Sharing in the Mystery of Las Posadas

By Bishop Michael B. Hunn

I have a vivid memory of Advent from my childhood. In the dark and chilly night with a little bit of snow on the ground my family gathered with many others to walk through the streets of town carrying candles, and singing. We knocked on peoples’ doors; they closed those doors in our faces. We sang again and kept walking holding our candles and enjoying the luminarias all around. Finally we knocked on the door which opened and we were welcomed, to a fiesta, a party. As a young boy I didn’t really understand what was going on, but that experience I still hold with me. I remember the taste of the hot chocolate. I believe there were tamaleivers involved. I remember how good it felt to finally be warm inside the house that welcomed us after shivering as we wandered from place to place.

Las Posadas is a wonderful liturgical tradition which has its origins in over 400 years of practice within Latino/Hispanic Christian congregations. It commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph seeking room at the inn. Then again they knocked on doors which were not open to them, and then finally the innkeeper offered them room in the stable where Christ our Savior was born. In Hispanic Latino Christianity, Las Posadas is celebrated as a novena for nine days. Beginning on December 16, Christian congregations wander through the streets singing and knocking on doors and join a party when the doors are open. It’s all organized ahead of time, of course. But the experience can bring your heart close not only to what Mary and Joseph must’ve felt, but also to the experience of all of those people today who have no home, no warmth, nowhere to lay their heads. I was talking with some of our Spanish-speaking congregations about attending Las Posadas with them. Canon Lee Curtis and I began to talk about how poignant it would be to celebrate Las Posadas with those people who are camped on the bridge trying to claim asylum in the United States.

The bishop told Juan to ask the lady for a sign. About this time Juan’s uncle became seriously ill, which convinced Juan to avoid the lady. However, she found Juan and after assuring him of his uncle’s recovery, and provided him with Castilian roses, not native to Mexico, for Juan to carry to the bishop in his cape or tilma.

On December 12, when Juan Diego opened his tilma in the bishop’s presence, the Castilian roses fell to the ground, and the bishop dropped to his knees. On the tilma where the roses had been appeared an image of Mary exactly as she had appeared at the hill of Tepeyac. According to a posting on Franciscan Media, a ministry of the Franciscan Friars, “Mary’s appearance to Juan Diego as one of his people is a powerful reminder that Mary—and the God who sent her—accept all peoples. In the context of the sometimes rude and cruel treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards, the apparition was a reminder to the Spaniards and an event of vast significance for the indigenous population. While a number of them had converted before this incident, they now came in droves. According to a contemporary chronicler, nine million Indians became Catholic in a very short time. In these days when we hear so much about God’s preferential option for the poor, Our Lady of Guadalupe cries out to us that God’s love for and identification with the poor is an age-old truth that stems from the Gospel itself.”

The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe dates to the 16th century. A poor Indian named Cuauhtlatohuac, who was given the name Juan Diego at baptism, lived in a small village near Mexico City. On Saturday morning December 9, 1531, he was journeying to Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As he was walking by a hill called Tepeyac, he heard music like the warbling of birds and radiant cloud appeared. Within the cloud stood an Indian maiden adorned as an Aztec princess. The lady spoke to him in his own language and sent him to the bishop of Mexico, a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga with the message that the bishop was to build a chapel in the place where the lady appeared.

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Bishop Hunn bestows blessings to a baby during the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Bede’s Episcopal Church in Santa Fe.

Celebrating Our Lady at St. Bede’s, Santa Fe

Father Javier Arias, associate rector of St. Bede’s, in his sermon addresses Karen, Alejandra, Said and Leonardo, who were making First Communion at the Feast Day after completing their first level of catechism study.

The Rev. M. Catherine Volland, rector of St. Bede’s, administers the chalice during the celebration Eucharist.

Bishop Michael Bueker Hunn elevates the breviad of Christ’s body during the Eucharist in celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe

At St. Bede’s, Santa Fe.

The feast of all flavors followed the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady at St. Bede’s, Santa Fe.

Santa Inez, Terlingua

Worshippers gather at the Church of Santa Inez in Terlingua, Texas, for the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Ms. Juantita Mendoza and Alona Laya assist the Rev. Mike Walters (front) and the Rev. Canon Lee Curtis as Our Lady of Guadalupe is processed in Terlingua, Texas, for services at the Church of Santa Inez.

Bishop Hunn’s Visitation Schedule for January-February 2020

January 5 St. James’ Church, Mesilla Park

January 18 Celebration of New Ministry, Cathedral Church of St. John, Albuquerque

January 19 Cathedral Church of St. John, Albuquerque

January 26 St. James’ Church, Taos

February 2 Ending of a Pastoral Relationship and Leave-taking from a Congregation, St. Mary’s Church, Albuquerque

February 2 St. Chad’s Church, Albuquerque
We Episcopalians believe in a loving, liberating, and life-giving God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As constituent members of the Anglican Communion in the United States, we are descendants of and partners with the Church of England and the Scottish Episcopal Church, and are part of the third largest group of Christians in the world. We believe in following the teachings of Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection saved the world.

We have a legacy of inclusion, aspiring to tell and exemplify God’s love for every human being. Men and women serve as bishops, priests, and deacons in our church. Laypeople and clergy cooperate as leaders at all levels of our church. Leadership is a gift from God, and can be expressed by all people in our church, regardless of sexual identity or orientation. We believe that God loves you—no exceptions.

The Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion is the gathering of Anglican and Episcopal churches from around the world. Today, the Anglican Communion comprises more than 80 million members in 44 regional and national member churches in more than 160 countries. The Episcopal Church is part of the Anglican Communion, and is comprised of 108 dioceses in 16 nations. At the head of the Anglican Communion is the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Justin Welby.

The Episcopal Church, established shortly after the American Revolution, has its roots in the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church, known as the Church of England, had a strong following in colonial America, but when the colonies won their independence, the majority of America’s Anglican clergy refused to swear allegiance to the British monarch as was required. As a result, the Episcopal Church was formed. The vibrancy of the Anglican Communion reflects the lives of its congregants and their commitment to God’s mission in the world.

The Bible

The 39 Articles, a 1536 foundational document of Anglican theology, relates that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.” The Scriptures, comprised of the Old and New Testament, as well as some apocryphal texts, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is of extraordinary importance to Episcopal worship. During a Sunday morning service, the congregation will usually hear three readings from Scripture, and much of the liturgy from The Book of Common Prayer is based explicitly on the Biblical texts. According to the Catechism, “We understand the meaning of the Bible by the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in the true interpretation of the Scriptures” (p. 853–4).

There are several translations of the Bible authorized for use:

- King James or Authorized Version, the historic Bible of The Episcopal Church
- English Revision (1881)
- American Revision (1901)
- Revised Standard Version (1952)
- Jerusalem Bible (1966)
- New English Bible with the Apocrypha (1970)
- Good News Bible / Today’s English Version (1976)
- New American Bible (1970)
- Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition (1973)
- New International Version (1978)
- New Jerusalem Bible (1987)
- Revised English Bible (1989)
- New Revised Standard Version (1990)
- Common English Bible (2012)

The Book of Common Prayer

The Book of Common Prayer is a treasure chest full of devotional and teaching resources for individuals and congregations, but it is also the primary symbol of our unity. As Armentrout and Sllicos note in their Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, “Anglican liturgical piety has been rooted in the Prayer Book tradition since the publication of the first English Prayer Book in 1549.” We, who are many and diverse, come together in Christ through our worship, our common prayer.

The prayer book, most recently revised in 1979, contains our liturgies, our prayers, our theological documents, and much, much more.

The Sacraments

Our Anglican tradition recognizes sacraments as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 857) Holy Baptism and the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, are the two great sacraments given by Christ to his Church. In the case of Baptism, the outward and visible sign is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the Eucharist, the outward and visible sign is bread and wine, given and received according to Christ’s command. The inward and spiritual grace is union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God’s family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit. In the case of the Eucharist, the outward and visible sign is bread and wine, given and received according to Christ’s command. The inward and spiritual grace is union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God’s family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit. In the case of Baptism, the outward and visible sign is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a pastor to the people, to share the bishop in the overseeing of the Church, to proclaim the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese, to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church, to proclaim the Word of God, to act in Christ’s name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church, and to ordain others to continue Christ’s ministry.

The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people, to share the bishop in the overseeing of the Church, to proclaim the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need, and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ, to come together week by week for corporate worship, and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.
In El Paso, Border Ministry Assists Mexicans Fleeing Violence

By Lynette Wilson

[Episcopal News Service – El Paso, Texas] An informal tent city has taken stake in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, alongside the entrance to the Santa Fe Street Bridge, one of three bridges connecting the sprawling northern Mexico border city to El Paso, Texas. In recent months, Mexican families fleeing rising violence perpetrated by drug cartels have arrived at the U.S. southern border seeking protection in the United States via the asylum system. Unlike Central American asylum-seekers who have been arriving steadily at the U.S.-Mexico border for more than a year, there’s no “official” system for handling the surge in Mexicans seeking the same protection from violence and persecution.

“The people who are living out on the streets by the ports, they are all Mexican. There is no established system to deal with Mexican asylum-seekers seeking the protection of the United States,” said the Rev. Cristina Rathbone, who while on sabbatical for three months has served the Diocese of Rio Grande in El Paso as a bridge chaplain, accompanying families as they wait their turn to claim asylum and holding daily English and art classes for children. “By the three ports of entry, there are three tent communities, and the people there — more than two-thirds of them have families — have self-organized,” she said. “They have created unofficial community-based lists. The people at the top of those lists go up to the ports of entry and seek permission to ask for asylum from the border patrol agents every two hours. 24 hours a day, and almost always are turned away with the same refrain. There is no room.”

Earlier in the year, the Trump administration implemented Migrant Protection Protocols, a policy commonly referred to as “Remain in Mexico” that requires asylum-seekers to wait in shelters in Mexico while their credible fear claims are processed. The policy and others like that brokered with individual countries, El Salvador for example, were designed to deter asylum-seekers. The protocols, however, do not apply to Mexican asylum-seekers who have congregated in tents. President Trump has characterized immigrants and migrants as “murders” and “rapists.” And, though cartels have exploited the chaos at the border to their advantage, some migrants are fleeing cartel violence in their communities.

During a homily delivered at the second annual Border Ministries Summit held in Arizona, Rathbone shared stories from her work. “I remember sitting on the Santa Fe Bridge, waiting at our ports of entry, nonetheless, because they have the right to apply for asylum in this country. And all are treated with the same respect. They are pregnant women, unaccompanied minors and thousands more, including the most vulnerable among them, who are also Jesus himself, and many are showing me photos of her husband in an open coffin just yesterday, a mother sobbing on the sidewalk, ‘I never asked for this — a father who was sent away with the same refrain: ‘There is no room.’”

“A grandfather shot in the stomach and then slashed to death. A woman who was murdered in a taxi, then her husband was murdered in the same taxi later. A man who was shot in the head, his body by his son’s own murderers,” she recounted. “And, just yesterday, a mother sobbing on the sidewalk, showing me photos of her husband in an open coffin — murdered in their home, a week ago. All of these people, who are also Jesus himself, and many thousands more, including the most vulnerable among us: pregnant women, unaccompanied minors and members of the LGBTQ community, are being denied their right to apply for asylum in this country. And all are awaiting at our ports of entry, nonetheless, because they still believe in the hope that is, or used to be, the United States of America.”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus says. “Just as you do to one of the least of these, you do to me.”

Episcopalians are providing humanitarian aid to migrants and asylum-seekers on both sides of the border, stretching from El Paso down through the Big Bend region, and includes 40 percent of the southern border. Volunteers have been working on both sides of the border in Juárez, the diocese has provided assistance to the Rev. Hector Trejo who serves as vicar of three Anglican churches in the Diocese of Northern Mexico. “When the buses were coming through, we in the Diocese of the Rio Grande were caring for the people that were coming off the buses and helping them get resettled,” said Rev. Rio Grande Bishop Michael Hunn. “When the U.S. government started the ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy, instead of those buses coming into the Diocese of the Rio Grande, people were just put on the buses and driven across into Juárez and left on the street in Juárez. But we felt that it is our responsibility to help and care for those folks who are trying to come to the United States.”

“For some in the United States, it may seem the most recent wave of migration has ceased. That’s not the case, it’s just less visible. Migration has not stopped,” said Hunn. “It’s just that the people are on the other side of the border now. And so, we were able to work with and leverage our existing relationship with Padre Hector Trejo. … He opened up immediately one of his churches to serve as a shelter” Trejo has now opened the doors to two of his three churches to serve as shelters, with assistance from Rio Grande diocese and the wider support of its borderlands ministry.

In August, when the Rev. Lee Curtis became Rio Grande’s canon to the ordinary based in El Paso, shelters were the urgent need. “We were serving mostly Cuban nationals. This was just as the ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy took effect,” he said. “So, the task was pretty clear: build up shelter, support the Cubans as they’re waiting in Mexico for their credible fear interview. Then when they get their interview, they’re released by CBP [Customs and Border Protection] back to the U.S. and we’ve done our job.” One of the other major challenges, though, is that almost as soon as faith-based and other humanitarian workers get a handle on the situation, it changes.

“The second we feel like we have figured out the shape of migration in Juárez, it changes, whether through U.S. policy or where folks are coming from,” said Curtis.

“In late September, early October, we were down to about 15 Cuban asylum-seekers, and then the Mexicans started coming from southern states, and they’ve started sleeping around the bridges. It’s a guess as to when CBP will be letting people over. So, they have been staying by the bridges because they don’t want to miss an opportunity to cross.” Some of the families have been living in tents in Juárez for two months. As the weather gets colder, some are sleeping in shelters, returning to the bridges in the morning to take their places in line. And for some, the long wait can result in being sent back to the very communities they’ve fled, as Rathbone pointed out in her homily, when she told the story of a woman with five children who’d fled after the cartel tried to kill her oldest son. They were denied asylum. The likely outcome if they return home, the mother told Rathbone, is that her sons will be forced to choose between joining the cartel or death.

“It’s important to remember that these Mexican asylum-seekers are the people in the small pueblos and the big towns and the enormous cities who are saying no to the violence and the drug cartels of Mexico. These are the people whose lives are being threatened and many of them ended because they are refusing to join the criminal enterprises,” said Rathbone. “They are determined to protect their children from that because they are small business owners, because they are taxi drivers, because they are people who have been preyed on by the cartels. So they’re, in fact, the very opposite kind of people they’re being characterized as being by the president and many others. These are the brave, law-abiding pillars of their communities who have been forced to flee by the violence that, at the moment, is on the upswing in Mexico again.”

– Lynette Wilson is a reporter and managing editor of Episcopal News Service. She can be reached at lwilson@episcopalchurch.org.
Border Ministries Summit Calls Christians Serving Migrants to Common Mission

By Lynette Wilson

[Episcopal News Service – Tucson, Arizona] The steel border fence separating Nogales, Arizona, from Nogales, Mexico, follows a rolling hill, and depending on the slope, residents can sit on their porches and watch life unfold on either side. It was the mayor of Nogales, Mexico, who in 1918 initiated a 6-foot wire fence separating the two cities, and countries, in a transborder “good fences make good neighbors” cooperative spirit. A hundred years of history ensued, families living on either side crossing over, adults to work and shop, children to attend school. Up until a few years ago, when the United States installed steel mesh between the slats, families would gather at tables set on either side and share meals, passing homemade foods through the fence. Not anymore. A teenager’s death precipitated further separation. In October 2012, Customs and Border Protection agent Lonnie Swartz fatally shot 18-year-old José Rodríguez through the fence, the Rev. Rodger Babnew said, as he pointed to a single-stone concrete building on the Mexico side that features a mural memorializing the teen. Babnew, a deacon serving St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Nogales, Arizona, is co-convener of Cruzando Fronteras, a Diocese of Arizona border ministry that, along with ecumenical partners, provides shelter, food, medical care and other assistance to migrants and asylum-seekers on the Mexico side of the border.

On November 21, opening day of the second annual Border Ministries Summit, Babnew and a caravan of Episcopalians and other Christians drove 70 miles along Interstate 19 from Tucson to Nogales to see the border wall firsthand. In all, 200 Christians from across the United States had gathered at St. Philip’s in the Hills Episcopal Church in Tucson’s Catalina foothills for the summit held November 21-23. Summit participants learned about the 1,954-mile border and its history, the U.S. immigration system, the impact of U.S. foreign and trade policy on societies and economies in Mexico and Central America, and the various ministries carried out by dioceses and churches along the border. From Brownsville, TX, to San Diego, CA, Episcopalians are providing humanitarian aid to migrants and asylum-seekers and, where possible, support to law enforcement officers in their parishes and communities.

Historically, adult males make most of the attempts to cross the border, but in the last five or six years, families, women and unaccompanied minors, many fleeing violence in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, have begun making the journey. It’s not uncommon to see the border wall, which in most places is vertical steel slats, cutting a line through cities and small towns along the border. The border region extends 50 miles north of the wall into the United States where border agents make random stops at checkpoints along interstates and highways. Most migrants and asylum-seekers entering the United States make their way further north, beyond the border wall, reuniting with family and friends in other parts of the country.

“We’re inviting folks to recognize that the migrant journey just doesn’t stop at the border; it continues as people step into our immigration process. We are called to continue to walk with, serve, and be transformed by migrants as they journey through the process,” the Rev. David Chavez, Diocese of Arizona missioner for border ministries and a summit convener, said in a conversation with Episcopal News Service. “I think the message is clear that the notion of ‘border’ is really fluid in the sense that a border is a horizon that we encounter whenever we encounter the other. It can go on to find ways to go beyond our small communities, our zones of comfort, and maybe begin to bridge-build into communities of people who are radically different from us and who may actually share the same mission that we share — to reach out, to be present, to walk with and to serve the stranger in our midst.”

Anglican and Episcopal bishops gathered at the conference issued a statement at the summit’s end recognizing the Americas’ shared history and the human desire for a safe, violence-free, economically viable life. “We … acknowledge that North and Central America have a long history which we share, before the current nations existed. We have been bound together by shared cultures, languages and economies. We are in this situation together and we have been for centuries,” the statement read. “To the migrants we want to say we gathered here with you in our hearts. We see you, we hear you, and we wish to stand with you in our common search for security, dignity, justice, and community. “We also acknowledge that we are all seeking safety from violence and a peaceful way of life for our families. We stand against all criminal activity, the drugs which addict and enslave people, and those who would prey upon others through sex trafficking, kidnapping, and other forms of oppression. Their representatives — bishops of the dioceses of Texas, Arizona, Rio Grande, Los Angeles and San Diego; recognizing the diversity of political ideologies among Episcopalians, stressed that Matthew 25 calls Christians to welcome the stranger.

The first border summit took place in November 2018 in El Paso, Texas, at a time when migrant caravans from Central America arrived regularly at the U.S.-Mexico border in what became an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Earlier this year, detention centers at the U.S. border were over capacity as a steady stream of migrants, many from as far away as China, India, Eritrea and Angola, plus others fleeing Cuba, Venezuela and Brazil, continued to arrive. In April, U.S. Customs and Border Protection detained 109,144 migrants, the highest number since 2007 at the southwestern border. During a border summit session on November 22, Border Patrol Tucson Sector Chief Roy Villareal, who joined the Tucson sector last March, acknowledged that the federal agency didn’t have the capacity in its detention centers and was not equipped to handle the humanitarian crisis at the border. In Arizona, Sarah Eary, who coordinates the asylum program for Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, has been trying to get chaplains placed in migrant detention centers. “We are chaplains to all of them because we believe that the chaplaincy is there to provide the spiritual and emotional care that migrants need. Our presence will not only care for the migrants, but will inhibit bad behavior from happening.”

The U.S. Border Patrol Tucson Sector covers 2,622 miles of border, which is patrolled by 3,900 agents. On November 22, Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said he would expand the Trump administration’s Migrant Protection Protocols program to the Tucson sector. The MPP, commonly called “Remain in Mexico,” requires asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico, some in shelters, some on the streets, while U.S. officials process their cases. The effects of the Remain in Mexico program are visible in cities along the border. For instance, across the downtown bridge connecting Brownsville, TX, to Matamoros in Mexico, the tent city that housed 20 or so families in May has grown to more than 200 tents, said Tatiana Hoeker, who volunteers with migrants in the Diocese of West Texas.

President Donald Trump campaigned on an anti-immigrant rhetoric and since taking office, has banned immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries, gutted the federal refugee resettlement program, implemented policies separating families at the southern border, cut aid to Central America and imposed the Remain in Mexico restrictions. “This administration’s policies are focused not only on curtailing undocumented immigration, but also on substantially reducing legal immigration. From increasing bureaucracy, sending asylum-seekers back to Mexico and attempting to expand the ‘public charge’ provision, this administration’s aim is clear. They want to keep people from coming to the United States, regardless of their immigration status,” said Rushad Thomas, policy adviser in the church’s Washington, D.C.-based Office of Government Relations. “The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations works every day to fulfill our mandate from General Convention, to advocate for a more just and humane immigration system,” wrote Thomas in an email to ENS. “That includes standing up for the rights of asylum-seekers at the southern border.” In collaboration with our partners in the immigration advocacy community, we have actively pushed back against the Migrant Protections Program (Remain in Mexico Policy). This policy has been detrimental to the safety of asylum-seekers. MPP-Related America’s moral obligation to provide a safe haven for individuals fleeing violence and persecution in their homelands. OGP has also called upon lawmakers to provide humanitarian resources and red protection to our suffering sisters and brothers at the border.

Thirty-one percent of Arizona’s 7 million residents identify as Hispanic. Arizona was part of Mexico until 1848 and was the last territory in the lower 48 states admitted as a state in 1912, and it has 25 federally recognized Native American tribes. Connecting to one’s own story of migration and immigration can lead to compassion for others making the journey today, said Arizona Bishop Jennifer Reddall in a sermon preached during the summit’s November 22 evening Eucharist. Reddall shared that, in the 1880s during the time of the German unification wars, one of her “great-great-great-grandfathers” sent for two boys, ages 12 and 14, to the United States from Germany.

Continued on page 14
Climate activist 18-year-old Greta Thunberg has been named TIME magazine’s 2019 Person of the Year, making her the youngest in their history to receive the designation. Previously the youngest recipient was Charles Lindbergh at age 25, and I will put Thunberg at age 16.

Earlier this year, Fortune magazine named her the sixth greatest leader in the world for her leadership in climate activism. The editors of The Christian Century, in their October 23 issue, honored Greta Thunberg as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.” She was held up as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.” She was held up as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.” She was held up as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.”

Heschel says “If we already know what the prophet feels the blast from heaven.” The editors of The Christian Century, in their October 23 issue, honored Greta Thunberg as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.” She was held up as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.” She was held up as a prophet, using Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s definition of biblical prophecy as “the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor.”

The Christian Century editors remarked on her leadership in climate activism. “People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth.” The editors stated that “The prophet speaks words that are almost unbearable extremely, but she also tells us what, deep down, we already know. The science is not in doubt. The forecast models are grim. We either rise to the challenge of rescuing the planet or live with irrevocable consequences.”

This is the thinking behind the El Paso Challenge. “Anxiety and gratitude cannot occupy the same space. When we catalog what we are thankful for, our list of challenges grows less powerful. When I thought about this particular event was not happening to me, but the anxiety I felt over it was hurtful. I found that Step 4 of Mr. Lucado’s process is very helpful. I am grateful for so many things, and while I could not personally help the person against whom this terrible act was committed, I could take the thankfulness I feel and turn it into another act of gratitude.”

I want so much to continue to support the children of that orphanage. I want to build the scope of what I do for them. It takes five positive actions to undo one negative action.

This particular event was not happening to me, but the anxiety I felt over it was hurtful. I found that Step 4 of Mr. Lucado’s process is very helpful. I am grateful for so many things, and while I could not personally help the person against whom this terrible act was committed, I could take the thankfulness I feel and turn it into another act of gratitude. I want so much to continue to support the children of that orphanage. I want to build the scope of what I do for them. It takes five positive actions to undo one negative action.

I want to thank the people on our family’s prayer chain that lifted up the church in Mexico and gave me the sense of community I was looking for. That sense of community is what most people long for and don’t know how to find. I am blessed I have all of you that have prayed with me and for me. I have a new perspective on the prayers we sent on behalf of the Mexican church – the first recipient of the miracle of our prayers was that church. The second recipient was me, because I got to witness it and felt its power second hand.

PS. If you want to get rid of any old Barbies, or Barbie clothes, because they have to be dressed to meet their new owners! you can send them my way, and I will put them through the Barbie Spa. There are many orphanages in Mexico and we have contact with several. I hope to find a good deal at the after-Christmas sales for deflated soccer balls for the boys too. If you have dolls or Barbie items you want to send to the missions, you can contact Kit McAlpin through the diocese and/or Eastern Star and she will get them to us, and we will get them to Mexico. Thank you!
Week 3: January 20-26, 2020
Read: John 5:19-John 7:24 • Reflect

At a North Carolina Church, the Tradition of ‘Child Bishops’ Teaches the Meaning of Advent

By Chris Kamadi

This article was first published in Faith & Leadership.

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, a church enshrines a young chorister as “bishop” every December in a medieval practice that illustrates the upside-down spirit of Advent. Last December, 10-year-old Prakash Keeley proudly donned the gold-and-white bishop’s robe and interlaced a staff that towered over him by a half-foot, and blessed a kneeling congregation with the words of Jesus: “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall never enter it.”

Since 2012, St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has annually enthroned a sixth-grade boy such as Keeley, giving him bishop’s regalia and letting him lead the service for the Feast of St. Nicholas on December 6. The tradition of the “boy bishop,” with roots dating back to medieval times, emphasizes the upside-down aspect of the Advent season. The making of boy bishops, if only for a service, illustrates the words of the Magnificat in a physical way: “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly” (Luke 1:52-55).

At St. Timothy’s, a senior boy chorister receives the honor each year. The chorister is elected by parish leaders for his dedication and involvement with the programs at the church, and one of the privileges is taking on the role of boy bishop in December. The other choristers also take part, dressing as “canons” and vesting him with the robe and a bishop’s ring. The newly enthroned bishop then leads part of the service, reading a prayer from a booklet that includes the names of all the boy bishops from previous years.

The following year, he participates in passing the title on to his successor. The Rev. Steve Rice, the rector of St. Timothy’s, was inspired by the British tradition of boy bishops. The exact origins of the tradition are unclear, but historically the tradition teaches the congregants at St. Timothy’s that everyone is important for the life of the church, Prakash’s mother said: “You can be a young person and still be involved in the church life.”

Youth Ministry Aims to Breathe New Life into Anglican Communion’s Mission

[ACNS, by Rachel Farmer] Young people across the churches of the Anglican Communion are being sought to represent their regions on the new Anglican Youth Network, which has now many young visionaries and leaders for the future. One member of the interim working group, Clifton Nedd, Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) Lay Member and Anglican Alliance Caribbean Facilitator, said the network fulfills the objectives of the ACC resolutions from 2016 and 2019, ensuring that the Church’s mission is open and inclusive of all. This is not simply about keeping young people connected or as a means of sustainability; he said: “Jesus is a deeper goal: to support and facilitate the fulfillment of God’s mission in the lives of young people.”

The network will facilitate connections among young people, particularly those whose work is based on similar themes. Clifton said it will give young people a forum to pray with and for other, deepen loving service, and share mission perspectives. He said: “They will share stories of their experiences with others around the world. Also, very importantly, the network will be a mechanism for consulting with young people so that decisions that are made at the highest levels of the Communion will be informed by perspectives from young people in actual parishes around the world.”

Diocese of the Rio Grande, Bi-Lingual Borderlands Youth Ministry

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and Young Life Big Bend are prayerfully obeying God’s call to reach every unchurched and spiritually disinterested young person residing in the West Texas borderlands with the Gospel of Christ. Our start-up ministry will serve, love, and minister to youth and families on both sides of our border with Mexico. This encompasses the cities of Marfa, Alpine and Presidio, Texas and Ojinaga, Mexico.


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Father Howden Was No Stay-at-Home Rector

Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Michael Buerkel Hunn, Cathedral of St. John, Albuquerque

Ted Howden was born in Cumberland, Maryland and for the first 12 years of his life lived in the rectory. His father was sent to the wilds of New Mexico as the Missionary Bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande and Texas west of the Pecos River when Ted was 12. Like many children of clergy in those days, Ted was sent to a New England prep school for his education, a good Episcopal school as it happens – the Kent School in Kent, Connecticut. He attended Yale University and then the General Seminary in New York City. He returned to his father’s diocese to be ordained deacon and priest when he was 27 years old. Immediately upon being ordained a priest he was installed as rector of Saint Andrews Episcopal Church in Roswell, New Mexico – I’m sure the fact that his dad was the bishop had nothing to do with it.

The young Father Howden was not a sit-at-home type of rector. The young priest got around. As the vicar of Lincoln County, he regularly held services in Artesia, Hobbs and Lovington. In those days there are not many Episcopal Churches around and so he regularly celebrated the Holy Eucharist in places like the Navajo Lodge at Ruidoso for the congregation now called the Church of the Holy Mount, and in a school house in Glencoe, before helping to raise money to build a church there, which at the time was the only protestant church between Roswell and Alamogordo. The young rector also served as the chaplain of the local prep school in Roswell. It is easy to imagine him thinking fondly of his days at Kent while teaching, coaching and serving the boys at the New Mexico Military Institute. It is also easy to imagine that the boys of NMMI were grateful to have a chaplain who understood them. Father Ted wrote a prayer for the boys, which the school printed in the student handbook so the boys could always have it near them.

Our Father in heaven, inspire we beseech Thee, all members of this school with directness of purpose in the training of body, mind and spirit, that we may better serve Thee, our country, and our fellowmen. Give us the vision to know the right, and the courage to follow after it. Strengthen us with might by Thy Spirit for the duties of life before us. And grant that we may so lead to heart the lessons of training and discipline here that we may always continue Thy faithful soldiers and servants unto life’s end. Amen.

Like all good prayers this one reminds the boys that God is calling them. It asks for God’s strength. It asks that the boys may learn the lessons God is teaching them through the difficulties of their daily life. It asks that God might make them faithful servants. You can learn a lot about a person by the prayers they say.

I said it before and I’ll say it again, Father Howden was no stay-at-home rector. He went where the people were. He took the Gospel to the countryside. He saw many young men from NMMI graduate and take up their duties in the United States military.

That connection to the boys who were preparing to serve their country was important to Father Howden. It must’ve been, for he himself signed up to serve in the New Mexico State Guard. His unit in the Guard was made up entirely of New Mexico boys, predominantly Hispanic, Latino and Native American soldiers. These were not the sons of bishops, mayors and governors. These were kids looking for a better life, a career better than what many young people could expect in New Mexico in those days. These were young people with servant hearts willing to give even their lives for the others. And now Captain Howden was with them praying, celebrating communion and training in the mud, dirt, cold and heat right alongside them.

On August 17, 1941 the New Mexico state guard unit was federalized and became the 200th Coast Artillery. After a brief training stint in San Francisco, the 200th was sent to the Philippines and the rector of Saint Andrews’, Roswell, went with them. He was 39 years old, but must’ve seemed old and wise to the young soldiers he served.

When the United States entered the Second World War it was not to help out to the East, in Europe, as it had been in World War I. No, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, the United States responded to the West. By late December the fields around the 200th’s encampment were riddled with holes made by bombs and bullets. Every day Chaplain Howden said prayers with his troops. He celebrated the Eucharist with them. He helped the medical teams. He wrote letters home for the boys, which tells you something about the education they had not received before they signed up. He scrounged candy and soap and cigarettes for them and tried to get their letters out to the occasional submarine that surfaced in the bay.

In his spare time Chaplin Howden built a chapel out of bamboo in a section of trees where the soldiers could pray without being seen by enemy aircraft. Chaplin Howden was no stay-at-home rector. He was a long way from the life of a privileged son of a bishop. The fighting around the 200th grew more and more intense and by March 1942, General Douglas MacArthur could see the writing on the wall. He evacuated, leaving a small force behind to defend the Philippines but not the 200th. Captain Howden was evacuated with his troops and his unit was sent home. The 200th was decommissioned, but Father Howden then went into the Reserve and served the New Mexico State Guard until 1946.

I said it before and I’ll say it again, Father Howden was no stay-at-home rector. He was a man of the people. He was with servant hearts willing to give even their lives for the others. And now Captain Howden was with them praying, celebrating communion and training in the mud, dirt, cold and heat right alongside them.

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On April 7, the enemy broke through the line. On April 8, the 200th was ordered to destroy their heavy weapons and anything that might be of use to the enemy. On April 8, Howden stood with his men in a field with their pockets turned inside out while Japanese soldiers confiscated anything they wanted. Howden and his boys were prisoners of war.

The Japanese soldiers who had taken prisoners had a real problem on their hands. They were not equipped and did not have enough food to feed so many prisoners. Conditions were rough at the beginning and were brutal by the end. In the months to come many Latino, Hispanic and Native American sons of New Mexico were marched from prison camp to prison camp. Howden stayed close to his men. He regularly gave his food to “those who needed it more.” He got thinner and thinner. People encouraged him to eat more. “The boys need it more,” he said, again and again. Six months later, they were rounded up and marched 15 miles before being herded like cattle into the belly of a ship. For 10 days, nearly 1,000 men tried to survive, vomiting with seasickness and dysentery, the belly of a ship. For 10 days, nearly 1,000 men tried to survive, vomiting with seasickness and dysentery, the belly of a ship.

Howden began his life surrounded by privilege. Many of Howden’s soldiers did not survive, and neither claimed the lives of hundreds of prisoners of war. Conditions were rough at the beginning and did not have enough food to feed so many prisoners. Conditions were rough at the beginning and were brutal by the end. In the months to come many Latino, Hispanic and Native American sons of New Mexico were marched from prison camp to prison camp. Howden stayed close to his men. He regularly gave his food to “those who needed it more.”

Ted Howden began his life surrounded by privilege. But he lived his life according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, not according to the rules of privileged society. It is clear that Ted Howden loved his neighbor as himself – better than himself. It is clear he gave sacrificially to those in need. It is clear he took the church wherever he went – building a chapel out of bamboo, celebrating the Eucharist on an altar made out of an ammunition box. He died not knowing the outcome of the battle, not knowing the outcome of World War II. He died without ever seeing victory.

Except of course, he had seen victory. He deeply knew the victory in Jesus Christ. He knew that love is stronger than death. He knew the truth of the resurrection. He knew that the wealth and privilege and power of this world is a fleeting thing, for the love of Jesus Christ which binds people together lasts forever. God is the only real thing there is. God’s love in Jesus Christ is the truth. In Jesus Christ, Ted Howden knew victory, and so he was strong enough to give sacrificially, not to live by the standards of this world, but by the standards of Jesus Christ.

To us he is an example of the saintly life. And of what it is to be a humble disciple. We disciples of Jesus Christ are called to do no less – to stay with our people, to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ, to give sacrificially.

Ted Howden did not do anything during the Bataan Death March that he hadn’t done before. In fact he had trained for decades for those moments. As a young priest in Roswell and in New Mexico he helped people. He said his prayers, he built churches, he brought the Eucharist to those who needed it. And he helped feed those in need. He took to heart the words of Jesus, “whenever you do this to the least of these, you do it to me.” And he lived that life. A disciple’s life. A faithful life.

So when he had food that others needed, he gave it. When there were prayers that needed to be said, he said them. When there were churches that needed to be built, altars that needed to be built, he built them. When there were wounded who needed healing, he helped. If there were words that needed to be written, he wrote them. He did it all as a servant of Jesus Christ with no thought of himself. And so we commemorate him in the Diocese of the Rio Grande because he is an example for each of us and all of us. We do not need to wait for some great event in order to do great work. In fact, the word great doesn’t even really apply. We are called simply and humbly to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, say our prayers, receive the Body and Blood of Christ, build churches so that others will know how to find safety and security and healing and forgiveness.

This is the life to which we are called, wherever we live, whatever gifts we have been given, whatever resources are in our possession, we are called to do, with all that we have, what Jesus would do. We are called to give with our lives as Jesus gave his. We are called to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly. And if you’re needing a practical example, look at the life of the Reverend Ted Howden, Aiman.
The beautiful Diocesan Bosque Center in Albuquerque welcomed 50 women for the Entertaining Angels Unaware weekend in November. Everyone learned fascinating things about angels from the Rev. Pat Green. We worshipped and sang together with the help of Mary Badarak and members of Santa Fe Music Works. We celebrated a birthday and broke bread together. We spent time in quiet meditation, including a workshop on Praying with Icons led by Pat Catlett. It was a time of inspiration, fellowship, and refreshment surrounded by the serenity of the Bosque Center. Links and pictures of the weekend can be found on the Women’s Ministry website (VarietiesOfGifts.blogspot.com).

Looking into 2020, make plans to join women of the diocese and Canon Lee Curtis at St. Luke’s, La Union, on March 14, 2020 for RE: Lent. This will be a time to prayerfully RE:rect, RE:connect, and RE:new in the midst of Lent. Registration and more information will be available on the Women’s Ministry website in January. Looking further into 2020, the Women’s Ministry Council is busy planning summer events.

Our 8th Annual Bosque Weekend will be November 20–21, 2020 when the Rev. Carolyn Metzler will help us consider The Wildernesses in our Lives. For Lent of 2021, we’ll return to the Bosque Center on March 5–8. The Rev. Jane Ross will help us explore and present the play Women of the Gospel Meet Jesus. Meanwhile, digital opportunities to connect are available as the Women’s Ministry works to bridge the distances of the diocese. You can sign up for the Lectionary Study by Elaine Aniol Wilson MDiv at wdrgstudy@gmail.com. It is delivered to your inbox weekly, providing the opportunity to learn more about the Sunday lessons. You can also join the ongoing class at the Cathedral each Wednesday morning at 10:30 as you are able.

Eighth Annual Women’s Pre-Lenten Quiet Day
Church of the Holy Faith, Santa Fe, Saturday, February 8, 2020, 8:30 – 4:00

The Church of the Holy Faith invites all women in the community to join in the eighth annual Women’s Quiet Day for a day of Pre-Lenten reflection, study, music, and silence. This year the Quiet Day leader will be the Very Reverend Dr. Peggy Patterson, former Associate Rector at the Church of the Holy Faith. Peggy is currently living near Berkeley CA. She serves as Assisting Priest at All Souls Parish in Berkeley and as an Adjunct Professor in Pastoral Theology at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley.

This year’s contemplative day is entitled: Hildegard of Bingen: An Invitation to Wholeness and Holiness. Hildegard’s wholeness included being a Mystic, Musician, Healer and Medicine Guru, Poet, Abbess and church reformer, Wisdom friend to her sisters and to patriarchal church leaders of her day. She was a lover of creation and believed that through the green power of God, vinditas, all of God’s creatures could become the bloom and beauty and fecundity which is the image of God.

The day will include three presentations, including a special one introducing Hildegard’s “shocking” innovations in her liturgy Chants and Canticles, a study of some of her Spiritual Art in Mandalas and “iconic Painting”, and plenty of time in silence to contemplate your own invitation to “wholeness and holiness” as we approach the Lenten season. The day will close with Holy Eucharist incorporating a homily by the speaker and Hildegard’s music. All women are invited to attend this special day with our Sister, Hildegard of Bingen. The day will include a continental breakfast, light lunch, and a folder of information about events around the diocese. The Retreat and induction for Daughters of the King will be the Very Reverend Dr. Peggy Patterson, President, Daughters of the King, El Paso. Binneweg, Vice President Daughters of the King, Las Cruces and Corrine Salari-Polhemus, President, Daughters of the King at large, and Johanna Binnaweg, Vice President Daughters of the King. Las Cruzes and Corrine Salari-Polhemus, President, Daughters of the King, El Paso.

Women’s Ministry of the DRG: to “connect and support all women in their diverse ministries, by offering opportunities to gather for studying, re-creating, and celebrating who we are as women of Faith, Hope and Love.” The website has resources for women’s groups, including speakers as well as information about events around the diocese. Sign up from the website (www.VarietiesOfGifts.blogspot.com) to get regular e-news about Women’s Ministry. Contact Cindy Davis, Coordinator of Women’s Ministries (cynthiadavisauthor@gmail.com), if you have questions, suggestions, or would like to join the Council to help us determine the path for this important ministry.

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To register call Donna Lukacs at Holy Faith Church, 505-982-4447 or email her at donna@holyfaithchurchsf.org by January 22, 2020.
Southwest Deanery gatherings at St. Francis on the Hill

The Southwest Deanery hosted its Fall Meeting at St. Francis on the Hill in El Paso on November 2, 2019. Eleven congregations were represented at the meeting and it was good to see so many familiar faces as well as some new ones.

The lovely folk of SFOTH greeted people with a continental breakfast before Br. David-Luke Henton led Morning Prayer assisted by lector Mr. Bruce Trueindle. A program on the Hoima, Uganda Mission Trip to the Blessed Mustard Seed Babies Home, presented by Fr. Wally Lalonde, preceded the business meeting.

Highlights of the meeting included the treasurer’s report from Mr. Sal Saldivar, approving a budget for 2020, election of officers, Vice Dean Derrick Washington’s report on the work of Diocesan Council, hearing about ministry to asylum seekers from Fr. J.J Bernal and Fr. Justin Gibson, and recognizing Mr. Bill Cox for his service on the Deanery Board as Poverty and Outreach representative. All enjoyed a lovely lunch before heading home.

The Rev. Chloe Chavez, Missioner for the Homeless and Displaced, visited Ruidoso November 6, 2019, to bless the Evening Drop-in Center and learn about the needs and hopes of High Mountain Youth Project as the organization strives to help vulnerable teens in Lincoln County stay in school and graduate.

Missioner on the Move

The creation of the mosaic was led by Hernandez and Domenici, with parishioners helping in different aspects of the artistic process. Leaves for the tree were created in workshops attended by parishioners as young as 3 and as mature as 92. Others scoured thrift stores to locate plates and ceramic pieces in the needed colors. Artistically inclined members worked on mosaic birds to inhabit the tree. An estimated 70 parishioners worked on the mosaic in various ways.

The completed courtyard and mosaic were dedicated in Cecil’s memory on September 22, 2019. The courtyard is open to the public Monday–Thursday, 9–2, and Sunday mornings.
Film documents beauty at St. Bede’s, Santa Fe

Scheffler Lecture Looks at Near-Death Experiences

Almost 100 people gathered in Polen Hall on October 25 for the Annual Scheffler Lecture, sponsored by the Church of the Holy Faith, Santa Fe, literary committee, featuring The Reverend John W. Price. He spoke about something which is obviously of interest to many and happens to be the subject of his book Revealing Heaven: the Christian Case for Near-Death Experiences. The stories he wrote about came from his seven years as Chaplain at St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital in the Texas Medical Center. He also served as a parish priest for 33 years, concurrently serving as an Army Chaplain.

Father Price has visited nearly 400 people who’ve had a near-death experience. From his book, he told us about “Private Albert” a soldier who described a really bad drug trip he had when younger. The private had died but been told, “It’s not your time,” and was sent back. This prompted him to quit drugs cold turkey. The most bizarre story, Fr. Price told was of a woman who woke up inside a body bag in the morgue.

Today, it is estimated that 13 million adults in America have had a verge-of-death experience. They may be very reluctant to talk about it, however, asking themselves if anyone will believe them if they discuss what happened. Will everyone think they’re crazy? Were they judged and rejected by God? Or do they just have more to do on earth? When Fr. Price asked the audience if anyone had had such an experience, three people raised their hands. No one at the lecture called them crazy, and they confirmed that an out-of-body experience can occur without a death.

He strongly recommends that people talk about these experiences. Some who listen will believe you and take it seriously. They need to hear you. Coincidentally, many who believe in the possibility of these experiences are routinely involved with resuscitation, such as first responders.

We learned that there are various ways people exit the body and move into death: floating up, moving through a tunnel, getting up and walking, going into a void, being engulfed by light, being taken away by Jesus, being met by a loving but dead relative, feeling intense inexplicable love, reviewing their life, being given instructions by an angel, or zipping off at light speed. They don’t always realize they’re dead. A study of the blind reports that some have floated above their operating table and seen what’s below their color.

Afterward, when people have returned to their body, sometimes having been slammed back in, some report being able to see others’ auras – and knowing when someone is up to no good. They can hear other’s thoughts, see pictures.

Some see medical infections in others. They have an electromagnetic field around them that runs down batteries, leaving their watches useless. They can develop a new spirituality and become more empathetic and loving, which can contribute to divorces. They develop an awareness of what it means to have a meaningful life, gain belief in the sacredness of life, and become more relaxed and less materialistic, which also contributes to divorces. If the conscious doesn’t appreciate a change in lifestyle. They have no fear of death and become seekers, sometimes leaving churches that dwell on the negative, because now they delight in life.

Father Price was stunned by Raymond Moody’s 1975 book, Life After Life, which interviewed Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, author of On Death and Dying, who wrote of the experiences people had while clinically dead. But was the first author of something on the subject? That would be Plato, who wrote the first written account of someone having had a near-death experience.

Historically, there were four opposing points of view about the afterlife. The Sadducees believed there is nothing (which is why they were sad, you see) or we steep in the ground forever, or we sleep till Jesus returns, or we are out of our consciousness for a significant amount of time. But it is Paul who wrote in I Cor. 12 that we take on a spiritual body. Father Price wonders if Paul was describing himself and a near-death experience found in chapter 15, when he was taken away and stoned. He also wonders if the reason Jesus went over Lazarus was because he was sorry to bring the dead man back from Paradise. (John 11:35)

The questions from the audience were thought-provoking as well. For example, if the soul is the seat of consciousness, and if the brain can die but consciousness doesn’t, then is death just a moment in the ongoing life of the soul? Is Purgatory a review of one’s life, which can be painful or torturous because of our shortcomings? If people can come back from the dead, when should/can we harvest organs? And if some people report having examined their life to the point when their soul entered their body in their mother’s womb, well, what does that say about abortion?

Another question was how long is an out-of-body experience? The answer is that it depends on how long it takes to be resuscitated. How many minutes were you dead? But some say they went to a timeless place, so that the five minutes in which they were gone felt like three weeks to them. This brought up the question of why some people come back and others do die. The consensus was that it’s simply up to the Lord.

Father Price highly recommends reading Life After Life, the book by Raymond Moody. And he graciously gave the sermons at the Sunday services and led the Forum, telling different stories and giving different examples.
Community Thanksgiving at St. Paul's in Marfa Draws Crowd, For Some a Homecoming

By Lynnette Wilson

(Episcopal News Service — Marfa, Texas) St. Paul’s Church’s community-wide Thanksgiving dinner began in the 1970s when Allison Scott’s family and another family, totaling 11 children and four adults, wanted to use St. Paul’s parish hall for a joint family dinner. Once it was agreed to, her mother Dorothy suggested inviting widows from the community who might not otherwise have a place to go, and from there, Thanksgiving dinner grew and a St. Paul’s tradition emerged.

This year, on November 28, more than 200 people — parishioners, locals, tourists, part-time residents and others — flocked through the serving line at St. Paul’s in Marfa, a small West Texas town of 1,800 people. They dined together at tables in the parish hall and outside on pews moved to the lawn to handle the overflow. For Mavis Rios, a native of Marfa who grew up across the street from the church, the annual Thanksgiving dinner at St. Paul’s is a chance to reconnect to people in the community. It’s also something Rios, who’s a park ranger at the Fort Davis National Historic Site 62 miles north via Highway 170, promotes to out-of-towners looking for a place to share a meal. Such was the case with Houstonian Renee Harris, her husband and their three children, who met Rios the previous day while hiking in the Davis Mountains.

“We were going to wing it,” said Harris, as she waited for her family to gather in the parish hall. The Harris family worships at a Roman Catholic church at home in Houston but joined with more than 80 others at St. Paul’s sanctuary for the 11 a.m. Eucharist that preceded dinner.

As worshipers filled the pews, volunteers, including Gretel Enck who the day before cooked one of the dinner’s five turkeys, put on their aprons and took their places in the kitchen. By the end of the church service, these parishioners and community members were delivering a steady flow of ham, brisket, side dishes and desserts.

Dedie Taylor, one of the dinner’s lead organizers, and Enck worked in the kitchen, while Enck’s mother, Mary Drechsler, played the organ. Drechsler was visiting from Bainbridge, New York, where she’s a member of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. “I just think the whole thing is so special, and it gets me out of cooking,” said Drechsler, who for the fourth time attended St. Paul’s Thanksgiving dinner, along with another daughter and a son-in-law who were also in town.

Coordinating and sharing big dinners is something Taylor has been doing for a long time. Orphaned at 18, Taylor, who filed early enough that she’d make her own Thanksgivings, Christmasmasses and Easters. In fact, it was while preparing for a Thanksgiving dinner she was hosting for 30 people in her 984-square-foot apartment in Washington, DC, that she first met her future husband, Lonn Taylor, who died earlier this year. “I lived on the top floor and he lived on the fourth floor, and I was going down to 7-Eleven to get something last minute, and he got on the elevator,” said Taylor. She suspected he was new to the building and asked him if he had dinner plans, which he did, so she invited him to come by for dessert since her dinner was starting later than his.

He showed up for dessert, and after that, they shared dinner together at least once a week for 18 months, before dating formally and eventually marrying. They moved to Fort Davis, Texas, in 2002 and began attending St. Paul’s and volunteering on Thanksgiving. “I believe in making this a place where people can give thanks, and by giving thanks, we are reminded of what we are thankful for,” said Wallens.

Following the service, Shere Whitley, a member of St. Paul’s, who moved to Marfa from Houston in the late 1970s, expressed gratitude for her two sons “who are healthy and happy” and live nearby. Teenager Elias Wonsowski, who serves as an acolyte at St. Paul’s and lives in Alpine, 26 miles east along Highway 90, gave thanks for St. Paul’s congregation, saying, “The people are just really nice, and you don’t find a lot of people like this anymore.”

Thanksgiving dinner grew and a St. Paul’s tradition not otherwise have a place to go, and from there, St. Paul’s Thanksgiving feast.

In the early 1970s, artist Donald Judd began buying property in downtown Marfa and ranchland on the periphery. Judd later established the Chinati Foundation, a contemporary art museum named for the Chinati Mountain Range, putting Marfa on the map and earning it worldwide recognition in art circles and beyond.

During his sermon before the meal, the Rev. Mike Wallens, St. Paul’s vicar, traced the complicated origins of Thanksgiving, beginning in 1621 up until President Abraham Lincoln declared it a federal holiday in November 1863, when the nation was in turmoil and in the middle of the Civil War. “The country was literally falling apart” and Lincoln’s political career was in question, said Wallens, which he followed up by asking, “What was this man who apparently had little to be thankful for — what was he thinking?” As the nation again finds itself in turmoil, citing disagreements over how to handle immigration, endless wars, self-serving leadership, “we are here to give thanks, and by giving thanks, we are reminded of how blessed we are,” said Wallens.

The Rev. Mike Wallens, St. Paul’s vicar, rings the church bell before the Eucharist on Thanksgiving Day.

The sign in front of the St. Paul’s Episcopal Church invites everyone to the annual Thanksgiving feast.

Gretel Enck, left, and her sister, Melody Crowshaw, prepare one of the dishes at Enck’s home for the Thanksgiving Feast at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

Community and St. Paul’s Church members bring a dish or two to share at the annual Thanksgiving celebration.
Arizona Churches Honor Peoples of the Land and Add Indigenous Peoples Day to Diocesan Calendar

By David Paulsen

The Diocese of Arizona is stepping up its efforts to give recognition to the “People of the Land,” including by creating an Indigenous Peoples Day on the church calendar. The diocese can celebrate in future years on the second Monday of October – the Columbus Day federal holiday. The diocese’s 38th convention was held on the weekend after the most recent Columbus Day. Indigenous Peoples Day was one of two resolutions approved to encourage greater acknowledgment of the 22 federally recognized Native American tribes in the state. The other resolution offered congregations specific language that can be incorporated into their worship.

Across the diocese, “we don’t have a church that isn’t directly on or very close to traditional native land,” the Rev. Debbie Royals told Episcopal News Service in an interview. “I’ve learned to put away my pride and overreact that last line.” Royals, the diocese’s canon for Native American ministry, is a member of the Pascua Yaqui, whose tribal land is in the Tucson area. She helped draft and submit the two resolutions, which were approved by the diocesan convention. “I encourage leaders to commit on a commitment the diocese made in 2016 to acknowledge the ‘traditional custodians’ of church land. Royals’ voice wavered as she grew emotional describing the joy she felt when she heard her two boys back both resolutions, signifying what she saw as a big step toward increasing the visibility of Native American members and their culture in the church. “I sat with such a feeling of, for the first time in my life…that I’d been seen, that I was no longer in the shadows,” she said.

The resolution adopting Indigenous Peoples of Arizona Day doesn’t mention Columbus Day specifically, though the date is the same. It will be set aside as “a day of prayer and reflection to understand our shared history and continue along a path of reconciliation.”

Cathedral of St. John the Divine, which is owned and operated by the Episcopal Diocese of New York, is one of a handful of dioceses that have previously passed resolutions supporting Indigenous Peoples Day. The resolution was approved by the diocese’s convention last month, Royals said, when Reddall recognized the Gila River Indian Community. The convention was held in Phoenix at the Sheraton Crescent Hotel, which is north of the Gila River Indian Reservation.

“Border Ministries Summit...” continued from page 5

“I can’t imagine how much fear they must have had to set those two boys alone on a boat to a place they’d never been. They didn’t even go to family. They went to Chicago, they got with friends,” said Reddall. “Our family members and loved ones who have been or are at risk, they have said, ‘I only need one chance. I only need one chance to make sure we are not the family that said no letters, no letters back and forth. And I wonder if that means they didn’t think they were literate because there are no letters, no letters back and forth. And I wonder if that means they didn’t think we are the church, and we must care for each other’,” he said.

Twenty of the Diocese of Arizona’s churches, including Grace St. Paul’s in Tucson, which is involved in the sanctuary movement, have set up drop zones to welcome asylum seekers. Back in Nogales, Cruzaando Fronteras has the capacity to serve 200 asylum-seekers in two shelters. It also offers opportunities for people to visit the border, which Arizona’s bishops have called on the diocese’s missioner for advocacy and social justice aid in early November when he spent six days alongside Babwewi experiencing the border from different angles. “We were able to cross the border three times to spend time with the families,” he said. “We also had the opportunity to hike through the desert with the Tucson Samaritans, placing water along known migrant trails. All along the way, we saw drab, sun-bleached scraps of clothing, remnants of the many journeys that had taken place there,” he told ENS.

“Finally, we bore witness to a streamlining heard at the federal courthouse in Tucson where, in a mere 90 minutes, 75 people were found guilty of illegally crossing the border and sentenced to deportation. A little less than one person a minute.”

His experience in Nogales and his attendance at the border ministries summit allowed him not only to learn, but to make recommendations for serving migrant, asylum-seekers and immigrants across the church. “Learning from bishops south and north of the border, a clear message emerged: We must act together, and we must act now,” Sugar said. “I have family members and loved ones who have been or are at risk for deportation. I am not interested in waiting around while their lives in this country are at risk.”

- Lynette Wilson is a reporter and managing editor of Episcopal News Service.

Native American church leaders offer a traditional blessing during the consecration of Arizona Bishop Jennifer Reddall on March 22. Photo: David Schachter, via Diocese of Arizona
Sr. Joan Brown, osf, Executive Director New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light

ACT TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

The young Greta Thunberg, at a march with 500,000 people during the UN COP 25 International Climate Meeting, said that strikes and marches are not enough. Action and quick action is required to address climate system change. There are ways to dig in right now for a communal act to Love God, Neighbor, Creation and Our Common Home. And, it is important to celebrate actions already taken.

St. Thomas of Canterbury, Albuquerque, is one example. As they were working to install solar, they had a surprise recognition recently. John Murphey, an architectural historian in Santa Fe, recently discovered that St. Thomas of Canterbury was the first ecclesiastical building in the State of New Mexico to install a passive solar system in the form of trombe walls built in 1880! The parish’s new Rector-Time-Certain, The Rev. Dr. Jeanine Driscoll, is pictured here next to the trombe wall on the south side of the nave. Further historical information is contained in a book by Madeleine Wells and Jane Williamson. So You Want to See a Solar Building? A Tour Guide for Northern New Mexico, published in 1988.

Canterbury has long been a champion of responsible environmental stewardship. A group of activists in the parish, formed in 2006 and calling themselves Canterbury Advocates for a Sustainable Environment, CAGE, was instrumental in reactivating New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light and moving NJ IPL from under the umbrella of the New Mexico Conference of Churches to independent non-profit status. Over the years and under the leadership of its late Senior Warden Don Darlington, Canterbury has initiated a number of sustainable policies and practices, replacing incandescent lighting with LEDs, discouraging the use of disposable paper products, isolating recyclables, and planning liturgies that celebrate creation and remind us of our Christian responsibility to preserve the planet for future generations.

Several years ago the parish began planning for the installation of a solar array on the roof of the building as an “outward and visible sign” of its commitment to creation care and is making steady progress towards that goal. When the solar panels are in place, Canterbury will have confirmed its status as not only a “green” champion but, in light of this recently-unearthed history, a “green” pioneer in the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

A few actions your community can take: Sustaining Earth Our Island Home Carbon Tacker https://www.diocal.org/climate is an Episcopal app organized around life choices clustered into five main areas. The choices range from easy to hard. It includes links to church-wide creation-themed formation resources. Become one of the congregations using this tool.

Week of Faith and Climate Action is Interfaith Power and Light’s annual program of climate-themed worship services and sermons that spans ten days of events in celebration of April and Earth Month. This is IPL’s premier event to create a mass movement of people of faith making the moral call for climate action. The theme of April 16-27, 2020 is “Love Made Visible”. We will engage in Sacred Activism to protect the people we love and care about who are most impacted by climate change, including frontline and fenceline communities, the elderly, our children, and future generations. The kit includes a Sacred Activism guide on the importance of people taking part in civic engagement, plus six activism challenges, including one especially for youth based on the leadership of young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. Sign up to get resources and show your engagement at https://www.faithclimateactionweek.org/. Work to become Solar! San Joaquin Episcopal Diocese has a goal to become the first solar powered diocese. The Diocese of San Joaquin, located in California’s Central Valley and Sierra Nevada, has 22 faith communities and an abundance of sun. This year, it put in motion plans to bring solar panels to all or nearly all of those communities. By the end of 2020, Bishop David Rice hopes those solar panels will be installed and generating enough power to offset the energy usage of all Episcopal properties in the diocese.

Congregations in New Mexico can become solar too. St. Francis Episcopal, Rio Rancho, recently took part in an NM IPL webinar with Catholic Energies, which is working nationally with any large enough faith facility in a turn-key approach addressing lighting upgrades and solar installation. NM IPL is planning another webinar. Let us know if you are interested joann@nm-ipl.org.

The New Mexico Conference of Churches (NMCC) has called as its Interim Executive Director, the Rev. Dr. Kay E. Huggins. Kay brings extensive experience in both local church leadership and the ecumenical movement. Her appointment was announced on Monday, December 2, at the annual leadership retreat of the NMCC Board. She begins her work on January 1, 2020.

In addition to hiring an Interim Executive Director, the board has initiated a period of reflection on the identity and purpose of the Conference. This will be carried out during the first half of 2020. The Conference will be contracting with a consultant to design and implement a reflection process in the new year.

Rev. Susan J. Quass
Steps Down as NMCC Executive Director

This is to announce my retirement as the Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference of Churches. While my faith in the vital mission of the Conference continues unabated, I am leaving on December 31, 2019, for another call. In the new year, I will become the primary caregiver for my Mother, 92, who is experiencing progressively worsening dementia.

Since joining the Conference of Churches on April 1, 2017, I have valued the wide spectrum of ministry accomplished by the churches of New Mexico. It has been a privilege to represent the New Mexico Conference and to engage with the churches and people of faith in celebrating Christian unity and our Common Home. And, it is important to celebrate actions already taken.

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