NATIONAL ALTAR GUILD ASSOCIATION

Spring 2025

EPISTLE

President's Message

David Hawley-Lowry, NAGA President

Micah 6 vs. 6-8

Hello friends, I trust you are having a blessed and happy Easter and that your celebrations of the risen Christ at the vigil and or Easter day brought you many blessings and joys!

This past Lent and Easter I have had the opportunity to visit a variety of churches, including one Reformed Church and one Catholic Church. It is a joy to experience the different traditions of various parishes and see how they prepare through Lent culminating at the Eater vigil or Easter morning. There are so many variations from removing items, changing to simple wooden crosses, removing brass ware, to just simple veiling or in some cases using just simple colored paraments. To some degree I think this speaks to folks' roots. Many, but not all, of us raised in the Episcopal tradition have "Anglo-Catholic" traditions and we often tend to do more in our churches to reflect seasonality.

The Reformed Church I referenced uses a series of darkening grey veils across the sanctuary ten feet overhead; it is quite

continued on page 16

Page

Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity 3
Homily on 2 Kings 6
AG News 8
Bookshelf 12
Stained Glass Windows 12
Sacristy Shop 14
Not Grandmother's Altar Guild 17

Spring 2025
Issue # 214
Published Quarterly
in Enfield, NC

"Do this in Remembrance of Me"

Judy Mathis is a retired deacon of the Episcopal Church, living in Broomfield, Colorado

In the early 80s when I was 40 years old, we moved to Florida where I was welcomed into a loving Episcopal Church. I was a high school teacher and counselor with a husband and two teenagers at home. To say I was busy was an understatement. The altar guild at my new home church needed help, and the idea of serving on the altar guild really appealed to me because it was a quiet, behind-the-scenes ministry. As the altar for Sunday was prepared on Friday morning, I couldn't participate because I was working. We did, however, have a midweek 6:00 PM service in our chapel.

The directress who trained me was patient and loving, and I looked forward to this time each week. This was only five minutes from my home, and I could set up the altar for the service on my way home from school; I returned to worship, and after the service, washed and put away the holy vessels. I did this for several years and always loved the quiet time spent preparing

continued on page 4

Officers & Board (2024-2027)

Officers

President – David Hawley-Lowry
11143 Summer Drive
Zeeland, Michigan 49464
(c) 616-915-6188
David8hl@outlook.com

First Vice President – Debbie Mead
1192 Dover Way
Broomfield, Colorado 80020
303-669-3251
naga1vp@gmail.com

Second Vice President & Membership Chair – Martha Noble
328 Willowcrest Lane
Birmingham, Alabama 35244
(c) 205-910-4224
naga.vp2membership@gmail.com

Secretary – Diane Grondin
18 Hilldale Rd.
South Weymouth, Massachusetts 02190
(h) 781-335-2198
dmgrondin@comcast.net

Treasurer – Phyllis Bruce
402 Circle Drive
Fairhope, Alabama 36532
(c) 251-680-2764
pobruce46@gmail.com

Board

Endowment Fund Chair – Kate Canby
8113 Vailveiw Cove
Austin, Texas 78750
512-636-9010
katecanby@gmail.com

Nominating Chair – Dianne Walters
407 Lake Oliver Drive
Enterprise, Alabama 36330
(h) 334-393-6715
(c) 334-308-3420
dirdh68@gmail.com

Parliamentarian – Barbara Nichols
120 Chestnut Street
Middlesex, New Jersey 08846
(c) 908-420-9679
tbmee@aol.com

Sacristy Shop – TaMara Oertel
8399 Kier Road
Village of Clarkston, Michigan 48348
248-420-5687
mrsoertel@gmail.com

Scholarship Chair – TBA

Service Ministries Chair & Mission Supply Coordinator – Alice Scarbrough
(h) 512-472-3007
(c) 512-923-3799
ascarbrough@padminc.com

Immediate Past-President – Marcia Himes (2021)
(c) 307-850-7217
rhimes@wyoming.com

Past-Presidents (year elected)
Helen Loring – 1961
Terry Harris – 1967
Annie Lou White – 1973
Betty Sturges – 1979
Phyllis Hayden – 1982
Nancy Grandfield – 1985
Barbara Wilson – 1991
Phyllis Hokanson – 1994
Hobey Hinchman – 1997
Judy McLarty – 2000
May Sherrod – 2003
Mary Jane Hollopeter – 2006
Mary Lu Jarvis – 2006
Jane Ames – 2009
Katrina Packard – 2012
Lynn Hendricks – 2015
Dianne Walters – 2018
Marcia Himes – 2021

Historian & Newsletter Editor – Judy Henderson
1978 Red Bud Circle NW
Palm Bay, FL 32907
(h) 321-327-3175
(c) 321-536-3965
Jem2415@earthlink.net

Newsletter Design & Production, Webmaster – Betty Hinchman
89 Nevins Street
Brooklyn, NY 11217-1825
(c) 917-992-1905
bettyhinch@gmail.com

Province Representatives

Province I (New England) — Diane Grondin
(h) 781-335-2198
dmgrondin@comcast.net

Province II (Atlantic & International) — Barbara Nichols
(c) 908-420-9679
tbmee@aol.com

Province III (Mid-Atlantic) — Open
Contact David Hawley-Lowry (David8hl@outlook.com) for more information

Province IV (Southeast) — Phyllis Bruce
(c) 251-680-2764
pobruce46@gmail.com

Province V (Midwest) — David Hawley-Lowry
(c) 616-915-6188
david8hl@outlook.com

Province VI (Plains & Mountain) — Debbie Mead
(c) 303-669-3251
naga1vp@gmail.com

Province VII (Southwest) — Kate Canby
(c) 512-636-9010
katecanby@gmail.com

Province VIII (West) — Sarah Chesebro
(c) 805-440-3607
sarahchesebro@gmail.com

Province IX (Central & South America) — Open
Contact David Hawley-Lowry (David8hl@outlook.com) for more information

The Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity, Altar Guilds, and the Liturgical Arts

The Rev. Dr. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook



The Rev. Dr. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

The Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity is a religious order of the Episcopal Church founded in Boston in 1882 by Mother Ruth Margaret, formerly of the Society of St. Margaret, and Charles Chapman Grafton, then rector of the Church of the Advent, Boston, and later bishop of the Diocese of Fond du Lac. The sisterhood moved to establish a new motherhouse in Providence in 1888 and later moved to Fond du Lac in 1905. Eventually, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity worked out a network of branch houses nationwide, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Portland (Maine and Oregon), Newport, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Indigenous reservations in Wisconsin and Nevada. The Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity also founded two retreat centers, one on Long Island and another in Santa Barbara. The spiritual center of the convent, branch houses, and retreat centers were the chapel and their spiritual life as a community.

Of the sisterhoods founded during the Oxford Movement in the Episcopal Church, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity considered its mission unique, focusing on serving parishes rather than building institutions like schools, hospitals, and orphanages. This parish work included Christian education for all ages, including the lapsed, preparation for the sacraments, spiritual counsel and prayer, altar guild instruction, design and repair of vestments, altar coverings and linens, and baking Eucharistic wafers.

In addition to founding the first Anglican religious orders since the Reformation, one of the legacies of the Oxford Movement to the Episcopal Church was the rich liturgical heritage, including frequent Eucharist, ornate processions, and more frequent feast days. The vibrant liturgical life of the Oxford Movement contributed to the building of ornately decorated churches and the renewal of ecclesiastical arts.

This catholic revival was also connected to doctrine; vestments, altar linens, and other church appointments stood for continuity and universality, as well as the centrality of the Eucharist. The earliest Anglican sisterhoods, like the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity actively pursued the ecclesiastical arts to support mission work. To prepare li-

continued on page 5

Order your *Epistle* in living color! Send your e-mail address to Martha Noble at naga.vp2membership@gmail.com

EPISTLE of the National Altar Guild Association

Winter 2025, Volume 60, Issue #214

Published Quarterly in Enfield, North Carolina

Winter—February Spring—May Summer—August Autumn—November

Send address changes to: Martha Noble, 328 Willowcrest Ln., Birmingham, AL 35244, naga.vp2membership@gmail.com
Send articles & photographs to: Judy Henderson, 1978 Red Bud Circle NW, Palm Bay, FL 32907, Jem2415@earthlink.net
Deadline for submitting material: December 1 (Winter); March 1 (Spring); June 1 (Summer); September 1 (Autumn)

All materials reproduced from Epistle must be credited to the National Altar Guild Association.

Do this in Remembrance...

continued from page 1

our Lord's table. What a contrast to the commotion of working in a high school setting!



Judy Mathis

Fast forward to 2003, when I retired from the school system and was ordained a deacon. I really appreciated the role of the altar guild even more as I witnessed all the preparation necessary for the different types of services. I was always impressed by the love and care with which the members served. I learned a lot from them not only practically but spiritually as well.

Nearly six years ago, we moved to Colorado to be near family, and once again, I was warmly welcomed into an Episcopal Church. While I no longer serve as a deacon in the formal sense, I am active in several ministries of the church. I am always encouraging and notice the loving care the members of the altar guild demonstrate as they go about their duties. Perhaps that is why the leader of our altar guild asked me to share my thoughts.

"I feel we honor God and Jesus by making thoughtful and careful preparations to carry out Jesus' command to, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'

Why I Love Serving on the Altar Guild

I thought since I had learned so much from the members over the years, I'd share some of their thoughts about serving on the altar guild with you.

I asked a friend, who has only served for a year, to write a few observations about her experience. She writes, "*Raised in a faith, at a school and at a time when tradition dictated that girls could clean the sacristy but were to touch nothing, the altar guild has given me a greater sense of participation in the profound mysteries and miracles of faith. Every time I touch the instruments of worship is like the first time: awe-inspiring.*"

She goes on to say, "*I am always struck by the way in which our team works like a well-oiled machine going about the various tasks and rolling with the changes that crop up — and there can be a number of them. Adjusting to the changing church calendar, funerals, interim clergy, and a variety of programs hosted in the church are just some of the challenges posed to the altar guild participants. What doesn't seem to change is the patience with which these adjustments are addressed.*"

Sometime in the past, the leader of our altar guild asked the members to answer the question, "Why I love serving on the altar guild." Here are just a few that stood out for me. "*What I like about the altar guild is working together as a small team to help with the service. It truly is a privilege to serve the Lord in this way.*" Another answered, "*I serve with love and joy in my heart*," and "*Serving on the altar guild I feel more connected when I worship*."

One member had several observations to share. "*I feel we honor God and Jesus by making thoughtful and careful preparations to carry out Jesus' command to, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' The altar guild prepares the church and the elements of communion so that all who enter will have the opportunity to feel that this is a special place and something special is going to happen here. The congregation may not notice all of the details, as altar guild members do, but they notice that everything is prepared, ready and beautiful, and they don't have to do anything — the Holy just happens.*"

I hope you enjoyed hearing and learning how serving on the altar guild affects those who serve. These thoughts warmed my heart; I can only imagine they warmed our Lord's heart too. ✝

Sisterhood

continued from page 3

turgical spaces for these liturgies, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity and women of Anglo-Catholic parishes created altar guilds to teach how to prepare the altar, embroider, and repair the linens and vestments. Some parishes included junior altar guilds where older girls learned similar skills. The vision of the sisters in teaching altar guild was to equip local people with the skills in altar guild and liturgical arts to ensure that beautiful worship was accessible to all parishes who wanted it, regardless of income. To support this vision, the sisters not only conducted ongoing altar guild training in the parishes they served, but they offered diocesan altar guild training and through their "missionary enterprises" created and donated vestments, frontals, linens, and wafters to parishes in need, military chaplaincies, and Anglo-Catholic parishes in other parts of the world.

The Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity produced vestments, altar frontals and hangings, and altar linens for almost one hundred years, starting in Boston in 1890 and ultimately from the Convent of the Holy Nativity in Fond du Lac until 1988. The workrooms were organized according to levels of technical skill, from those sisters equipped to design and execute the most elaborate embroideries and teach others to those who did more straightforward sewing and finishing. Artistic skills in drawing and composition were needed as many of the finest designs were original. Laywomen Associates skilled in needlework were included in production.

The scope of vestments and altar linens created by the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity is staggering. For example, in 1915, the sisters created eight altar cloths, seven antependia, thirty chasubles, twenty-four stoles and maniples, thirty-six eucharistic veils and burses, thirty-five office stoles, fifteen bookmarks, a dalmatic, one cincture, seventeen albs, twenty-three amices, thirteen girdles, ten surplices, nine fair linens, five credence table covers, nine corporals, five palls, ten lawn veils, seventy-six purificators, thirty lavabos, four stoles' collars, and two linen covers.[1] Although the number of articles produced declined as churches became fully stocked, the sisterhood continued to create many more ornate articles with delicate embroidery. In 1928, the sisters made twelve chasubles, thirty-six stoles, and copes and miters. The sisters also repaired existing garments.[2] As liturgical life adapted, so did the work of the sisters. The embroidery department diversified to produce altar pillows and large dossals.[3] In addition to artistry, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity's missionary enterprises required business acumen. The sister-in-charge of each department tracked and reported orders by income, expenses, and the type of goods sold or donated. Completing and shipping orders and corresponding with customers was included as part of the business and furthered the relationships between the sisterhood and local parishes and dioceses worldwide.







From top: Altar Bread Department, the Embroidery Department, the Sacristy

The Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity most extensive missionary enterprise involved the production of altar bread. An extension of Anglo-Catholic Eucharistic theology, altar bread was an income stream for the sisterhood and an ecclesiastical art. They started baking altar bread in 1886, including the large priest's hosts and the smaller wafers for the people. Altar bread

continued on page 11

Homily on 2 Kings 5:1-19

Jan Cope Provost, Washington National Cathedral

The story of Naaman is a story filled with irony and it offers us an extraordinary and lifelong lesson in humility and God's grace. This morning I invite you to enter into the story with me, to engage it and wrestle with it and what it was saying in Naaman's day and what it continues to say to you and me today.



Jan Cope Provost

First, for context, we understand from the story that Naaman is a very powerful person with tremendous prestige and so many resources at his fingertips. He was in his day like the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has been tremendously successful in his career. As I said, he has power, prestige — seemingly, he has it all — with one exception. He seems to have this skin disease that he can't get rid of, that is the source of shame and pain. Being the sort of man with the resources he has, you know he had to throw everything he had at that problem and he couldn't fix it. All the best dermatologists of the day, everyone he could pray to, he'd probably prayed to, and yet he had a problem he couldn't fix.

In Naaman's case, we know how desperate he is because — listen to the story again: he's consulted everybody he can consult and he's at the last straw on this problem. Just to underscore that, can you imagine how desperate he must've been to listen to a servant girl from an enemy country who maybe was 12 and is at the lowest rung of the social strata talking about some unnamed prophet in her homeland who she's confident can heal Naaman? Based on her telling her mistress, Naaman's wife, he goes to an enemy country, goes to the king to get a letter of introduction. This wasn't like taking an afternoon sojourn to Bethesda from Washington, DC. It was over a 200-mile journey. He takes with him about 900 pounds of precious metals, which in today's market would be about three and a half million dollars' worth of stuff. He loads up a whole entourage to go with him to an unnamed, unknown prophet on the off chance that he might get healed.

God's grace is free and available for each and every one of us. You can't earn it. You can't buy it. You can't power your way to it.

You know the story. He arrives in Samaria, has a misunderstanding with the King of Israel, but nevertheless, the unnamed prophet Elisha shows up, and tells the king, "Send him to me." So, the great and mighty Naaman shows up with his whole entourage and loot at Elisha's door and Elisha sends a messenger to Naaman and says, "Go to the Jordan River, wash yourself seven times and you'll be healed." Naaman is furious. I mean, doesn't he know who I am? Powerful, prestigious. Look at all the stuff I've got with me! He almost misses it, folks. And in another ironic twist in the story, it is his lowly and faithful servants who stop him in his tracks and say, you know, if you would have been asked to do something really dramatic and difficult, would you have done it? Why don't you just give it a try?

So Naaman has to park his ego, his pride, and his self-importance on the bank of the Jordan to receive what God intended. Naaman thought he knew what he needed, which was healing, which was essentially skin deep. But God had another plan. God wanted so much more for Naaman. We know that because the story continues. Naaman receives God's grace and restoration and relationship, and he finally understands that there is the one true God to whom he offers his lifelong allegiance,

continued on page 10



Ecclesiastical Sewing

WORSHIP BEAUTIFULLY



Rekindle Reverence.
At Ecclesiastical Sewing, we believe the Church deserves the very best. For centuries traditional vestments and sacred art inspired awe and reverence, lifting hearts and minds to God. Today, we're bringing that tradition back.

Crafted with Care
Our handmade vestments are designed and stitched in the USA using only the finest materials—no cheap fabrics or mass-produced shortcuts. Our brocades come from a small, private European weaver, ensuring every piece reflects the timeless beauty of the Church.

Empowering DIY
For altar guilds and crafters, we offer a full range of DIY supplies: fabrics, antique-inspired patterns, appliqués, trims, and more. With our resources, you can create stunning vestments that honor the sacred traditions of the Church.



Restoration with Purpose
Do you have vestments that have seen better days? Our expert restoration service breathes new life into treasured pieces. Whether it's repairing delicate embroidery, replacing worn fabrics, or reworking aged designs, we help preserve the sacred history tied to each vestment.

Let's move beyond the abstract, soulless designs of the past 50 years. Together, we can restore beauty, reverence, and tradition to our sacred spaces.

Visit EcclesiasticalSewing.com
Or Email us at: customersupport@ecclesiasticalsewing.com

Altar Guild News

Central Florida Diocesan Altar Guild (DAG) Meeting

Judy Henderson, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Melbourne

On 1 February 2025, the members of the Diocese of Central Florida Altar Guild gathered at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Melbourne, Florida, for our annual meeting. Central Florida is a large Diocese, especially in area, so it is not always easy for altar and flower guild members to travel to a meeting. With this in mind, the Central Florida Diocesan Altar Guild (DAG) board moves the annual meeting to a different Deanery each year. This year, the meeting was hosted by the Southeast Deanery.

Upon arriving, attendees were treated to a tour of the Holy Trinity church and historic chapel, including the Flower Room, the Sacristy, the Historic Chapel, and the Narthex with beautiful stained-glass windows. Breakfast goodies and beverages were also served and a "Meet and Greet" form was provided to help attendees get to know each other.



One of the Exchange Tables

Exchange Tables were set up for attendees to bring and display items their churches no longer need as well as to take items that they could use in their churches. Items on the Exchange Tables included Bibles, a chalice, collection plates, linens, banners, stoles, chasubles, snuffers, processional crosses, Paschal candle stands, and many other items. All items were free for the taking. Exchange Table items remaining at the end of the day were given to the Rev. John E. Clark, former

continued on page 9





Donated by the DAG to St. Ann's Church in Belmopan (left) banner, and (right) banner, bells, and Paschal candle stand

23rd Psalm, Reinterpreted

From I Shall Not Want*, by Robert Ketchum*

In his beautiful book, *I Shall Not Want*, Robert Ketchum tells of a Sunday School teacher who asked her group of children if anyone could quote the entire 23rd Psalm. A golden-haired, four-and-a-half-year-old girl was among those who raised their hands.

A bit skeptical, the teacher asked if she could really quote the entire psalm.

The little girl came to the front of the room, faced the class, made a perky little bow, and said, "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want."

She bowed again and went and sat down.

That may well be the greatest interpretation of the 23rd Psalm ever heard. ✝

AG News

continued from page 8

Deacon in the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida and presently Deacon in the Anglican Diocese of Belize. In 2015, Deacon Johnny founded No One Hungary, a non-profit food pantry at St. Gabriel's Church in Titusville, Florida, which has expanded and is partnering internationally with the Anglican Diocese of Belize to create the Mission Hope Belize. Donated food, clothing, school supplies, and liturgical items are shipped monthly and Deacon Johnny and his wife, Jacki Bailey, assist the Diocese in distribution of the donations. For the past two years, the altar guilds of the Diocese of Central Florida have provided churches in the Anglican Diocese of Belize with liturgical items from the Exchange Tables at our annual meetings.



The Rt. Rev Philip Wright, BA, MA, ORE, Bishop of the Church in the Province of the West Indies, Anglican Diocese of Belize and Deacon John E Clark

After a short business meeting, attendees enjoyed a Eucharist service with Holy Trinity's priest, The Rev. Thomas Phillips, and our Central Florida DAG Chaplain, The Rev. Garcia Barnswell-Schmidt. Fr. Tom provided an amazing sermon based on the gospel of Luke's emphasis on Jesus' care for the least, the lowest, the outcasts, the tax collectors — the Gentiles. In Luke's gospel, Jesus goes out of his way to find those on the margins, while often the "churchiest of the church people" miss the forest for the trees. In their zeal for religion, the pharisees miss the presence of God in their midst in Christ and even drove him out of their presence. Fr. Tom encouraged altar guild members, as the first stop, to bring the presence of God to the service, to remember that all you do in this place is about knowing Christ and making Him known. Our job as altar guild members is to embrace the congregation and make everyone welcome in Jesus' name. Fr. Tom urged us to go back to our churches with renewed vigor and zeal and to never forget that we are doing what we do for the glory of God. He encouraged us to give our heart and mind to all that we do in the sanctuary. He said, "The Lord wants to use you as a major leader in your church to encourage your priest to keep the main thing — the main thing — to Love God with all your heart, mind, and strength, and to Love your neighbor as yourself." He also urged us to pass this love on to the next generation. He said, "A 12-year-old will never be encouraged and excited to love Jesus if all they see in church is religiosity. Let's be a church that points the next generation to Jesus in all that we do." The service included the installation of the DAG Board, including a new member who has joined the Board to help represent the Southeast Deanery.

Everyone gathered back in the Parish Hall for lunch and then split into two workshops — either altar guild or flower guild.

Maureen Hamilton provided a Flower

continued on page 10



Installation of the Central Florida DAG Board (from left): The Rev. Garcia Barnswell-Schmidt, Eve Hyatt, Sandra Hendriks, Kathy Shearer, Betty Seckinger, Beth Hyatt, Paul Lagassey, Cyndy Berry, Judy Valk, Barbara Miller, Judy Henderson, The Rev. Thomas Phillips)

AG News

continued from page 9

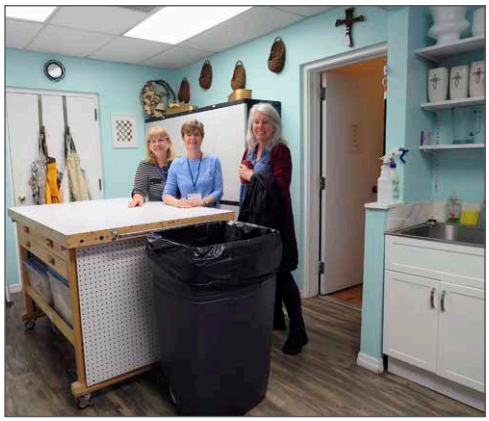
Guild Demonstration as she assembled two mirror arrangements that would be used on the Holy Trinity altar for the Sunday services. She started by showing the group how to arrange flowers in a small vase for a small church or chapel (for about $15.00) and then moved on to the use of native foliage and how a totally green arrangement became the Holy Trinity Altar arrangement. Maureen also demonstrated arranging roses and other flowers in vases; these arrangements were given as door prizes at the end of the meeting. Holy Trinity traditionally uses the flowers from the weekend altar arrangements and repurposes the flowers into mugs or vases for distribution to parishioners who are in the hospital or who have a birthday or an anniversary. Attendees participated in a hands-on session where they learned to make these lovely Blessed Altar Flowers into a small flower arrangement in a mug for the individual joy of others; each attendee made a mug of flowers to take home.



Maureen Hamilton, Flower Workshop Leader



Barbara Clarke, Dawn Kiefer, and Mona Leverett with mug flower arrangements



Sandy Stone, Anna Bourne, and Eloise Evans in the Flower Room

The altar guild workshop covered Recruitment, Care of Linens, Team Organization, and Special Services (e.g., funerals and weddings). A presentation was made covering each subject, and time was allowed for questions and input from other churches. Demonstrations included laundering and spreading small linens on Plexiglas for drying so that the linens need no ironing when dry, and the use of a red ribbon to indicate when the wine in a cruet has been blessed. In addition, handouts were on display, and copies were available for anyone who signed up to receive an e-mail copy of the nine handouts. ✞

Homily

continued from page 6

someone who knows him, someone who has the power to restore him and redeem him and to hold him close no matter what. He goes then to Elisha and offers all his stuff and Elisha says, "No, I don't need that."

Naaman asked for something that he didn't know he needed. He loads up dirt from the Holy Land, if you will, that he can take with them back to Damascus so that when he's worshiping the one true God, he's standing on holy ground. You see my friends, God's grace is free and available for each and every one of us. You can't earn it. You can't buy it. You can't power your way to it. It's a lesson in humility. Saint Paul writes about how he was afflicted by a thorn in the flesh or thorn in the side and he asked God three times if he would take it away, if God would take it away.

What are we waiting for? God works in mysterious ways and sometimes sends us the most unlikely messengers to receive the very help and the words and the wisdom that we need. If you are in need, don't miss the boat. And if you are in a place where you have a boat, go out, seek someone in need. We have so much work to do because at the end of the day, the lesson is to love God with all that we are and all that we have and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our world needs it. You and me and Naaman, too. Amen. ✞

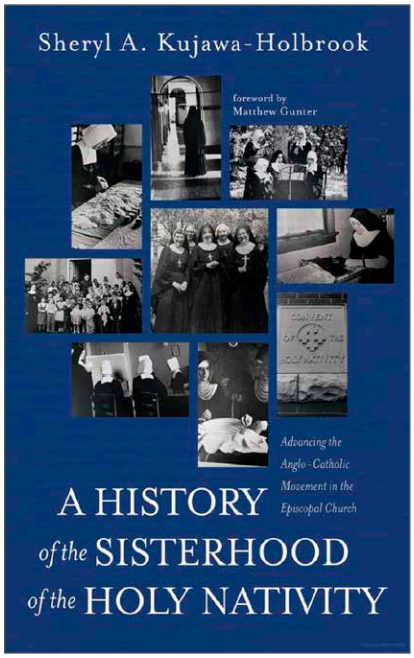
Sisterhood

continued from page 5

was in high demand, as daily Mass, to the extent that a priest was available, was integral to the sisterhood and increasingly the practice in Anglo-Catholic parishes. Eventually, an ecumenical clientele purchased altar bread: Episcopalians, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Methodists from almost every state in the United States, Korea, Japan, Pakistan, the Bahamas, and other countries. The critical mass of the orders came from churches in Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, and Michigan.[4]

The missionary enterprise of altar bread production expanded rapidly, and at its height, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity sent out over one million communion wafers annually. By 1894, the sisters baked over 4400 priest's hosts and over 47,700 communion wafers for their use, as well as St. Stephen's, Providence, and Church of the Advent, Boston. The total cost of production was $24.40.[5] The Eucharistic network, connected through altar bread, expanded throughout the early twentieth century. During World War II, the sisters sent altar bread to over twenty separate Army and Navy bases in the United States and abroad.[6] By 1971, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity and a staff of three women Associates from Fond du Lac produced 1.8 million individual wafers and over 78,000 priest's hosts.[7]

Because the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity considered altar bread production an extension of the altar, it resisted efforts to commercialize the operation. The wafers were baked, cut, stamped, and packed into rolls by hand for distribution. The wafers were embossed with Eucharistic symbols like the Lamb of God. Rejected wafers were recycled as fish food. The baking was tricky as the wafers easily scorched.



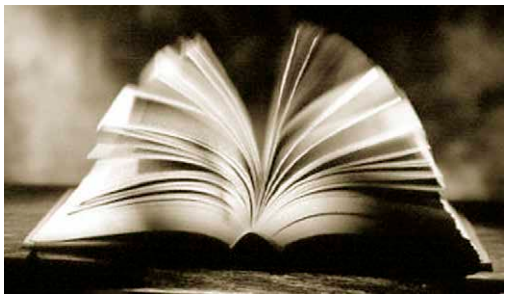
Of the sisterhoods founded during the Oxford Movement in the Episcopal Church, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity considered its mission unique, focusing on serving parishes rather than building institutions like schools, hospitals, and orphanages.

Standing over hot brick ovens while wearing wool serge habits took considerable spiritual discipline. The work typically required one sister full-time, assisted by several novices. Trusted Associates also worked in altar bread production.

From its inception, the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity was focused on teaching, retreats, and a rich heritage in altar guild training and the ecclesiastical arts. Assisted by Associates of the sisterhood, the sisters were spiritually nourished by their deep commitment to caring for the altar and the sacraments. The spiritual charism of the sisterhood, along with their missionary enterprises, deepened relationships across parishes and dioceses to advance the catholic faith throughout the Episcopal Church.

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook is a priest of the Diocese of Los Angeles, the Historiographer of the Episcopal Church, and the editor of the journal *Anglican & Episcopal History*. She is the author of the recent book, *A History of the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity: Advancing the Anglo-Catholic Movement in the Episcopal Church* (Wipf & Stock, 2024). ✞

[1] Yearbook 1915-1918, 1919-1920, SHNC, 16; 88, 169, SHNC
[2] Yearbook 1920-1931, SHNC, 200. 232, SHNC.
[3] Annual Report of Convent and Mission Houses, 1940-1943, 60, SHNC.
[4] Karst, "Traditional Religious in a Secular World," 14.
[5] Yearbook 1894, "Report of Altar-Breads," SHNC, n.p.
[6] Annual Report of Convent and Mission Houses, 1940-1943, SHNC, for an example of the trend, see 58.
[7] Karst, "Traditional Religious in a Secular World," 14.



NAGA is Grateful for the Following Gifts

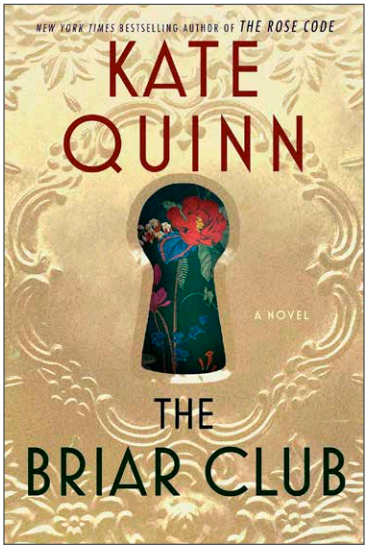
- From Linda Geiger in Memory of Phyllis Hokanson
- Endowment Gift from Diane Grondin
- From the Diocese of Olympia Altar Guild in Memory of Elaine Coulter Lee Foster

The Book Shelf

Reviewed by Lynn Hendricks

The Briar Club

By Kate Quinn



What if a house could talk? "The walls have ears"; what secrets could they reveal about the inhabitants?

The year is 1954, the place is Washington, DC. Step inside Briarwood House, Boarding House for Ladies, run by the surly Mrs. Nilsson. Meet the inhabitants: Pete and Lina; Mrs. Nilsson's children; the mysterious widow Mrs. Grace March; Reka Muller, a Hungarian refugee; Nora Walsh, daughter of and sister to policemen, and; Felicity Orton (Fliss), wife of a doctor caught up in the Korean War and stationed at a hospital in Japan, with her infant daughter Angela. Bea Verretti of the soon to be defunct Women's Baseball League; Claire Hallett, on the staff of Senator Margaret Chase Smith, and; Arlene Hupp, a gung-ho anti-communist in the mode of Senator Joe McCarthy working for the HUAC (House on Unamerican Activities) make up the rest.

Join them as they are drawn together every Thursday evening to Grace's small 3rd floor room for a shared meal on mismatched plates and a cup of Grace's Sun Tea. Grace, always so hospitable and ready to listen, befriends each one, hears their secrets and helps them without divulging her own tightly held secret.

Kate Quinn has invited us to be the "walls," of Briarwood House and to listen in on the lives of the Briar Club. Won't you come in?

Strangers become a family calling themselves the Briar Club, yet still so many questions are going unanswered. Who is this Kitty to whom Grace writes postcards but never mails? From whom are Nora's weekly bouquets of flowers? What is it that Reka is so desperate to get? Who is Claire's Sid? What is the story behind Arlene's need to be important by putting down her fellow boarders? Where is Pete and Lina's father? Who is Bob McDowell? What does Harland Adams of the FBI have to do with anything? Is Xavier Byrne a gangster or a businessman?

And the house sees itself changing under Grace's hand, a vine she paints across the walls of her attic space soon continues down the stairwell. Flowers are added by everyone, making it (the house) "feel pretty again." New smells of cookies baking and gumbo or Swedish meatballs fill the house with new and interesting odors. But what of the blood smell? Something dreadful has occurred, leaving two dead bodies to spoil Thanksgiving Day. Oh, how the house wants to protect its borders, who it thinks of as friends, but it can only listen as events play out culminating in the revelation of Grace's secret.

Set in the era of McCarthyism and the Korean Police Action, Kate Quinn has invited us to be the "walls," of Briarwood House and to listen in on the lives of the Briar Club. Won't you come in? ✝

Enhancing Our Worship Through Stained Glass Windows – Part II

Debbie Mead, Holy Comforter Episcopal Church, Broomfield, Colorado

In the Autumn 2024 edition of the Epistle, we highlighted some of the stained-glass windows at Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Broomfield, Colorado. Here we discuss an additional four windows created using the same dalle de verre method, which means "slabs of glass" in French. The pieces of glass are very thick and, when cut, create multiple facets, which reflect the light filtering through them beautifully.



The Last Supper

Chalice of wine and the bread, with the foreboding shadow of the cross waiting in the background.

"While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." ~ Matthew 26:26-29



Calvary

The hill of Calvary with the three crosses and overshadowing darkness, adjacent to Joseph's lovely garden, where Jesus was laid in the new tomb.

"From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land." "When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely He was the Son of God!"

~ Matthew 27:45, 54

"As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away."

~ Matthew 27:57-60



Resurrection

The cross draped with the victory crown and dominated by a larger crown in the background all symbolize Jesus' triumph over the cross and death.

continued on page 18

Online Sacristy Shop

TaMara Oertel

My name is TaMara Oertel and I currently run the Online Sacristy Shop. I thought I would remind you of all the wonderful options available to you and your Guild members. I was the model for this photo-shoot!

Log onto the NAGA website for prices and ordering information: http://nationalaltarguildassociation.org/ or use our Sacristy Shop order form on page 15. ***Invoice, including postage, will be mailed with your order. Please do not send a check with your order.*** ✞



The aprons are a nice visual for your ministry! Hang a few of these in your Sacristy!



Grab one of these cooler bags to handily cool your things — wine not included!



There's always time to sit in fellowship when preparing holy spaces with this NAGA tea/coffee cup.



The stamps are great for adorning paper napkins to create disposable corporals and purificators for offsite events.



Our beautiful logo on this lapel pin will bring awareness to our organization.

Online Sacristy Shop

continued from page 15



Running in the rain to get all your chores done? Do it in style with this spacious umbrella. Last two umbrellas in stock are $15 each. Please write in your order on the sacristy shop order form.



This is our NAGA pin/necklace with chain included. Depicted is an altar with candles on each end. Even more lovely in person. This makes a wonderful gift for altar guild members.

NAGA Sacristy Shop

Please visit us online for descriptions and photos: http://www.nationalaltarguildassociation.org/

Sterling Silver Cross Pendant/Necklace	$36.00
NAGA Altar Care Apron	$20.00
Purificator Stamp	$14.00
Tote Bag	$14.00
NAGA Prayer	$12.00
Coffee Cup	$10.00
Cooler/Disaster Kit Bag	$7.00
Notecards with Envelopes	$6.00
NAGA Lapel Pin	$5.00
NAGA Notepad	$3.00
Transfer Sheets	$1.00ea

Sacristy Shop Order Form

Invoice, including postage and remittance address, will be mailed with your order. ***Please do not send check with this order form.***

_____ _____
Name Phone

_____
Address

_____ _____ _____
City State Zip

Item **Price**

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Total _____

Mail order form to:
TaMara Oertel
8399 Kier Road
Clarkston, Michigan 49348
248-625-1837
mrsoertel@gmail.com

President's Message

continued from page 1

the statement as they head to Gethsemane. Then we get to holy week with foot or hand washing, the striping of the altars, some churches create their own garden of Gethsemane. Others will conduct a service of Tenebrae.



David Hawley-Lowry, NAGA President

All these changes and services are significant, all are meaningful but different, and all are ways of preparing for Jesus' death on the cross and the resurrection. Through all this we sacristans are very busy being our Martha selves with flurries of change and care setting the stage, cleaning, ironing, polishing, repairing, all in preparation for Jesus's resurrection! Then Holy Saturday comes, a day we mostly miss as we are completing the above tasks, and then the flowers come and add another level of beauty, pleasing to both the eyes and nose.

Easter vigil this year I celebrated with my adult daughter in a large Catholic parish in Illinois. A cousin who I served as his best man when he married twenty-five years ago, married into a large catholic family and last year he made the decision to explore joining the Catholic tradition. He was received into the Catholic Church at the vigil, he was also the Godfather to two infant children. It was a busy night for him. The service had all the stops pulled out if you will. Something I had not seen before was a walk-through baptismal font. Adults being baptized walked into the font and had three vessels of water poured over them, and then the infants were baptized in what is more typical to us Episcopalians by being held over the font and handfuls of water poured on their head. It was a wonderful service and experience. The music was excellent, a 50-person choir and a 20-piece orchestra. As we were preparing for the Eucharist, I watched the flurry of activity coming from the sacristy ensuring all was prepared for the Eucharist. There was one sacristan who was presenting the thurible for incensing the altar and carefully stepping closer to the altar trying get one of the priests' attention. I could see the relief on her face when she was successful and handed off the thurible. With so many good and different traditions, we are blessed to be able to do our parts and partake in the joy and beauty of this Easter season.

It is a joy to experience the different traditions of various parishes and see how they prepare through Lent culminating at the Eater vigil or Easter morning. There are so many variations.... To some degree I think this speaks to folks' roots.

I was reminded this week how grateful I am to be a churched child of God. One of the retired priests in my diocese passed a few weeks before Easter and his memorial service was during Easter week. He was a lovely and eclectic man with a rich history. Raised by missionary parents in Africa, as a young man he held a variety of occupations here in the states before becoming an ordained priest. This funeral, in a church where there was no doubt it was Eastertide, truly reflected this man's life. From the African drums upon entry to the African prayers, to a daughter starting by reading the first half of the epistle as a question, then pausing to read a poem by Robert Frost, and concluding the second half of the Epistle as the answer; and then a post communion solo anthem of Ave Maria sung in Latin; it was wonderfully moving. When I walked in, I offered his wife my condolences and she graciously reminded me that this was a celebration and resurrection of life, and I can assure you it truly was a service of celebration and resurrection. Rest well, dear friend!

Now as we are in Eastertide and looking to late spring and summer events and activities, I would remind you all to take

continued on page 18

Not Your Grandmother's Altar Guild

Sharon Sheridan, reprinted from July 13, 2009, The Episcopal Church

Look behind the red curtain at the front of the worship hall and you won't find the Wizard of Oz. But you will see altar guild members from around the country, working their behind-the-scenes magic to make the Eucharist run smoothly for thousands of worshipers each day.

The faces behind the ministry also are more diverse than some might expect. Altar guild members serving at the main convention Eucharist on July 12, for example, included a 16-year-old girl from Miami and Dr. George Marks Jr., a cardiologist and director of the altar guild at St. James' in Los Angeles.

"There are more of us [men] joining the altar guild now," Marks said. "We have two on our altar guild. I think that's a growing trend, and I don't think it's for the heavy work. I think it's just something we enjoy doing. Even the going in, doing the preparation when nobody's around. It's just very centering … for me, at least."

The composition of altar guilds in the Diocese of Olympia varies from church to church, said Sherry K. Garman, diocesan altar guild directress. Quite a few have men, some are made up of older women, and some include entire families who serve together, she said. "We have quite a few congregations that are portable," meeting in schools or other denominations' churches, with the altar guilds transporting all the worship materials for each service, she added.

At Grace Church in Madison, Wisconsin, five men — mostly former senior wardens — asked to join the altar guild, recounted Jane Henring, president of the Diocese of Milwaukee's altar guild. "That kind of worried us at first. We thought, 'Oh dear, they're going to take over.'"

The faces behind the ministry also are more diverse than some might expect. Altar guild members serving at the main convention Eucharist on July 12, for example, included a 16-year-old girl from Miami and Dr. George Marks Jr., a cardiologist and director of the altar guild at St. James' in Los Angeles.

But an altar guild coup never materialized.

"They've been so wonderful and adaptable," she said. "They've been just a tremendous asset."

Reaching out to potential younger members, some churches also have junior altar guilds, Garman said.

"We never do have enough young people," Henring said of the Diocese of Lexington. "We're still pretty long in the tooth."

But she doesn't believe the oft-predicted death of altar guilds because of a lack of youth participation will materialize, she said. "I've heard it ever since I was a child."

"There's nothing the matter with the older people," she added. "We've got a little experience."

"We do need to let people know that the altar guild is open to everyone, men and women, because it is a ministry," Marks said. He first joined an altar guild while in medical school in Philadelphia about 30 years ago. "I think it's a good way to give and serve without having to be up in front of someone" the way other volunteers, such as lectors, are, he said.

"It is a behind-the-scenes ministry," he said. "A lot of people don't really realize what it takes to really prepare and do a service."

At convention, altar guild members arrived at 8:30 a.m. for the 10 a.m. July 12 Eucharist, setting up the main altar and 12 Communion stations around the worship hall, said Beth Jett, who serves on the altar guild Christ Church Cathedral in Lexington, Kentucky. A rotation of 58 altar guild members handles the daily Eucharists, with extra volunteers helping out where needed.

continued on page 18

President's Message

continued from page 16

time and "smell the roses" so to speak. Look back at all the accomplishments you have made. We have so much rich tradition and history as well as new ideas to experience and learn from to move forward. I am so grateful for all of you – the work and ministries that you carry out, the worship you support, the fellowship you keep, and the craft you continue to do without ceasing. Please share this craft of altar guild service and joy with newcomers, young and old alike. We have so much to share and pass on.

Gods Peace and blessings to you all! ✞

Not Grandmother's AG

continued from page 17

Cleaning up after the service, the altar guild collects the used wine goblets and pitchers for transport by convention center workers to the building's dishwashers. This marks a great improvement from the last convention, when altar guild members transported the altarware into the basement of the convention center in Columbus, Ohio, then ran them through the dishwasher themselves and had "ladies standing at the end with terry cloth towels" to dry them before transporting them back to the worship space, Jett noted.

While admitting at the end of a busy morning that they were ready to sit down for awhile, the altar guild members remained smiling and enthusiastic about their ministry.

"It's a ministry of service with love," Jett said.

"I don't figure I need a paycheck," Garman added. "The blessings are more than enough." ✞

Membership Renewals Are Due

A reminder if your NAGA dues are not up-to-date, this will be the last *Epistle* you will receive this year. Please send your renewal check to David Hawley-Lowry, 11143 Summer Dr., Zeeland, Michigan 49464. For more information, contact David at David8hl@outlook.com or 616– 915-6188.

Stained Glass

continued from page 13

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

~ Philippians 2:8-11



Ascension

The lamb of God with the banner of victory, representing Christ reigning in heaven.

"And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

~ Revelation 7:10 ✞

NAGA Annual Membership

Join us!

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Individual $35 / Household* $55

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Parish _____

Diocese _____

Parish $50

Parish Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Attn: _____

Diocese _____

Diocese $100

Diocese Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Attn: _____

I wish to receive *Epistle* ☐ in color via e-mail ~ OR ~ ☐ in black & white via regular mail

Make check payable to the National Altar Guild Association and mail to:

Martha Noble
328 Willowcrest Lane
Birmingham, Alabama 35244
naga.vp2membership@gmail.com

*Household with spouse/partner or family member

To the Glory of God

Remember that special someone with a gift that continues to give — consider ongoing support of our national presence and commitment.

National Altar Guild Association Endowment Fund

_____
Name of donor or donor organization

_____ _____
Phone Email

_____
Address

_____
City

_____ _____
State Zip

My/our gift is given:

☐ as a memorial
☐ as a thanksgiving
☐ to honor

_____
Name of honored or occasion

_____
Address of person honored

_____
City

_____ _____
State Zip

Do you give permission for:

☐ your name
☐ your honored person's name or occassion to be printed in *Epistle*?

Make check payable to the National Altar Guild Association and mail to:

NAGA Endowment Fund
Kate Canby
8113 Vailveiw Cove
Austin, Texas 78750

National Altar Guild Association

Spring *Epistle* #214
1035 Linda Lane
Charlotte, NC 28211-2038

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROCKY MOUNT, NC
PERMIT NO. 91

If anyone is in Christ,

he is a new creation;

the old has passed away,

behold the new has come.

~ 2 Cor. 5:17