

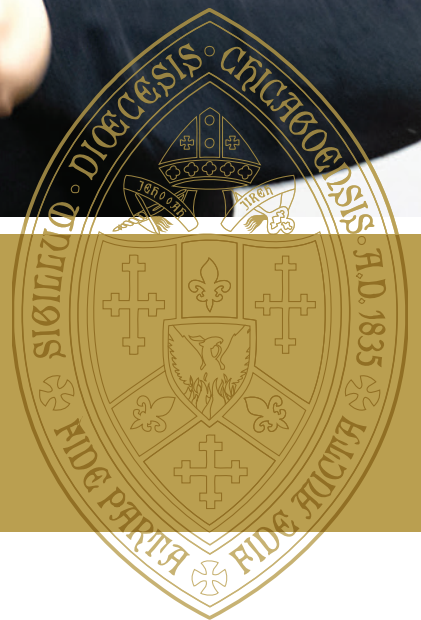
thrive!

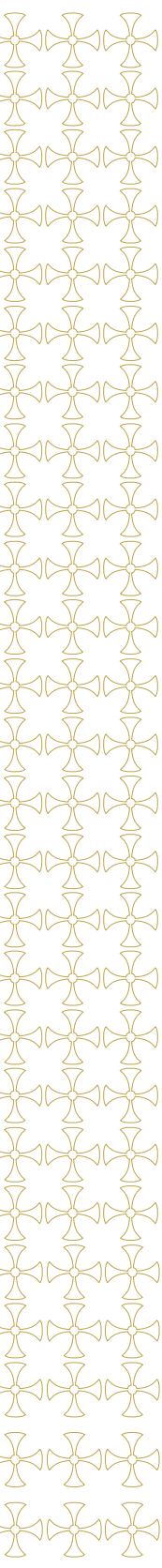


FALL 2019

EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
OF CHICAGO
MAGAZINE

Artistic approaches to outreach
Cultivating leadership at All Saints
A new bishop for Southeast Mexico





Letter from Bishop Lee



“I believe ... we die and rise with Christ in the water of the font. My conviction about that doesn’t stand in the way of my asking questions about dying and rising and God with people for whom that may be a foreign language.”

The fall issue of Thrive! is published around the same time as diocesan convention, and this year that provides me an opportunity to endorse the work of Casper ter Kuile, who, with his research partner, Angie Thurston, will be our keynote speaker this year.

As you can read on page 12, Casper is co-founder of How We Gather, a millennial-led spiritual startup collaboration between Harvard Divinity School and the Fetzer Institute. Casper and his colleagues study how people find meaning, connection and community in an increasingly secular world. Those of you who keep up with the reports on church attendance will not be surprised to learn that people increasingly are having these needs met by communities outside church walls. This is especially true of younger people.

This presents a challenge to the church, but there is reason for hope. Casper and his collaborators have noticed that these new communities of purpose often find themselves “reinventing the wheel” when it comes to creating a sense of meaning and membership. Often these efforts fall short of evoking a sense of transcendence. The church, therefore, has a special gift to share in its disciplines and customs including liturgy, sacred reading and special events that mark life passages.

Obviously, there are key differences between religious communities and secular communities of purpose that I have no reason to try to gloss over (mainly, that for me Christian rites and sacraments are effective precisely because I believe them to be true.) Yet I am intrigued by the possibility of making friends across differences and building a relationship with these new communities in an appreciative way.

I believe that in fact we die and rise with Christ in the water of the font. I believe that to my core. I believe that the Eucharist is an encounter with the living, dying and rising Jesus. My conviction about that doesn't stand in the way of my asking questions about dying and rising and God with people for whom that may be a foreign language.

There’s not a town, suburb, or

neighborhood in this diocese where we don’t have to look very hard to find people who are striving to create meaning. So let’s get out there and make some friends. Let’s get curious and get out of church and go find those folks and say, “Hey could we talk? I’m really curious about what you’re finding here. What do you long for?” I think it’s an opportunity to just engage. Evangelism never has meant talking anybody into anything. It means witnessing to the good news we have experienced in the love of God.

Some of our parishes are already using music and the arts to reach out to the wider community, and to enhance the spirituality of their members. You can learn more about the efforts of Emmanuel, Rockford; St. Barnabas, Glen Ellyn; and St. George’s, Macomb, on page 7.

Two other stories in this issue take you deeper into recent news events. The Rev. Bonnie Perry, who was elected bishop of the Diocese of Michigan in June, recently departed from All Saints, Chicago, where she had been rector for 27 years. Behind her she leaves a strong team of lay leaders and an ethic of lay leadership. Read about the ways in which the parish cultivates leadership on page 2.

And, as I opened with news of our diocesan convention, let me close with it. I was disappointed to learn earlier this month that Bishops Benito Juárez-Martinez and Julio Cesar Martin of the Diocese of Southeastern Mexico are not able to be with us at our convention this year. But we will have a chance to celebrate Bishop Benito’s two decades as bishop and get to know Bishop Julio, who was consecrated in September, sometime early next year. In the meantime, you can read about our relationship between our two dioceses on page 15.

In Christ, + Jeffrey

PHOTO: CHARLIE SIMOKATIS

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For each of the last five years, St. George’s Church in Macomb has awarded music scholarships to one or two students at nearby Western Illinois University and hosted concerts to raise funds for their living expenses. In exchange, students like Madalyn Pridemore and Nathalie Joy Hernandez perform at the congregation’s Sunday services.

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On our cover

Nathalie Joy Hernandez prepares to perform at St. George’s Church in Macomb. Photos on the cover and above by Todd Welvaert.

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SAVE THESE DATES

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February 28 – March 1
Bellwether Farm, Ohio

Plan-It Training

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Electing Convention

June 20
St. James Cathedral

Camp Chicago

June 28 – July 17
Stronghold Camp and Conference Center

Episcopal Youth Event 2020

July 7 – 11
Howard University, Washington, D.C.

College for Congregational Development Summer 2020 Intensive

July 26 – August 1
Loyola Retreat & Ecology Campus, Woodstock, IL



A New Era

All Saints Look Ahead

{ By Kathleen Moore }

On June 1, the Rev. Dr. Bonnie Perry, rector of All Saints Church in the Ravenswood neighborhood of Chicago was elected bishop of the Diocese of Michigan. During her 27-year tenure, the church's typical Sunday attendance grew from 30 to nearly 300; the congregation established a community services organization with a budget that now tops \$500,000 a year, and enrollment in the parish's church school skyrocketed.

Perry, who will be ordained a bishop on February 8, will be a tough act to follow. But ask around at All Saints, and you will find a deep sense of hope and joy for the future of this parish operating just below the grief associated with losing a beloved spiritual leader. This confidence and optimistic outlook emerges from the culture of strong shared leadership Perry has cultivated during her time at All Saints.

"Of course, it's going to hurt, because Bonnie is just such an amazing person and an amazing pastor," said Matt Schuneman, the parish's co-warden. "She's played a key role, but it hasn't just been Bonnie. There have been so many leaders who have been key to shaping this community. You get a strong sense of leadership from all the other major personalities that are here on a day-to-day basis, whether it's people who lead events or have been wardens, or finance committee chairs, or helped with church school. There are so many people who are great leaders that you feel this energy and sense of 'this is going to be a big change, but this is going to be okay.'"

Perry made it a point to encourage and empower lay leaders throughout her time as rector. "I am aware that I'm a big personality and I can take up a lot of space," she said in an interview before her departure. "And I have worked over the years to pull that back in parish activities. Part of good, strong leadership is to make space for people to step in. So, for example, I have not run a vestry meeting in 18 years."

She made a practice of delegating liturgical leadership as well. "During Holy Week, we have four services, and each service has someone who is in charge of that day," she said. "The staff will provide resources, but other people who don't happen to be ordained are the ones who figure out what it's going to look like. It's a continuous 'pointing away,' knowing what people's passions are, and then inviting those people to step into those places to take a risk."

"One of Bonnie's key leadership skills is that when she finds someone who has a calling or a passion for something, she is so supportive at really letting it take off," said parishioner Andrea Garland, who assists with the coordination of All Saints' church school program.

The church school itself, is perhaps the prime example of this dynamic. When Polly Tangora came to All Saints in 1992, the parish was offering what Perry described as "a mildly lame typical church school."

"And it wasn't long before Polly, who has a master's degree in education, came to me and said, 'I would like to teach the children about Jesus.' She has this deep, abiding love for Jesus, and also has that amazing, quirky sense of humor that is a signature of this community." Tangora, who still directs the program, established and continues to grow a thriving church school.

"Using Polly and the church school as an example, I'd go so far as to describe Bonnie's style as 'hands off,'" said Garland. "Because she trusted how it was growing and moving. And it wasn't because she wasn't interested and didn't value the work. It's a sign of a good leader, someone who says, 'Hey this is really going well. I don't need to micromanage this. I trust this.'"

The commitment to encouraging others in their calls to leadership has caught on, extending beyond the rector to the congregation as



All Saints has made a tradition of encouraging parishioners' creativity through liturgy and pageantry.

Exhibit A: The Wake the Dead service on All Saints Day (this page); Exhibit B: Christmas pageants, including Hamilton Meets Jesus (opposite, below.)



parishioners encourage one another in their ministries. “About 12 or 13 years ago, I said to Polly ‘Hey, I think I might be wanting to help with the school,’ said Garland. “It really felt like a calling. It felt right. And, Polly and I chatted, and soon I found myself sitting beside her and learning about everything she does. As the church school has grown, we’ve seen the leadership grow as well. More and more people are coming to us and saying ‘I’d like to do this.’ And sometimes we tap people and say ‘Hey, do you think you might be interested in this?’”

Margaret Ferguson said their rector’s style has set them up well for the transition. “We’ve been watching her build up the church school and make sure that the foundation is there, that there are multiple people in

“All Saints is such a healthy place, and with such effective, strong lay leadership. It’s an exciting time to think about the future that has yet to unfold.”

leadership positions,” she said. “And we have Ravenswood Community Services, which is a phenomenal organization that has been built out of All Saints and has a solid foundation and strong leadership. There are the worship committees, and our music program, they all have strong leadership, and it has all been built from ground up. This is not the ‘Bonnie Perry Show.’ This is All Saints. And she’s made sure of that.”

Ravenswood Community Services, which was founded in 1993, has grown into an organization with a \$500,000 budget, a full-time executive director, a program manager, and 50 volunteers per week. “And I wash the dishes,” Perry said.

“The Ravenswood kitchen and food pantry is essential,” said parishioner Michelle Mayes. “It’s the way we’ve really connected with people in the community, to be outward-focused. And it doesn’t require much priest involvement. It has its own 501(c)(3) status. It’s on the right track to be able to continue on its own.”

The Rev. Andrew Rutledge, whose first full day as associate rector at All Saints happened to be the day of Perry’s election, has taken note of the strength of lay leadership in the congregation. “I’ve been a lifelong Episcopalian, and I’ve been involved with a number of churches all over the country,” Rutledge said. “I know the church through and through, and I’ve never seen a church like this before. I’ve never seen such strong passionate, creative people in lay leadership. This transition is not going to be a low point in this church’s history. This transition is really a catapult; it’s a place to launch them into the future to be whatever they want to be.”

As rector for nearly three decades, Perry was able to see children grow up and grow into leadership roles as adults. “Our famous Africa bake auction [a fundraiser that supports partners in South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya] was started by Hilary Waldron, who was 8 when I met her,” Perry said. “She started the bake auction when she was 16. She is now an adult with a master’s in social work, who runs our youth group. Last year, the auction raised \$41,000 in an hour and 15 minutes.

“That’s why this place is going to be able to do this transition, because



*“I know the church ...
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leadership.”*

our 9-12-year-olds, with the guidance of their teachers, meet with Bishop Joseph Atem [bishop of the Diocese of Renk in South Sudan] and ask him questions. And the kids are completely and utterly empowered to run this bake auction based on what they hear from him. And again, I bake a cake, and it’s always displayed on the front table. But it’s always described as having a ‘nice personality.’”

Leaders at All Saints point to their strong children’s program, their outreach work, their commitment to welcome and inclusivity, and a sense of “goofiness” and “silliness” as essential components of what makes the congregation tick. “And that could change in the future,” Ferguson said. “In ten years if we came back to this conversation, will that all be the same? It could be. It may not be. And that would be okay as well.”

Schuneman sees this time of transition as “an amazing opportunity to ask questions like ‘What are our priorities?’ and ‘Who do we want to be in the next 25 years?’ It’s going to be really interesting to work through that process.”

“All Saints is such a healthy place, and with such effective, strong lay leadership,” said the Rev. Andrea Mysen, director of ministries for the Diocese of Chicago. “It’s an exciting time to think about the future that has yet to unfold. I know there is a normal and understandable grief there, but what I expect to emerge is an excitement for what’s next and what is to come.”

“Up to this point All Saints has been my life’s work,” Perry said. “It’s the church I prayed for. And it is just an amazing faith community that has so shaped and transformed me. This place knows that we have the gifts, talents, and agency to live out Gospel values in ways that matter. These people lead. These people lead all over the place.”

“Bonnie has left us a strong community with many strong leaders,” Garland said. “And those leaders will remain. It won’t be the same without Bonnie; it will be different. But that’s okay. We’re going to figure out what comes next together.” ✚

Artistry With a Mission

{ by Lu Stanton León }

For centuries the church, at its best, has served as a center of community life. From medieval stained glass windows to contemporary exhibits and performances, the creative arts have helped congregations welcome their neighbors, express the Christian call to service, enhance congregational life, and become known within their communities.

In the Diocese of Chicago, congregations of all sizes use concerts, art shows, photography, poetry readings and other art forms in ministry to their congregations and communities.

HOPE FOR HEALTH IN SOUTH SUDAN: ST. BARNABAS, GLEN ELLYN

Since 2005, St. Barnabas has hosted an annual concert of gospel, jazz and classical music to benefit the Renk Medical Clinic in South Sudan. Each year, the concert raises about \$10,000 for a clinic that stays open until medical supplies run out. And they always run out.

“We’re a very small church, but we’ve always had a commitment to outreach and we’ve always had a passion for the arts,” said Shirley Holt, a founder of the annual concert. “It’s pretty amazing because the first time we did it, we didn’t have the concept that it would be an annual event. I remember our priest (the Rev. Matthew Alan Gunter, now bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac) said, ‘You should probably book it for next year!’ Everybody just took hold of the rope.”

The Renk clinic, administered by the Episcopal Diocese of Renk in South Sudan, is in the Upper Nile State. The area is populated by farmers, herders and refugees from the civil war in South Sudan, as well as refugees from Sudan and Ethiopia. The clinic sees roughly 9,000 patients per month, with people often walking 10 to 20 miles to get medical care.

Renk and the Diocese of Chicago have had a companion relationship since 2001. Shortly after it was established, Daniel Deng Bul, then bishop of Renk and later archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, visited St. Barnabas and shared stories of his country’s dire needs. The seed for a benefit concert was planted.

“Because I’m a nurse, I wanted to know about health care,” Holt said. “There was no health care at that time in the village of Renk. There had been a clinic, but it had been closed for several years. The idea of having whole sections of a country without health care was alarming. That just kind of bored itself into my head.”

All of the funds raised by the free-will offering concert are sent directly to the Diocese of Renk. St. Barnabas underwrites all other costs, and the professional musicians—more than ten, most years—donate their time and talent.

“Over the years between 100 and 200 people attend the event,” Holt said. “Very early we set our goal at \$10,000. I realize that that’s not much money in the grand scheme of things, but it goes a long way in South Sudan.

“I think it has become part of the fabric of St. Barnabas.”

The Rev. Natalie Van Kirk, who was rector of St. Barnabas until October, agrees.

“The South Sudan ministry is a very big part of St. Barnabas’s identity. Even when people move away, they come back to participate in the concert. And because all of us have contacts in other denominations, it was been a pretty ecumenical event.”

Noting that the congregation has about 170 members, Van Kirk said, “What they do here is pretty phenomenal for this size congregation.”

In addition to the concert for South Sudan, St. Barnabas also sponsors an annual concert to raise money for the DuPage County’s program to end homelessness.

“They do a tremendous amount,” Van Kirk said of St. Barnabas’s parishioners. “And we’ve always been blessed with really talented artists, especially musicians.”

ARTS & OUTREACH: EMMANUEL, ROCKFORD

Almost six years ago, three parishioners at Emmanuel wrote a diocesan grant proposal designed to showcase the arts while also

deepening parishioners’ spirituality.

“We really wanted to create programing that would address the need for additional spiritual offerings and bring in people from the community,” said Millie Zimmerman, one of the three who drafted the original proposal. “Our rector was just leaving, and in preparation for that, our parish conducted a survey. One finding was our parishioners wanted to do more in the way of spirituality. Plus, our church is right on the border of the downtown area of Rockford, which was enjoying an organic revitalization and was really flourishing. We were well aware that we were on the edge of that excitement, and we wanted to reach out to that community.”

At first their goal for the new program, titled Aspire, was a bit nebulous, Zimmerman admits. But over the years, the initiative has matured into a program that facilitates arts and spirituality outreach through musical events, art shows, lectures, poetry readings, film series, spirituality and meditation classes ... you name it.

The Rev. Bill Nesbit, interim rector since February, notes Emmanuel’s commitment to serving its neighbors.

“Emmanuel has really stayed connected to its neighborhood community,” Nesbit said. “We work together with other nearby churches to expand our impact. We get about 140 to 150 worshipers in on any given Sunday, but our impact on the community goes so much further. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry says that the goal of evangelism is not to grow the church but to change the world. We may not be changing the world, but we are changing our little corner of it for the better.”

Zimmerman said the first art show, which showcased parishioners’ artwork, helped members of the congregation get to know one another in new ways.

“We have artists, potters, sculptors, photographers, people who did architectural drawings,” she said. “We spent the entire evening walking around and saying, ‘I didn’t know that person could do that!’ It was just wonderful.

“The committee was really energetic at first. Really robust but perhaps out of control. We may have had too many things going. We’re still strong, but we’re not out of control.”

This year the Aspire program offered a spring poetry reading and an ongoing summer film series featuring “If Beale Street Could Talk,” the documentary “RBG: Ruth Bader Ginsberg” and “Beautiful Boy.” Films chosen each year deal with social justice issues and are preceded by a light supper and followed by a discussion. The film series is a free-will offering, but there is a \$10 charge for the poetry readings. About 30 people attend the film nights. The poetry readings draw about 60 people.

Zimmerman said Emmanuel’s outreach through the arts serves primarily as a way to enhance the lives of parishioners and members of the community.

“In addition to enriching the lives of our congregation and the community, I believe Aspire has enhanced the city’s awareness of our name and place and helped establish our identity in the collective consciousness. We have improved the awareness of who and where we are.”

This fall the Aspire program did something completely new. On November 2 the church celebrated Día de Los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, with a full day of activities for adults and children. In addition

“I believe Aspire has ... helped establish our identity in the collective consciousness. We have improved the awareness of who and where we are.”

to a screening of the movie “Coco,” there was a catered Mexican lunch, a mariachi band, and a dance presentation by the Rockford Dance Company. Attendees decorated the Resurrection Garden and helped create a Day of the Dead altar in the narthex.

“People were encouraged to bring whatever mementos they wanted to put on the altar to remember their loved ones,” Zimmerman said. “The mariachi band took us outside so we could put marigolds on the graves in the Resurrection Garden.”

Zimmerman hoped the event would appeal to the significant Mexican and Central American population in Rockford.

“I personally have always felt that on All Saints’ Day, while we’ve always had a proper Anglican service, we weren’t doing what we needed to do to honor our ancestors,” Zimmerman said.

MAKING MUSIC, CHANGING LIVES: ST. GEORGE’S, MACOMB

With 28 members, St. George’s Church in Macomb may be one of the smallest congregations in the Diocese of Chicago, but when it comes to community impact, it punches above its weight.

For the past five years the church has awarded music scholarships to one or two students at nearby Western Illinois University and hosted concerts to raise funds for their living expenses. In exchange, the students perform at the congregation’s Sunday services, held in a rented space on University Drive near their school.

“Our students from Western Illinois University say the music department there calls us ‘the music church’,” said the Rev. Paula Engelhorn, rector of the church. “I love that.”

Scholarship recipients call it “a blessing.” Many are on full university musical scholarships, but need money for food and incidentals.

“The entire church is filled with wonderful humans and I am very thankful to have them in my life!” said Luciana Hontilă, a Romanian violinist who played at St. George’s for three years. This fall, she began a doctoral program in music at the University of Iowa.

“They are my family here in the United States,” Hontilă said. “Mother Paula and Mr. John (Engelhorn’s husband) have been a huge blessing for my family and me. They have been the most generous, supportive, kind



Clockwise from top left: Musical fundraiser at St. Barnabas, Glen Ellyn; Bishop Joseph Atem at St. Barnabas dinner; photographer Arturo Fernandez spoke at Emmanuel, Rockford; Shirley and Dick Holt, hosts of the St. Barnabas dinner; the Rockford Dance Company.



Clockwise from top:
St. George's small but mighty
music ministry has featured
violinist Madalyn Pridemore,
the Hontilă siblings, Vlad
and Luciana, and a congre-
gation that sings.



and loving people since we met them.”

In August, nearly 90 people attended a St. George's-sponsored violin concert featuring Hontilă, her father, Claudiu, a renowned Romanian violinist, and her younger brother Vlad, who also received scholarships from St. George's while at WIU. The concert raised about \$2,000, much of which will go toward Vlad's living expenses at the Manhattan School of Music, where this year, in his first semester, he was chosen as concertmaster.

“It was extraordinary,” Engelhorn said of the concert and the turnout. “People said they'd have to pay \$200 for a concert like that in Chicago. We didn't believe how much we made. The Hontilăs are a wonderful family. Vlad lived with us for two years. It was really hard to let him go.”

Luciana and Vlad overlapped as musicians at St.

“Our musical ministry
has been tremendous.
The Holy Spirit has
led us since the time
we started here.”



This year St. George's welcomes a new crop of musicians. Engelhorn said a talented freshman violinist, Madalyn Pridemore, will play every Sunday during each semester and cellist Nathalie Joy Hernandez will play every other week.

“Our musical ministry has been tremendous,” Engelhorn said. “The Holy Spirit has led us since the time we started here.”

The Episcopal congregation lost its home on East Carroll Street, Macomb, a little more than 10 years ago when what was then the Diocese of Quincy and about 60 percent of its members broke away from the Episcopal Church and became founders of the conservative Anglican Church of North America.

Though still small, the Episcopal congregation has doubled in size since 2011, when a dozen members held services in Engelhorn's living room. It's now outgrowing its rented space on University Drive.

“We can only do so much,” Engelhorn said of their limited finances. “It's been a struggle but a good one, and we're very happy with our music success. For me, it's a labor of love.” ✝

George's, much to Luciana's delight.

“We were providing the musical background every Sunday for all the hymns and unique preludes and postludes,” she said, “and we organized some other church-related musical events to fundraise for our scholarships. The connection we had with the parishioners was and still is very valuable to me. Such a wonderful community!”

Recipients of St. George's music scholarships receive \$800 to play every Sunday during a semester, \$400 to play every other Sunday, and honorariums for playing at special events. The church also pays a student organist \$60 a week.

“The church was very generous and supportive of our path as musicians,” Luciana said. “It was so helpful! I used it for music supplies such as new strings, accessories and many times for food and books, train tickets, depending where the need was at that time.”



“What drew human beings to religion in the first place has not disappeared.”



Drawing meaning from tradition | by Kathleen Moore

More than twenty-three percent of the U.S. population now claims to have no religious affiliation. The increase of the “nones,” as they are popularly called, is being felt in all Christian denominations, and the Episcopal Church is no exception. From 2008 to 2018, domestic membership fell by more than eighteen percent, to just under 1.7 million people.

As leaders across the church work to understand how the Episcopal Church might respond to this changing religious landscape, Casper ter Kuile, cofounder of research and design consultancy Sacred Design Lab and Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School, suggests we look no further than the gifts of our own tradition.

“I think we’re all familiar with the story of decline—certainly for the mainline Christian churches and denominations,” says ter Kuile, who will give the keynote address at this year’s diocesan convention with his research partner Angie Thurston. “People share a sense of decreasing relevance. They sense a growing chasm between ‘inside the church’ and ‘outside the church.’” But, he says, Christian traditions have great wisdom to offer in an age when “an undercurrent of stress and disconnection is having massive implications for our health and wellbeing. What drew human beings to religion in

the first place has not disappeared.”

Those include “the consistent yearning for meaning and purpose and connection and the joy of experiencing ritual or something bigger than yourself,” ter Kuile says. “All of these elements, marking stages of time and life journeys, all of that is still one hundred percent relevant. And what our research has always focused on is asking the question, ‘what are people doing to fulfill that and how can we help them do it better?’”

Ter Kuile co-founded How We Gather, which describes itself as a “millennial-led spiritual startup collaboration between Harvard Divinity School and the Fetzer Institute.” The project studies how people find meaning, connection and community in an increasingly secular world. Their research demonstrates that people, particularly younger ones, are finding what they yearn for in communities outside church walls.

“We looked at very secular organizations that nonetheless have been fulfilling these congregational roles,” says ter Kuile. “How do people work through the death of a loved one or diagnosis? Where do they find support for the little things of everyday life, like looking after someone’s dog when they’re going to visit their parents? Who is bringing soup when someone’s sick?”

“We found all those things are happening—in fitness groups, in arts groups, in justice groups. I think for a lot of people within religious congregations, that’s a real surprise. So, to look with new eyes at the places in which people are finding community and meaning, and to look

top left: Bishop Jeff Lee and others share a laugh during a gathering of theologians and young adult “experience designers” exploring what ritual means earlier this month at the Nicholas Center; below: Casper ter Kuile

“People are looking for things religion has helped us find. And I don’t think it’s going away any time soon.”

with eyes of appreciation not just criticism – that can be a revelation.”

Ter Kuile encourages Christians to find and learn from these secular communities. “Pay attention and ask questions, just with the people in your life, your friends or kids, or neighbors,” he suggests. “Just ask them ‘Where do you go to find community?’ And you will find they will start talking about their running club, for example. And just being curious about these things and learning more about them can really shift the paradigm of how we think about what religion is all about.”

Ter Kuile cites The Sanctuaries, an arts community in Washington D.C., as a favorite example of a group that “cultivated a multi-racial community from the very beginning.” Founded six years ago, the group describes itself as “the first interfaith arts community in the country,” and opens its space to artists of all racial and religious backgrounds. Led by an ordained minister, resident seminarians, and other spiritual leaders in formation, The Sanctuaries hosts events that, according to a How We Gather report, “allow people of diverse spiritual and artistic backgrounds to share their perspectives, do creative projects, and engage in honest conversation.”

Turning to secular communities for a sense of meaning and connection is not without its drawbacks. “The fact that many of these communities are for-profit companies is problematic,” ter Kuile says, citing the indoor cycling fitness company SoulCycle. “That adds a challenging barrier of who gets to belong and who doesn’t. Access becomes about price point.”

Secular communities also struggle with “starting from scratch” when, ter Kuile says, they would benefit from the wisdom of traditional religious practice. “The best innovation comes from tradition,” he says. “For a lot of these secular communities, they feel like they have to make it up for the first time. They say, for example, ‘Well okay, someone’s having a baby, what do we do?’ And this is where we see a lot of communities reinventing the wheel

without having the wisdom of tradition to guide them.”

Religious traditions, ter Kuile says, hold the very wisdom secular communities are seeking. “How can we liberate these religious resources?” he asks. “The words you say at a baptism and the idea of a liturgical calendar, for example. These are things that will practically serve all sorts of people, way beyond those who might see themselves as, ‘I’m an Episcopalian and I’m in the pews every Sunday.’”

Bishop Jeff Lee has been involved in conversation with ter Kuile and others for a few years. “It has opened what has been for me a refreshing and exciting conversation with people who are longing for many things that I believe are at the heart of our faith,” he says.

The phenomenon of seeking a sense of life-defining purpose in secular communities is only accelerating, Lee says. “And I want to suggest that we have nothing to be afraid of in the face of it and much to engage. This is an opportunity to get out of church and go find these folks and say ‘Hey, could we talk? I’m really curious about what you’re finding here. What do you long for?’ There’s not a neighborhood in this diocese where we have to look very hard to find people who are striving to create meaning.

“I’ve been reflecting on Paul in the Areopagus—how he says, ‘Athenians, I see you’re a very religious people—let’s talk about this!’ When we engage with those outside our tradition we carry our deepest convictions with us, and need not be anxious.”

Ter Kuile draws on his research into the ways in which a hunger for liturgy shapes secular life for “Harry Potter and the Sacred Text,” a popular podcast he co-founded and co-hosts with Vanessa Zoltan. The program uses traditional practices for reading scripture to explore J.K. Rowling’s beloved Harry Potter novels as “sacred text,” each episode exploring a different spiritual theme.

“We use these gems of the Christian church, so we now have 65,000 people who do Lectio Divina every week,” says ter Kuile, referring to both the ancient Christian practice of meditating on scripture, and the podcast’s weekly audience. “We did a live show with John Green [author of the young adult bestsellers “The Fault in Our Stars” and “Turtles All the Way Down”], who is an Episcopalian. It shows how things that come from the Christian church or the Episcopal tradition can still be meaningful and relevant to people.


“People are looking for the things religion has often helped us find,” ter Kuile says. “I think there is a huge cultural moment right now, and I don’t think it’s going away any time soon.” ✚



Companions

A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

| by Jim Naughton |



“Our people are poor, and the priests, too, face economic hardships. ... They don’t have a car. They don’t even have a horse or a donkey. They don’t have pensions or medical care. Those are things I am concerned about.”

The Diocese of Southeastern Mexico has a new justice-oriented leader interested in poverty, indigenous issues and same-sex marriage, and parishes across the Diocese of Chicago are ready to help him in his new ministry.

The Rt. Rev. Julio Cesar Martin was elected bishop coadjutor in March and ordained in late September at the Anglican Centre in Tuxtepec, in the state of Oaxaca. Next March he will succeed Bishop Benito Juárez-Martínez, who is retiring

after 20 years as diocesan bishop. Martin ministered for two decades in the Mexican church before spending 10 years leading parishes in Alberta and Nova Scotia in Canada.

The Diocese of Chicago will soon elect a new bishop itself, and Gary Martin, chair of the committee that oversees the companion diocese relationship with Southeastern Mexico, says the almost synchronous change in leadership presents an excellent opportunity to reevaluate and reenergize the partnership, which currently involves 11 congregations in Illinois and seven faith communities in southern Mexico.

“There is a need for us to communicate and educate about where the relationship has been and where we want to take it and how we want to get it there,” he said.

Juárez-Martínez is unable to attend convention as he often does, but the companion diocese committee is planning to celebrate his 20-year tenure and get to know his successor when the bishops visit early next year. His absence, however, will not delay the announcement of the committee’s latest project, the Bishop Benito Juárez-Martínez Lay Leadership Fund. The initiative will provide \$25,000 over a ten-year period to cultivate lay leadership in the Diocese of Southeastern Mexico, where just 12 clergy work with 2,000 lay members in 19 parishes, missions and preaching stations spread over the southern quarter of the country.

“Initially we identified this fund to be used to train parishioners in the Diocese of Southeastern Mexico for the diaconate but revised our thinking to make it broader and be used for other lay leadership needs,” Gary Martin said.

Martin, a member of Christ Church, Winnetka, worked closely with Juárez-Martínez, and came to know him, his wife, Angelica and son, Eigner, well. “Bishop Benito brought a sense of really solidifying the Diocese of Southeastern Mexico, giving them a vision, giving them a presence within the province of Mexico, having a really pastoral, real caring attitude for the people of this diocese. He really cared about their welfare.”

The man who will succeed Juárez-Martínez agrees. “Bishop Benito has done wonderful things about stewardship and administration too,” he said in an interview a few days after his ordination and consecration. “Our diocese is the leading diocese in Mexico and Latin America. This diocese has the most social outreach projects bettering the material standard of living of people. I would like Chicago to learn about these things at the convention and to get involved in these wonderful projects. However, having said that, we will not forget about the great commission of the church to invite everyone to citizenship in God’s kingdom.”

Both Mexican bishops currently work from the diocesan center in Xalapa, a provincial capital of some 400,000 people, 60 miles northwest of Veracruz, which sits on the Gulf of Mexico and is the largest city in the diocese. Martin says his new diocese is complex in ways he had not fully anticipated.

“I thought at first that becoming a coadjutor didn’t make that much sense because this diocese isn’t as complex as larger dioceses with administrative complexities,” he says. “However, the complexity of this diocese has to do more with culture. Because of the 19 congregations, 14 of them are indigenous and they don’t even speak Spanish. They have a different culture, and I am not of that culture. I need to learn some of those languages to celebrate and preach.”

The liturgy at Martin’s consecration was celebrated and the sermon preached in Spanish, while readings and prayers were offered in Zapoteco, Maya and Chinanteco. The bishop is fluent in English, Spanish and five other western European languages, but the languages of his indigenous congregations are new to him. He hopes to pick them up gradually, he says, but will use the international phonetic alphabet to celebrate liturgies with indigenous communities until he does.

His ministry in southeastern Mexico, he knows, will be entirely different than his years as a rector in Canada, or his 10-year term as dean of the cathedral in Mexico City. “Our people are poor,” he says. “And the priests, too, face economic hardships. They have to walk miles from the main highway to the communities. They don’t have a car. They don’t even have a horse or a donkey. They don’t have pensions or medical care. Those are things I am concerned about.”

Along with improving the lot of his clergy, Bishop Martin says he wants to cultivate spirituality among parishioners. But this, too, he notes, has a financial dimension.

“There is so much lack of resources here that it is not only the priests’ stipends and living conditions that I am worried about,” he says. “It is even the condition of our buildings, the painting on the wall, the vessels for communion. I want to make sure all the liturgical settings are pointing toward more spirituality, so that as you pray, you are not looking up at a bare light bulb covered by dust and spider webs. So you are not worrying about peeling paint and rupturing water pipes and the condition of the roofing.”

Martin says he also wants to establish “full transparency of handling of moneys and resources, plus accountability and true synodical governance.”

On a personal level, the bishop says he hopes “to be prophetic in the acceptance of same-sex marriage.”

“That shouldn’t come as a surprise,” he says. “In the 1990s I wrote

extensively about this from pastoral, theological and anthropological perspectives. Now I am done just talking about it. I am done writing about it. I am ready to do something about it. My intention is to do what Jesus would do.”

The companion diocese relationship is perhaps better understood as a network of parish-to-parish relationships. Currently there are 11 parishes involved in relationships with communities in Mexico. These include St. Mark’s, Glen Ellyn, which has a relationship with San Marcos in Nigromante; St. Chrysostom’s, Church of Our Saviour in Chicago, Church of the Atonement, St. James Cathedral and Holy Comforter, which have a relationship with the Chiapas ministry; St. Mary’s, Park Ridge, which has a relationship with San Juan Bautista in San Felipe; Christ Church, Winnetka, which has a relationship with Jesus de Nazaret in La Esperanza; Grace Church, Galena, which has a relationship with Santa Cruz in La Joya; Holy Family, Park Forest, which has a relationship with La Divina Providencia in El Camalotal, and Transfiguration, Palos Park, which has a relationship with Transfiguración in Nuevo Progreso.

Members of St. Mark’s, Glen Ellyn; Church of Our Saviour, Chicago; and Christ Church, Winnetka, attended the March synod meeting at which Bishop Martin was elected, and Phil and Terri Jackman represented the Diocese of Chicago at the bishop’s ordination.

Gary Martin says the Chicago committee is clear on what it is and what it isn’t.

“We are not just there to helicopter in and say, ‘Look what we built! Look what we made! Aren’t we wonderful?’” says Martin, who has made nine trips to southeastern Mexico since 2005. He says the people of the



“I need their support, prayers and friendship ... I really need to have the support of the Diocese of Chicago and their parishes there.”

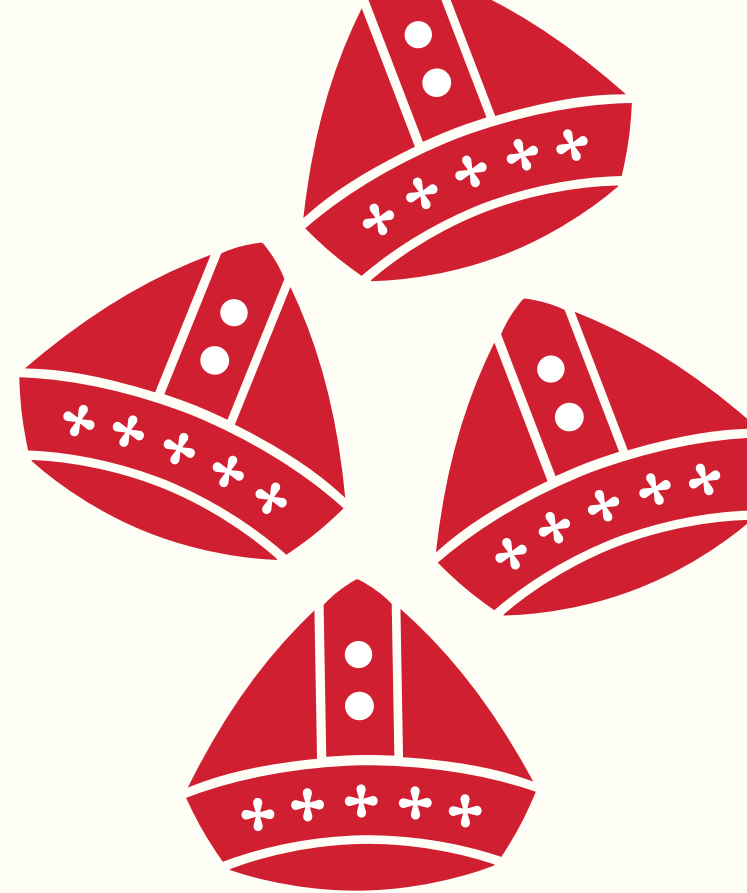
Diocese of Southeastern Mexico live in rural communities and work very hard for what they have but open their homes graciously to visitors.

“This is not Habitat for Humanity,” he says. “We’re not building houses. We are more invested in being with the people, forming relationships. It has made it hard at times to get people to come with us because some keep asking ‘What do we do? What are we going to build?’”

But the essence of the program, as the name of the supervising committee suggests, is companionship. “For me playing tag, playing soccer with the kids, interacting with people, that’s the core of the relationship,” Martin says.

“For me this is a true companion relationship. I get as much out of the trip as they get from us. Both sides receive different blessings. And, yeah, we do support priests in southeastern Mexico through parishes around our diocese, but what I’ve gotten is this sense of how welcoming and kind these people are. Everyone understands this a two-way street.”

Bishop Martin is eager to see more traffic on that street. “I need their support, prayers and friendship,” he says. “I need not to ever lose the connection with the Episcopal Church and the Canadian church. I really need to have the support of the Diocese of Chicago and their parishes there.” ✚



Hear, Hear

Search starts with listening

The profile that will describe the Diocese of Chicago to priests interested in becoming its next bishop—the product of hours and hours and hours of listening—will be published next month.

“We wanted to be sure that everybody has an opportunity to contribute their thoughts and ideas, and we wanted everybody to understand that we were truly listening and doing everything we could to make our profile as honest and full and as meaningful as it needs to be, and that we clearly articulate the incredible diversity of resources and challenges in the diocese,” said the Rev. Anne Jolly, a member of the Standing Committee overseeing the work of the Search and Nomination Committee.

“We know we are looking for a bishop with unique skills to lead this unique diocese,” said Jolly, who is rector of St. Gregory’s Church in Deerfield.

Between August and October, the Search and Nomination Committee held 11 90-minute listening sessions at locations around the diocese, plus two listening sessions exclusively for clergy and smaller sessions with groups including the Hispanic/Latino Mission and Ministry Task Force, the diocesan council and trustees and the Youth Ministry Network. The committee also met with the director of Episcopal Charities and the bishop and his staff.



“We have people who have experience in searches, people who have experience in transitions both in and outside the church, and people who have experience in doing sociological research which has been very helpful in doing the profile.”

— The Rev. Jenny Replogle

In late September, the committee launched an online survey asking members of the diocese their opinion on a range of issues including their top mission priorities and the traits they most desire in the diocese’s next bishop.

The Rev. Jenny Replogle, co-chair of the search committee, said the skills and experience of members of the committee have made it possible to analyze and synthesize data collected in numerous ways.

“We have people who have experience in searches, people who have experience in transitions both in and outside the church, and people who have experience in doing sociological research which has been very helpful in doing the profile,” said Replogle, co-rector of St. Paul’s Church in Peoria. “We just have a team that is prayerful and genuine and authentic and really committed to running a search that reflects our values as followers of Christ. We care about the dignity of the people of the diocese who we are representing, and also the dignity of the candidates who put themselves forward.”

Members of the committee participated in antiracism training before undertaking their task.

“I think we have made a very conscious effort to create space to hear from a diverse set of constituents in the diocese by choosing locations that are generally geographically accessible, and by reflecting on the work of specialized ministries or governing bodies that have exercised ministry in the diocese,” said Luis Garcia of the Church of the Atonement, who co-chairs the committee.

“As a committee, we entered the listening sessions with a completely open mind,” he said. “Our hope is that we have created a profile that is an absolutely honest reflection of the aspirations and the concerns of the diocese in terms of the work of the thirteenth bishop of Chicago.”

Fifteen congregations are represented on the committee. “You can’t have a representative from every community in the diocese,” Replogle said. “But we all understand that we are representing the whole diocese, and not just our own congregation.”

She emphasized that the committee has not met with any leaders from outside of the diocese, and that the Rev. Kim Jackson, the search consultant, has exercised a light touch with the group.

“She has let us know what best practices are when we have asked,” Replogle said. “She has never told us we have to do anything one way or the other. And she hasn’t told us what kind of thing we should be looking for.”

Even as the search process moves forward, the committee remains open to hearing from members of the

“This is not just our process. This is an invitation to the diocese to join with us in the work we do on their behalf.”

diocese, Jolly said.

“Standing Committee members’ emails are on the bishop search website (chicagobishopsearch.org) and in the governance section of the diocesan website (episcopalchicago.org),” she said. “There is no secrecy, no foregone conclusions, no predetermined outcomes.”

Replogle agreed. “I literally have no idea who we are going to get applications from and who are going to be the strongest candidates,” she said.

“We as a committee are open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit,” Garcia said. “We are open as we gather information to hear people’s joys and concerns, and we are hoping that the diocese will work with us in identifying through personal contact persons that they feel might be called to serve as the thirteenth bishop of Chicago.

“This is not just our process. This is an invitation to the diocese to join with us in the work we do on their behalf.”

Nominations for bishop will open after the publication of the diocesan profile next month and close in January. The committee will announce its slate in April, after which there will be a brief period in which additional candidates can be added to the slate by petition. The electing convention will take place on June 20. ✚



BY THE REV. ANNE B. JOLLY

*Rector of St. Gregory’s, Deerfield, and
Member of Standing Committee*

At the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago’s 2018 convention, where I was a lay delegate, famed broadcast journalist, professor and lifelong Episcopalian Ray Suarez spoke on the dire picture that statistics show for the future of the Church. He wondered exactly how the Episcopal Church should reach young people, and pointed to St. Lydia’s Dinner Church, a Lutheran Ministry in Brooklyn, as one example of a way forward.

At the church where I serve, we have been debating whether the native flowers planted in our memorial garden should be deadheaded as the summer growing season gives way to fall and winter. If we leave the spent blooms intact over the winter, people may assume we’re neglecting to care for our garden – and even our church. However, what looks messy and disheveled to the casual observer provides winter shelter for birds, and spreads seeds that will produce more native flowers in the next growing season. While the garden may appear neglected or ignored, so much is happening to increase life and beauty for the coming years.

The Diocese of Chicago is in the beginning of a significant change that will, in some way,

Entering a Time of Preparation

affect us all. While change can be an opportunity for new growth, change is oftentimes accompanied by some measure of fear and anxiety about what’s next. There is no question that the transition from Bishop Jeff Lee to a new bishop will require a lot of people to participate in a lot of planning and work. The Standing Committee is canonically responsible for overseeing this process, and is working closely with the chairs of the Search and Transition Committees to ensure we are all communicating well with each other and sharing the responsibilities appropriately. We are working with the diocesan staff, calling on their expertise and knowledge of the diocese at each point in the transition. We have a bishop search consultant recommended by The Episcopal Church’s Office of Pastoral Development who is advising us on the process, and we are in conversation with other dioceses that have been, or are currently going through, a bishop transition.

The Search and Nomination Committee, made up of clergy and laypeople from all over the diocese, is well organized, prayerful, and working in as transparent a way as this process allows. This committee will manage our search process up until they present a slate of nominees to the Standing Committee. We have also assembled a Transition Committee that will pick up the process as soon as the nominees are announced. The Transition Committee will organize the walkabouts, help with the electing convention, and help organize the events surrounding the Ordination and Consecration of the 13th Bishop of Chicago. In addition, the Transition Committee will have a role in thanking Bishop Lee for his faithful service and welcoming the bishop-elect and family to the diocese. We are so grateful for the talented, faithful people on these committees who have volunteered to serve the diocese during this

time of transition, carefully tending to the details that help ensure the transition will be as smooth as possible.

The staff, Standing Committee, and the Search and Transition Committees are keenly aware of the responsibility we have been given, and are organized to work together to guide the diocese through the ordination and consecration of our next bishop. There will be several months between the time of Bishop Lee’s retirement and the ordination of our new bishop, and the Standing Committee will have canonical authority during that time. We are already anticipating this, structuring our prayers, work, and communications so that we can work with both the bishop and bishop-elect to ensure this time will be managed well.

Contact information for the Standing Committee and Search and Transition Committees can be found on the search and transition website (chicagobishopsearch.org). We welcome your thoughts and ideas. While at times it may appear that nothing is happening, we are thoughtfully, prayerfully, and advisedly working in the hope and promise that at the end of this season of transition we will experience the joy of new life and growth in the Diocese of Chicago. We are excited about this time in our common lives and are honored to serve each one of the members of the diocese in this capacity. ✚

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