COMMUNIQUÉ

Creation Care and Environmental Justice

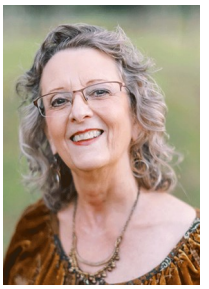


National Episcopal Church Women

Volume 25 - Number 3 Fall 2025

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2024-2027

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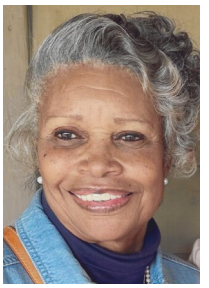
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Province I

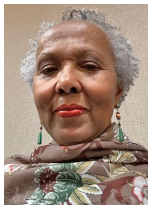
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The National Episcopal Church Women Board maintains several internet resources to assist its members in their celebration of women's issues.

Website:

ECWNational.org

Facebook:

National Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

Articles appearing within the *Communique'* do not necessarily represent the opinions of the National Episcopal Church Women nor the Episcopal Church. The organization strives to provide a platform for women to present ideas and opinions that affect women's issues. The editor may be contacted for comments or questions at: editor@ecwnational.org

Episcopal Church Women membership information may be obtained via the website or by contacting your local province representative.

To update your subscription address or opt-in to our digital version of the *Communique'* contact the editor at: editor@ecwnational.org

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Message from the President

Lisa Bortner - President
National Episcopal Church Women 2024 - 2027

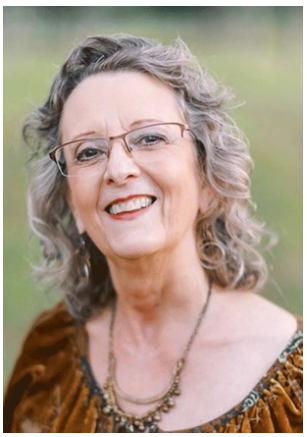
Leading with Jesus at the Center

When I think about leadership—especially Christian leadership—the image that comes to mind is not a boardroom table or a gavel, but a table in Galilee where Jesus sat with His disciples. It was there that He taught, encouraged, corrected, and loved. That is the kind of leadership we are called to embrace: leading with Jesus first, at the center of all we do.

"My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity." – *Proverbs 3:1-2 (NIV)*

This verse reminds us that leadership begins with knowing God's Word and living it. We cannot lead others well if we are not rooted in Scripture and aligned with God's will. When His Word is our foundation, we gain the wisdom and discernment needed for every decision—whether that's in a board meeting, a ministry project, or a conversation over coffee.

Practical Ways to Lead with Grace and Jesus at the Center



1. **Pray first.** Start every board meeting, planning session, and decision-making moment by inviting Jesus in. This isn't a formality, it's the most strategic leadership move you can make.

2. **Make expectations clear.** Neglecting to communicate and reinforce clear expectations is the perfect recipe for disappointment or disaster. Love enough to be clear and lead with both truth and grace.

3. **Seek mentorship—and give it.** Find someone you admire as a leader and ask them to mentor you. Learn from their faith, their resilience, and their wisdom. Then turn around and invest in someone else. Leadership grows in the soil of intentional relationships.

4. **Be courageous in decision-making.** A Christian leader cannot hide from hard calls. Seek God's will, pray over the matter, gather wise counsel, and then be ready to decide.

5. **Show the why and the way.** People will

follow a vision they understand. Explain the purpose (the "why") and then lay out the steps (the "way").

Lead with joy. Ministry is serious work, but it should also be life-giving. Laugh, celebrate victories, and create an atmosphere where people feel valued and encouraged.

What Makes a Good Christian Leader?

- A servant's heart modeled after Jesus.
- Integrity that holds fast to truth.
- Humility to listen and learn.
- Courage to act.
- Grace to forgive and restore.

A commitment to God's Word as the ultimate guide.

God has a great plan—not just for your ministry, but for your leadership journey. Trust Him, follow His direction, and let every decision reflect His heart. When we put Jesus first, everything else falls into place—not always easily, but always in His perfect order.

Lead well, dear sisters. Lead with Jesus.

A message from 2nd Vice President NECW



Be Part of the Story—Share Your Experience!

We'd love to hear how your church or community is embracing **Creation Care** and **Environmental Justice**. Whether it's a story, photo, article, or upcoming event, your contribution can inspire others through our **e-News Blast, Facebook, and Communiqué**.

This issue is dedicated to lifting up Creation Care and Environmental Justice. Our goal is to encourage life-giving choices as we live together on this earth. The NECW board would be honored to feature your voices and experiences across all generations.

Researchers describe Creation Care as encompassing three key areas:

Environmental Stewardship – protecting ecosystems, reducing pollution, and promoting biodiversity.

Spiritual Responsibility – honoring creation as a sacred trust, rooted in faith and respect for the Creator.

Community Engagement – educating, mobilizing, and building collective action for a healthier planet.

Your story doesn't need to be big to make an impact. Gardening, conserving water, planting trees, reducing waste—every step matters!

Help us spread the good news of Creation Care and Environmental Justice. **Send us your stories, photos, articles, or events today—your voice matters!**

Sincerely,

Mrs. Gloria Rogers







Rooted in Prayer, Growing in Justice: ECW's Creation Care Witness



By: Sue Mueller

The National Episcopal Church Women (ECW) continues to live into its call as a community of prayer, fellowship, and action. Under the leadership of the Creation Care & Environmental Justice Committee, chaired by Sue Mueller, ECW is weaving together liturgy, reflection, and advocacy in ways that strengthen our common life and witness.

Season of Creation Daily Prayer Series

This fall, ECW launched the *Season of Creation 2025 Daily Prayer and Reflection Series*. Running from August 31 through October 5, the series guides us through prayers, petitions, and reflections for each day of the season. Together, we joined the wider Church in observing the feasts of the Holy Cross, St. Matthew, St. Michael & All Angels, and St. Francis of Assisi.

Through simple daily rhythms, ECW members prayed with creation and for creation, embodying our leadership as women of the Church who hold prayer and justice together.

Looking Ahead: ECW Creation Care Book Club

Beginning in January 2026, ECW will host a quarterly Creation Care Book Club via Zoom. This new initiative will bring women together from across dioceses for prayer, reading, and discussion. Proposed titles include *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Kimmerer), *All We Can Save* (Johnson & Wilkinson), and *Climate Church, Climate World* (Antal).

By centering diverse voices and connecting to the liturgical seasons, the book club offers us a way to learn, reflect, and act together.

Stations of the Cross: From Gender Justice to Creation Care

During Lent 2025, ECW offered *Stations of the Cross: Thursdays in Black Against Gender Violence*. Building on that foundation, the Committee is preparing *Stations of the Cross on Creation Care* for Lent 2026. These stations will follow the traditional liturgy while incorporating reflections from across the Episcopal Church, embodying our call to prayer, justice, and leadership.

Expanding the Circle

The Committee is also exploring opportunities to expand its membership, welcoming women beyond the national board who are engaged in creation care ministries throughout the wider Church.

Together, these initiatives remind us of our calling: to be women who pray deeply, act boldly, and lead faithfully in the Church and in the world.

Women at the Well - Faith in Action

By: Cindy Mohr

The Gospel of John recounts the story of the Samaritan woman meeting Jesus at the well.

Jesus breaks many social barriers by speaking with the woman, an outcast. Jesus offers her life-giving water that provides eternal life. When Jesus reveals he knows her past, she recognizes him as a prophet and rushes to tell her people about him, leading many to believe in Jesus.

For the 2027 Triennial, the 2024 - 2027 the NECW Board has embraced the theme of "Women at the Well." Like the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at the well, we need to be open to the moments when we can be more like Jesus. As each of us continues our faith journey, we should show love, mercy and kindness for all and break down social, ethnic and cultural barriers as we become strong witnesses to our faith.

The logo depicts a joyful woman receiving life-giving water. The swirls of water invite us to put faith in action through evangelism.

Story Sharing and Creation Care



Excerpts From: episcopal church.org/creation

We begin with questions and statements ("prompts") that could draw forth stories about creation and faith.

When have you experienced wonder, love or awe at God's creation? Share that story in vivid detail.

Share a story about a moment when you felt deeply connected with God in nature. How did you recognize God in that moment?

The Book of Job says animals, birds, plants, and fish teach us about God. Recall a moment when an interaction with creation taught you about God.



As you think back on your connection to the natural world, have you seen any of the places or creatures you love be damaged or limited because of human action? Share about that experience, including how you discovered the change and how you felt about that loss.



Have you ever been part of protecting or preserving God's creation? What was that experience?

Share a story about when you felt really connected to your community, the world, the universe, or something greater than yourself, as a result of engaging with creation care or eco-justice work?



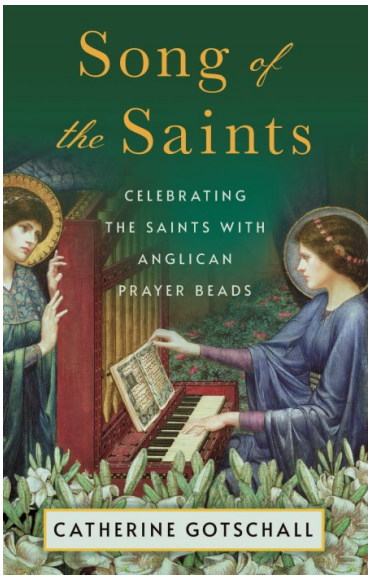
Many of us hold particular convictions or concerns close to our hearts. What is one belief, conviction or concern that is important to you? When did this begin to matter so much to you?

Share a story about a time when you felt especially powerful (or powerless) in facing an issue of creation care, eco-justice or environmental racism.

Episcopal Church Women's Prayer

Almighty God, we pray that You will bless our work in mission and ministry in the world. Help us pray fervently, labor diligently and give liberally to make known the power of your love given through your Son Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the lessons from the past nor fear the challenges of the future. Anoint us with your grace and shine in our hearts as we reflect your light throughout the world. - Amen.

A New Devotional Resource that Offers a Prayer Practice Inspired by the Saints



Weekly Anglican prayer bead meditations to deepen readers' connection to saintly Christians

NEW YORK, NY - Church Publishing, which produces official worship materials, books, music, and digital ministry resources for The Episcopal Church, is pleased to announce the publication, in October, of *Song of the Saints: Celebrating the Saints with Anglican Prayer Beads,* by Catherine Gotschall.

From Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century to Hildegard of Bingen in the High Middle Ages to nineteenth-century abolitionist Frederick Douglass, saints have long been a source of inspiration and solace for Christians. Now, a new book offers a tried and tested weekly Anglican prayer bead practice that draws readers into a deeper communion with multiple saints throughout the liturgical year.

Selected from various Christian liturgical calendars, each featured saint is accompanied by an icon-like image, an original prayer, and a brief spiritual biography that allows us a glimpse into the world and circumstances that shaped the saint's life. Ultimately, readers aren't just learning about the saints—they're engaging in a spiritual conversation with them, delving into their lives, their timeless wisdom, and their heart.

"What an extraordinary gift Cathy Gotschall has given us in *Song of the Saints*!" says Kristen E. Vincent, author of *A Bead and a Prayer: A Beginner's Guide to Protestant Prayer Beads*. "On one level, it is a wonderful anthology of saints—both familiar and new—filled with their wisdom, images, and stories. On another, it is a devotional that extends a gracious invitation to grab your prayer beads, sit, and feel as if you're praying with the saints themselves."

The book is now available through the Church Publishing website.

Web Resources from the Episcopal Church

There is this wonderful online map of all Episcopal Churches/neighborhoods on one of the Episcopal Church websites.

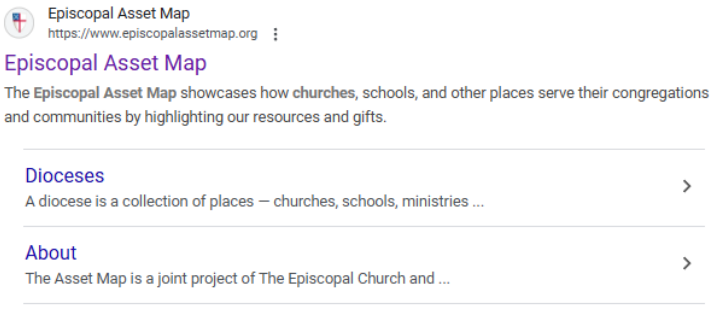
https://episcopalassetmap.org

The General Convention website also provides neighborhood information with valuable content.

https://generalconvention.org/explore-your-neighborhood/

Be aware that the demographic and mapping tools are better experienced in full screen on a laptop or desktop. If you have a mobile device, you can still view the tool and information available. You can add a layer to the 'explore-your-neighborhood' web page by following the link at: Adding an Ecojustice Layer.

EXPLORE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



Prison Ministry Workshop Held



By The Rev. Linda Barton Paul, O.C.

Volunteering in most prisons is just a phone call to the Chaplain of the Chapel Services of any prison yard. Deacon Linda Barton Paul gave a list of many worthy volunteer activities for people to access to be Christ to others. From Post Card ministries to doing Episcopal Services, Deacon Linda pointed out the variety of ways people can serve incarcerated women who need a PASE (Positive Adult Support Experience) in their lives.



Starting with the history of state prisons, after the end of the Civil War when they were created, to the federal oversight required to ensure equal treatment of both inmates and all support personnel, she showed how building more prisons will only bankrupt states, and not contribute to the economy. Crime is down 33%, but sentencing has increased to an average of 20-25 years.

This helpful and insightful workshop, in our Social Justice Free Workshop Series, has been well received, according to Deacon Linda. Look on the NECW YouTube channel for the recorded session to hear the full 50 minute presentation.

Province IV: Finding Peace Through Purpose at 2025 Retreat

"How to Declutter Your Life" – A Weekend of Renewal at Camp McDowell

Camp McDowell, AL — June 2–4, 2025

Against the peaceful backdrop of Camp McDowell's wooded serenity, Episcopal Church Women (ECW) from Province IV gathered for their annual Retreat and Meeting—three days designed to breathe new life into busy spirits and re-center the soul. This year's theme, *"How to Declutter Your Life,"* offered both a literal and spiritual invitation: to lay down what weighs us down and walk forward with lighter steps and fuller hearts.



The retreat kicked off with a vibrant energy that belied the quiet surroundings. From across the Southeast, women came together not just to step away from the pressures of everyday life, but to reflect, connect, and renew their purpose as leaders and faithful stewards in their parishes and communities.

At the heart of the retreat was Gail Larson, whose grounded wisdom and engaging spirit brought the theme vividly to life. Larson holds a BA and MBA from the University of Rochester and completed theological coursework at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. A life-long student of Benedictine spirituality, Gail now serves as a licensed Lay Reader and Eucharistic Minister in the Episcopal Church and preaches regularly at Penney Memorial Church in Penney Farms, Florida, where she lives with her husband, Rick Koenig.

Larson's sessions were a tapestry of theology, storytelling, and practical tools for navigating life with less—but living more fully. Her opening talk, *"Living an Abundant Life with Less,"* invited participants to explore how intentional simplicity

could lead to spiritual abundance. In *"What Your Treasurer Reveals,"* she brought a unique perspective on what we hold dear and why. *"The Roadmap to Decluttering"* followed, equipping attendees with frameworks to identify clutter in their homes and how to categorize the clutter to make it easier to sort. The retreat closed with *"The Joy of Gratitude and Generosity,"* a session that helped the participants reflect on donating items to charities and the gratitude we can experience by being generous to others.

Complementing Larson's guidance was the soul-stirring music of Shaun Pezant, whose melodies helped weave together the spirit of the weekend. With over 40 years of experience in sacred music and 26 years as Artist in Residence at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Pezant's accompaniment was more than background—it was a central part of the worshipful atmosphere that carried attendees through moments of reflection and joy alike.

As part of the weekend's business, ECW Province IV also welcomed new leadership. Mary Beth Welsh was installed as Vice President, and Sara Churchman took on the role of Communications Coordinator, marking a renewed chapter of creativity and collaboration for the board.

Though just a few days long, the retreat left a lasting impression on its attendees. "This weekend gave me space to breathe," one participant shared. "I came here tired and overwhelmed. I'm leaving with clarity—and with sisters to walk this journey with. Plus, I'm ready to purge my life of unneeded baggage."

As the sun set over Camp McDowell and women packed their bags—perhaps a little lighter than when they arrived—the spirit of the weekend remained. In a world that constantly asks for more, the ECW of Province IV found something deeper: the strength and joy of living with less.





Support the Episcopal Church Women

Contributions from provinces, dioceses, parishes/congregations, and individuals provide ongoing support to the ECW National Board so that it can continue its ministry. Even the smallest contributions add up to make a world of difference. As you pledge your support for the National Episcopal Church Women, consider how your help could be felt with a recurring monthly gift.

Make donations on the website: ecwnational.org/give

You may send a check payable to: Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS)

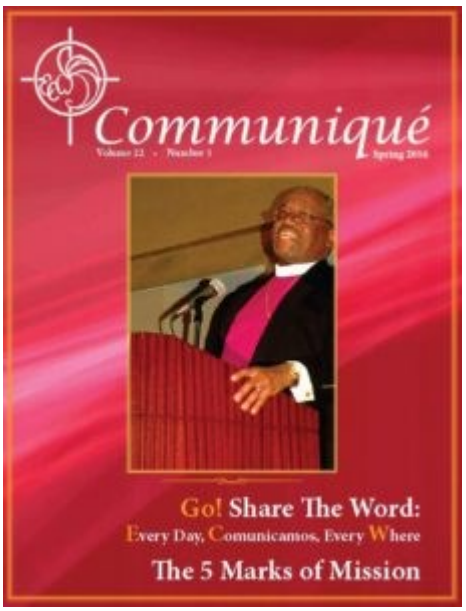
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Communique' Magazine New Directions

At the May, 2025 national board meeting, it was decided that the Communique' magazine would change its printing from a combined English and Castilian Spanish print publication to an English only print publication. The Spanish and English versions will both appear as separate digital publications on the Episcopal Church Women website – ecwnational.org.

If you wish to continue to receive the English print version of the Communique', please scan the QR code to indicate your wishes.







Make a Planned Gift to the National Episcopal Church Women

We hope that you will consider including the National Episcopal Church Women in your estate or final financial plans. Your gift helps sustain our mission for generations to come. Whatever approach you choose, your offering will honor the vision of the ECW and provide assistance to women and girls around the world.

Episcopal Church Women have supported Christian causes since 1871. It is through the generous donations made by our members at the time of their passing that enables us to continue our charitable work. No donation is too small and all bequeathments have a lasting impact.

The Episcopal Church Office, New York, NY, organizes all funding for the National Episcopal Church Women. To ensure your gift is properly recorded for exclusive use by the National Episcopal Church Women, gifts must be made payable to: National Episcopal Church Women – Known as – (Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society). We also ask that you include within your will or death directives a statement, that at the time of your passing, the executor of your estate contact the acting president of the ECW to notify them of the forthcoming donation.

We maintain several grant programs. You are welcome to direct your gift to the specific use of any of these programs. We also accept funds to our general operating budget. Donations to the general fund allows the National Board to use the funds as best determined by the needs of the women and children we support.

Gift Options

More information about Planned Gift giving is located on the ecwnational.org website: ecwnational.org

Advent Season

The Advent season for the Episcopal Church in 2025 begins on Sunday, November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve, December 24. Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Key Dates:

- Advent Begins: November 30, 2025 (First Sunday of Advent)
- Christmas Eve: December 24, 2025
- Christmas Day: December 25, 2025

Liturgical Color:

- The color for Advent is typically purple or blue, symbolizing penitence and hope.

Themes:

- Advent focuses on themes of hope, peace, joy, and love, often reflected in scripture readings and church services during this period.

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16 Days of Activism



November 25 to December 10, 2025

Standing Together Against Digital Violence

Every year, the global UNITE Campaign calls people around the world to take a stand against violence toward women and girls. In 2025, the focus is on a growing crisis: digital violence—abuse that takes place through phones, computers, and online platforms.

While technology can connect and empower, it is also being misused as a weapon to stalk, harass, and harm women and girls. Some of the most common forms of digital violence include:

- Image-based abuse: the non-consensual sharing of intimate images (often called “revenge porn” or “leaked nudes”).
- Cyberbullying and trolling: online threats meant to silence or intimidate.
- Harassment and sexual harassment across social media and digital platforms.
- AI-generated deepfakes: manipulated images, videos, or audio used to shame or exploit.
- Hate speech and disinformation targeting women and girls online.
- Doxxing: publishing private information to endanger or intimidate.
- Online grooming and sexual exploitation.
- Catfishing and impersonation to deceive or manipulate.
- Misogynistic networks that fuel hate and abuse.
- Stalking and surveillance through digital tracking tools.

According to UN Women, digital violence disproportionately targets women—especially those with public voices such as activists, journalists, women in politics, human rights defenders, and young women just beginning to use their platforms.

The National Episcopal Church Women (NECW) Board invites you to join in solidarity by acknowledging the UNITE campaign and supporting the 16 Days of Activism. Together, we can shine a light on these abuses and take a stand to end violence against women and girls—in every form, everywhere.

Be Loved: A Day of Connection and Renewal at the Province VII ECW Fall Gathering

By Lisa Bortner



"Be Loved" was more than just the theme of the Province VII Episcopal Church Women's Fall Gathering in Oklahoma City on September 13—it became the heartbeat of the entire day. Guided by the Rev. Callie Swanlund, participants experienced a spirit-filled journey into the truth of their belovedness and the call to live wholeheartedly.

Rev. Callie has been called to a ministry outside traditional church walls. She is a retreat leader, writer, speaker, and spiritual companion whose work continually reminds people of their worth and belonging. Her latest book, *From Weary to Wholehearted*, speaks directly to those navigating burnout or trying to keep it at bay.

From the start, Rev. Callie invited the women of Province VII into a sacred reminder: each of us is God's beloved. "We are all worthy of love and belonging," she said. "And we can always find common ground." Vulnerability, she explained, is not weakness but a courageous act that builds trust. Drawing from Brené Brown's wisdom, she reminded everyone that wholehearted living flows from the belief, *I am enough*. For Christians, this worthiness is not earned—it is a gift. It has been with us since the beginning, anchored in God's unwavering presence.



Throughout the day, Rev. Callie created spaces for both reflection and joy. Participants wrote letters to their younger selves, offering words of grace and encouragement to the 20-year-old versions of who they once were. There was also movement and music—stretching and dancing to the song *Lucent*, with its refrain, "You don't have to carry the weight of the world in your bones. Let go, let go, let go." Voices rose together in *This Little Light of Mine*, a reminder to shine brightly and never dim the gifts God has given.

She challenged the group to notice where shame, comparison, and scarcity creep in, warning that these steal joy and immobilize us. Guilt, by contrast, can motivate growth. True freedom comes in releasing shame and embracing belovedness.

One memorable metaphor carried fresh meaning: "Who is your pork chop?" Rev. Callie shared Chef Nathalie Dupree's image of pork chops in a skillet—one cooks dry on its own, but two together nourish each other. So it is with friendship and support. We need one another to thrive.

This spirit of connection deepened as Rev. Callie introduced *freudenfreude*—a German-inspired word that describes the joy found in another person's happiness or success. Practicing *freudenfreude*, she explained, strengthens relationships, builds cooperation, and shifts our focus from comparison to celebration.

The day was a reminder that light shines brighter when shared, that gifts are meant to be cultivated rather than hidden, and that joy multiplies in community.

The women of Province VII left Oklahoma City renewed, uplifted, and deeply grateful for Rev. Callie's shepherding presence. More than anything, they carried with them the truth that they are, and always have been, God's beloved.

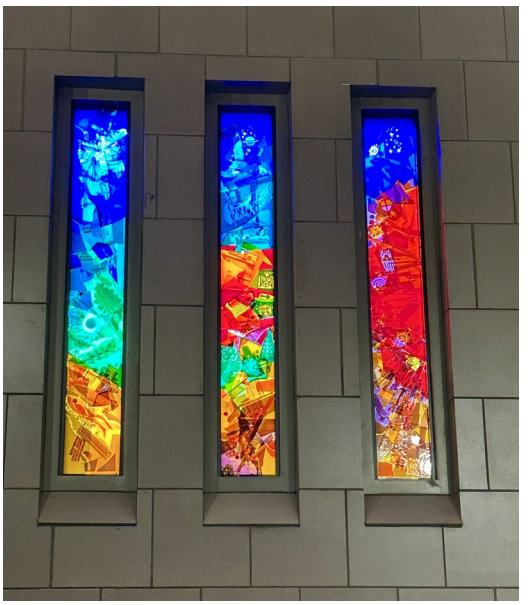
Light of Creation: The Stained Glass Windows of St. Nicholas Chapel at St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



By: Lisa Bortner

The Province VII ECW Gathering held in Oklahoma City concluded in a spirit of reverence and beauty with a closing Eucharist in the intimate St. Nicholas Chapel. Bathed in the glow of its stunning stained-glass windows, the chapel provided a perfect setting for worship. The service was officiated by The Very Rev. Katie Churchwell, Dean, while the sermon was delivered by retreat leader The Rev. Callie Swanlund, whose words brought the gathering to a meaningful and inspiring close.

Tucked inside the Education Building of St. Paul's, the St. Nicholas Chapel is a quiet place of prayer and reflection. Though often used for mid -week Holy Communion and intimate services, the chapel is most renowned for the breathtaking stained glass that fills it with shifting color and light.



At the heart of the chapel is the *Creation Window*—six magnificent stained-glass panels arranged in two triptychs. Designed and crafted by Louisiana artist Steve Wilson of Baton Rouge, these modern windows invite worshippers to experience the wonder of God's creation through bold imagery and radiant hues.

According to the church's website, the first window is called "Nebula" and features a multi-layered blue glass vortex above green and gold earth elements. The second window entitled, "St. Nicholas," features him with miter and staff. Children, like the stars in the sky, gather in his presence. Known as "Thunderstorm," the third window reflects images from Native American creation accounts. "Spirit of Light" describes the artist's expression of God's creative presence through a Pentecost brightness of red light in the fourth window. The fifth window is called "Chi Sign" because of its primal symbol of the Chi (X or χ) for Christ. The "Moon and Spiral" as sixth window is known, contains both symbols gleaming with intensity and shedding their light and color on the Chapel altar.



Together, these windows transform the small chapel into a place where heaven and earth seem to touch. As sunlight filters through Wilson's artistry, worshippers were immersed in a kaleidoscope of faith, beauty, and divine mystery.

St. Paul's is justly proud of this hidden jewel—a sanctuary where the play of stained glass light draws the heart closer to God. Visitors are warmly invited to step inside, sit quietly, and let the colors of creation speak to the soul.

Women Making Waves

By Janice Eberhard



Women Making Waves is a new group just getting started. They are excited about where our future is headed and the impact everyone can have on the community around us!

Church of the Resurrection, Oklahoma City, spent the morning at Skyline Urban Outreach. In the Food Resource Center, they helped by bagging groceries, assisting shoppers, and restocking shelves. They popped into the Style Shop to help hang some recent donations and learned about their Garden Program, helping with seeds and composting. Skyline is a wonderful organization that touches so many lives daily. Everyone is thankful for their time with them, and look forward to going back again

Skyline's endowment with the Oklahoma City Community Foundation helps provide lasting resources for our patrons.



The Food Resource Center and Mobile Pantry provide free groceries to food-insecure Oklahomans, utilizing a choice pantry model. This approach allows patrons to select items that best meet their family's needs and preferences, resulting in reduced food waste, lower distribution costs, and a greater focus on preserving the dignity of those we serve. 25,015

In 2024. 1,451,883 pounds of food was distributed to Oklahoman's in need.

Skyline Garden is a vital program designed to provide fresh produce directly to Skyline patrons. The garden not only supports the health and wellness of our community but also offers regular educational opportunities.

In 2024, Skyline partnered with Adelaide Lee Elementary School to integrate hands-on gardening lessons into the school's science curriculum. Over six weeks, the Garden Program provided weekly gardening lessons to 90 fourth grade students. 6932 pounds of fresh produce in 2024 Major expansion of infrastructure 865 participants in garden classes and service opportunities 14 garden education classes hosted.

A Church Without Walls: Bishop Kara Wagner Sherer and the Gospel of Reckoning

By George Cassidy Payne

When Kara Wagner Sherer became the first woman bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester in 2024, she made history. But if you ask her, she'd say she's more interested in making meaning. The kind that refuses easy answers. The kind that confronts injustice, tells the whole story, and invites the Church to be more than abuilding, especially in a city where the ghosts of slavery, segregation, and displacement still speak.



The Rt. Rev. Kara Wagner Sherer is the ninth bishop of the Diocese, consecrated on July 13, 2024. A lifelong Episcopalian, she has served in ministry across the United States and in England. Kara holds a B.A. in English from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, and previously taught in New York City, Potter's Bar (England), and Chicago before earning a Master of Divinity from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

She then spent 21 years in parish ministry in Chicago, including 19 as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, where she led efforts to build a worshiping and community-serving congregation grounded in authenticity and justice. Kara focused on raising up leaders, bridging the gap between science and faith, and embracing the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. Her ministry emphasized antiracism, creation care, and violence prevention—causes that remain central to her episcopacy.

As bishop, she now leads a diocese of 48 congregations and chapels, served by more than 100 priests and deacons, across eight counties from Lake Ontario to the Pennsylvania border. From rural farming towns to urban neighborhoods and lakeside villages, these communities, she believes, are uniquely poised to be lights of love and service to all.

I first heard Bishop Kara on WXXI's *Connections*. Her voice was calm, curious, and charged with moral clarity. She spoke of Jesus not just as a savior but as a liberator rooted in solidarity with the poor, the outcast, and the politically abandoned. She made it sound like love was not only a spiritual concept, but a daily political practice. I left that radio hour deeply moved. And I wasn't the only one.

When we met in person at the diocesan office in Henrietta, NY, I found that same calm presence. Midwestern warmth met urban edge. She smiled widely, spoke plainly, and listened fully.

Our conversation began where another article of mine ended—at St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Church, the oldest Episcopal congregation in Rochester. It was there that I stumbled upon a startling historical claim: that its basement once housed part of the Underground Railroad. Upon invitation to see the space, I explored it for myself. Though the accuracy of that claim remains debated, what's not in doubt is the plaque on the wall upstairs honoring Nathaniel Rochester, the church's first alderman, the city's namesake, and a known slaveholder.

Before moving north, Rochester enslaved people in Maryland and North Carolina. Even after New York began gradual emancipation in 1799, he used indenture contracts to prolong Black servitude. And like many white men of his time, he profited from land grabs at the expense of Indigenous sovereignty, particularly that of the Haudenosaunee.

The Episcopal Church, too, has its entanglements with slavery and settler colonialism. I asked Bishop Kara: Isn't it time we told that truth, fully and publicly?

Her answer was thoughtful and direct. "A

church is not a museum," she said, "but I understand the need to look at our history and to tell the truth about our past."

This wasn't a deflection—it was an invitation. What would it look like for a Rochester congregation to create a permanent exhibit on the Church's complicity in slavery and displacement? I posed that to her.

She acknowledged that responses would be mixed: "Some would see it as an opportunity to engage. Some would be resistant. Some indifferent." In that, she sees a reflection of the broader Church, a body divided on race, memory, and the politics of repair.

We shifted to talking about Rochester more broadly, its patterns of redlining, its segregated neighborhoods, and its slow and painful reckoning with inequality. Kara noted the parallels with Chicago, where she had long served. "It's the same story," she said. "Just on a different scale."

Then she said something that stuck with me: "Like with Obama's presidency, many liberals want to believe racism is over. I sense a version of that here. That because Rochester was home to Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, we've 'arrived.' But we haven't. There's still so much work to do."

That work, she says, is both spiritual and structural.

We spoke, too, about immigration justice and the silent courage of congregants offering sanctuary to those at risk of deportation. Kara recounted a quiet prayer vigil held at the Border Patrol station on Pattonwood Drive in Irondequoit, NY. "Not a protest," she clarified. "A vigil. A way to honor the humanity of everyone involved: migrants, activists, even agents carrying out policies they may not believe in." She applauded the local media for its coverage but reminded me: "Some of this work has to happen under the radar now. For everyone's safety."

It was in those moments, those blurry spaces between law, love, and loyalty, that Kara's theology shone brightest.

"We don't presume to know the mind of God," she said. "We come to know God through each other, through bread and wine, through truth told in community."

So what does "being Church" look like in a city haunted by past and present injustice?

"It looks like people being fed, housed, visited, and loved."

It's not about full pews on Sunday. It's about full bellies on Monday. It's about showing up at the food pantry, the shelter, the courtroom, or the sidewalk outside the jail. It's about asking hard questions and staying for the hard answers.

Kara's vision is a faith that walks with the grieving, with the oppressed, with the truth. Even when that truth implicates us.

The Church, she says, does not exist to serve itself. It exists to serve the world.

As I left our meeting, I kept thinking about her steady gaze, her refusal to dodge discomfort, and her willingness to ask: Who are we really honoring? What history are we hiding? And what if holiness lives not in the steeple, but in the streets?

Bishop Kara Wagner Sherer is not here to soothe Rochester's conscience. She's here to awaken it.

George Cassidy Payne is a poet, freelance journalist, and community organizer based in Rochester, NY. His work explores the intersections of politics, faith, culture, and justice. A former adjunct professor of philosophy and current 988 Suicide Prevention Counselor, Payne writes regularly about moral leadership, local history, and grassroots movements. His essays and poems have appeared in both local and national publications.



National Board Meeting Highlights from Rochester, NY



Christ Church Parish

September 26–30, 2025

The National Episcopal Church Women Board gathered for its fall meeting in Rochester, New York—a time filled with faith, fellowship, and inspiration. Board members joined in worship at Christ Church Parish, where The Rev. Dr. Julianne Buenting, Interim Rector, led a truly uplifting service. The sanctuary came alive with the majestic sound of the pipe organs and songs, with musicians from the University of Rochester's renowned Eastman School of Music. These extraordinary instruments, part of the Eastman-Rochester Organ Initiative (EROI), showcase a special partnership between the University, Christ Church, and the Episcopal Diocese. Heartfelt thanks to the students and choir members whose beautiful music enriched the Sunday service.

A Meal and More

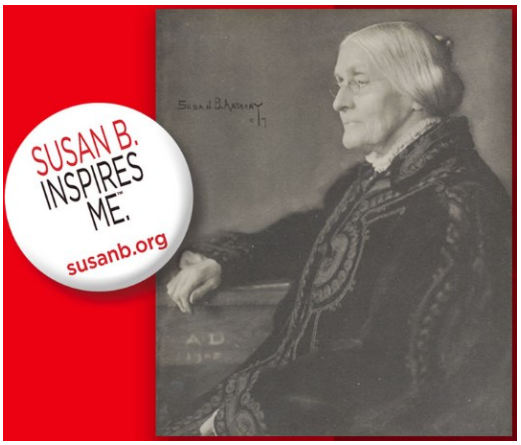
Saturday, September 27

The National Episcopal Church Women Board received a warm welcome from The Right Reverend Kara Wagner Sherer, the ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Rochester, New York. Also joining the gathering were members of *A Meal and More*, a long-standing community service program at Christ Church Parish. The NECW Board was honored to present a $1,000 donation in support of their ongoing mission.

Founded 48 years ago by parishioners, *A Meal and More* began as a restaurant-style experience—complete with table service and live music—designed to bring dignity and joy to those in need. Visiting the program was both heartwarming and inspiring, as board members witnessed the dedication of volunteers serving their community with compassion.

Online donations are welcome; to learn more or contribute, please visit their website.

Susan B. Anthony Home and Cemetery



The National Susan B. Anthony Museum & House in Rochester, New York, preserves the National Historic Landmark home of the legendary civil rights leader and women's suffrage pioneer. This historic home was the site of Anthony's famous arrest for voting in the 1872 presidential election and served as the headquarters of the National American Woman Suffrage Association during her presidency.

It was here that Susan B. Anthony lived, worked, and ultimately passed away in 1906 at the age of 86, shortly after delivering her powerful "Failure is Impossible" speech in Baltimore. The front parlor still stands as the very place where she was taken into custody for exercising her right to vote, a defining moment in the fight for women's equality.

The home was purchased in 1945 to honor her legacy and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965. It has also been recorded in the Historic American Buildings Survey for its cultural and architectural significance.

During their visit, board members also paid their respects at the Mount Hope Cemetery where Susan B. Anthony and her family are laid to rest—a moving reminder of the enduring impact of her courage and conviction.

Fundraising 101 – Part Two

By Deborah Stevens
ECW Presiding Liaison Officer
Diocese of South Carolina, Province IV

"COLLABORATION: SHARING THE BILLBOARD"

Collaboration is working with someone to create or produce something. That means your ECW joins hands with another ministry or your Vestry for a common goal. It doesn't mean you are giving up your ECW identity.

Our Annual Ice Cream Social here at Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church in Pawleys Island, South Carolina is an example. The Social is open to not only church members but folks from the surrounding area. The ice cream is FREE. The water is FREE. We have a DJ, face painter, disc golf, corn hole to name a few. The grilling is done by the ushers known as "Gehrman's Grillers". The hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and a drink are sold at a very nominal fee. What is important is that everyone is mentioned in the publicity.

By sharing the billboard you are not only increasing the number of people executing the event but it will increase those in attendance.

If your church is smaller in numbers then joining forces is a must for you. It will greatly increase the success of your event and perhaps increase interest in your church.

Remember that collaboration creates more interest in your ECW and sharing the billboard creates a bond for future ventures you plan to hold.

The Environmental Learning Center



Where students learn how to attend to agriculture.

The Environmental Learning Center, supported by St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Jackson, Mississippi is 640 acres of breathtaking beauty. There is a 35-acre lake, 14 miles of nature trails, three outdoor classrooms, a catfish pond, ropes course, cemetery (1800 circa), old home sites, more than 75 different native trees, animals, and much more. Since its founding in the summer of 1992, the center has offered enriching programs for students of all ages.

Several needs have been identified by the Jackson Public School District to help maintain and enhance the Environmental Learning Center, including:

- Monthly purchase of chicken feed from Johnson Milling Company in Clinton, MS
- Signage for the facility entrance: "JPS Environmental Learning Center"
- Outdoor seating furniture for student use
- Uniform shirts for staff (Oxford-style and/or polo shirts for four employees)



Currently, St. Mark's covers the cost of chicken feed, for each month. The congregation is also sharing this initiative with other churches to promote care for creation and further support this important environmental mission. If you would like to help support The Environmental Learning Center, please contact St. Mark's Episcopal Church's office; saintmark1883@aol.com.

National Episcopal Church Women

211 Union Chapel Rd.
Cedar Creek, TX 78612

To remove a loved one from the mailing list
please contact editor@ecwnational.org