation, KEEPING THE FIRE ALIVE: Navigating Challenges in the Spiritual Life, COME, FOLLOW ME: Six Responses to the Call of Jesus, and SAYING YES: Discovering and Responding to God’s Will in Your Life. Fr. Albert will give a retreat from 9 am to 3 pm. The retreat, generously sponsored by the Daughters of the King, will be free.

Holy Family • Camille Donoghue • camille@donoghuess.net

Holy Family continues to host monthly events for families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder. Our First Friday event in February is a Fun Night; in March it will be a children’s worship service. On the third Friday of every month we host the Santa Fe chapter of the New Mexico Autism Society parent support group meetings.

St. Bede’s • Catherine Wilmott • cath.wilmott6@att.net

St. Bede’s annual house building project in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, will take place from Wednesday, March 30 to Saturday, April 2. It will be the 2nd house that St. Bede’s has built since 2000. Anyone age 12 or over is welcome to join the team. St. Bede’s is affiliated with Missions Ministries, based in Colorado. Please take a look at their website www.missionsministries.org. If you are interested in building or would like more information, please contact Lydia Pendley at lydiapendley@gmail.com.

St. James • Gwenneth Glenn • office@stjamesstaos.org

St. James had its first Evensong of the year on February 7 at 4:00pm. The Evensong featured rarely heard settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Daniel Purcell, the brother of Henry Purcell. We were blessed with the presence of The Right Rev. Michael Vono on January 17. Bishop Michael celebrated at our principle service, where two children were baptized and 3 people were received into the Episcopal Church. Bishop Michael participated in our annual meeting and was spotted folding chairs and tables at the end of the meeting. The St. James Mardi Gras, Shrove Tuesday supper was held on Tuesday, February 19. We served Cajun food and pancakes to capture both traditions. All are invited and welcome.

St. Jerome’s • Margaret Palmer • margaretbrooks44@yahoo.com

St. Jerome’s is toughing out its winter season. Attendance has been lower than in the summer because many of our parishioners have left for the winter, and many more have had trouble getting out of their driveways. One couple that worship here every Sunday because many of our parishioners have left for the winter, and many St. Jerome’s is toughing out its winter season. Attendance has been lower than in the coming year. We have discussed a number of these suggestions at our Bishop’s Warden meetings along with budget planning discussions. As these suggestions were reasonable and within the scope of our congregation’s budget, talents, and abilities (expanding the St. Jerome’s sign, starting a small Gospel choir), we believe they are “doable” and look forward to implementing them this coming spring, summer and fall.

Carolyn Busch was honored at St. Jerome’s during the morning church service as she has just completed a four-year term as Bishop’s Warden. Her work and dedication in this office has been invaluable and is greatly appreciated by the congregation.

St. Paul’s Peace • Rev. Madelynn Kirkpatrick • mkpriest@msn.com

St. Paul’s Peace Christmas Eve service included a children’s pageant for first time in several years. Members of the congregation helped to organize and rehearse the children in their roles and in the singing of Christmas hymns. Our Christmas Eve attendance was more the double that of previous years, we are all feeling encouraged by these young people.

St. Paul’s is hosting a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper open to the community of Las Vegas. This is a tradition of St. Paul’s and one they are enthusiastic about maintaining.

We will be offering Ashes and Prayers out of doors, across from Highlands University campus bookstore and sub, in addition to the traditional Ash Wednesday service.

Adult Bible study begins Feb 7th following the Sunday worship service.

The original church (built in 1879) has been refurbished for use as a children’s chapel. We are preparing to begin Sunday school the last Sunday in January. This is a big step for us as we are setting forth on this adventure after a hiatus of a number of years of Christian Education specifically for children, trusting the Lord guide us.

Southeast Deanery

The Spring Gathering for the SE Deanery will take place April 29-30 at St. Paul’s, Marfa. Dean Goodman from the Cathedral of St. John, Albuquerque, will join us and bring some volumes of the St. John’s Bible. We are looking forward to learning more about the St. John’s Bible.

St. Christopher’s, Roswell

St. Christopher’s Hobbs

St. Christopher’s Hobbs has called The Rev. Beverly Tasy to be their Vicar. She began her ministry there in February. The Celebration of New Ministry tentatively is scheduled for Saturday, June 11 to coincide with the Bishop’s visitation June 12.

St. Andrew’s, Roswell

Knowing that teens can’t always get to youth group in person, St. Andrew’s offers an online alternative, Andy’s E-EYC (Episcopal Youth Community). Teens do not have to be members or attend St. Andrew’s to participate. In fact, teens don’t even have to live in Roswell! All teens in the Diocese of the Rio Grande are invited to participate. For information or to register, contact Donna Addkison (donnaandstראשwes@gmail.com). You will be sent an invitation to log in to our password-protected location. Your privacy is valued.

St. Andrew’s held a city wide celebration of Chocolate Cake Day on January 28th. A wide variety of chocolate cake treats were furnished by parishioners and friends. Prizes were awarded for the winning recipes.

Andy’s Community Breakfast continues to provide a nutritious and wholesome meal to Roswellites in need of a meal. As many as 145 persons a month have attended the breakfast held on the last Saturday of every month. Personal hygiene items and notions are also available for those in need, as are flu and pneumonia shots during the fall and winter months.

Father Dale holds office hours every Tuesday morning and has distributed $19,302.51 for the homeless, those in need of financial assistance to pay utility bills, or persons requesting help in financial planning during 2015. The parish has been asked for donations of sleeping bags, tents, and other camping equipment for our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness and who need extra warmth during the cold winter nights.

St. Andrew’s hosts two movie events each month for parishioner, friends and the public. The Classic Movie Matinee is held at 4:00 pm on the 2nd Sunday of each month. At the conclusion of the movie, Evening Prayer is offered and celebrated at 5:30 p.m. This month’s classic movie is “North by Northwest.” The second event is Family Movie Night held at 6 p.m. on the 2nd Saturday of each month. The featured film for February is “Minions.”
CATO appointed to Church Pension Council

The Rev. Canon Daniel G. P. Gutierrez has been invited to serve a three-year term on the Church Pension Group’s (CPG) Client Council. CPG established the Client Council to provide feedback regarding the benefits and services offered by CPG to our clients, and to offer input on selected new ideas CPG management may be considering.

In the appointment invitation, CPG stated “You have been selected to participate in the Council because you know The Episcopal Church and understand the unique needs of our population.”


CLAD retreats to the Bosque Center

The Congregational Life and Development Advisory Committee (CLAD) returned to the Bosque Center January 22-23 for a retreat to evaluate the work they had done the past year, and set goals for an expanded agenda for 2016.

Team members are: Co-Chairs The Rev. Colin Kelly and Ms. Cathy Bailey, Mr. Charles Hawkins, Dr. Janet Sanders, The Rev. Jan Hosea and The Rev. Linda Wilson. CLAD was formed three years ago by Bishop Michael Vono to assist congregations in times of transition to prepare for calling new priests. The Bishop asked CLAD to expand the role to enhance congregational visioning and to evaluate the needs and goals to build into the future.

Boy’s logo design chosen for Queen Elizabeth’s 90th birthday

The Queen’s actual birthday is on 21 April; but it is traditional for public celebrations of the Monarch’s birthday to take place on an “official birthday” in the Summer. The exact date varies throughout the Commonwealth. In the UK, it is marked on a Saturday in June. This year it will be marked on 11 June and there will be a weekend of celebrations from Friday 10 June through until Sunday 12 June.

On the Queen’s actual birthday, there will be a number of gun salutes in London: a 41 gun salute in Hyde Park, a 21 gun salute in Windsor Great Park and a 62 gun salute at the Tower of London.

Offical events taking place on the Official birthday weekend will include a thanksgiving service at St Paul’s Cathedral, a Birthday Parade on Horse Guards Parade and a street party in The Mall. It is envisaged that church events will be integrated into local community celebrations that take place that weekend.

“The birthday celebration weekend offers churches the opportunity to share local stories from the last 90 years through exhibitions and oral histories, securing these memories for future generations,” a C of E spokesperson said.

The school’s 199 pupils, aged from four to 11, will be celebrating the Queen’s 90th by studying her life and having a street party to celebrate.

The grants awarded are:

- Let’s Give ‘em a Boost - submitted by St. Francis on the Hill, El Paso, $3,000 for back to school clothing.
- St. Paul’s Community Outreach Program – St. Paul’s, Truth or Consequences, $4,200, for monthly community dinners for 100-150.
- Good Shepherd After School Program - Good Shepherd, Silver City, $1,000 for 12-15 after school programs per year.
- Palomas: Alas de Amor - Good Shepherd, Silver City, $2,500 for breakfasts for 150 students during school year.

The Diocesan Poverty and Outreach Board has designated grants for 2016 following the Deeney prioritization process instituted previously. The grants will be appropriated in two payments to the grantees, who are required to report to the POB on the expenditure of grant monies.

For 2016, the following grants were awarded:

- **Southwest Area Deeney**:
  - Interfaith Community Shelter – Holy Faith, Santa Fe, $4,000 for support of homeless shelter.
  - Raton Hunger Pantry – Holy Trinity, Raton, $1,500, for food pantry.
  - Bernal City Community Food Pantry – St. Paul’s Peace, Las Vegas, $6,000 for food pantry.
  - St. James Food Pantry – St. James’, Taos, $3,500 for food disbursement.
  - Family Fun Fair – Holy Faith, Santa Fe, $1,200 for support of families with autistic children.
  - Friday Lunch Program – Trinity on the Hill, Los Alamos, $2,500 for student lunches.

- **Northeast Area Deeney**:  
  - Interfaith Community Shelter – Holy Faith, Santa Fe, $4,000 for support of homeless shelter.
  - Casa San Miguel Food Pantry – St. Michael and All Angels, Albuquerque, $3,000 for food pantry.
  - St. Mary’s Food Pantry – St. Mary’s, Albuquerque, $3,000 for food pantry.
  - Clare’s Closet – St. Francis, Roci Rancho, $3,000 for clothing ministry startup.
  - Sundays at St. Martin’s – St. Martin’s Hospitality Center, Albuquerque, $5,200 for charges for priest at site.
  - Four Corners Home, St. John’s, Farmington, $3,500 for startup of ministry outreach.

Boy’s logo design chosen for Queen Elizabeth’s 90th birthday

[Anglican Communion News Service] The Church of England has unveiled the logo that it will use for its celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II’s 90th birthday, after running a design competition through church schools.

Ten-year-old Lucas Salinger from Potten End C of E Primary School in Hertfordshire, part of the St Albans Diocese, drew the winning design, which was selected from more than 1,000 entries. It depicts a circular crest bordered by children holding hands. It is dissected by a cross, reminiscent of the one that hangs above the altar at Holy Trinity, the village church. It has two candles and the number 90 in the quarters; and is topped by the Royal Crown and the E-II-R insignia, representing in Latin Elizabeth Regina.

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**Northwest Area Deeney**

- Puerto Seguro, Safe Harbor, Inc. – Epiphany, Socorro, $2,000 for children’s program.
- Angel Tree – St. Matthew’s, Los Lunas, $2,500 for gifts for children with incarcerated parents.
- Casa San Miguel Food Pantry – St. Michael and All Angels, Albuquerque, $3,000 for food pantry.
- St. Mary’s Food Pantry – St. Mary’s, Albuquerque, $3,000 for food pantry.
- Clare’s Closet – St. Francis, Roci Rancho, $3,000 for clothing ministry startup.
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- Four Corners Home, St. John’s, Farmington, $3,500 for startup of ministry outreach.

**POB grants**

- St. George’s Food Pantry – St. George’s, Fajardo, $3,000 for food pantry.
- Casa San Miguel Food Pantry – St. Michael and All Angels, Albuquerque, $3,000 for food pantry.
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Faith Communities Going Solar

Spring is already in the air. But we do not have to wait for spring for the brightness of the sun. Many faith communities in NM are celebrating Brother Sun year round and saving energy bill while caring for creation by doing energy efficient upgrades and then installing solar.

St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, is one of the newest Brother Sun Congregations with their installation that was dedicated the beginning of November. Their solar team, which did an amazing job figuring out how to do an LLC with congregants to finance their solar installation, is now offering their services to ten new churches.

New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light (NMIPL) utilized their talents with an open house information event at St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church on Monday, February 29. Contact info@nm-ipl.org if you are interested in joining the trend celebrating brother sun and caring for creation.

Faith Climate Action Week calling for 50 congregations in New Mexico

Faith communities are invited to join thousands of communities across the United States from April 14-25 for the Faith Climate Action Week. Interfaith Power and Light invites educational events, sermons, prayers, and your creative actions during this week. Sign up and get resources available at http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/program/preachin/. New Mexico is trying to get 50 faith communities of all traditions around New Mexico to sign up. If you have questions contact info@nm-ipl.org.

Church considers long-term response to Flint’s water crisis

[Episcopal News Service] Churches and other community-based organizations responded first, providing Flint residents with bottled water and filters for their taps long before Michigan officials acknowledged people were drinking lead-contaminated water.

Over the last two weeks, Flint’s water crisis and the state’s failure to respond, have dominated mainstream headlines, with President Barack Obama declaring a “state of emergency,” and last week Governor Rick Snyder using his State of the State address to apologize to Flint residents.

It was the persistence of community groups, like Water You Fighting For and Concerned Pastors for Social Action, who organized protests, press conferences and publicity for months. As has been on national news, my home state Michigan has an emergency need that the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande and the Eastern Michigan dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan and donations from parishes across lower Michigan, partnered with the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, the soup kitchen at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, on the city’s east side, the north side’s Christ Enrichment Center and other organizations to make sure the city’s residents had access to clean water.

Earlier this month, the regional EPA official resigned over the crisis.

Almost immediately following the switch, residents began to complain about the water’s color, taste and smell, and the skin irritation caused by bathing in it, yet government officials maintained the water’s safety. It was the efforts of community leaders and pastors, who spoke up for the city’s majority black and impoverished residents, that caught the attention of physicians and academics who conducted studies countering the government’s claims. Of the city’s 100,000 residents, 9,000 are children under age 6, the population most vulnerable to the cognitive and developmental delays associated with lead poisoning.

“As for the long-term health, educational and psychological effects on the generation of babies, toddlers and preschoolers, we don’t know what that will look like, how will they be measured and attended to,” said Scheid.

Scheid became the rector of St. Paul’s in May of 2015, after serving as rector of St. Augustine of Canterbury in Bemont Harbor, another Michigan city that has been under emergency management.

Before state officials acknowledged the public health crisis and deployed the National Guard door-to-door handing out bottled water, filters and testing kits, community-based organizations and churches stepped up.

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in downtown Flint served as a water distribution point, and with grant assistance from the dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan and donations from parishes across lower Michigan, partnered with the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, the soup kitchen at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, on the city’s east side, the north side’s Christ Enrichment Center and other organizations to make sure the city’s residents had access to clean water.

With a $5,000 grant from Episcopal Relief & Development, St. Paul’s, channeling the money through the United Way, was able to replace water filters in schools, reaching 23 percent of the student population.

“A moving forward, one of the ways churches and other community-based organizations are looking to respond to residents’ needs is by making sure they have access to healthy, fresh foods. Evidence has shown that foods rich in iron and vitamin C can ameliorate the effects of lead poisoning,” said Scheid.

“The issue is that much of the food that comes through the food bank, fresh stuff, is on the verge of spoiling and getting appropriate food from the food bank is a challenge,” said Scheid, adding that Flint is a food desert. “This is something we are looking at, as could we do something to address nutrition in a meaningful way, could we purchase top quality food for distribution in families.”
The Season of the Religious Film

This Lenten and Eastertide is seasoned with films that enhance the visual experience of reflections of religious faith and belief. As commentators have remarked, Christian movies do make money, and it is fortunate that this translates into well-written scripts, higher production values and better acting.

Two films that deal with the central figure of our Christian Faith, Jesus the Christ, are Risen and The Young Messiah. Risen is unique among the films I’ve seen dealing with the Passion of Jesus. It’s focus is on the time following the Resurrection rather than on the Crucifixion. The story follows the journey of a Roman Tribune, played by Joseph Fiennes, who is tasked by Pilate to find the body of Yeshua, who he had crucified at the behest of the Sanhedrin. The film engages the backstory of the days after the discovery of the empty tomb and the long walk from Jerusalem to Galilee and the Ascension.

The Young Messiah is based on the 2005 novel Christ the Risen by Anne Rice, who authored Interview with the Vampire. The novel follows much of the narrative provided in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which provide the birth narratives and then Luke jumps to Jesus as a 12-year-old. Rice begins her story of a 7-year-old Jesus returning from Egypt to Nazareth with his parents. Rice draws her narrative from the stories provided in the non-canonical, pseudepigraphical Infancy Gospel of James and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas [http://www.earlychristianwritings.com]. The film promises a view of the Christian Faith through the eyes of a child, and invites viewers to “discover the Savior when he was a child.”

Miracles from Heaven is based on the memoir by Christy Beam, which tells the story of 12-year-old Anna, who suffers a 30-foot fall from a tree and that renders her unable to eat and requires her to be fed through tubes. Anna suffers a near-death experience that cures her disorder. The result is unique among the films I’ve seen dealing with the needs of one another, those in our community and the world, and to spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. St. James’ still bears witness to a living faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.