Together
in the
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF THE RIO GRANDE
JULY / AUGUST 2017
DEARLY BELIEVED SISTERS AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST JESUS,


FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT CHARLES DICKENS’ TALE OF TWO CITIES AND THESE POWERFUL OPENING SENTENCES IN BOOK I, “RECALLED TO LIFE.” DICKENS WRITES, “IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE AGE OF WISDOM, IT WAS THE AGE OF FOOlISHNESS, IT WAS THE EPOCH OF BELIEF, IT WAS THE EPOCH OF CREDULITY, IT WAS THE SEASON OF LIGHT, IT WAS THE SEASON OF DARKNESS, IT WAS THE SPIRIT OF HOPE, IT WAS THE WINTER OF DESPAIR, WE HAD EVERYTHING BEFORE US, WE HAD NOTHING BEFORE US, WE WERE ALL GOING DIRECT TO HEAVEN, WE WERE ALL GOING DIRECT TO THE OTHER WAY...” (P.1).” THESE WORDS PAINT A GRAPHIC PICTURE OF HUMANITY’S PERENNIAL STRUGGLE TO BOTH UNDERSTAND AND OVERCOME THE COMPLEXITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE WORLD AND LIFE ITSELF. PERFECTION IS NOT FOR OR IN THIS MORTAL REALITY.


IN ADDRESSING THE CHRISTIANS IN ROME WHO FACED MANY OBSTACLES TO THEIR FAITH AND COMMUNITY, ST PAUL SAID, “WHAT THEN ARE WE TO SAY ABOUT THESE THINGS? IF GOD IS FOR US WHO IS AGAINST US? HE WHO DID NOT WITHHOLD HIS OWN SON, BUT GAVE HIM UP FOR ALL OF US, WILL HE NOT WITH HIM ALSO GIVE US EVERYTHING ELSE? WHO WILL BRING ANY CHARGE AGAINST GOD’S ELECT?... WHO WILL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? WILL HARSHNESS, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FATIGUE OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD?... FOR I AM CONvinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (ROMANS: 8: 31-39).

OURS IS AN AGE IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH NEEDS TO REMAIN FEARLESS IN ITS MISSION TO RESTORE ALL PEOPLE TO GOD AND TO EACH OTHER. CHRIST RISEN AND NOW INCARNATE IN EACH ONE OF US CONTINUES TO WORK TOWARDS RESTORING GOD’S KINGDOM OF LOVE, JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR ALL PEOPLE AND ALL CREATION. IN THIS LONG FERTILE GREEN SEASON OF ORDINARY TIME THE CHURCH WILL CONTINUE TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL AND BE AN EXAMPLE OF THE WAYS OF JESUS CHRIST. THANKS, TO GOD! KEEP THE FAITH AND CARRY ON! BLESSINGS EVERYONE,

BISHOP MICHAEL

THE REV. SIOUPK

BISHOP APPOINtS PATTy SIOUPK ARCHDEACON


According to the Canons of The Episcopal Church (ILL.7.2.), A Bishop may appoint one or more of such Deacons as Archdeacon(s) to assist the Bishop in the formation, deployment, supervision, and support of the Deacons or those in preparation to be Deacons, and in the implementation of this Canon.”

“This is in keeping with her duties as Canon Liturgist and Convener of Deacons, Bishop Vono said, “and she is most deserving of this honor.” Her title as Archdeacon will be the Venerable.

A native of Albuquerque, the Rev. Soukup has lived in New Mexico her entire life. She earned both a bachelor’s degree in political science and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of New Mexico. She was employed by the State of New Mexico for 25 years, and after retiring from state government in 2013, she was hired by the diocesan office in a full-time capacity as the special projects coordinator/contracts administrator and book keeper.

Deacon Patty has served at the altar for 40 years in various liturgical capacities at several parishes in Albuquerque, and she has become a fellow of the Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church in 2005. She attended the Diocesan School for Ministry and was ordained a deacon in 2006, and she has served in this capacity at St. Mary’s, the Cathedral of St. John, and St. Mark’s. She was appointed as Canon Liturgist for the diocese by Bishop Vono in 2012, and she was appointed as Convener of Deacons for the diocese by Bishop Vono in 2014.

In addition to providing and coordinating pastoral care within the parishes, Deacon Patty has been involved in Stephen Ministry and nursing home ministry. She has also coordinated outreach efforts in the southern part of the diocese for Rio Grande Borderland Ministries. She and her husband Mike have been married for 30 years. They devote a great deal of time to caring for their numerous cats, and they actively support local animal rescue organizations.
At the June 9 meeting, the Profile Subcommittee reported that it had received 227 electronic and five paper responses to the Bishop Search Survey on Survey Monkey. Of those 232 responses, 83 percent were from the laity, 65 percent were from the two northern deaneries, 65 percent were from urban areas, and 66 percent of the respondents were women. The subcommittee reported that it was substantially ahead of schedule in its tasks.

Besides hearing other subcommittee reports, the Committee set up its group norms, stressing commitment to the process and the importance of both anonymity and confidentiality.

The Committee adjourned its calendar and added a meeting to kind of come together. So that's the advice that I would give.

problems they're having because they didn't wait for the consensus to kind of come out of all those issues. Some of my colleagues, you know, were feeling estranged because they were gay, the same thing with women, because they didn't wait for the consensus to kind of come together. So that's the advice that I would give.

A spiritual and personal policy of gradualism, of doing things slowly and not pushing things, and being patient. I've grown over slow movement, to solve St. Francis; they're breaking away and we're in lawsuit. To solve St. Francis on the Hill in El Paso, none of that was revealed to me before I came. So yes, I would have loved to have known that my two major quests were to be: 1) you've got to solve St. Francis, they're breaking away and we're in lawsuit. And 2) the controversy over Camp Storey. "The camp, Bishop, I was told. Thank God we didn't sell the camp, and now we're in such a better place. My colleagues who did sell their camps now are kicking themselves.

If there was one piece of advice you would give to your successor, specifically concerning this diocese, what would it be?

A spiritual and personal policy of gradualism, of doing things slowly and not pushing things, and being patient. I've grown over slow movement, to solve St. Francis; they're breaking away and we're in lawsuit.

 próxima vez que vayas a enfocarse en la educación, eso no cambia. No, no hay una meta intermedia. Pero como comencé a trabajar con las personas, todas las definiciones que tenía cambiaron. Yo sabía que había una división, pero no sabía cuánto. Cuando llegué aquí, encontré que la tarea era mucho más grande. A medida que fui trabajando con las personas, me di cuenta de que había una gran división, pero no sabía cuánto. Cuando llegué aquí, encontré que la tarea era mucho más grande. A medida que fui trabajando con las personas, me di cuenta de que había una gran división, pero no sabía cuánto. Cuando llegué aquí, encontré que la tarea era mucho más grande. A medida que fui trabajando con las personas, me di cuenta de que había una gran división, pero no sabía cuánto. Cuando llegué aquí, encontré que la tarea era mucho más grande. A medida que fui trabajando con las personas, me di cuenta de que había una gran división, pero no sabía cuánto. Cuando llegué aquí, encontré que la tarea era mucho más grande. A medida que fui trabajando con las personas, me di cuenta de que había una gran división, pero no sabía cuánto.
BISHOP SEARCH: Did you know?

ELECTING A BISHOP

A newly elected bishop must be approved by a majority within the House of Bishops and a majority of standing committees in the church within a 120-day time frame set by the Presiding Bishop’s office. The Diocese of the Rio Grande’s special election will be scheduled for Spring 2018, with consecration set for Nov. 3, 2018.

VARIETIES OF BISHOP

A bishop is a successor to one of the Twelve Apostles, who has been consecrated by other bishops. In Old English it was “biscope”, which came to be pronounced “bishop” and was later spelled that way. In the Episcopal Church, there are five kinds of bishops: Presiding, Diocesan, Assistant, Coadjutor, and Suffragan. No bishop is “higher” in rank than another. The five kinds define their function. We, of course, will be electing a Diocesan bishop who will replace our current bishop, the Rt. Rev. Michael L. Vono, when he retires.

A BISHOP’S POWER IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Episcopal Church, our branch of the Anglican Communion, retains the threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, but, from its inception, the role of bishops in the Episcopal Church has differed from the role that they had in the Church of England. In particular, legislative authority in the Episcopal Church has differed from the role they had in the Church of England.

The Constitution, and the Canons.

The bishops, as a group, can take any legislative action of the convention, thus the power of bishops is significantly less in the Episcopal Church than in the Church of England. The bishops, as a group, can take no action without approval of the House of Deputies except to the extent that the General Convention has previously delegated authority and responsibility to the bishops. Those delegations of authority and responsibility are found in the Book of Common Prayer, the Constitution, and the Canons.

Camp Stoney will be hosting an Open House on Friday, August 4 from 10am - 2pm in honor of the camp’s 50th Anniversary. Please join us for lunch and camp activities (swimming, archery, hiking, crafts) along with conversation with old and new friends.

Celebrate Stoney’s 50th Anniversary Camping Season! After the Open House, stay for a celebration dinner with Bishop Vono and other special guests! Your dinner ticket comes with a night’s stay at Stoney in the Retreat House or cabins (first come, first serve). Please see the website to register. Alumna Camp 1 Night 2017 - Registration.

Alumni Camp - August 1 - 5. Come back to Stoney for an extended weekend to catch up with friends from Camp. We have excursions planned (fly fishing, trip to Santa Fe, Mesow Wolf, opera, Bandelier and much more!), along with traditional hiking, swimming and archery opportunities. Register by July 15! Alumni Camp Half Week 2017 - Registration.
Interview with the Bishop: A look behind and a look ahead  
Continued from page 3

Fire, we have Red River. Magdalena has 15 people. So, that’s going to be a challenge. And I think that’s a key to our rural diocese: the bishop has got to be willing to travel.

How many miles a year do you put on your car? 20,000-22,000 a year.

What are the other challenges for the new bishop? There are two things. One, you are obliged to be at certain meetings. I’m the chair of the council, I’m the chair of the property committer, I make reports to Standing Committee. I go to COMB. But other meetings, unlike some of my friends, the other bishops, my pastoral style has always been “Where my people are, that’s where I should be as well.” So the challenge of showing up at things, for example: Tony had the sale of the bowls, there are some bishops who will not do that sort of thing because they see it as a waste of time. I don’t see it as a waste of time. But doing those things is a challenge. St. Chad’s does the same thing. I hope the profile is clear that that’s something the diocese expects. It would be a very traumatic thing if all of a sudden the bishop doesn’t see that going to these things is equally important as being chair of a committee. Some bishops only go to things they are obliged to go to. Well, I don’t think that works. But what you will face is, “Well, Michael Vono is single. He had a lot of time. His family was really struggling churches, is there the possibility the next bishop will face the questions of consolidation? Yes and no. The no is we’ve just changed, along with other dioceses, we’ve just changed the age limit, along with other dioceses, the age limit one could enter ministry. You could be 65 now, go to the bishop’s school, not have to go to seminary, graduate, or go to Trinity, and by 68 you’re ordained a priest, and you’re a priest — it’s your second vocation or you’re retired — but you’re a priest who’s going to be taking on the rural parishes. So what’s happening now is because seminary is so expensive, because the church really is moving toward a model like the Trinity model and also Seminary of the Southwest, the whole emphasis now is raising up indigenous — not Title 9 — but the indigenous raising up of ministers within the rural areas and giving them the freedom at 50, 60, 70 years old. We have a man who is 60 something who wants to become a deacon and so now he can do it. So, that’s the no. The yes challenge is that it is a rural diocese, and some people can fit in rural settings and some people can’t. So you have to find the right people to fit in those places.

Among the questions suggested for this interview were the following two, the first from a progressive and the second from a conservative. The first: What is the number and influence of parishes in the diocese with the urge to leave the Episcopal Church? When everyone wanted to go to the Rio Grande. And I think we’re already there because we have so many more clergy, our number of priests applying for every position. And clergy, our number of retired clergy, that has grown.

The second: Is there still a place in the Diocese of the Rio Grande for a conservative? Well, absolutely, and I hope that everybody sees that; that a conservative, an Anglo-Catholic, can live here happily in their ministries without any duress, absolutely. And remember there is a balance. We’re tried to keep a balance between liberal and conservative, in council, in Standing Committee, in chairs of different committees, in deans, in ecumenical officers. Yes, I hope that model continues. This is a healthy and good road we are on right now.

Where do you see this disease in 10 years? If I were going to be here in 10 years, I would see this diocese stronger and larger than it is now. The numbers have increased. The finances have increased. Fair Share has increased without us having raised the percentage from parishes because the numbers are growing every year. Every year it has grown. So I see this diocese as going back to its original history when it really was one of the most attractive dioceses in the Episcopal Church, when everyone wanted to go to the Rio Grande. And I think we’re already there because we have so many more priests applying for every position. And clergy, our number of retired clergy, that has grown.

But Fair Share has recently been raised. Yes, Point-zero-five, which is very small, and there were so many years that it was flat-lined, and had there been the discipline of fractioning it up just a little bit, we would be keeping up with inflation. But this is only the second time an increase has happened in my time.
Weekend to Rest in God's Love

The Women's Ministry of the Diocese of the Rio Grande is looking forward to several fun events. Women of all ages are invited to join us for a gala weekend at Trinity on the Hill, 2001 Trinity Drive in Los Alamos, on August 4-5. This summer weekend provides time for relaxation and conversation as well as inspiration and activities. Take time to sit under the loving Banner of our Lord, in the company of other women of God. Remember the Sunday School song, "The Lord is mine and I am His, His banner over me is love." God wants to love us, and we need to find time to be loved!

There will be time to share ideas about living the Great Commandment in our daily lives. We'll take time to care for ourselves with quiet, crafts, and maybe even massage. We'll do outreach and consider the importance of women in God's work. Registration is $25, and includes Friday dinner and Saturday lunch. More info is on the Women's Ministry website (VarietiesOfGifts.blogspot.com).

Sabbath Rest, the 6th Annual Bosque Weekend will be November 17-18 at the Bosque Centre. The Rev. Monica Whaker will be our retreat leader. Plan to take time to explore finding Sabbath in all parts of our lives as busy Christian women over this weekend. More details and registration info will be available later this year.

Our weekly e-study (open to men as well as women) is a way to learn about the lectionary readings in an interesting way. Starting in Advent, individuals or small groups will be invited to take up the privilege of writing a series of these meditations. If you are interested in doing this, or just to sign up to receive the e-study, send an email to wdrgstudy@gmail.com.

Last year's Christmas party was so much fun, we will be having a similar event this year. Special prayer events in Lent and during the Bishop Walk-About are in the planning stages in coordination with the Daughters of the King.

Women of the diocese can keep up with all the upcoming events by receiving the e-newsletters, checking out the Women's Ministry website (VarietiesOfGifts.blogspot.com) and Facebook page (Facebook.com/WomensMinistryOfDRG). E-mail Cindy Davis, Coordinator of Women's Ministries (cindydavis@cyndiadavisaustralia.com) to be included in all e-news mailings.

Prayer, Service, Evangelism: Redeeming the World

The Order of the Daughters of the King® is a worldwide Order that creates Christian leaders from lay and clergy women in the Episcopal Church and other churches in the "historic episcopate." Daughters take vows of Prayer, Service and Evangelism. Members will gather for their annual Diocesan Assembly on July 28-29 at Grace Church in Carlsbad. The theme is Turning Sorrows into Dancing and Redeeming the World.

Canon Raymond Raney, our keynote speaker, will lead attendees in exploring how these three vows are vital tools to transform parishes, communities, and into the world. Business of the Order will also be conducted, so it is important for all Daughters to attend.

Registration for Assembly is available from Chapter Presidents and on the Diocesan Daughters' website at DRGDaughters.blogspot.com. If you are interested in learning more about Daughters of the King, you are invited to attend the Assembly. You can also contact Cindy Davis, diocesan president at cindydavis@cyndiadavisaustralia.com or speak to your parish priest. Information is also on the diocesan Daughters of the King website.

This December, Daughters will join with other women of the diocese for our annual Christmas party. Last year the event welcomed more than 50 women, including participants in the Women's Circle of Empowerment as special guests. More info will be posted later in the year about this and events coming in 2018.

We all have our little Vanities

By Ms. Charmaine Martin
St. Andrew's, Roswell, NM

I don't wear skirts these days, though I love them. I've been trying to rehabilitate a bunyon through bracing at night and wearing roomy, boxy-toes shoes, which just don't go with skirts. But on Easter Sunday, I pulled out a favorite spring frock and a selection of "lady shoes" to try. I was nearly out the door before reason and a sense of irony prevailed: "You're going to undo months of effort, and endure years of torture for VANITY. And in Church!" and I went back and started over. Vanity may be thought of as a minor vice, but it's really the younger, sillier sibling of Pride. These days, it's hardly thought of at all, being subsumed under the psychological heading of Narcissism. At its extremes, Narcissism is a serious personality disorder, but as commonly used, it's just a buzz-word for self-centered vanity.

We may not use the word "vanity" any more because it would be like a fish using the word "water"; we are living in it, surrounded by it. The world is now Vanity, Faux Vanity, Fancy Vanity, etc. Before the magazine, and before the novel, was a stop in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress: a never ending fair in the town of Vanity, "a place of worldly ostentation and frivolity." Turn on the television or the internet, and you are there.

Narcissistic "vanity" is defined as an inordinate love of and concern for one's own appearance and accomplishments, but "vanity" as a concept includes a lack of real value, hollowness, something worthless, trivial or pointless.

It is this sense of vanity that Solomon explores in the Preacher of Ecclesiastes: "Then I considered all that my hands had done and the tool I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind..." ( Ecc. 2:24)

Through all his labor of acquiring wisdom, through all his teaching in Proverbs of the wisdom he had learned, Solomon ends where he began: all human striving is vain and futile. Only God is immortal; only God knows all the answers. And we cannot know His plan for us. "The end of the matter: all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

Along the way, Solomon recommends enjoying the good things God puts in one's path, and doing your work willingly and faithfully (Ecc 9:7-10) and letting God sort out the meaning.

When enjoyment of the good things changes to an over-concern with appearances, you've fallen back into vanity. Would you do a thing if no one were watching? Would I wear the murderous (but really cute) shoes I weren't going out? We all have our little vanities (I do the crossword in pen), but as long as we face them honestly, we can keep them from controlling us. Honest friends help, and especially family members, who don't let you get away with anything. They may not use the same words, but they will bring you up as sharply as Abigail Adams did with her motto, 'Down, Vanity!'
Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows
Becomes 11th Bishop of Indianapolis, First Black Woman to lead Episcopal Diocese

The Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows was ordained and consecrated the eleventh bishop of Indianapolis April 29, making her the first black woman to lead a diocese in the history of the Episcopal Church and the first woman to succeed another woman as diocesan bishop.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry led the service as chief consecrator and was joined by more than 40 bishops from across the church. Nearly 1,400 participated in the service at Clowes Hall on the campus of Butler University. Diocese of Chicago Jeffrey D. Lee preached. From 2012 until her election as bishop, Baskerville-Burrows served on Lee’s staff as director of networking in the Diocese of Chicago.

“Indianapolis, you have called a strong, loving and wise pastor to be your bishop,” said Lee, in a sermon that was interrupted by applause several times. “She will love you, challenge you, tell you the truth as she sees it and invite you to tell it as you do. She will pray with you at the drop of a hat and care for you in ways that will not diminish your own agency. She will empower you. She will lead. Count on it.”

Among the co-consecrators at the service was the Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris, the first female bishop in the Anglican Communion. Before the consecration, Baskerville-Burrows told the Indianapolis Star, “The first thing that comes to mind is how grateful I am to the women that have come before me. Barbara Harris will be at my consecration, and when I think about what she’s done for me and how I’ve encountered little girls saying, ‘Oh my gosh. One day, may I discern such a call?’ That is just everything.”

Harris retired in 2003 as bishop suffragan of Massachusetts and was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. Gayle Harris (no relation), who was also a co-consecrator of Baskerville-Burrows. The other co-consecrators were Bishop Catherine Waynick (her predecessor), Bishop bees, Bishop Douglas Sparks, Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Indiana-Kentucky Synod Bishop William Gaffney. She was seated the next day in Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis.

Baskerville-Burrows was elected in October by the clergy and lay leaders of the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis to lead 48 congregations that comprise nearly 10,000 Episcopalians in central and southern Indiana. She succeeds Waynick, who led the Diocese of Indianapolis for 20 years and was one of the first female bishops in the Episcopal Church.

“Setting at the crossroads of America, this diocese has a special call to bring healing, hope and love to a world that is too often fearful, hurting and polarized,” Baskerville-Burrows said before her election. “I see the Diocese of Indianapolis as an inclusive community of hope bearing the light of Jesus Christ to central and southern Indiana and the world.”

Before her work in Chicago, Baskerville-Burrows was rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Syracuse, New York, where she also served as Episcopal chaplain at Syracuse University. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Smith College, a master’s degree in historic preservation planning from Cornell University and a master of divinity from Church Divinity School of the Pacific. She and her husband, Harrison, met at her ordination to the priesthood in 1998 and were married in 2003. They have a son, Timothy, age 6, who is a kindergarten student at St. Richard’s Episcopal School in Indianapolis.

Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows becomes the eleventh bishop of Indianapolis, first black woman to lead Episcopal Diocese.
**BORDERLAND MISSION STATEMENT:**
Río Grande Borderland Ministries is an agency of the Diocese of the Río Grande committed to offering a compassionate response to needs of the New Mexico and far western Texas borderlands. For RGBM everyone eats, everyone is clothed, everyone has a safe and healthy habitat and everyone is loved.

**PRIORITIES:**
- Extend, expand and deepen services for those in need on the border.
- Support and expand existing borderland ministries of the Episcopal Diocese of the Río Grande and work with congregations that have border ministries.
- Understand and identify new borderland needs throughout the Diocese and engage them in Christ-like ways. Work with congregations that wish to develop a border ministry or participate in an existing ministry.
- Respond to emergency borderland needs.
- Encourage trans-border relationships and partnerships that facilitate expanded ministries on and across the border.

**Existing Diocesan Ministry Support and Expansion:**

- **The Roadrunner Mobile Food Pantry in Columbus:** The Mobile Food Pantry program was expanded to provide monthly food for 185 households. RGBM has distributed over 397,000 pounds of food.
- **The Palomas Feeding Program:** Ten of the poorest and neediest families in Palomas were provided with a monthly food basket, as well as clothing, blankets and other necessities.
- **The Palomas Shoe Box Program:** Christmas shoe boxes full of gifts were given to over 600 needy children in Columbus, New Mexico, including over 400 children from Palomas, Mexico.
- **The Borderland Blanket and Coat Drive:** More than 500 coats and blankets were distributed to people in Palomas and others in need in Luna County.
- **The Women’s Cooperative in Palomas:** Over $6,000 of the women’s products was sold.

**Pastoral Care and Worship:**
1. **Columbus:** Individual pastoral care and grief counseling was provided as needed. Weekly Eucharistic services were held, with the addition of a bilingual service.
2. **Terlingua and LaJitas:** Spanish language is included in services at these two locations as per the needs of the congregation.
3. **St. James:** St. James celebrated a Spanish healing service on August 4.
4. **Good Shepherd, Silver City:** Spanish language worship was offered on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Posadas were celebrated for the community.

**Evolving Outreach:**
- **Otra Vez Thrift Store, Terlingua:** After the expansion of their facilities last year, this ministry continues to thrive and move forward. Work is underway to install a storage container in which to store merchandise that is not yet sorted. The facility is now able to handle furniture items, which will be a great help.

**MINISTRIES OF THE RGBM**

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- **Fr. Paul Moore, Chair**
- **Administration/Ministries**
- **Rev. J.J. Bernal, Missioner, Center**
- **St. Andrew’s, Las Cruces**
- **St. Mark’s, Albuquerque**
- **St. Luke’s, La Union**
- **St. Christopher’s, El Paso**
- **Holy Spirit, El Paso**
- **St. James’, Alpine**
- **San José de Anapra and Santa María Magdalena**

**MINISTRIES INVOLVED**

- **Good Shepherd, Silver City**
- **St. Luke’s, Deming**
- **St. Andrew’s, Las Cruces**
- **Holy Spirit, El Paso**
- **St. Christopher’s, El Paso**
- **St. James’, Alpine**
- **St. Paul’s, Marfa**
- **St. Beda’s, Santa Fe**
- **St. Mark’s, Albuquerque**
- **St. Luke’s, La Union**
- **St. Christopher’s, El Paso**
- **Holy Spirit, El Paso**
- **St. James’, Alpine**
- **Big Bend Mission**
- **Lajitas**
- **St. Mary & St. Joseph**
- **Otra Vez**
- **Outreach**
- **Terlingua**
- **Santa Inez**

**CHURCHES INVOLVED**

- **Columbus/Palomas**
- **Women’s Ministries/Outreach**
- **St. Christopher’s, El Paso**
- **Food Pantry/Feeding Program**
- **St. James’, Alpine**
- **Big Bend Mission**
- **Lajitas**
- **St. Mary & St. Joseph**
- **Otra Vez**
- **Outreach**
- **Terlingua**
- **Santa Inez**

**DISTRIBUTION CENTER EXPANSION:** Holy Spirirt, El Paso, continued their ministry as the long-planned RGBM El Paso based storage and distribution facility. The 12x10 storeroom at Holy Spirit has at times, been lined with boxes stacked 5 feet high containing dozens of pairs of jeans; t-shirts, underwear, socks, shoes, pajamas, sweaters, jackets and more, and ranging in size from birth to young adult, including men and women’s items. Donated items have been distributed in Palomas, Columbus, Anapra, Juarez and El Paso. With over 50 backpacks and bags have been donated and distributed to school children, along with multiple items of school supplies. Donations have also included dozens of coats and blankets, bedding and personal items, and Christmas gifts children.

San Jose de Anapra and Santa Maria Magdalena: The Diocese Northern Mexico has instituted some changes along the border region common with us. Unfortunately, Santa Maria Magdalena mission closed last year. Fr. Miguel Angel Ramirez at San Jose Anapra has been replaced. Fr. Miguel Angel is now working w Fr. J.J. Bernal at St. Christopher’s in El Paso in a number of areas including preaching, presiding at the Eucharist and overseeing pecan grove. We are considering our next steps.

Emergency Food: Needy families and the homeless in the great New Mexico, Columbus area as well as families in Palomas and Anapra, Mexico were provided with emergency food as needed. A refrigerator and freezer were added to the Columbus Facility that fresh and frozen food could also be provided.

Emergency Home Repair: Emergency home repair was provided for several families in Columbus New Mexico and Palomas, Mexico.

Project Boundary Reach: A 2008 4-wheel drive Jeep was purchased to facilitate access and deliver goods throughout the borderlands. Over 15,500 miles were logged.

**Let us pray:**

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Voices from Both Sides
Celebrating the Eucharist in the Rio Grande
By the Rev. Paul Moore
Rector, Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City

On May 6th Fr. Paul Moore, Pastor Sarah Guck, her husband Tony, and Pastors Angel and Mayela Ganthuy from a Pentecostal Church in Palomas, Chihuahua, gathered with hundreds of other people at Lajitas, Texas for Voices from Both Sides/Voces de Ambos Lados.

Voices from Both Sides is a day when the Border Patrol allows people to cross the river to and from Mexico freely to visit family and friends, to buy and sell, and to celebrate the fact that in spite of the political divisions marked by the Rio Grande, the human family is one, and has been one along both sides of this river for centuries.

The event commemorates the closing of this small international port by the U.S. Border Patrol on Mexican Mother’s Day, May 10, 2010, hence the alternate Spanish name of La Protesta, and has taken place on the Saturday closest to that date since that year. It is marked by family reunions, a lot of good food and drink, music from both sides, and good fun. At 3:00 in the afternoon everyone is encouraged to get into the water.

The Rev’s, Moore, Guck and Ganthuy, with the indispensable help of Episcopalian Martha Stafford of Terlingua, set up a table in the middle of the river at 10:30 a.m. and celebrated the Eucharist in English and Spanish, offering communion to anyone who wished on both sides. The short homilies by both the Rev. Moore and Rev. Ganthuy garnered spontaneous applause as they both talked about how the human family and especially the family of God is not divided by political borders. About 30 people, 15 on each side, received the Sacrament.

Many people, including the coordinator of the event, thanked the team for the significance and power of what took place, and plans are developing for a repeat celebration next year.
St. Paul’s Peace had an enthusiastic celebration of Pentecost, beginning with bright red balloons enhancing the nave and other red appointments throughout. We heard the gospel read in multiple languages, renewed our Baptismal Vows, and lighted candles to recall and signify the gift of the Holy Spirit we received in our baptism.

Our Pentecost celebration on Sunday followed a wonderful Saturday of fishing, picnicking, and walking trails into the beautiful landscape of Camp Davis, thanks to the generosity of Holy Faith church which invited us, for the second year in a row, to share in their day at Camp Davis.

The celebration of the Pentecost moment of receiving the “Good News” in many languages, will continue as St. Paul’s Peace brings the members of our congregation to the First United Presbyterian Church in June to share worship in the Presbyterian tradition. The Presbyterian church will then bring their congregation to St. Paul’s Peace in July to share Sunday morning worship with us.
El Paso Boy Scouts feted at Holy Spirit

By Donald Woodyard

Boy Scouts, adult and youth members alike, joined Holy Spirit parishioners at the communion rail in a special Scout Sunday service on April 23. Retired Bishop Jerry Lamb was the celebrant at the Holy Eucharist which honored all Boy Scouts and their adult leaders for their countless contributions to benefit and serve El Pasanos.

Holy Spirit has special reason to say thank you to the Boy Scouts of America. The church, which at one time sponsored three Scout units, has benefited directly from Scouting. An Eagle Scout service project several years ago provided a much-needed handicap-accessible ramp at Founders Hall. And in the last two years, Scouting for Food drives have provided thousands of pounds of food for its Food Pantry.

The church had another way of saying thank you to the Scouts. Don Woodyard, the former chartered representative to Scouting for the church units, presented a check for $765 to Pete Jimenez, Jr., a professional Scout executive representing Yucca Council, BSA. The money was left over in the treasury of the last Cub Scout pack which folded last year. Woodyard also received a personalized colored sketch drawn by fellow Scouter and Morris Brown. It honors Woodyard for his 45 years of service to Scouting. The award was presented by Scouter Nate Jones.

Jim Conway is scoutmaster for Troop 727 in El Paso. His troop, sponsored by St. Pius Roman Catholic Church, provided the color guard for the processional and posted the American flag, the Episcopal flag and the Yucca Council flag.

“Thank you for the service and letting us take part,” Conway says. “It is great to be recognized. It was good of you for the service and letting us take part,” Conway underscores Jimenez. “I thought the Scouts did an outstanding job,” says Norene Pitman, senior warden at Holy Spirit. “They were together as they processed which is hard to do.”

Conway was impressed that he and his troop, although not Episcopalians, could receive communion. “Thank you for the service and letting us take part,” Conway says. “It is great to be recognized. It was good of you to have the service.” Jimenez underscores Conway. “I am thankful for the support of Scouting that the pastor and congregation at Holy Spirit Episcopal Church have exhibited. I hope to not only continue, but to improve the relationship in the future. Thank you once again.”

Holy Cross Celebrates Graduates

Church of the Holy Cross in Edgewood spent the Eucharist on May 7 celebrating its graduates, and welcomed its former rector, the Rev. Canon Raymond Ranev as celebrant at the request of the graduates. The graduates (pictured from left) were: Connor Morrison, Julia Kirby, Adela Gallegos, Morgan Crotta and Nicandra DiRaddo. The graduates, and the congregation, were treated to a potluck luncheon and cake.

St Chad’s Feasts at Picnic

The congregation of St. Chad’s gathered at Elena Gallegos Picnic Grounds, Albuquerque for its annual Parish Picnic Sunday June 11. In addition to the food, the people gave a hearty welcome to the Rev. Patty Soukup, who was appointed Deacon at St. Chad’s by Bishop Michael Vono.

Convention 2017

The 65th annual Convention will convene October 19-21, 2017, at the El Paso Marriott Hotel, 1600 Airway Boulevard. Among the duties required of the Convention will be the election of offices. The deadline for nominations is July 28th. The Cathedral and Area Deans will be acting as the Nomination Committee. Persons wishing to stand for election should contact their dean to place their name in nomination. Nomination requires completion of the biographical form, answering the questions provided, and submitting an electronic (jpeg) mugshot for publication. The forms will be posted on the Diocesan website in June.

Diocesan Offices to be Elected - 2017

**Cathedral Chapter**
- One Lay Person or Clergy for a three-year term

**Standing Committee**
- One Lay Person for a three-year term
- One Clergy for a three-year term

**Diocesan Council**
- One Lay Person for a two-year term
- One Clergy for a two-year term
- One Lay Person for a one-year term

**Disciplinary Board**
- One Lay Person for a four-year term
- One Clergy for a four-year term
Digital illustrators welcome seniors with dance.

St. Chad’s Foundation gave a big “aloha” to the parish with a luau featuring Hawaiian food, music and hula dancing on May 6.

Bishop Michael Vono joined more than 110 of St. Chad’s congregants and their guests at the foundation’s “Spring Fever Fest,” an annual fundraiser that features live and silent auctions. Attendees got the chance to bid on everything from a season’s worth of New Mexico Philharmonic tickets to a year’s worth of Barbara Caldwell’s on everything from a season’s worth of New Mexico live and silent auctions. Attendees got the chance to bid on everything from a season’s worth of New Mexico live and silent auctions.

Keeping with this year’s luau theme, but without the pit-roasted pig, St. Chad’s own Chef Maureen Lisi-MacReady cooked up a delicious menu of kalua pork sliders, huli-huli chicken skewers and haupia with cashew, coconut and roasted pig, St. Chad's own Chef Maureen Lisi-MacReady.

Dried pineapple brittle.

A presentation by dancers Cindi and Les Heffner from Hawaii O Hawai’i demonstrated several aspects of Hawaiian culture as well as provided the entertainment for the evening. They also led several participants through a hula lesson, emphasizing their motto: Mai helahela i ka hale — ehulamai (leave your bashfulness at home — just hula!). Bishop Vono didn’t join the dancing, but he said he enjoyed the fellowship and the luau atmosphere.

St. Chad’s Foundation has used the proceeds raised by Spring Fever Fest for a number of projects at the church. The money has paid for a large “welcome” sign near the street, upgrades to the landscaping and parking lot, and most recently, it has helped pay for roof replacement over the offices, classrooms and commons area.

The foundation’s directors who set up and coordinated the event include Jim Frost, president; Joe Allotta, vice president; Bob Gough, secretary; Bernice Dicks, treasurer; Ellen Coman, Bob Francis, Brian Hill, Merri Jean Jones and Bob Kingsbury. St. Chad’s rector, the Rev. Jeremiah Griffin, serves as clergy advisor to the foundation.

Bishop Vono didn’t join the dancing, but he said he enjoyed the fellowship and the luau atmosphere.

The first two chapters introduce a way of understanding the Spirit and the seven gifts. The next seven chapters focus on each of the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the last two chapters illustrate how the fruits of the Spirit help us in our spiritual growth. Sessions will be held on Wednesdays, 2:30-4:00, July 12 – August 2. Books will be available for $10 before the first session. Space is limited. To register, email Ruth D’Arcy at darcyruth@gmail.com.

We fished, picnicked, and explored the beautiful grounds. Our church yard sale is June 24, 8-2.

Faith to enjoy a lovely day at Camp Davis, a guest ranch set high in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico. We fished, picnicked, and explored the beautiful grounds. St. Paul's Peace, Las Vegas.

Thank you from St. Paul’s Peace to all who have donated books for the summer literacy program for the children of Las Vegas that will occur in August. Please call or email if you have books to donate.

Donna Lukacs
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The Woman’s Spirituality Program at The Church of the Holy Faith will be discussing the Trinity’s feminine Life-Giver, the Holy Spirit, in four sessions this summer.

Enkindled: Holy Spirit, Holy Gifts, by Albert Haase, OFM and his sister Bridget Haase, OFM is the text for the sessions. The book consists of twelve short chapters, each including text, questions for reflection, and prayer.

The first two chapters introduce a way of understanding the Spirit and the seven gifts. The next seven chapters focus on each of the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the last two chapters illustrate how the fruits of the Spirit help us in our spiritual growth.

Holy Family, Santa Fe
Camille Donoghue
Holy Family continues to host monthly meetings of the Interfaith Clergy Alliance and the New Mexico Autism Society, and observed Memorial Day by all dressing in blue to highlight autism.

Our Music Director, Mary Badarak, is hosting “Choir Camp” for adults on Saturday afternoons beginning June 17.

Holy Family will host its annual Fun Fair September 16, but at another location. Stay tuned for specifics!

Holy Family goes blue for Autism awareness.

St. James, Taos
Gweneth Glenn
St. James, Taos will join with Habitat for Humanity to build a home for the wonderful, hard-working Padilla Family. Angela and Augustin Padilla are parents to three adorable children: Laelah, 3, and twins Paul and Benjamin, 2. Angela is a stay-at-home mom. Her little ones keep her very busy! Augustin works at Wolfgang Spa Works, repairing and installing hot tubs. They are both originally from Taos and have lived here most of their lives.

Thursday and Friday, June 16-17, parishioners will gather at the Padilla’s home site to help construct their house. On Sunday the Padilla family will be with us to worship and celebrate Fathers’ Day at a Parish BBQ. The Habitat for Humanity team will also be with us selling the bricks and sticks to be used in the Padilla’s home.

St. Paul’s Peace, Las Vegas
Rev. Madelynn Johnston
Thank you from St. Paul’s Peace to all who have donated books for the summer literacy program for the children of Las Vegas that will occur in August. Please call or email if you have books to donate.

Thanks to the generosity of Holy Faith, a number of congregants from St. Paul’s Peace joined members of Holy Faith to enjoy a lovely day at Camp Davis, a guest ranch set high in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico. We fished, picnicked, and explored the beautiful grounds.

Our church yard sale is June 24, 8-2.

St. Stephen’s, Española
Karen Morris
St. Stephen’s continues its 10:30 am summer schedule of one Eucharist through the end of July. The Propers Study continues to meet on Tuesday evenings at 5:30 pm.

Trinity on the Hill, Los Alamos
Trinity Tidings
Sisters and brothers in Christ as a connection to God through nature and labor in the vineyard are once again tending the Community Garden on North Mesa.

Members of the Youth Choir will again attend the Royal School of Church Music Camp in St Stephen’s Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre PA in July.

St. Athanasius, who so eloquently and powerfully honored the Holy Trinity with his writings, has been named the Patron Saint of the parish.
Scientific and Episcopalian Priest The Rev. Edward Ostertag passed away on Thursday, May 11 at the age of 91, surrounded by his family in Seattle, Washington.

Father Ostertag became a prominent voice against the Vietnam War for equal rights for women, including advocating for the ordination of women in the church, disability rights, Native American rights, and the civil rights movement. His churches always hosted a variety of groups like AA and NA. He spoke out strongly for gay rights at a time when AIDS patients were isolated pariahs. In 1980, he made national television news for blessing a gay couple in his church. In 1986 he was made an honorary Lakota chief for his service to the Living Waters Sioux congregation in Denver. His example inspired several people who knew him to enter the priesthood.

Edward Frederick Ostertag was born on June 5, 1925, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Carl F. Ostertag and Kathryn Woodgate. The third of six children, he grew up in Denver. His example inspired several people who knew him to enter the priesthood.

He was drafted into the Army in 1943, just after finishing high school. He became a medical technician in the field hospital following the Eisenhower front across Europe. Much of his work involved disposing of lost limbs and fallen soldiers in brutal circumstances. His WWII experiences would chart the course of his life, even though he rarely spoke of them, even to his family and closest friends.

He attended the University of the South on the GI Bill and graduated in 1949, then moved to New York City where he studied at the General Seminary and worked as a social worker in the South Bronx. During his time in New York he met Caroline Deborah Hopewell who was studying at Vassar College. Caroline came from an English family in Albuquerque, and they were married in Albuquerque on July 6, 1953. They would have four children.

He was ordained to the diaconate in 1952 by Bishop Stoney, and ordained a priest the next year by Bishop Kinsolving, at Holy Trinity Church in Raton, New Mexico. In 1960, he and his growing family moved to Fort Collins, Colorado, where he served as the rector at St. Luke’s for 20 years. In Fort Collins, he demonstrated his skill at building a church and leading mainstream congregations to address pressing social issues. Saint Luke’s grew from a church of 110 seats in a crumbling building to over 400 seats in a new building, which remains one of the architectural gems of Fort Collins.

In March of 1981, Edward suffered a severe mental breakdown and was hospitalized in Denver for several months. Attitudes about depression were different than what they are today and the experience left him feeling deeply betrayed by the bishop of Colorado, who was one of the most conservative in the country.

The family moved to Denver, where Fr. Ostertag took a position as Rector of St. Barnabas, a crumbling church with a small and shrinking congregation near Capitol Hill. He would stay there from 1984 to 1991, and built it into one of Denver’s most vibrant and diverse churches.

In 1985, he prompted heated debate when he gave a series of Denver’s most vibrant and diverse churches.

Fr. Ostertag spent the remainder of his professional life advocating for The Episcopal Church to be more inclusive. Edward and Caroline retired to her family’s house in the tiny village of Hillsboro in 1986. He was very active in local environmental issues, served as rector of St. Paul’s in nearby Truth or Consequences, and in the New Mexico Democratic Party. After Caroline’s death in 1995, he remained in Hillsboro, where he found a home among his neighbors and the rural New Mexico landscape he loved.

After years of living alone, he moved to Seattle to be closer to his children. He is survived by his children, Anne Rogers, Robert Ostertag, Emilie Lowens, Martha Adams, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Memorial services took place in Seattle on May 24 at St. Paul’s and in Hillsboro on June 10.

Rest in Peace: Edward F. Ostertag
By Martha Ostertag Adams, His daughter

Social activist and Episcopal Priest The Rev. Edward Ostertag passed away on Thursday, May 11 at the age of 91, surrounded by his family in Seattle, Washington. Father Ostertag became a prominent voice against the Vietnam War for equal rights for women, including advocating for the ordination of women in the church, disability rights, Native American rights, and the civil rights movement. His churches always hosted a variety of groups like AA and NA. He spoke out strongly for gay rights at a time when AIDS patients were isolated pariahs. In 1980, he made national television news for blessing a gay couple in his church. In 1986 he was made an honorary Lakota chief for his service to the Living Waters Sioux congregation in Denver. His example inspired several people who knew him to enter the priesthood.

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The Diocesan Staff gathered at Bishop's Ridge May 23 for its annual retreat under the leadership of Cathy Bailey (center). From left to right are: Annette Chavez y De La Cruz, Toye Robertson, the Rev. Patty Soukup, Guy Gronquist, Bishop Vono, Amy Morrison, the Very Rev. Canon Carole McGowan, Jerry Gallegos and Mary Jewell. The Rev. Canon Raymond Raze in the mirror.

The Diocese of the Rio Grande played host to the Spring Gathering of the Transition Ministers of Provinces 5, 6 and 7 from May 8-11. The Diocesan Transition Ministers shared strategies and experiences in helping congregations through the changes inherent in clergy departures and arrivals.

IONA GRADUATION
The Very Rev. Canon Carole McGowan, dean of the Bishop's School for Ministries, blesses the first graduates from the IONA initiative, David Martin (right) and Skip Bambrook.

Transition Ministers gather at the Bosque
Bishop Vono welcomed most of the clergy in the Diocese at two clergy summits in May. Clergy gathered at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Las Cruces, on May 13, and at the Bosque Center, Albuquerque, on May 24.

Bishop Vono explained that it was his intent that this clergy summit be held in both the northern and southern parts of the diocese every two years. In his 41 years of ministry, the Bishop has found that the best approach for change is gradualism. He briefly explained the process for selecting his replacement and indicated that today's session is a part of that closure.

The sessions were divided into three parts. The first part is for each participant to spend 3-4 minutes answering this question: How are you doing personally? In the second part of the Summit, the Bishop asked all present to answer: What have you brought to your congregation that has enlivened it and inspired it to grow? Or, if you are new, what do you envision that you will bring?

Bishop Vono commented on his own life in the Diocese, saying: “Three things come to mind. First, I feel that I’ve brought a colorful presence to the Diocese. Second, I brought myself, and people tell me, ‘You haven’t changed from when you were a priest.’ Third, I hope I’ve brought a sense of identity and mission. What does it mean that we’re a missionary diocese?”

In the third part, Bishop Vono distributed a draft document describing what has gone on in the Diocese for the past seven years. The clergy read portions. “This is a shared legacy of what we all have accomplished together,” he said. The document, “The Shared Legacy of Ministries with Bishop Michael L. Vono” will be distributed at the annual Diocesan Convention and published in Together following Convention.

Bishop Vono is surrounded by the DTM of Provinces 5, 6 and 7.
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DIOCESAN CONVENTION DEADLINES
Nominations
July 28
Constitution & Canon Changes
August 11
Resolutions
August 11
Reports to Convention
September 1

PRIEST AND DEACONS
The Rev. Madelynn Johnston (left) chats with Deacons, the Rev. Lane Perdue (right) and the Rev. Pat Masterman.

Bishop Vono leads summit discussion
Photos by Robert Batten

Together in the
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE RIO GRANDE
DIOCESE
Diaconal Ranks Grow by Six


The Rev. David Martin was ordained to the Vocational Diaconate. Ordained as Transitional Deacons were the Rev. John Tober, the Rev. J.P. Arrossa, the Rev. James Stambaugh, and the Rev. Capt. Mark Lee. Received as a Transitional Deacon from the Roman Catholic Church was the Rev. Jeffrey Toliver.

The Rev. Cn. Raymond Raney, Canon to the Ordinary, preached the sermon for the service, and stressed the call to serve God makes to all God’s people. “We are called to serve. Never forget that calling as servants to the servants of God. Once you are ordained, a deacon’s stole will be placed over your left shoulder. It is the left to leave your right arm free to be of service to the Lord and his people.

“You are each and every one of you called to the Lord’s service. I’m not just talking to the ordinands seated here. I’m talking to all of you seated in our Cathedral. We are all called to service to the Lord. To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the needy, visit the prisoner, and make welcome the stranger in the land.”

Canon Raney closed with a poem by Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore:

I slept and dreamt
that LIFE was JOY,
I awoke and saw that
LIFE was SERVICE.
I acted and behold,
SERVICE was JOY.

Diaconal Ranks Grow by Six

The Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande concluded Pride Week by marching in the annual Albuquerque Pride Parade on Saturday, June 10. About 100 marchers from six parishes were represented as we marched in Christians demonstrating our love for all God’s children and our baptismal vow to respect the dignity of every human being.

130 people gathered earlier the same week for a Pride Eucharist at St. Michael’s and All Angels where Bishop Vono celebrated.

DRG takes Pride to the streets

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In God's eyes, there is no them. There IS only us. The following commentary, headlined “To God there is no them: Only us,” ran Sunday, July 17, 2016, in the “Santa Fe New Mexican.” It is even more timely today.

By the Rev. James Gordon

The Church of the Holy Faith, Santa Fe

On July 3, 2016, at The Church of the Holy Faith, we observed Independence Day. The service was beautiful and moving, from the processional hymns to the meditation near the end, the Prayer of St. Francis, sung beautifully by our choir.

I have a great love for this country, I believe God did shed his grace upon it, and I am most grateful to God for placing my life in it. All of that hit me strongly as I heard Director of Music Mark Childers play the prelude, Aaron Copland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man,” then the opening strains of the processional, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.”

Sunday, July 3, my sense of patriotism and pride was tempered, in the best way, by the Gospel reading — Matthew 5:43–48 from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ words about loving and praying for one’s enemies — and by the St. Francis prayer with its beautiful opening, “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.”

All in all, even with last month’s Orlando nightclub tragedy and the painful memories of June 3, I felt like a good day to be an American. A very good day. A week later, with the fatal police shootings of black men in Minnesota and Louisiana, followed by the sniper attack that killed five police officers in Dallas, followed Friday by ambushes of police in Tennessee, Missouri and Georgia, my feelings — and I imagine that of most Americans — are complicated.

This past Sunday the lesson from the Hebrew scriptures featured a reading from the seventh chapter of the Book of Amos, a section where God shows Amos a plumb line which he puts in the midst of his people. Plumb lines are used to show what is straight and what is crooked, and I find myself wanting to be shown a plumb line like God shows Amos, a plumb line that shows what in us is in straight and what in us is crooked. Not who is straight and who is crooked. But what is in us, all of us, each of us, is straight and what is crooked.

I do believe that America was blessed by God at her very beginnings, and that in terms of nationhood, America is, as Lincoln put it, “the last, best hope of mankind.” But even that is so, that we do well to remember ancient Israel, the nation God created for himself, and the people he created the nation for, the ancient Hebrews. They were, as the Book of Zechariah says, the apple of his eye. God himself told their progenitor, Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” Such was God’s love for Israel.

Yet the God of love is also the God of justice, and he grieved when the nation and people he loved repeatedly turned away from justice and therefore from him. In the 10th century B.C., the Hebrew people had split into two nations, Israel and Judah. Two centuries later in Israel, while the king and his chief priest saw peace and prosperity, Amos, with his prophet’s eyes saw injustice, exploitation of the poor, public corruption and religious observance based on ritual instead of real piety Amos told the powers that God would judge them and he did, using the words Asyrian as his instrument.

Amos is notable for that prophesying of God’s judgment, and for something else according to Old Testament scholar Joan Comay, he is the first in Scripture to propose the concept of a God who is universal and not just the tribal deity of the Hebrews.

In Jesus’ day seven centuries or so later, God’s people still did not understand the concept of a universal God. The world still was largely divided between us and them, and the people known as the Samaritans — a mixed people who had come into being as a result of the Assyrian invasion — were most definitely “them.” Considered “half-Jews, at best, they were scorned by the Hebrews, and they scorned the Hebrews in return.

How shocking to his audience, then, was Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan, which we heard on Sunday, a parable that was meant to turn the people’s assumptions about “the other” on its head.

The story is well-known: On the road to Jericho, a man — from the context, a Jew — is set upon by robbers and left for dead. Two members of the Jewish religious establishment — a priest and a Levite — pass the man, perhaps to avoid being declared to be ritually impure. But then a Samaritan passing by sees the man, has compassion on him, binds up his wounds, puts him on his own animal, takes him to an inn where he not only pays for his keeping, but promises to return and pay more if that is needed.

This story Jesus tells in response to the famous question, “Who is my neighbor,” asked by an expert in religious law seeking his own justification. By the way he tells the story, Jesus changes the terms of the question and compels the lawyer, much to his surprise and, I’m sure, his chagrin, to consider it’s the person who helped — it’s the hated Samaritan — who proved to BE a neighbor to the injured man.

Who is my neighbor than prove to be the wrong question. The right question is, “To whom can I be a neighbor?” And the answer is, to anyone, anyone, especially anyone in trouble.

Saturday’s New York Times had this headline: “America Grieves as Its Fuars Being Pulled Further Apart.” The subhead read “Lightening Candles but Asking Whose Side Are You On?”

This feels like a dangerous time in America as well as the world, with many pressures seeking to divide us. The key word there is “US.”

God is the God of all the nations and of all the peoples. In that sense, there is no “us versus them.” There can’t be. There is only us. When people act lovingly, that’s us. When people act despicably, that, too, is us.

In the wake of the recent shootings, and with the emotions just past ahead of us, conventions that mean red hot rhetoric and possibly more violence, all will feed pressure to emotionally distance ourselves one from another, to allow it to become as another New York Times headline put it: liberals against conservatives, Black Lives Matter against Blue Lives Matter and protesters against the police.

I pray we can avoid that. This doesn’t mean not judging actions or words as being good or bad, right or wrong; it doesn’t mean not participating in the political process and in serious discussion, even argument. It does mean remembering that when people do something that in our eyes is regrettable or even terrible, they remain part of us. Like it or not, there is no them.

God showed the prophet Amos a plumb line, a line that indicated what was straight among the people and what was crooked among the people. Of us, for our faith, too, have a plumb line. That plumb line is Jesus, his actions and his words — and the words of his servant Francis. Two Sundays ago, as we celebrated America’s Independence Day, we heard sung Francis’ famous prayer. In it, he can think of no better way to answer the question “Whose side are you on?” than by meditating on its opening lines...