HOMECOMING
Churches in Turlock & Ridgecrest return
# THE DIOCESE OF SAN JOAQUIN GOVERNANCE

## STANDING COMMITTEE

**Clergy:**
- 2016: The Rev. Glenn Kanestrom, Christ the King, Riverbank
- 2015: The Rev. Suzy Ward, St. Paul’s, Visalia (Secretary)
- 2014: The Rev. Michele Racusin, Holy Family, Fresno (President)
- 2013: The Rev. John Shumaker, St. Matthew’s, San Andreas

**Lay:**
- 2016: Juanita Weber, St. Anne’s, Stockton
- 2015: Stan Boone, Holy Family, Fresno
- 2014: Richard Cress, St. John’s, Lodi
- 2013: Richard Jennings, Holy Family, Fresno

## DIOCESAN COUNCIL

### NORTHERN DEANERY

**Clergy:** 2014: The Rev. Basil Matthews, St. Clare, Priest In Charge

**Lay:** 2015: Louise McCoskey, Christ the King, Riverbank

### CENTRAL DEANERY

**Clergy:** 2013: The Rev. Paul Colbert, Madera/Merced Missioner

**Lay:** 2014: Don Austin, (Secretary) Holy Family, Fresno

### SOUTHERN DEANERY

**Clergy:** 2015: The Rev. Linda Huggard, Kern County Missioner

**Lay:** 2013: Carrol Sewell, All Souls, Ridgecrest

### AT LARGE

**Lay:** 2015: Marvin (Jerry) Pettiford, Grace, Bakersfield

**Lay:** 2013: George Sitts, St. Raphael’s, Oakhurst

**Lay:** 2014: Jan Dunlap, (V.P.) St. Brigid’s, Bakersfield

## DEPUTIES TO GENERAL CONVENTION

**Clergy Deputies:**
- C1: The Rev. Canon Mark Hall, St. Anne’s, Stockton
- C2: The Rev. Luis Rodriguez, Church of the Saviour, Hanford
- C3: The Rev. Glenn Kanestrom, Christ the King, Riverbank
- C4: The Rev. Kathryn Galacia, St. Francis, Turlock
- CA1: The Rev. Michele Racusin, Holy Family, Fresno
- CA2: The Rev. Paul Colbert, St. Raphael’s, Oakhurst and Holy Trinity, Madera
- CA3: The Rev. Paul Colbert, St. Paul’s, Modesto

**Lay Deputies:**
- L1: Nancy Key, Holy Family, Fresno
- L2: Cindy Smith, St. Brigid’s Bakersfield
- L3: Bill Latham, Christ the King, Riverbank
- L4: Jan Dunlap, St. Brigid’s Bakersfield
- LA1: Judith Wood, St. Paul’s, Visalia
- LA2: Marilyn Metzgar, Grace, Bakersfield

## DEPUTIES TO PROVINCE VIII SYNOD

The Rev. Paul Colbert, St. Raphael’s, Oakhurst and Holy Trinity, Madera

Jan Dunlap, St. Brigid, Bakersfield

## COMMISSION ON SCHOOLS

Samantha Bland, Christ the King, Riverbank

Faye Choate, St. Matthew’s, San Andreas

Stephanie Gilmer, St. Paul’s, Modesto

Katrian Van Walterop-Ijams, St. Paul’s, Modesto

Janice Latham, Christ the King, Riverbank

Frank Remkiewicz, Christ the King, Riverbank

Lindy Santellan, St. Paul’s, Modesto

Juanita Weber, St. Anne’s, Stockton

The Rev. Kathleen West, St. Paul’s, Modesto

Judy Teter, St. Paul’s, Modesto

## YOUTH COMMISSION

Stephen Bentley (Co-Chair), St. Anne’s, Stockton

Aaron Conner (Co-Chair), Grace, Bakersfield

Claire Littlefield, St. Francis, Turlock

Leslie Littlefield, St. Francis, Turlock

Ashley McGuire, Grace, Bakersfield

## MORE...

For documents concerning the Equality Commission, as well as the Canons and Constitution documents, please see our website, [www.diosanjoaquin.org](http://www.diosanjoaquin.org) under the tab “Governance”. 
Dear Friends,

We in the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin are joyfully welcoming back four returning churches. Four of our legal cases have been resolved through settlement; returning to the diocese: St. Francis, Turlock; St. James, Sonora; St. Michael’s, Ridgecrest; and St. Paul’s, Bakersfield.

Each of these churches has a group who remained Episcopalians who return now to make up the core of the returning congregation. The exception is St. Paul’s, Bakersfield, which includes members of two start-up congregations, Grace, Bakersfield, and St. Brigid’s, Bakersfield.

We celebrate the return of these churches. The spirit in which we celebrate is not of being victorious over others, but rather that we have settled our differences with regard to these properties. Now we are able in these four congregations to turn our full attention to ministry and Christ’s mission.

We wish to welcome everyone back to these churches. We sing a song in this diocese called “All Are Welcome.”. All means “All.” In our churches there are no outcasts, and there are no reasons, such as race or station, age, gender or sexual orientation, or any conditions that will cause anyone to be excluded.

To those who left the Episcopal Church and wonder if they are welcome: Yes, “all are welcome.” We are bound to extend Christ’s invitation, “come unto me all of you...” Now we turn ourselves fully to the pursuit of Christ’s mission unencumbered, in these four churches, by any legal restraints. These are the reasons for our joy and celebration.

Faithfully,

+Chet Talton
Remain Episcopal to offer grants to help communities of faith grow

The Remain Episcopal (RE) organization is offering grants to help grow local communities of faith, including parishes, missions, deaneries or church organizations.

The organization, formed ten years ago with the objective of providing fellowship and education to Episcopalians in the diocese of San Joaquin, who felt uncomfortable with the way the diocese seemed to be heading, worked with others around the country to form a network of support for faithful Episcopalians in similar difficulties.

That network was named Via Media, after the “middle way” of broad-Church Anglicanism.

In the past RE has sponsored numerous daylong workshops throughout the diocese of San Joaquin. The Baptismal Covenant Series gathered in different parishes to explore the meaning in our lives of five parts of Covenant that we as Episcopalians affirm at each Baptism.

RE has given grants to start up faith communities, and helped to finance services and activities that did not have diocesan funding. Now that many of our properties are returning to the diocese, and because these communities will initially have smaller congregations, RE recognizes the need to help “grow the church.”

We will expend all of our resources, gathered from the generous donations of so many throughout the Episcopal Church, in supporting our rebuilding as an appropriate closure for Remain Episcopal, and a catalyst for continued growth and mission outreach.

For more information, or to apply, contact Dr. Richard Jennings, doctorrj@sbcglobal.net and Dr. W. Marshall Johnston, marshall.johnston@fresno.edu. For an application, visit the diocesan website at: www.diosanjoaquin.org.

"A Phenomenal Level of Support" for San Joaquin

From news, wire reports

Along with the good news this week of legal settlements returning four church properties to the Diocese of San Joaquin came the June 10 announcement that the Episcopal Church’s Executive Council had approved increased financial assistance to the diocese (see related story in the Journal, page B).

Diocesan officials were thrilled. “This is a phenomenal level of support,” said the Rev. Canon Kate Cullinane, during a telephone interview from Virginia, where she was attending a CREDO conference.

“Everybody expected support when the diocese split” in 2007, she added. “It’s easy, when it first happens, to say yes, we’ll be there, but to have this ongoing support is wonderful.”

The assistance has been in the form of both initial grants, and also loans, she noted. The continued support indicates a level of commitment that says “they’re going to see us through to the end.”

Chancellor Mike Glass also heralded the news.

Executive Council’s unwavering support and commitment to supporting the Diocese of San Joaquin has not only preserved the mission and ministry of the church in the central valley, but its investment of treasure, leadership, and expertise will ultimately allow the diocese to grow and redevelop itself to do the work of the church in new ways that will hopefully inspire the larger church,” he said.

At its June 8-10, 2013 meeting in Linthicum, Maryland Council agreed to provide an additional line of credit of $785,000 to be accessed.

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With the rap of his crosier on the church door and trumpet fanfare, San Joaquin Bishop Chet Talton on June 9 formally ushered in the future of St. Francis Episcopal Church in Turlock: “we’re moving forward with mission, ministry and the work of reconciliation.”

The standing room only gathering of about 150 sang “All are Welcome,” a theme reflected throughout the homecoming festival celebration of the church, the first to be returned to the diocese after negotiated settlements with former members who left the Episcopal Church in 2007.

“We can now turn all of our resources to sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and engaging in Christ’s Mission in the world,” Talton said.

At the heart of that mission is reconciliation. All are welcome. All means all, including those who differed with our churches and left; they are welcome. At center in our celebration of return is that we can devote ourselves wholly to mission and ministry.”

Vera Sahlstrom, who turned 94 a day earlier, said she couldn’t have asked for a better birthday present.

“I spent 30 years on the altar guild here and 30 years in the choir. I’ve got so many memories here. It’s good to be home,” she said.

Her grandson, Paul Voorhees echoed the sentiment: “I was born and raised in this church. It’s good to be home, it’s happiness.”

The Rev. Kathie Galicia, priest-in-charge of the congregation, said she received the keys to the church a week earlier and the returning congregation held its first service there June 2.

“It’s wonderful to have the church back,” she said. Overwhelmed by the support of visitors from across the diocese, she added: “This is like having a giant open house. I want to do this every Sunday.”

St. Francis members had worshipped in various locations the past six years, after theological differences split the diocese in 2007. Former members had left the Episcopal Church but had attempted to keep the property.

State and federal courts have consistently ruled that church properties are held in trust by the diocese for the mission and ministry of the wider Episcopal Church.

Returning Episcopalian Nedra Voorhees, 74, echoed an often-repeated sentiment that coming back to worship “felt like coming home.

“It was a wandering and a soul-searching time,” she recalled. “My commitment to Christ was strengthened by not having that security that somehow a building provides for you. You come to rely more on your relationship with God than on a building … when you’ve
Journey to South Dakota’s Pine Ridge Reservation and worship Taizé-style

By Aaron Conner
Grace Church, Bakersfield

This past Memorial Day weekend I attended the “Pilgrimage of Trust on the Earth” at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwest South Dakota. On May 24, I flew from Burbank to Denver, where I met a friend Adam, who hosted me for the evening and with whom I made the six-hour drive to the reservation.

Also attending the May 24-27 pilgrimage were brothers from the Taizé Community of France and pilgrims from all walks of life and from many Christian backgrounds. The pilgrimage’s purpose is to “enable young people from every continent to mobilize their energies, to gather together their longings, intuitions and experiences,” according to Brother Alois, Prior of the Taizé Community).

This is one of many pilgrimages held outside the community. Last year, it was held in Chicago. Since 2005, pilgrimages have also been held in parts of Europe, India, and Africa.

For those unaware of Taizé, here is some background: The ecumenical monastic order was founded in 1940 by Roger Schütz, a Swiss Protestant pastor, who came across the village of Taizé while bicycling from Geneva. He bought a house there and opened his doors to Jews seeking sanctuary as well as war refugees. While he was away tending to business in Switzerland, German soldiers occupied his home; he was unable to return until 1944. After the war, he published a small number of pamphlets offering space to those who wanted to live a simple life of prayer and reflection.

A Roman Catholic and an Anglican joined him. Seven of them on Easter Sunday 1949 took vows to serve Christ in simplicity, celibacy, and community. In the 1960s young adults from all over the world became interested in the way of Taizé and began making pilgrimages. The brothers extended their property to accommodate the pilgrims.

When they built their current church, the Church of Reconciliation, in 1962, they were concerned that it was too big; only to be concerned later it wasn’t big enough. Since then the community hosts thousands of young pilgrims weekly.

Before his death (he was murdered by a mentally ill women during an evening prayer service in 2005) Schütz said he felt it was time to take the “Pilgrimage of Trust” to other parts of the world, which started a year later after Brother Alois was appointed as Prior of the community.
Taizé services are very simple and include: music, Scripture readings, prayers, and songs. The songs of Taizé were written to emphasize passages of scripture and prayer. They are written in many languages to accommodate and promote the unity of its pilgrims. The songs are short and simple, sung in repetition and often in canons while being embellished by a cantor, a tool used to aid contemplation.

The pilgrimage held in South Dakota has its origins when a group of students from the Cheyenne River Reservation visited Taizé in 2009. Discussions with the Lakota students and the community inspired this year’s visit.

The Rev. Robert Two Bulls Sr. offered the space around Christ Church, a few miles outside the Red Shirt Village. The monks accepted the invitation and preparations were made for 2014. However, so much buzz was generated by the event that it was moved to 2013.

Episcopal, Lutheran and Catholic dioceses and congregations from across the country collaborated to make it happen. Accommodations were minimal: we were without electricity and showers and 20 porta-potties on site were “sponsored” by congregations and organizations in the United States.

The Episcopal Church Office for Indigenous Ministries and the South Dakota Lutheran Synod donated large meeting tents. The space used for communal prayer was a natural amphitheater below Christ Church, overlooking the Bandlands.

Our days were fairly consistent with a day in the Taizé community: morning prayer, an introduction to the Bible with a monk, small group discussion, general sessions, workshops, noonday and evening prayer, and meals in between.

One of the verses we focused on was Isaiah 44, which was written after the Jews had been exiled from Israel, according to the monk who led the study. All hope for them was lost, but it was the prophet's calling to bring hope and trust that God was still present, and still with them, and that God was doing a “new thing”.

The passage of scripture resonated well with the context in which we were living for that weekend. Pine Ridge is located in one of the poorest counties in the nation and there is a high per capita rate of alcoholism, unemployment, and families living well below poverty level.

A previous bishop had closed churches on the property, citing low attendance and lack of funding. But the Rt. Rev. John Tarrant, the current bishop, has reestablished connections with the community.

The monks said they chose the location because of the sufferings of the Lakota people. They found a sense of hope was grounded in the community of Native Americans. After many trials and betrayals, they continued to trust that a “new thing” would happen.

Trust, Brother Roger has said, involves taking a huge risk; and inviting more than 500 people to their Reservation (the only gathering on Reservation grounds since Wounded Knee in 1973) was indeed an act of risk taking. God’s “new thing” is juxtaposed with trust and taking a risk. This resonated with us the duration of the weekend.

During discussion in my small group, we concluded that the Taizé community’s focus is reconciliation and justice. The monastic community focuses on the interactions of God’s people and finding commonality. Through reflection and contemplation one can be open enough to listen to and to love God while also listening to and learning to love themselves.

And it is through listening, real listening, to those around us, that we can be reconciled to one another. Listening is an act of trust, of risk taking.

I think those of us in San Joaquin can identify. Where all hope seems lost, God continues to tell us, “Comfort, a new thing is coming!”.

Taizé invites us to be present to ourselves and in our communities and ask, where do we see God’s work, how can we reconcile ourselves to see the work of the newness of God? Taizé instructs us that through contemplation and reflection we can not only find the newness of God in the past, but we can engage in God’s creativeness in the present.

On Sunday many of the
Third Annual Women’s Retreat focuses on Julian of Norwich

By Deborah Spaine

For this was revealed, that our life is all founded and rooted in love, and without love we cannot live... it is the most impossible thing which could be that God might be angry, for anger and friendship are two contraries....” So says Julian of Norwich in the 49th chapter of her Showings.

Love and friendship were the firm foundation of the Women’s Retreat this year held at the Evergreen Conference Center Oakhurst. Wrapped and enfolded in the wild green beauty of the Sierra Mountains, we experienced the fragile preciousness of this world, which Julian likens to a hazelnut lying in the palm of her hand. “It lasts and always will, because God loves it” (Ch. 5).

The Rev. Luis Rodriguez led our community of 21 exceptional women into the mysticism of England’s medieval anchorite with a blend of history, power point pictures, and liturgical worship. With increasing passion and a playful twinkle in his eyes, he opened us to Julian’s spiritual struggles and explorations. His loving attention to Julian’s teachings on suffering brought new depth of understanding to our shared stories of the challenges and new life that are transforming our diocese.

Over tasty food and a bit of wine (we are Episcopalians after all), we strengthened our bonds of friendship both old and new and spurred each other on in our various ministries and callings.

Fr. Luis leads a session of the Women’s Retreat.

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Four Participate in COM’s Day of Discovery

Four members of the diocese participated in a day-long Commission on Ministry conference to explore lay and ordained ministry. Those who came were Bruce Dean Bailey of St. Matthews, San Andreas; Aaron Conner from Grace, Bakersfield; Michael Zivko Jurkovic from St. Paul’s, Modesto; and Marilee Muncey from St. Nicholas, Atwater. This day of inquiry and discernment was held at Christ the King in Riverbank on April 13.

The purpose of the Day of Discovery is to discover and appreciate the mission and ministry of Christ as expressed in the ministry roles of the Episcopal Church and to see how the individual fits in. It prepares the participant to further explore their mission and ministry through a 12-week course called the Context for Ministry. All those who participated are going to continue their discernment through this twelve-week course beginning April 29.

Participation in the Day of the Discovery and the Context for Ministry marks the first steps an individual takes in discerning a call to ordained ministry, and the Commission on Ministry therefore asks that we keep Marilee, Michael, Aaron and Bruce in our prayers.

The Rev. ANDY ANDERSON has been appointed priest-in-charge of St. James, Sonora.

The Rev. KATHIE GALICIA has been appointed priest-in-charge of St. Francis, Turlock.

The Rev. LINDA HUGGARD has been appointed priest-in-charge of St. Michael’s, Ridgecrest.

Diocesan Administrator ELLEN MEYER has been elected Province Representative for the Bishops’ Executive Secretaries Together (B+E+S+T) for Province VIII. B+E+S+T was started in 1986 for Bishop’s executive secretaries and administrators. The mission of B+E+S+T is to empower its members through networking and education to value their ministry and to support the ministry of their bishops and the wider Church. B+E+S+T holds yearly conferences for its members. Province VIII will be hosting the 2015 conference.

The Rev. HEATHER MUELLER has been appointed priest-in-charge of St. Andrew’s, Taft.

The Rev. ANNE SMITH (of St. John’s, Lodi) has been elected the new vice-president of the Northern Deanery.

The Rev. TIM VIVIAN has been appointed priest-in-charge of St. Paul’s in Bakersfield.

NEDRA VOORHEES (of St. Francis, Turlock) has been elected the new secretary of the Northern Deanery.

JUANITA WEBER (of St. Anne’s, Stockton) has been elected the new president of the Northern Deanery.

Please keep Michael Jurkovic (St. Paul’s, Modesto), Aaron Conner (St. Paul’s, Bakersfield), Bruce Bailey (St. Matthew’s, San Andreas) and Marilee Muncey (St. Nicholas, Atwater) in your prayers.
Worship Taizé-style
FROM PAGE 5

pilgrims parted ways, to the nearby Lutheran and Catholic parishes. Many (I suspect more than half, mostly Episcopalians and some who opted not to travel) stayed on site to participate in the outdoor Eucharist at Christ Church.

A makeshift altar was created; we sat on the ground. The Bishop of South Dakota preached and presided as we participated in the service from memory from the Book of Common Prayer. Bishop Suffragan Mary Glasspool from Los Angeles and Bishop Maria Griselda Delgado from Cuba were also present. Adam and I had to leave the event after lunch as I had an early flight out of Denver.

There nearly 600 people at the pilgrimage, ranging from teenagers to age 35. I met a number of Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Mennonites, Non-Denominationalists, and even Baha’i. There were girls with blue hair, guys with crazy beards, people from all corners of the United States, Canada, and even Finland.

There were people who were volunteering on nearby reservations, working on their under graduate degrees, getting ready for the Peace Corps and for ordinations, teachers, nurses and students undertaking graduate studies. In addition to singing traditional Taizé chants, we also sang hymns in the Lakota language.

We found commonality, there were friends to be made left and right, and I am sure had wifi been available then our Facebooks’ would have been blown up by friend requests via our iPhones. I will cherish the pilgrimage in the coming years as I try to accept the challenge from Taizé to take the experience and listen in my own community. Three gatherings are scheduled in Texas next spring and I hope to make pilgrimage (maybe even take a group) to continue to learn what the Spirit is saying through the voice of Taizé.

Pentecost Evensong in Lodi

On the day of Pentecost, May 19, St. John the Baptist Church in Lodi hosted a service of Evensong for our sister churches of the Northern Deanery for a shared celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ’s church. This was a follow-up to the Advent Evensong last December 2.

More than 70 worshippers gathered for shared hymns and readings for Pentecost Evening Prayer. Choir directors from St. Francis in Turlock, St. Paul’s in Modesto, and St. John’s in Lodi had rehearsed an anthem, which they presented for the congregation. Members of several other Episcopal churches joined us as well.

Since Pentecost was the day designated for the support of our sisters and brothers in Haiti, we took up a collection in the special “Haiti” envelopes. As it happened, the counters at St. John’s included our morning collection in the same Haiti envelopes — for a total of $447.

We also enjoyed a reception hosted by the Fellowship Committee of St. John’s Church, and people stayed to catch up on old friends and to meet new ones. There was much to rejoicing all around!

— The Rev. Jim Stickney
St. John the Baptist Church, Lodi

 NEWS BRIEFS

Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church to host Nov. 15 forum on racism

On November 15, the Episcopal Church will host and produce a forum centering on a critical topic for our times: Fifty Years Later: The State of Racism in America. Originating from St. Andrew’s Episcopal Cathedral in Jackson, MS (Diocese of Mississippi), the 90-minute ecumenical forum will be live webcast beginning at 1pm Central (2pm Eastern, noon Mountain, 11am Pacific, 10am Alaska, 9am Hawaii).

The forum will be moderated by well-known journalist and PBS commentator Ray Suarez. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori will keynote the event. Two panel discussions will focus on main themes: Racism in America today — why does it persist? And Racism in America’s future — where is there hope for change?

“This offers Episcopalians and others an opportunity for continued truth-telling and reconciliation, as we seek a society of justice,” noted Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, a keynote speaker for the event. “We say we believe all human beings are made in the image of God. Do we give evidence of it?”

This year marks significant landmark anniversaries in the struggle to end discrimination, provide equal rights and combat racism: the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the 50th anniversary of the pivotal March on Washington, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Medgar Evers, the 100th birthday of Rosa Parks. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was signed into law.

Registration begins July 27 for Diocesan Convention

Registration for the annual convention meeting of the Diocese of San Joaquin is set to begin July 27. Don’t forget to save the date for the Oct. 25-26, 2013 gathering, at St. Paul’s Church, Modesto. Special guests will include Sister Marie Therese from the Diocese of Haiti and the Norm Freeman Band.

Please make sure that certificate of lay delegate forms have been updated through the diocesan office. For more information, contact Ellen at: emeyer@diosanjoaquin.org

Church property returns
FROM PAGE 3

got to do a lot more work to make it happen.”

She added that: “It’s an exciting time for the whole diocese, a turning point.”

Her sister Beryl Simkins, agreed. “It’s time to move on,” she said. “We need to be about being Christians in Turlock. We have learned so much from this experience. I learned that the people are the church.

“We’ve learned never to take the church for granted. We appreciate each other so much. Everybody helps these days. Everybody takes responsibilities and does whatever needs to be done.”

In Ridgecrest, where St. Michael’s Church was also returned to the diocese, the Rev. Linda Huggart said she’d just moved into the church rectory.

The congregation, which had been meeting as All Souls at the historical society building, was adjusting to returning to their property.

“If we can do it out of a box for five years, we can certainly do it in a church,” she said. “We’re kind of taken aback now that we’ve got pews and sound systems and organs.”

For Dee Dee Cox, 88, a long-time member, the return was joyous.

She said the church “was very precious to me. The church has meant a lot to me in my life here and my life in general,” she said. “So, it was difficult to be removed from it, but we carried on in a different way.

“No, I’m feeling joyful,” she said but added that “it’s also sad. What happened was an unfortunate loss for both congregations.”

As the result of favorable rulings by the Kern County Superior Court, conversations are also underway regarding the return of other congregations in Bakersfield, Delano, and Sonora. Other disputed properties throughout the diocese are in various stages of litigation, according to diocesan chancellor Michael Glass.

Another church property, St. Paul’s, Modesto, was returned July 1, 2009 prior to litigation.

“It’s been really emotional,” said Terrance Goodpasture, a St. Francis member since 2000. “There’s lots of enthusiasm that we’d like to keep going forward.”

St. Paul’s, Modesto hosts Mother’s Day event
by The Rev Kathleen West

Other daughters, aunts, cousins, sisters, brothers, dads, grandparents, grandparents, grand-children, friends—everyone was welcome and there was lots of love and laughter as the May 11 Third Annual Mother-Daughter Tea at St. Paul’s Church in Modesto.

The turnout was wonderful, the music was beautiful, emcee Nick Lorenzetti was in his element and many, many people worked very hard to make it a wonderful event.

The food was delightful and the keynote address by Lynis Chaffey was right on target.

Entertainment was provided by musicians Christa and Anthony, duet with voices and guitar, and by the Johannsen High School All Girls’ A Capella Viking Singers.

Many thanks to event coordinator Annmary Peck, and everyone who helped prepare food, cleaned up, decorated, and who organized the silent auction and those who attended and invited friends and family.

Many thanks to everyone who made this a wonderful event at St. Paul’s!

“Phenomenal Support”
FROM PAGE 2

through the end of 2014.

Council members conveyed in a February 2008 message to the diocese that: “we stand with you. Your struggles and needs inform our prayers, deliberations, and plans” after theological differences had split the diocese the previous December.

In 2011, Council established a covenant committee to document work of the continuing San Joaquin diocese. That committee regularly reports to council’s Joint Standing Committee on Local Ministry and Mission.

Women’s Retreat
FROM PAGE 6

The mix of presentations, worship, quiet time on our own, and conversa- tional meals provided the best conditions for both retreat and community building. In our last group discussion participants reported, “How nurturing it is to be in this environment… Coming here gives back in a way you can’t even find words for… It refreshes us.” We left with Julian’s certainty that “all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well.” (Ch. 27)

Mark your calendars for next year’s retreat the first weekend in May 2014.

Deborah Spaine is a parishioner at Grace Episcopal Church Bakersfield, a licensed clinical psychologist, spiritual teacher, and the author of The Holy Householder.
Asian Americans celebrate 40 years

By Jerry Hames

In 1973 a handful of Asian Americans, most of them Japanese and Chinese clergy, met in San Francisco to explore how to help newly established Episcopal congregations for Asian immigrants.

Those present around the table had modest expectations. They determined to seek a small grant from the church in order to publish an occasional national newsletter that would support their newly developing congregations. General Convention, meeting that year in Louisville, Ky., responded with a grant of $50,000.

“We asked for a bicycle, and they gave us a bus,” one of the original group members is reported to have exclaimed.

At the close of convention, Presiding Bishop John E. Hines, in the final months of his term in office, decided a bus driver was required and appointed a young 30-year-old priest, Winston Ching, a native of Hawaii. Ching would become the driving force behind Episcopal Asiameerican Ministries for the next 28 years.

It was Ching, who served under four presiding bishops — Hines, John Allin, Edmond Browning and Frank Griswold — who coined the term “Asiameerican” to include all Episcopalians of Asian descent.

Hines also appointed a Strategies Task Force to propose a structure for the church’s ongoing ministry with Asiameerican Episcopalians. In those early days the work was seen as serving the needs of Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Korean backgrounds.

The following year, about 125 people participated in the events of the first national conference of Asiameerican Episcopalians in San Francisco. Clergy and lay persons from throughout the United States and Canada met for three days to share their mutual concerns for the development of this new ministry, discussing the need for leadership development and ministries to recent immigrants and to students on college campuses.

Today, Asiameerican ministry is more complex. “What began as a modest vision has grown into a

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The Rev. Fred Vergara, missioner for Episcopal Asiameerican Ministries, baptizes Ellen Josephine, daughter of Filipino immigrants Evelyn and Joseph Hombrebueno, at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Woodside, N.Y.
Executive Council acts on finances and reorganizing

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church’s Executive Council agreed in June to increase the church’s aid to continuing Episcopalians in South Carolina and in the Diocese of San Joaquin, while also adding money to the budget of the committee responsible for nominations leading to the election of the next presiding bishop in 2015.

The council, which met for three days at a conference center near Baltimore, Md., also heard various reports on progress towards new initiatives that will be funded in each of the Anglican Communion’s Five Marks of Mission, according to the goals that General Convention set out in the 2013-2015 budget.

It also continued the process for formulating the 2016-2018 budget, which it must propose to the next meeting of General Convention.

Answering a request from the church in South Carolina, council agreed to expand a promised line of credit by $300,000, which will make available a total of $550,000 through the end of 2014 to support the continuing diocese.

The reorganization there has been ongoing since late 2007 when a majority at the diocesan convention voted, purporting to realign the diocese with the Argentina-based Anglican Province of the Southern Cone.

The proposals about how to target the church’s work around each of the Five Marks of Mission are being developed by teams made up of council members and the Episcopal Church Center’s churchwide staff. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said during a post-meeting press conference that a “significant aspect of the meeting centered on the continuing development of work around the Five Marks of Mission.”

New church HQ staff model, new tenant announced

Episcopal Church Chief Operating Officer Bishop Stacy Sauls announced recently a new organizational model for the staff at Episcopal Church headquarters in New York.

Sauls, leading a study to develop models for staff to work off-site/remote, said: “The goal is to have the networking staff especially be more connected to, responsive to and accessible to local leaders.”

He also said the second floor at 815 Second Ave., which houses Episcopal Church Center staff, will be leased to a new tenant, while negotiations are underway for other spaces in the 11-story building.

The leasing of the second floor will provide nearly $380,000 of new revenue in the first 12 months. The new tenant will be the Lyceum Kennedy French American School.

In a presentation to the church center’s staff at a special meeting, he said that the new model and the new lease would not result in any reduction in workforce. The new model allows for the recognition that every staff member is dedicated to mission work, no matter what the job responsibility, he said.

“Everything we do is about mission. It is about engaging mission, supporting mission and maximizing resources for mission.” Departments are remaining the same, but terminology is being reoriented to focus on mission as the priority. The new terminology will be Mission Leadership (formerly known as the Executive Oversight Group); Mission Networking (formerly known as program staff); Mission Support (formerly known as administration) and Mission Administration (formerly known as administrative assistants).

The new lease/tenant does not affect the current conversation on the future of the church center, he said. The new lease is coterminal with existing leases with current tenants, which means that “the ability to sell the building, if Executive Council should so decide, is not impaired.”
COUNCIL continued from page B

work for youth between high school and college or work, as based in the third Mark of Mission (“to respond to human need in loving service”), and efforts by the offices of communication and government relations to develop an online platform for networking people involved at all levels of the church in work related to the fourth (“to transform unjust structures of society”) and fifth (“to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”) marks.

Two or more of council’s five standing committees often met together during the three-day meeting to discuss mission work and other matters, and the Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe, the church’s executive officer, said that those gatherings “broke through some of the traditional committee boundaries.”

“This council is not waiting for this church to reimagine itself — or restructure itself — we’re already reimagining and restructuring ourselves as leaders of the Episcopal Church and in the broader communities,” he said.

In a related matter, council members agreed with a recommendation from its Governance and Administration for Mission committee to form a group to “assure the effective, thorough and collaborative implementation” of a resolution approved by the 2012 General Convention, which among other things commits the church to a triennium of “teaching, preaching, organizing, advocating, and building mutually transformative relationships with those who are poor to focus our hearts and the mission of our congregations and dioceses on reducing poverty and increasing economic and racial justice.”

“Just as [Resolution] A135 reflected a sea change on how we’re addressing domestic poverty, we’re also looking at new ways to coordinate that work,” the Rev. Gay Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, said at the press conference. At the last council meeting, members called for similar coordination of the church’s response to convention Resolution B019, which reaffirmed the church’s commitment to just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Rev. Susan Snook from Arizona reviewed progress on a process to develop the 2016-2018 budget to propose to General Convention. Nearly all of the council and staff liaisons to the church’s boards have been trained in how to guide their groups through a “budget visioning process,” she said.

Snook encouraged council to engage the church in a discussion about the fact that not all dioceses fulfill their full commitment to fund the churchwide budget. She noted that “there are no particular consequences” for not meeting the full asking.

In the 2013-2015 triennium, the dioceses are asked to contribute 19 percent of their annual income. Each year’s annual giving in the three-year budget is based on a diocese’s income two years earlier, minus $120,000.

The council elected Rosalie Simmonds Ballentine from the Diocese of the Virgin Islands to serve as the church lay representative on the Anglican Consultative Council for a term to last for three meetings.

It also awarded $535,000 in the latest round of Contable Fund grants that fund mission initiatives that are not provided for within the General Convention budget. The fund received 22 applications totaling $1,621,452, and funded seven.

Churches act on climate change

The Episcopal Church joined with two major Lutheran churches during a climate change conference in Washington, D.C., recently to commit themselves to “spiritual movement away from sin and despair [leading to] the renewal and healing of all creation.” They pledged to use their global networks to promote a political framework to limit climate change. From left, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd and Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori with the statement pledging concerted environmental action.

Philadelphia to host Episcopal Youth Event

The popular Episcopal Youth Event (EYE) will be held at Villanova University in suburban Philadelphia next summer. Slated for July 9-13, 2014, EYE14 will be planned in partnership with the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

The announcement was made in June by the diocesan bishop, Clifton Daniel, to Executive Council members in Maryland.

“Villanova University offers a scenic setting, with ample facilities for all the activities we are planning for EYE14,” said Bronwyn Clark Skov, youth ministry officer for the Episcopal Church. “Villanova is well known for its academics as well as its athletics, and its prime location near public transportation makes it an ideal place for our gathering.”

The 2014 event marks the twelfth EYE and remains a popular and well-attended event. EYE 2014 is geared for youth in grades 9-12 during the 2013-2014 academic year and their adult leaders.

Skov said that the planning team has met to talk about activities, topics, themes and worship services.
congregation of diverse ethnic congregations of over a hundred self-identified churches — Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, South Asian and Southeast Asian,” said the Rev. Winfred “Fred” B. Vergara, the church’s missioner for Asiamerica Ministries since 2004.

“Asiamerica as a word has evolved into three areas of ministries: ministries to Asian immigrants in America; ministries to American born Asian Americans, and ministries of bridge-building to churches in Asia and the world.”

On June 20, Episcopalians met again in San Francisco to celebrate the ministry’s 40th anniversary. The four-day event had as its theme “EAM@40: Remember, Celebrate and Re-Envision Our Mission.”

At the opening Eucharist, two deceased Asian American leaders, the Rev. Hiram Hisanori Kano, whose name is being considered as a contemporary saint for inclusion in “Holy Women and Holy Men,” and Ching, who died last year, were honored along with living pioneers.

Kano, who championed the cause of immigrant farmers in the 1930s, became a spiritual leader in the infamous internment camps where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.

“In times like these, we need to lift up some heroes of our past and learn from them,” said Vergara. “Hisanori Kano distinguished himself as an immigrant rights advocate, Japanese American internee and Episcopal priest. In the context of economic depression in the 1930s, he was an agriculturist; in the unjust internment camps in World War II, he was a prisoner-teacher-evangelist. As an Episcopal priest, he was a lover of God’s Word and disciple of Christ’s ministry of reconciliation.”

Like Kano, Vergara said, Ching was also a bridge builder, establishing networks of relationship “and persistently working for the Kingdom of God. His life will serve as one of our sources of inspiration and strength as we go about doing God’s work in our own generation.”

Episcopal Asiamerica Ministries has grown in recent decades with the arrival of refugees and immigrants from many Asian countries. Last year’s 77th General Convention in Indianapolis was significant, Vergara said.

“For the first time, the Hmong language was included in one of the morning liturgies, and six Asian American young adults participated in the convention. There was a Hmong delegation from Holy Apostles in St. Paul, Minn.

“Why we chose Hmong as an alternative language in the liturgy … was a proactive advocacy of one of the most marginalized communities in the United States, as well as one of the ethnic congregations that stands at the edge of mission in the 21st century.”

But despite many gains, the challenges of encouraging and supporting the development of churches for Asian Americans are formidable. A reduced budget for 2013 “means doing more with less” and will affect but not alter the consultation and celebration in San Francisco, Vergara said, speaking from his home office in the Diocese of Long Island.

“But we call upon everyone to be creative and resourceful and aspire to become better stewards of God’s generosity,” he said.
Conference honors first Asian American woman priest

By Episcopal Journal

Three years ago this June, more than 300 people, including international guests, family, childhood friends and her former students, gathered at Christ Church in Alameda, Calif., to celebrate the Rev. Fran Toy’s 25th anniversary of ordination as the first Asian American woman priest in the Episcopal Church.

Late this June, at the 40th anniversary of Episcopal Asian American Ministries (EAM), the former public educator and pioneer woman priest will found herself in the spotlight once again.

“I could never have guessed, first of all, that God would call me to be ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church, and being the first Asian American female, that it has opened so many doors,” Toy said to Pat McCaughan, a writer for Episcopal News Service, at the celebration three years ago.

“It was humbling to see so many people there,” said Toy at that time. “It’s been a really wonderful, wonderful adventure. It’s been a wonderful ride, and it’s not over yet.”

It was just three years after her ordination in 1985 that Toy found herself co-chairing the program of the Episcopal Women’s Caucus at the worldwide Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops. Her co-chair was a lay woman, Sally Buckle from the Diocese of Washington. The Americans at the center witnessed to many bishops of churches where women priests were not yet ministering, and they celebrated the ordinations of the first women in the Anglican Communion — the Rev. Li Tim Oi in 1944 and the Rev. Joyce Bennett in 1971. (Both ordinations were later revoked.)

The Rev. Fred Vergara, church missioner for Episcopal Asian American Ministries, said Toy has been active in the group since its beginnings and served as president of the EAM Council from 2003 until she was forced to resign in 2010 because of recurring illness. Recently, Toy, now 77, wrote to friends on Facebook to report that she was in good health.

Her ministry has encompassed local, diocesan, provincial, national and international service. She told McCaughan that she grew up with independent, pioneering women and felt called to ordained ministry at age 17, a call which predated by decades the church’s eventual decision to ordain women. “I don’t say it’s my ministry — it’s God’s ministry through me,” she said. “I think I just try to be what we’re supposed to be with what we promised at our baptism.”

A cradle Episcopalian, Toy was born Aug. 9, 1934, and grew up at Church of Our Saviour, a Chinese congregation in Oakland, Calif., where she met her future husband, Art. But her mother, a third-generation Californian and educator who “was the first female to open her own private Chinese school,” insisted Toy go to college before she married.

After seeking some information about ordained ministry, Toy eventually turned to a career in education and served as a public school teacher for 19 years while raising two children.

While attending a conference of Asian Americans in Seattle in 1977, Toy again felt a call to the priesthood. She said it felt like a call from God.

“By then the Episcopal Church was officially ordaining women, and I was working on my master’s degree in education. I was sitting alone in my room reading when I heard somebody ask me, ‘Where have you been all these days? I’ve been waiting for you.’”

Eventually Toy began attending seminary part-time at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif., while continuing to teach part-time (her two children were already in college). All three graduated in June 1985 within eight days of one another. In 1996, the seminary awarded her an honorary degree in divinity.

She has been a clergy representative to several provincial synods, served as a member of Episcopal Church’s Executive Council from 1991-97, and was a deputy to General Convention in 1998. She served on the Church Deployment Board from 1994–2000 and was elected to the boards of both the Episcopal Women’s History Project and the Episcopal Women’s Caucus.

This year’s Asian American Ministries celebration will be a special event for Toy, who believes serving in the church is still a challenge for women priests. On the podium to greet her will be the two most senior officials of the Episcopal Church.

Both are women — Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and the House of Deputies president, the Rev. Gay Jennings, who was elected at last year’s General Convention.

With some material from the archival files of Episcopal News Service.
Pope has an Anglican prayer book

Episcopal Bishop Pierre Whalon of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, presented Pope Francis with a special, black leather-bound edition of the Spanish-English selections from the Book of Common Prayer following his election. Whalon was part of an Anglican delegation attending the pope’s installation led by the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu.

He said that one Roman Catholic priest, shepherding some of the delegates following the installation, looked out at the popemobile and Pope Francis reaching out, touching people, and said, “We don’t know what to expect anymore.”

“The Anglicans agreed among ourselves that that is a good thing,” Whalon wrote in his blog.

Recent deaths

Family, friends and professional colleagues gathered at the School of Theology at Sewanee, Tenn., April 3 to mourn the death of a noted church historian who prepared generations for service in ministry.

The Rev. Donald Smith Armentrout exemplified the ecumenical movement, serving for 42 years as a Lutheran at an Episcopal seminary, preparing priests for the ministry and becoming an eminent scholar in Episcopal Church history.

Before his ordination as a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, he was appointed an instructor in ecclesiastical history at the University of the South School of Theology in 1967. He progressed to assistant professor, associate professor, and professor before being named Quintard professor of dogmatic theology in 1991.

Robert G. Oliver, 83, a former dean of the American Cathedral in Paris, died in Atlanta, Ga. He was ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Florida in 1960 and served congregations in Florida, Georgia and Mississippi before he became dean of the American Cathedral in Paris in 1974. In 1979 he was called as rector to St. James’ Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, where he served until 1990 when he retired and moved back to Georgia.

Scholar, teacher, poet and priest, John Booty, age 87 died at his home in Center Sandwich, N.H. After earning a doctorate degree from Princeton University, he joined the faculty at Virginia Theological Seminary as professor of church history, taught at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., and served as dean of the seminary at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. A life-long scholar, he was a fellow of the Folger Shakespeare Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and he served as historiographer of the Episcopal Church.

Briefly noted

Bishop Kirk Smith of the Diocese of Arizona joined with religious and union leaders in April to urge that family-unification policies be included in any comprehensive immigration-reform legislation. Smith said that the family was the “chief social unit in society,” and protecting and keeping immigrant families together should be paramount as federal lawmakers consider reform.

“This is one thing that we do all agree on, and that is support of the family, because we consider that to be an imperative that’s given to us by our religion and by our God,” he said on a conference call with the other officials.

Federal lawmakers continue to work on a comprehensive immigration-reform bill.

Gay and lesbian alumni of the University of Notre Dame and Saint Mary’s College presented the organization’s Thomas A. Dooley Award to Bishop Gene Robinson, retired bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire and the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church. The award honors individuals who, through a faith-based background, have demonstrated personal courage, compassion and commitment to advance the human and civil rights of lesbian and gay Americans.

Photo/Dick Snyder

Amid the historic beauty of Monument Valley, the ancestral home of the Navajo, Bishop David Bailey ordained Catherine B. Plummer to the priesthood. She is the widow of Steven Plummer, the first Navajo to serve as bishop of the Episcopal Church in Navajoland. Above, Plummer with Bailey outside St. Mary’s of the Moonlight Church in Oljato, Utah, following her ordination.

Bishop Pierre Whalon greets Pope Francis.
Outpouring of support follows trail of tornadoes

By Episcopal News Service

 Barely a week into the cleanup after a string of tornadoes killed dozens and devastated parts of Oklahoma, the Rev. Paul Snyder’s role had shifted from first responder to “helping people try to get order back into their lives.”

Snyder, an 18-year police chaplain and deacon for three years at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church in suburban Oklahoma City, was the person called by other clergy to help locate their parishioners.

“I could pretty much tell by the address if the home was in the tornado path. Some were pretty close,” Snyder said. “I’d go by their homes to make sure they were still there, and knock on the door and say ‘Hey, you need to call your priest.’”

Days later, he shifted his focus to “digging through stuff” as the residents of Moore sifted through debris left by the 200-mile an hour twister that cut a 20-mile path of destruction through the town. Twelve days later, after this tornado had killed 24 people and destroyed hundreds of homes, a second series of tornadoes and severe flooding caused more damage.

St. Christopher’s rector, the Rev. Emily Schnabl, said that homes of two parish families living near the tornado’s path had been damaged. A team of church volunteers went to assist them and others.

“There’s no introductions; you just walk into somebody’s yard and just start cleaning,” said Schnabl who described the devastation as an “open wound, naked to the sky.”

The first deadly tornado destroyed the home of Jera Kiespert and her family. But within a few days, after moving between hotels and the homes of family and friends, they received an offer of a four-bedroom house owned St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Edmond, where she and her husband, Jason, had once served in the choir and where their children had been baptized.

“It’s a great stewardship story,” said the Rev. Mark Story, St. Mary’s rector. “We received the house through a bequest from a parishioner. His gift was really quite amazing to the church and made it possible.”

Kiespert was overwhelmed by the offer, “It’s really hard when you’re so used to being on the giving end; when you have to be on the receiving end, it’s so humbling.”

Story said equipping the four-bedroom home for living was a blessing to the church.

“Lots of people want to do something physical and cleaning up the house and getting it ready gave lots of parishioners an opportunity to do something that connected them physically with the tragedy in Moore. It was a blessing for the family, a blessing for the parish, it was just a good thing,” he said.

The Rev. Canon José McLoughlin, canon to the ordinary at the Diocese of Oklahoma, emphasized that the need will continue for a long time. “We want to do things smartly and not duplicate efforts and make sure people know they are not being forgotten, both in the short-term and the long-term,” he said.

“A large part of what we are doing is sharing information and continuing to provide resources for short-term needs, for people who need clothes, gift cards, and assistance for housing.

“Money is still the best thing to give at this point,” he said. “We are being contacted by people from out of state who want to come in and help and we’re making sure we coordinate with them.

“We want to be part of the solution, whoever is doing the necessary work of recovery,” he added. “Once people get a better idea of what their insurance companies are going to do we will know better where gaps in services and housing are and we’ll be able to assist with those.”

What remains of the Kiespers’ home after the tornado struck Moore, Okla.
Sandy’s victims work at recovery

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

When Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast of the United States six months ago, “Frankenstorm” gave some New Jersey Episcopalians new ways of understanding the biblical experiences of exile and Passover.

The winter contingent of St. Elizabeth’s Chapel-by-the-Sea in Ortley Beach is in exile. Sandy swept the seasonal chapel off its moorings near the beach and into the bay the night of Oct. 29, 2012. The members are worshipping in East Dover Baptist Church on the mainland each Sunday.

“Holy Innocents sits in the sanctuary. Members to keep it from the ruins of Ortley Beach is in exile. Sandy swept the seasonal chapel off its moorings near the beach and into the bay the night of Oct. 29, 2012. The members are worshipping in East Dover Baptist Church on the mainland each Sunday.

Still, Bellars said, “it’s not home.”

About 40 miles south in Beach Haven, Holy Innocents Episcopal Church sits a block from the Atlantic with Pearl Street forming the northern boundary of its block. “Green sea water was running down Pearl Street for a couple of tides,” according to the Rev. Frank Crumbaugh, Holy Innocents’ rector.

Houses on the north side of the street were flooded but the water got no closer to the church and rectory than the sidewalk on the south, he said.

“That’s a powerful sign of deliverance,” Crumbaugh said. “When you look at that, you understand what ‘Passover’ means in a new way.”

Yet, Crumbaugh is clear that “we weren’t preserved to celebrate our good fortune; we were preserved to stand with people who weren’t and that’s been a powerful sign in Beach Haven.”

And that has been the other lesson Sandy left in its wake: churches have a role in their communities based in Scripture.

“Everybody knows what we’ve suffered and lost, and everybody continues to feel those losses and, at the same time, we’re like Paul,” Crumbaugh said.

“In New Jersey, Hurricane Sandy caused the greatest amount of destruction along the Highway 35 corridor that hugs the Atlantic in parts of Monmouth County and most of Ocean County.

as the weather warms up and more do-it-yourselfers start to work on their homes, McKee predicts people will be looking for childcare and to “be entertained at lower cost.” The church plans more such dinners in the future and hopes to offer nights with movies and dinners soon.

“I think vacation Bible school will be a big deal this summer for that same reason,” she said.

Whatever the work, “the most important thing we can say,” McKee is clear that “the church is going to be here walking with you.”

The message is: “God is walking with us and we’re walking with them and we’re here to stay and what we do will evolve as the needs evolve.”

Adams said that evolution and discernment is an on-going part of his job that he calls “a process in which we can transform a tragedy into an opportunity” by discerning what skills and resources each congregation can bring to bear to be relevant and serve their communities not just after disasters but every day.

Or, in other words, Adams said, “to be able to go out in their community and to see the face of God in other people and have them see the face of God in us.”
The trouble with labels

By Cathleen Falsani
Religion News Service

Labels can be helpful when, for instance, applied to cans of soup or barrels of toxic waste. But they are less so when affixed to human beings — particularly when labels are meant to summarize, indelibly, one’s spiritual identity.

In a recent Rolling Stone interview, Marcus Mumford, the 26-year-old lead singer of the wildly successful British band Mumford & Sons, raised the hackles of some religious folk when he declined to claim the “Christian” label as his own.

You see, Marcus is the son of John and Eleanor Mumford, who are the national leaders of the Vineyard Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland, an arm of the international evangelical Christian Vineyard Movement. Last year, he married actress Carey Mulligan, who he’d met at a Christian youth camp.

And the music of Mumford & Sons, for which Mumford is the main lyricist, is laden with the themes and imagery of faith — often drawing specifically upon the Christian tradition. They explore relationships with God and others; fears and doubts; sin, redemption and, most of all, grace.

Mumford was asked by Rolling Stone whether he “still consider[s] himself a Christian.” He answered, “I don’t really like that word. It comes with so much baggage. So, no, I wouldn’t call myself a Christian. I think the word just conjures up all these religious images that I don’t really like. I have my personal views about the person of Jesus and who he was. ... I’ve kind of separated myself from the culture of Christianity.”

His spiritual journey is a “work in progress,” Mumford said, adding that he’s never doubted the existence of God and that his parents are unbothered by his ambivalence toward the Christian label.

Mumford’s answer didn’t give me pause either, although I am a Christian and was raised in a faith community similar to the Vineyard and self-identify today as an evangelical.

When I was his age, I might have given a similar answer. He’s young, and faith is a journey, not a destination. Cut Mumford some slack and thank him for his honesty.

That was not the reaction of many of my co-religionists, some of whom deemed his answer a cop-out, chastising him for being ashamed of the gospel of Christ and tossing his lot in with the spiritual-but-not-religious crowd.

I didn’t hear Mumford’s remarks as a wishy-washy equivocation about the precepts of Christianity or a capitalist concern about alienating non-Christian fans. Rather, what I took away from his answer was a keen wariness about other Christians and our too-often brutal judgmentalism.

Growing up as a pastor’s kid, undoubtedly Mumford knows this all too well. And as someone who is newly accustomed to standing in the unforgiving glare of celebrity’s spotlight, he surely also understands our cultural obsession with putting people on pedestals and knocking them off.

What I heard in his reticence to label himself a Christian was echoes of another rock star whose own Christian faith has been a topic of controversy for years: Bono of U2.

For many years, beginning when Bono was the same age Mumford is now, he shied away from the Christian label and largely stopped talking about his faith publicly.

When asked about the role of religion in his life in a 1987 Rolling Stone interview, Bono said in part: “I am a Christian, but at times I feel very removed from Christianity. The Jesus Christ that I believe in was the man who turned over the tables in the temple and threw the money changers out.”

Fifteen years later, in 2002 Bono and I spoke at length about his discomfort with “the church” and his reluctance to self-apply the “Christian” label. “By the way, I don’t set myself up to be any kind of Christian. I can’t live up to that. It’s something I aspire to, but I don’t feel comfortable with that badge,” he told me. “It’s a badge I want to wear. But I’m not a very good advertisement for God.”

It wasn’t a disavowal of faith or beliefs. It was a statement from a humble believer who wants people to look to God — not him — for perfection and answers.

This reminds me of Pope Francis, who has accepted the label of “Holy Father” but prefers to refer to himself as the “Bishop of Rome.” He’s not denying his role as pontiff, but he is telegraphing the idea that he is much more comfortable with a more humble position.

I don’t care what Mumford or Bono or the pope call themselves or don’t. Their actions and (other) words tell a story of faith that is much more nuanced, and therefore truer, than any label they might pin over their hearts or have thrust upon them.

Cathleen Falsani is Faith & Values column for the Orange County Register.
Music in worship opens the realm of the spirit

By Sharon Sheridan

Singer Ana Hernández was helping to provide music during a small Christmas-morning service when one of the hymns made her weep. After the service, the organist said, “You know what’s amazing? I push buttons on the organ, and water comes out of your eyes.”

“The water drops on the stone of the floor,” Hernández replied, “and the thought that comes into my head is: I wonder how many other tears have hit this floor?”

The organist looked at her and said, “Yeah.”

What started as a “goofy” exchange suddenly shifted “into something unbelievably important and huge and wondrous,” Hernández said. “The Spirit will turn on you like that, on a dime, in a second.”

For Hernández, liturgy at its best inspires wonder — not only a sense of awe in experiencing the holy but also a sense of curiosity.

Author of “The Sacred Art of Chant,” Hernández is a composer, arranger and performer of sacred music and a member of the Episcopal Church’s Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

“I didn’t start out in the Episcopal Church, but I’ve been here since I was 17. … I fell in love with the liturgy, the music and the way it helped me access Spirit, the way it helped me access the things that I knew were important to me,” Hernández said. “I’m still figuring out what’s important to me, because I’m always curious … I’m always approaching life with that kind of, ‘Whoa! How does that work?’ or ‘How did she do that?’ It’s that curiosity, I think, that keeps me grateful for things don’t have any clue about how to articulate.”

When we come to church, we bring our questions into a space with “something for every sense,” she said. “There’s [stained] glass to look at, and that causes wonder. There is sometimes … a really amazing sense of smell going on with incense, right? There’s the sense of taste and touch in the Eucharist.”

And we hear music and the words of the liturgy. “The flow of the words, the rhythm of the words themselves can cause wonder in people,” Hernández said. The prayer book can help you enter a sense of wonder “and enable you to form the questions that will guide your life.”

And while the words remain the same, our perspective on them changes week to week, she said. “You find different things in it because you are never really the same.”

“There is no one right way” to do liturgy, she added.

“You go to church and we learn the drill from the book … but in that the Spirit is constantly working on us and the Spirit is working on our curiosity and our sense of wonder.”

For the Rev. Victor Thomas, “The most important part of worship is the Eucharist. “The Eucharist is all about mystery, and that really does feed us,” Thomas said. “It’s not like we’re trying to have all the answers … The sense of mystery with the Holy Communion, I think that adds to the wonder in worship.”

“We’ve got the best tradition in the world,” he concluded, “because there’s so much to it and there’s so much depth and weight and, really, if you do it with passion and very intentionally, I think it’s meaningful for so many people.”

The music, he added, is “not there to entertain us. It’s there to bring us deeper and more profoundly into the presence of God.”

“Not there to entertain us. It’s there to bring us deeper and more profoundly into the presence of God.”

— The Rev. Victor Thomas

Photo/Emily Given

Music in worship opens the realm of the spirit.

Sharon Sheridan is a freelance writer from Flanders, N.J. Her article was first published in Diolog, the quarterly magazine of the Diocese of Texas.
‘Cup’ offers history, advice to lay ministers

By Irene Styer


It begins with a journey of how the sacraments were distributed to early believers, in vessels of wood, stone or bronze after our Lord’s sacrifice, and explains different traditions of giving and receiving the elements.

“The earliest Christians handled the body and blood freely. Lay Christians routinely took the bread home with them from the Sunday Eucharist, where they kept it nearby in case of emergency,” Wickenberg Ely notes.

The historical facts regarding the Anglican Church, such as the history of the evolving role of lay persons in the Episcopal Church, are also very helpful as a point of focus. They can help keep our mind and thoughts on the correct things. To contemplate the traditions of the past and the present can be good for our inward soul.

Further chapters answer questions of how to deal with all the little accidents that can happen while serving at the altar, like spilling the wine, or dropping the bread into the cup or on the floor! These and several others are answered and very helpful to those starting out on this ministry.

Also discussed is the “unworthiness of the ministers.” This section was most interesting and well answered, finally summing up with the fact that God acts just as fully through one human being as another.

Anyone considering serving as a eucharistic minister would benefit greatly by reading this helpful book. No stone is left unturned.

Irene Styer has been a lay eucharistic minister for about two decades at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Mamaroneck, N.Y.

A Walk Through the Churchyard: Toward a spirituality of Christian death

By Rob Gieselmann, Published via CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 119 pages $6.45

By Solange De Santis

The Rev. Rob Gieselmann experienced the death of his young wife, Laura — probably the most painful experience save the death of a child.

A decade after she died of a rare disease in her early 40s, Gieselmann has crafted a gracefully-written, compelling story of Laura’s life and journey to death, their life as a couple with two young children and his other pastoral encounters with the dying.

The book is hardly depressing; in fact, it moves with the pace of a fine novel. Gieselmann's descriptive talent gives us such scenes as this, in a hospital: “About six o’clock, the sky darkened, lightning shot across the sky and thunder railed its battle cry. Ark-like rain fell. But we were in the waiting room cocoon.”

His and Laura’s story is both unique and universal.

At the time Laura died, Gieselmann was rector of Old St. Paul’s Episcopal Church near Chestertown, Md. — a historic church with 19 acres of churchyard that has seen 300 years’ of burials. Throughout the book, he walks through the churchyard literally and figuratively, searching for a human way and a Christian way to explain, to cope, to go on living.

Gieselmann relates his early, awkward days as a hospital chaplain called to the bedside of mortally ill people and, finally, of his parishioner Sam, who taught him about victory over death and about resurrection.

Like James Joyce, who wrote of the “wayward and flickering existence” of the vast hosts of the dead,” Gieselmann acknowledges Laura’s eternal presence in his and his children’s life and ends the book with a soaringly poetic vision of the world beyond the veil.

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Navajoland walk honors Vietnam vets

By Lynette Wilson
Episcopal News Service

Military service is an historical tradition in Navajo culture. In Mike Bekis’ immediate family, for instance, 38 members have served or are currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

“Just like my five uncles before us, they were all World War II [veterans], all of us have stepped up,” said Bekis, in a telephone call from Farmington, N.M., with ENS. “And we just followed in their footsteps.”

In May 2012, Bekis who served in the U.S. Army from 1975-1980, began organizing a walk to honor and remember Vietnam veterans, like his brother Robert Bekis, who upon their return from service received nothing approaching a hospitable welcome.

“A lot of these Vietnam vets came home to nothing,” said Bekis. “They got spit on coming through the gates … rotten fruits and vegetables and balloons filled with animal blood thrown at them.”

The Upper Fruitland Vietnam Veterans and the Episcopal Church in Navajoland sponsored the Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Honor Walk and Bike Run, titled “A welcome home for the Vietnam Veterans that they never received.”

The March 25-30 walk traveled 117 miles from Thoreau to Farmington, N.M., along a road known as the “Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway” and culminated in a celebration held at a gymnasium in Upper Fruitland.

“I was honored and privileged to join the Navajo Vietnam veterans and walk with them,” said Navajoland Bishop David Bailey in an e-mail to ENS. “It is important to our Episcopal Church in Navajoland as a response to our many Episcopal veterans who have proudly served in Vietnam, Iraq’s two wars and in Afghanistan and to their families.”

Many of the veterans suffer “post-war issues,” added Bailey. In response, the church has begun a ministry of recognition, which provides a place for veterans to meet and share with each other and their families.

“We identify resources to meet their specific needs and give them congregational support as they move toward healing,” he said.

March 29 marked the day the last Vietnam troops returned home 40 years ago, and in 2012 President Barack Obama and New Mexico Gov, Susana Martinez designated the last week of March as a time to honor Vietnam veterans.

“This march during Holy Week is a journey for the Navajo Vietnam veterans, a pilgrimage toward healing. When the march was planned, we didn’t know it was going to be during Holy Week. The dates just fell into it,” said Deacon Cornelia Eaton, who serves as Bailey’s assistant.

“Our veterans have suffered deeply — stories of broken marriages, attempted suicides, alcohol and drug addictions,” she said.

Chapter houses, which are similar to town halls, and various veterans groups sponsored walkers, who included spouses and children of fallen soldiers who walked in remembrance, said Eaton.

Two Navajoland Episcopal churches, St. Luke’s in the Desert in Carson, N.M., and St. Michael’s in Upper Fruitland, have started outreach ministries to veterans.

In 1978, the Episcopal Church carved out sections of the dioceses of Rio Grande, Arizona and Utah — areas within and surrounded by the 27,000-square-mile Navajo reservation — to create the Navajoland Area Mission. It was an effort toward unification of language, culture and families. Between 125,000 and 150,000 Navajo live on the reservation, which is about the size of West Virginia.

“Perhaps the most well-known of the Navajo people’s military service begins with the Code Talkers of World War II who used their Navajo language as a code which was never broken,” said the Rev. Wally A. Jensen, executive officer to the bishop for armed services and federal ministries based in Washington, D.C., in an e-mail to ENS.

“Military historians credit the Navajo Code Talkers with helping to win the war in the Pacific Theater. Recently the Navajo people have built a monument to honor the Navajo warriors who continued to serve in the military,” he added.

The Rev. Patrick Finn, a U.S. Navy chaplain, represented Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Services and Federal Ministries James Magness during the celebration in Upper Fruitland.

“My particular interest is the healing that can take place when our current veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have a safe place to share their story with veterans from the Vietnam War and other conflicts,” said Finn in an e-mail to ENS. “I am beginning a project called ‘Until Every Story is Heard,’ which is encouraging religious and community-based organizations to provide safe places for our veterans to share with other veterans.”

Before being called up to active duty, Finn served from 1995-2002 as the rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Park City, Utah, and worked closely with the late Bishop Steven Plummer and his wife, Deacon Catherine Plummer, organizing mission trips and medical missions, he said.
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