



# CAMINOS

## OUR ROADS TOGETHER

EDITION 5 | SPRING 2019

Serving The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania



### BUCKS COUNTY

UNIQUE BONDING AMONG  
CLERGY AND COMMUNITY

### HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

JOURNEY TO THE  
HEART OF CHRIST

### WEATHERING THE STORM

HOW ONE CHURCH BECAME  
STRONGER AFTER LEAVING ITS BUILDING

“ OUR CALL IS TO SERVE  
THE POOR, THE BROKEN,  
THE LOST, THE LONELY.  
IT IS NOT ABOUT SPENDING  
ALL OF OUR TIME  
ADMINISTERING TO  
THE BRICKS AND  
MORTAR OF A BUILDING. ”

## LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

THE RT. REV. DANIEL G.P. GUTIÉRREZ  
XVI BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

In Luke 10, Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs to go ahead of him saying, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” When they returned to our Lord, “they were filled with joy.”

Over the past three years, we have journeyed together on this sacred pilgrimage of faith, community and love. Together, we have been willing to engage in the hard work of preparing the field for our common life as a diocesan family. This ministry has involved toiling, turning over hard soil, bringing dark or forgotten places into the sunlight, pruning, watering, patience and love.

At each of my visitations, during numerous office hours in the diocese, in the staff’s daily work out in the diocese, and in listening to parishioner’s dreams and engaging in our sacred diocesan conversations—the seeds are emerging. Throughout it all, our focus has remained constant

- 1) addressing the poverty and pain of the world;
- 2) supporting and uplifting our churches; and
- 3) preaching Jesus Christ to the world.

I have heard from many that we have reached a new season in our common life together. That the first three years marked a fundamental change in our journey. Now, I invite each one of us in this beautiful diocese to step boldly into this new season. It is a time where we are called to trust, where we envision a new church, where we build together and deconstruct those things that separate us. This is hard work. Yet, as a diocese, we are willing to fail, accept that failure and, together, try again. Most importantly, we must love one another as Christ loves us.

The world is expecting a predictable church. The Church, our church, is the living body of Christ. It is hard to imagine Jesus looking into the eyes of those sitting at his feet and



saying, “We cannot dream of something new because we have always done things this way.” Thus, we must prepare the field for new growth, for the Church of 2025, 2050 and beyond.

Jesus offered us a sacred alternative vision based on God’s truth and reality. God is always transforming us and our world, and we must accept the invitation. We need to be fearless in our love of God and in our thinking. We must move from scarcity to abundance. We have Jesus—that is more than anything we can hope for and the answer to all our fears and prayers.

Our call is to serve the poor, the broken, the lost, the lonely. It is not about spending all of our time administering to the bricks and mortar of a building. We have churches where the entire budget is going toward maintaining the property. We have churches that need our common hands to assist with the path forward. If anything detracts from spreading the Good News of Christ, let us envision a new way of spreading the Gospel. “Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” This is where true joy resides.

### Sacred Journey

Yes, the world expects the predictable church. Let’s not be bound by structures. We are bound by our beautiful liturgy, our Book of Common Prayer and the Body and Blood of Christ. Let’s lead our church into the future by holding the faith of the early Church and disciples.

Let’s dream together and make that dream a reality. God is always planting seeds of hope. We are called to nurture those seeds and bring in a bountiful harvest. That mission will always challenge us. It will lead us beyond what we thought possible and shatter the limitations that we have placed on ourselves. I am grateful for each one of you and your faithfulness to Jesus Christ. I give thanks each day for the ability to serve as the shepherd and your Bishop.

May God bless you and may the seeds of hope awaken in our hearts.

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## BEYOND SUNDAY



Darby Mission is a church without walls set in a multi-generational community. "But, it's more than that" says the Rev. Doris Rajagopal. Between community dinners, afterschool programming and prayer groups Darby Mission serves between 300-500 people each week. "We strive to introduce Jesus to the people of Darby and beyond."

### FRONT:

The Bishop and members of the Diocesan community traveled to the Holy Land. See scenes from their pilgrimage on pages 14-15.



▲ The Very Rev. Michael Ruk, left, enjoys fellowship with the Rev. Barbara Kelley during a recent Bucks deanery meeting.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY in Bucks Deanery

Distance is a fact of life in sprawling Bucks County, which encompasses 622 square miles. And that's especially true for clergy in the Bucks Deanery.

"We're the largest geographical and numerical deanery in the Diocese," says the Very Rev. Michael Ruk, rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in New Hope and Dean of the Bucks Deanery for the past four years. "It can take us 90 minutes from our southernmost parish, Andalusia, to get to Quakertown in the north."

Yet, 90 percent of Bucks Deanery clergy attend the monthly clericus meetings, where they gather to share the Eucharist, lunch, prayers, news, and ideas. The meetings are rotated among the deanery's 18 parishes.

"Sometimes it might be our next-door neighbor and sometimes it might be 60 minutes away," Ruk says. "It's important to move around. You basically get to see everyone's place in about a year and a half."

The clericus meetings address what Ruk calls "an important part of being a priest—building community."

"In this day and age, when there's less clergy, less staff, less resources, the more we can share, the more we're building up the body of Christ," Ruk says. "I think it creates a healthy clergy person, and also creates healthy parishes and a healthy diocese. I really believe that." ▶



## Finding An EPIC Solution

The sprawling Bucks Deanery can also make it challenging for individual parishes to build community and work together. So the deanery came up with an EPIC solution—a consortium of churches along the Rte. 202 corridor from New Hope to Doylestown in Central Bucks County. EPIC, short for Episcopal Partnership in Community, launched more than two years ago and is already making a difference in the area.

A good example of how it works is the Community PeaceMeal luncheon offered by EPIC at Trinity Buckingham the first Sunday of each month. It is the result of merging two previously existing feeding programs. For 27 years, Trinity Solebury and St. Philip's New Hope had the PeaceMeal program predominantly for people with HIV and AIDS, but the number of people being served dwindled in recent years. Meanwhile, Trinity Buckingham had a Community Lunch program that had plenty of clients in need,

but struggled getting enough volunteers.

"So we merged the two recently and now we're feeding about 80 people once a month," Ruk says. The "free and hearty" Sunday meal is provided to those in need of food or community, he says.

EPIC also launched a local Community of Hope International program based on the rule of St. Benedict, the 6th century monk and abbot who wrote about the basic monastic virtues of humility, silence, and obedience, as well as directives for daily living. The lay ministry provides pastoral care training. The local program was initially created by Deacon Matthew Simpson as his project for ordination.

In other examples, Trinity Solebury and Trinity Buckingham have joined together on youth ministry, while a Free the Girls program started at St. Philip's four years ago has now spread to almost every church in

the deanery. Free the Girls is a non-profit organization that collects new and gently used bras and distributes them to sex-trafficking survivors in Central America. The women who participate in the program operate small businesses selling bras in areas where the undergarments aren't widely available. This enables them to earn higher-than-average incomes—and achieve safe, stable lives for themselves and their families.

"Last year, we collected 2,400 bras," Ruk says. "Every year it seems to grow."

The success of the initial EPIC approach has led the Bucks Deanery, working closely with the diocese, to create "a Lower Bucks branch, which is those churches along Rte. 13," he says. "The new branch of EPIC will help to build their bonds, because most of them are smaller, and in a much more fragile place. We've been working on that for the last year." ▶



**TOP LEFT,** The Rev. Marlee Norton and the Rev. Lisa Keppeler listen intently during a deanery discussion.

**TOP RIGHT,** The Rev. Ernest Curtin joins the Rev. Daniel Moore and Norton in prayer.

**BOTTOM RIGHT,** Moore and John Connor, seminarian, talk during a break in the meeting.

## Seeing the Breadth and Diversity of the Diocese

In much of Bucks County, Ruk says, “we’re far from the epicenter.”

“I think one of the key things that’s the responsibility of all of us is to understand where everyone comes from,” Ruk says. “That’s why I think it’s really important the way Bishop Daniel is making sure that meetings rotate around to different places and deaneries and churches. I personally love that, because it allows us to see the breadth and diversity of the Diocese, from buildings to neighborhoods, versus just meeting at one central location. Which is a very small scope of what the diocese is about.”

“It’s really good that people get out of their bubble. You see it’s not just a name, it’s a community. That is the way it’s building a tighter community and diocese.” ■



**TOP**, in sunshine or snow, members of the Bucks deanery gather to build community.  
**BOTTOM**, Deacon Matt Simpson and Kelley share food and fellowship.



# R E S O U R C E

## #1.

### The Need For a Centralized Place For Gathering Information in Community.

At the 2018 Diocesan Convention, Bishop Daniel outlined 10 new ideas for the diocese to consider. The first was an institute of learning and discernment for all in the diocese. An online place where “vestries, clergy and laity can find resources and information.” The resources and information would come from the talent across the diocese.

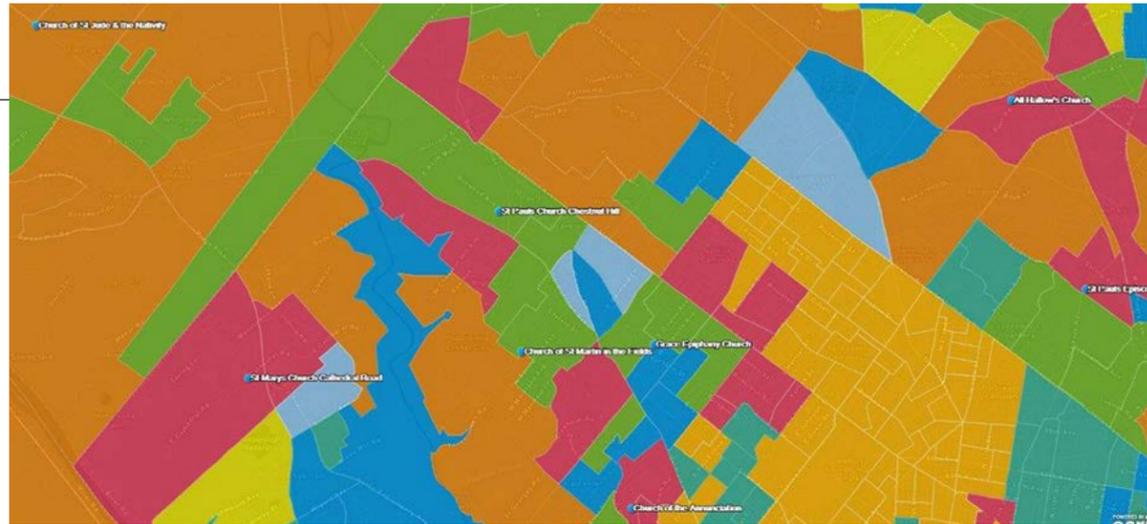
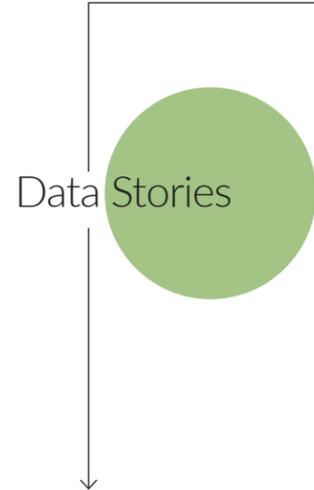
With the title of The Shepherd’s Call, a group of diocesan staff led by Kathleen McClave, a parishioner at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Wayne, has been meeting monthly to develop the framework for the new project. McClave has extensive experience in the financial services industry. The team is currently interviewing representatives across the diocese to understand needs. The first priority is to create a training program to support vestry members, allowing them to enhance their ability to contribute. Details on that will be announced at this year’s diocesan convention in November 2019.

Learning & Discernment

“An online place where vestries, clergy and laity can find resources and information.”

BISHOP DANIEL

## Knowing Your Neighbors



Do you know how many potential parishioners live within a mile of your church? If your neighborhood is changing, do you know who is moving in?

Starting in 2018, the diocese began working with Data Story, which pulls in demographic and parochial report information to chart vitality, sustainability and potential for growth. "Taking a look at the data on your community helps a church better understand where to focus resources and how to effectively communicate with the people around you," said Canon Kirk Berlenbach, canon for growth and support, who meets with churches to help them understand the data and then envision what this means for their futures. "This is useful for evangelism, mission and, when your church is seeking a new priest, in creating a parish profile."

Changing demographics affect almost all of the 134 churches in the diocese. "Often the people who attend our churches don't reflect the changing

communities around them, at least not to the same degree. But unless we know who they are, it is difficult to engage them effectively. This is where we can help."

In addition to Data Story there are several resources which churches can access on their own:

### The Episcopal Church

- Access via the Offices of the diocese
- Can track 49 fields from your parochial report

### Mission Insite

- Access directly through TEC
- Can track ASA and Income
- Provides demographic data on surrounding community

### Data Story

- Access via the Offices of the diocese
- Provides demographic data based on different parameters
- Provides strategic analysis to project potential for growth

When churches request data for a church, diocesan staff draws upon all three. The final packet shared with churches includes maps, statistics, detailed descriptions of the predominant "lifestyle" cohorts that live around your church and a summary of key insights "that we have gleaned from studying it all," according to Berlenbach.

"Of course data is no substitute for personal relationship, but it can provide valuable insights and thus better help you discern your missional priorities and find more effective ways in which you can proclaim the Gospel and change the world in the name of Jesus Christ."

If you are interested in finding out more on how your church can benefit from this resource, please contact Canon Berlenbach, [kberlenbach@diopa.org](mailto:kberlenbach@diopa.org).

Led by Waltier Blocker and made up of 60 voices, the Gospel choir from the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas is called the "hardest working choir on this side of heaven." And, for good reason. Together they have traveled across the United States and around the globe from The Vatican to Costa Rica to Ireland next summer to celebrate 30 years together.



# PILGRIMAGE

## To the Holy Land

In late January, I journeyed with 33 others from across this Diocese to the Holy Land, a place of mysterious beauty.

We moved from bustling, populated areas full of life, to river valleys with rich, fertile soil, and then to the desert. Whether it was the twisted branches and trunks of olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, the poppies that lined the path of the Via Maris, the sweeping vistas from the Mount of Transfiguration or the isolation of the barren landscape in the Judean Desert, all in our group were touched; prayers lifted us to a level of unexpected tranquility.

Along every step of the way, the evidence of human life over millennia and history that spans long enough to have covered an array of dynasties and civilizations was around every corner. And yet, modern life goes on. Those who make the Holy Land their home, visitors from myriad countries, and multitudes of pilgrims swirl into a milieu of human experience that testifies to the intrigue and holiness of the land. Young Palestinian boys selling gum on the street, the kind and welcoming smiles of the people of East Jerusalem, the bustle of shopkeepers, the solitude of shepherds, the Muslim residents who quietly said hello and bowed their heads to our group as we prayed.

Throughout our pilgrimage, Scripture came alive. It was moving beyond words to listen to the spring of water bubbling forth from Mary's Well; to lay our hands and heads upon the spot of our Savior's birth; to visit the cistern where Jesus healed the 10 lepers; to experience the transcendent divine presence that radiates at Mt. Tabor; to sip water from Jacob's well, where Jesus offered the Samaritan woman "living water;" to press our backs against the cold walls of the stone cell where Jesus waited for trial; to sit on the shore where Jesus instructs St. Peter to "feed my sheep;" to kneel and touch the rock of Calvary where Jesus suffered and died; and to kiss the stone where they laid his body for three days before death and the grave were vanquished.

Each day, we rose early, always starting in prayer. Prayer for the Diocese, our families, those who labor, those who work for peace and those who endure oppression. We worshipped and prayed with the people of Christ Anglican Church in Nazareth, singing and praying in Arabic and English. Often, we had unexpected encounters with the Risen Lord; prayers have been answered and paths will unfold. Have faith, Christ is moving in this world and in our lives.

- Bishop Daniel



# WEATHERING THE STORM Together



Beloved Community

▶ With God's creation as the backdrop, the Rev. Beth Hixon celebrates the Eucharist in Church of the Epiphany's new worship home in the Warner Education Building.

A fierce winter storm in February 2018 brought heavy, wet snow and blustery winds during the night, causing a large tree on the property of Church of the Epiphany in Royersford to unexpectedly snap. It fell across Third Avenue, blocking the road. The borough and PECO came out soon after and cleared the road, moving the imposing tree trunk back onto church property. There it remained through the rest of winter and into spring, when a group of church members banded together to chop it up, giving chunks of wood to any neighbors who wanted them and feeding the remnants into a wood chipper.

With all that has transpired since, the fallen tree has taken on a deeper, more symbolic meaning for Ed Hill, the vestry's property liaison and a former teacher at Kimberton Waldorf School. "It's almost as though that tree was an omen, a forewarning," Hill says. "It was a wakeup call."

Within eight months, the beautiful stone church itself—built in 1903, after the original 1889 structure was destroyed by fire—was shuttered and closed. Everything inside, from the pews to the ornate carved oak screening around the pipe organ and sacristy, had been sold and hauled away.

In late spring, not long after the tree fell, the building had been deemed "distressed" by a structural engineer. There were cracks in the mortar and the stone, and the walls were separating from the woodwork—a slow, inexorable process that had been going on for decades.

At one particular spot, the engineer who examined the building found that the wall was a full 6 inches out of plumb, referring to how far it was from being vertical, the Rev. Beth Hixon recalls.

"It was a structural problem from the beginning because they built this church straight into the dirt. There was no real foundation," says Hixon, who came to Epiphany as priest-in-charge in 2014, and was called as rector two years later.

But while cracks were showing in the stones and mortar of the church building, members of the vestry and congregation held together. And while the building may have lacked a real foundation, the people who worshipped there had an unshakeable foundation of faith in God and love for one another.

"There is a tremendous amount of commitment to their life together," Hixon says of the congregation.

That life continues today, just a short walk from the vacant, boarded-up church building.

The final service inside the church was held on Michaelmas, the feast day of St. Michael and All Angels, which fell on Saturday, Sept. 29, 2018. The next morning, on Sunday, Sept. 30, the congregation gathered to worship in a large, rectangular meeting room in the parish's Warner Education Building, built in the early 1960s and still linked to the church by a covered walkway.

There is no stained glass in the room where worship was held that day—and every Sunday since. But there are large picture windows that serve as a backdrop to the altar, offering a peaceful view of God's creation—tranquil trees and gently sloping grass.

Since arriving at Epiphany, Hixon has emphasized that the church is the "beloved community," not a building. "That's a mantra that I weave through everything," she says. ▶



During their "Souper Bowl Sunday," the church worships and then fellowships together over homemade soups brought in by members of the congregation. This year, several members wore Philadelphia Eagles garb.

Following that first service in the new space, Hixon recalls, the most poignant thing she heard was the comment from parishioners: "We're still us."

"It was a realization that we've got the liturgy, we've got each other," Hixon says. "That's where the Spirit is with us."

That realization can be seen in the message that is now printed on all of the church's materials: "The Church of the Epiphany Worships in the Warner Education Building."

The church remains, only the location has changed.

At the same time, there was a recognition that members needed to grieve for the loss of the sacred space where many had

worshipped for so much of their lives. "The whole grieving process continues," Hixon says. "And yet there's a lot of joy in the newness as well."

About 40 members continue to worship in the Warner Education Building space each Sunday morning, while working through a difficult discernment process that will determine whether they stay there or look to relocate elsewhere.

"Underlying the transition for all of us has been, what's next? Where are we going? What are we being asked to do in this community? And we don't know," Hill says. "But that's something we're praying about, and asking God, 'May we hear what you want us to do.' We're looking for that."

## What's Old, What's New?

Over the decades, the Church of the Epiphany has persevered through fire—the 1903 blaze that razed the original church building; the threat of closing—in 1926, as maintaining adequate membership to support even a shared vicar became a struggle that led members to consider closing the doors; and tragedy—the death of their beloved priest, the Rev. Dennis H. Warner, who joined the church as its very first rector in 1973 after Epiphany finally received parish status following decades of being served by resident vicars. A cherished member of the church family, Warner succumbed to brain cancer in 2007, just one year after the disease was diagnosed.

Although the church was served by an interim priest and two other priests in the intervening years, Hixon found members were still struggling with their grief and loss when she was called as priest-in-charge in 2014.

"When I first came, what struck me as the theme was: what's old and what's new," Hixon recalls. "I was new. We really kind of focused on that—what's old, what's new—so we could have conversations that would help people grieve. I still felt the grief from a number of other transitions, and I knew we would go nowhere unless we did that work. And people were really on board with it."

While the members of the church are mainly older, several young families have joined in recent years, attracted by what Hixon calls "the open, loving, embracing way of the people of the Church of the Epiphany".

"If Epiphany is going to grow and flourish, we're going to have to tap into whatever passion the young people here have for church," she says.

The question of what's next became all too real as the vestry, and then the congregation, came to understand the dire condition of their church home. In January 2018, before the tree fell and before they knew how extensive the issues with the church were, Hixon asked Hill if he would be willing to serve on vestry, and take on the important role of property liaison.

"I had no idea what that was going to mean," Hill says, wryly.

Once the full extent of the problem became clear, the church—like so many others in the Diocese of Pennsylvania and throughout the Episcopal Church in the United States—lacked the resources to restore the building. Just as previous generations of vestries had lacked the resources to make necessary repairs as they continued to mount, settling instead to do the best they could with what they had in patchwork fashion.

The estimated costs to shore up the structure started at \$200,000, and rose to a million dollars and beyond. And even if the church had that kind of money, there was no guarantee it would solve the problem.

The difficult decision to leave the church building was made in May 2018. The engineer had recommended that people should be out of the building before the first

frost. So the vestry set a Nov. 1 deadline to close the building and begin worshipping elsewhere.

Diocesan staff provided support and guidance throughout the transition. The Rev. Canon Kirk Berlenbach, canon for growth and support, met with vestry several times, and led a vestry retreat. He preached during a service one Sunday in the months before the move, and attended the last service in the old church building representing the diocese. Property Manager Sean McCauley also came to the church, and helped vestry members understand the process of selling the property.

"The diocese has been supportive when and how we've needed them to be," Hixon says.

During the months leading up to the move, Hill recalls, teams were formed, lists were compiled, and duties were assigned and carried out. After exploring other possible locations, the decision was made to move worship services to the Warner Education Building, which houses a nursery school in the basement, and parish administrative offices, space for Sunday school, and the meeting room on the first floor.

"All of these things went on, and it was because of Beth," Hill says. "She was guiding this. She had this plan that was working for us and working with us and strengthening us in the whole thing that allowed us to come through this in the way we apparently have."

"If Epiphany is going to grow and flourish, we're going to have to tap into whatever passion the young people here have for church."

REV. BETH HIXON



## What's Next?

Having successfully made the transition to a new worship space, the members of the Church of the Epiphany are now working to discern the answer to a question that should be in the prayers and deliberations of all congregations: What's next?

"This is taking a tremendous amount of energy. That's a reality and the truth," Hixon says. "You can put one foot in front of the other, which is what we've been doing, but even that takes an awful lot of energy—to be in constant discernment and try to discern how the Spirit is leading and what's next. Do we stay here? Do we get comfortable or not? What are the pros and cons?"

Discernment involves matters temporal as well as spiritual. Parking, for example, is a concern. Most church members do not live within walking distance of the church, which only has on-street parking available.

"That's a growth issue," Hixon says. "Remaining on this property, how would we grow? Because people like parking. There are a lot of little issues like that to look at. But I think the overriding consideration is the love people have for one another, the family of relationships."

Through the storms that have battered the church, literally as well as figuratively, Hixon credits the vestry with providing wisdom, strength, and support.

"There's no way that we would be as healthy as we are if we didn't have some pretty incredible people here who bring their love and their commitment and their gifts to bear," Hixon says.

She recalls how, at the diocesan clergy conference she attended last year, Bishop Daniel led an Ignatian contemplative exercise

based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Participants were asked to envision themselves in the well-known scene recounted in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in which Jesus is in a boat with his disciples when a storm comes upon them. The disciples fear for their lives and panic, rousing Jesus from his sleep. Rebuking the disciples for their lack of faith, Jesus calms the raging winds and waves.

"One of the questions was, who was in the boat with you?" Hixon recalls. "I was aware that when I looked around the boat, it was all of our vestry members. All of them were in the boat with me, and we were weathering the storm together." ■

# BEYOND SUNDAY

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia operates one of eight wellness centers in the diocese. And, that number is growing, says the Canon Toneh Smyth, canon for mission, who spearheads these efforts. "Churches are natural meeting points for people, they are epicenters in their community." Smyth, who is a licensed social worker, helps to place nurses and social workers in the churches and serves as the onsite academic advisor for them while they are doing their work. Here with Graham, a student at Temple University, they provide counsel to a walk-in clients.

# R E S O U R C E



## Empowering Veterans

# ADVOCATING For Veterans

The Veterans Committee is dedicated to its mission: to be more than a place of worship; to be a place of healing for veterans and their families; and to become a force in the community that advocates for, collaborates with, and empowers veterans.

We are looking for others in the diocese to help support this mission by becoming advocates and even members. If you are interested, please contact Canon Toneh Smyth, [tsmyth@diopa.org](mailto:tsmyth@diopa.org). She can help you get started.

The committee's goal is to enlist 10 churches in the diocese to register as official advocates for veteran ministry. This means your church commits to becoming a place of healing for veterans and their family. Additionally, we ask each church to:

- Host *at least* one veteran committee event at your church. (See below for examples.)
- Attend one community training on veteran culture and moral injury. (Listed on diocesan calendar. Next one is May 6, 2019.)
- Include a special prayer for those actively serving, veterans, and their families within prayers of the people.
  - Perhaps have veterans/veteran families create these prayers to be included.
- Take steps to start a veteran-run healing/support group at your parish.

**Advocate churches in our Diocese have done the following:**

- St. Stephen's, Philadelphia and St. Luke's Germantown both hosted a veterans mass.
- All Saints, Norristown and Trinity, Buckingham organized healing stitches groups, making blankets that went to homeless veterans and veterans in hospice or palliative care.
- Trinity, Coatesville, hosted a community training in addition to their monthly veteran brunches.
- The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral hosted a veteran mental health first aid training.
- The Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square, hosted a scholarship dinner and fundraiser.

Parishioners can, on their own, participate in "no vet dies alone," designed to assist veterans and their families as a loved one is nearing the next stage of their life. Volunteers are there for veterans when family and friends are not able to be present.

Please contact Canon Smyth, [tsmyth@diopa.org](mailto:tsmyth@diopa.org), if you are interested in joining the veterans ministry.

# ST. JAMES' OUTREACH MINISTRY

'Serves God by Serving Others'

On September 20, 1777, two weeks before the Revolutionary War's pivotal Battle of Germantown, George Washington's troops held a war council in the study of the three-story plastered stone parsonage—known as a "glebe house"—on the sprawling property of St. James' Episcopal Church in Colledgeville.

Local historians contend that soldiers were quartered there after the battle as well, according to historical documents.

While the 1749 Glebe House is recognized in historical circles for the role it played during the Revolutionary War, in recent decades, it has embodied what Bishop Daniel has called the "revolutionary spirit in this diocese" as home to St. James' outreach ministry.

The ministry, called Outreach House, provides nonperishable food, personal care items, and gently used clothing and household items to local families in need. It has operated out of the Glebe House since 1989, but the ministry—and the need—has outgrown the historic former rectory. With steep, narrow staircases, Glebe House is not handicap accessible. The 1,100-square-foot house has just one bathroom and no air conditioning in summer, and is in need of significant renovations estimated at \$140,000 just to return it to its original use as a residence.

Arising on land adjacent to Glebe House is a new, 2,800-square-foot, modern building that, by fall 2019, will serve not only as the new home for Outreach House, but as a testament to the church's commitment to live into its powerful, yet concise and clear, mission statement: "Knowing and serving God by serving others."

"We're an outward and visible sign of that grace that God gives us because people can see us doing the work Christ has given us to do," says the Rev. Mike Sowards, rector of St. James' since 2013. "They can see how we're feeding the hungry. They can see how we're clothing the naked. One of the reasons I so much wanted this Outreach House to happen is because it's a visible reminder to parishioners here that Christ has called us to do these things." ▶



Innovative Addition

**TOP, from left:** The Rev. Mike Sowards in historic St. James' Episcopal Church. The parish dates back to 1700, and the current church building was dedicated in 1845. The idea of growing the church's ministry for generations to come brings smiles to the faces of church parishioners

**BOTTOM.** Sowards, middle, is flanked by Carole Exley, director of St. James' Outreach House and architect Mike O'Rourke at the groundbreaking for the new 2,800-square-foot Outreach House.

## A Community Effort

On two days each week, “Client Hours” are held at Glebe House for families referred by parishioners, area clergy, local school districts, and local social service agencies.

Those with access to transportation can “shop” there using a points-based system. The number of points needed to “purchase” an item are generally based on 50 cents a point. Toilet paper, for example, is 2 points. Coffee is 8 points. A family of four accepted into the program gets 80 points a week to “spend.”

For clients who can't physically get to Glebe House, deliveries are available.

The ministry serves 194 registered clients,

made up of single-, foster- and two-parent families, abused women, the disabled and mentally challenged, and the elderly. The number of children varies from none to eight per family. As of March 2019, 46.5 percent of Outreach House's client base are children, out of the total of 667 individuals.

Outreach House is truly a community effort. The church includes money in its budget to purchase some of the nonperishable food and other items that are given out, and parish members also donate food. In addition, dozens of local community organizations and businesses— from scout troops and schools to other churches and businesses both large (such as Vanguard, one

of the world's largest investment companies) and small (such as Sublime Cupcakes in Collegeville)—hold food drives to support the ministry. The U.S. Postal Service in Collegeville also holds a collection each year.

There is no paid staff. Volunteers do everything from organizing and stocking pantry shelves, to packing food and delivering it, to sorting clothes, toys, and household items. They also assist clients and perform office work.

Outreach House, which primarily services Lower Providence Township residents, is designed to supplement services families in need can get through other programs, such

as the Daily Bread Community Food Pantry in Collegeville, which carries perishable products like meat and milk in addition to nonperishable items, and Pennsylvania's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

“A lot of time, if clients have SNAP, I tell them to buy their food with SNAP and then come in here and buy items like paper towels and toilet paper and toothpaste and a toothbrush—all the things you can't get with SNAP,” Sowards says.

A recent innovative addition to Outreach House's ministry goes by the catchy name

of Patty Packs, named for retired school teacher and St. James' member Patty Earhart, who came up with the idea.

Many people do not understand that children in need can get free breakfast and lunch on the five days a week they're in school, Sowards says. “But when they go home for the weekend, they don't eat,” he adds.

Patty Packs are small backpacks that volunteers fill with nutritious, nonperishable food for children to take home at the end of the school week. “We're working with Woodland and Arrowhead Elementary

Schools, and we have 49 students getting Patty Packs now,” Sowards says.

Outreach House also gives out backpacks with new school supplies each August, and holiday gifts from a child's own list through its Mitten Tree program at Christmas. (The requested gifts are written on colorful paper mittens hung on a tree, and people take the mittens, buy the gifts, wrap them, and bring them back for distribution at a holiday party.)



## 'This is Who We Are'



There will be ample space to accommodate—and even expand—all that Outreach House and its dedicated volunteers do. The estimated cost to build the new center and refurbish the Glebe House is \$1 million. Half of that amount is coming from memorials and estate gifts. The other half is being raised from parish members. The goal is to complete construction without encumbering debt.

Due in no small measure to the “outward and visible sign” of God's grace at work in St. James', the church is growing by leaps and bounds. When Sowards arrived in 2013, average Sunday attendance was about 120. Today, it's approaching 200.

The first Saturday evening service Sowards led when he first arrived had three people. He told vestry that he was thinking of canceling the service, but they prevailed on him to give it time and see what happens. It now draws as many as 50 worshippers.

“We're averaging four or five families a month coming in, transferring membership or becoming members of St. James',” Sowards says. “God has just been blessing us like you wouldn't believe. It's wonderful.”

In his preaching and teaching, Sowards emphasizes the need for all Christians to take seriously the vows they make before God in their baptismal covenant. Outreach House, he believes, is a good example of that.

In a recent issue of the parish newsletter, *The Epistle*, Sowards described Outreach House as “a place where those in need get help and a place where we can fulfill our baptismal covenant to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.”

Loving your neighbor. Feeding the hungry. Clothing the naked. These are the things Christ has called on us to do.

And as Sowards concludes a tour of the cramped Glebe House rooms crammed with food and clothing and toys and household items, all destined to help serve Christ in a struggling family, he smiles.

“This is what we do,” Sowards says. “This is who we are.” ■

**LEFT.** Taylor enjoys the groundbreaking celebration  
**TOP.** a wall of the new Outreach House goes up.  
**BOTTOM.** what the new center will look like when completed.



## BUILDING A CHURCH

### Where Youth are Participants, Not Guests

Shortly after his ordination as a priest in western Uganda in 1996, the Very Rev. Samuel Murangi learned a valuable lesson that has helped him to revitalize youth ministry at Emmanuel Resurrection Episcopal Church in Northeast Philadelphia more than two decades later.

"The diocese sent me to lead a small church in one of the villages back home," Murangi recalls. "My first church had a very active youth group that met every Saturday afternoon for fellowship and to practice music using locally made instruments, such as drums, flutes, guitars, xylophones, etc. As months went by, I realized something was missing. While the youth met every Saturday for practice, there was no place for them during the Sunday service to demonstrate what they had been practicing."

Murangi convinced church leadership to let the youth group perform one song before the sermon during the service each week.

"Eventually, I began to notice considerable improvement in their church attendance and participation," he says. "By the time I left the parish in 1997 to come to the United States, not one single young person missed Sunday service. This experience taught me that young people need participation, not to be entertained. The key with young people is to make them part of the liturgy."

As Murangi sees it, too many churches treat children as guests, not active, vital participants.

"What happens with guests? They eventually leave," he says.

And that's exactly what happens in many churches. "When kids grow up and turn 18, they leave," Murangi says. "Any guest reaches the point they have to leave and find their own home." ▶

◀ Ryan Moreno, left, Emmanuel Resurrection's director of youth ministry, leads the teen Sunday school class in a spirited game of "Duck Duck Zap," as his wife, Becky, looks on. →



## 'Fellow Sojourners'

When Murangi arrived, Emmanuel Resurrection had one Sunday school class for the handful of children and youth who attended, Ginny Stewart recalls.

"And all of them were here at gunpoint," Stewart says, laughing.

Today, there are three Sunday school classes (Stewart teaches the middle group) and they have their own space in a nicely renovated basement on the church campus that previously had been abandoned after flooding.

"What a difference, I'll tell you," Stewart says. "We really needed to revitalize it. Now, they bring their friends."

At Murangi's insistence, the youth were able to choose the paint color for the room that serves as home to the youth ministry and Sunday school class for teens. The church

also bought a large, flat-screen TV and put couches and comfortable chairs in the room. The idea, Murangi says, is to let the youth know they "have a space of their own."

In the summer of 2017, the church worked with a Philadelphia-based youth ministry organization called Ministry Headquarters—known as HQ for short—to put on a Vacation Bible School. Ryan Moreno, a teacher at MaST Community Charter School in Northeast Philadelphia who volunteers a lot with HQ, was the team leader.

After VBS, as the number of young people coming to the church continued to grow, Emmanuel Resurrection decided to hire a director of youth ministry to take the program to the next level. At the time, Moreno was looking for a church to work with, and when Emmanuel approached HQ to see if they knew of anyone who would be

a good fit, Moreno was the obvious choice. "My goal is to get them to have a positive association with church," says Moreno, whose wife, Becky, is also a teacher at MaST Community Charter School and helps with the youth ministry at Emmanuel. "They need to be shown they have a place, that

God wants them—not just to show up—but actually participate in conversation and learn."

Ryan and Becky teach the older youth Sunday school class, which now averages six to 13 kids a week. And even though that number drops during the summer, they continue to have Sunday school year-round.

"Over the summer, a lot of places cancel Sunday school. We still have it every week," Moreno says. "It's our place to come to. They're not tossed aside for two months." ▶

## Opening the Liturgy to Young People

That was the situation Emmanuel Resurrection faced when Murangi was called, first as Supply Priest in Residence in January 2015, and then as Priest in Charge nine months later. In the previous years, several families with young children had left the church, feeling like they didn't belong.

The dramatic turnaround—Emmanuel Resurrection has seen its Sunday school ranks swell from four to 22 kids since 2015, and now has an active youth group for teens—started with the liturgy. When he first arrived as supply priest, Murangi observed that one acolyte—usually the crucifer—disappeared quietly out a side door after reaching the altar. He also noticed that the two or three other children who were in church any given week would leave as well. They mysteriously reappeared in time for communion.

There was no acknowledgment that they were going to Sunday school and returning afterward. When Murangi became priest in charge, he and church leaders agreed that a prayer and formal dismissal should be added to the liturgy to recognize and celebrate the children and youth, along with their teachers. The service now includes this prayer:

*Heavenly Father, assist us, your children, to put on every piece of your armor so we can resist temptation and be strong believers. Help us to stand our ground with the belt of your truth, the body armor of your righteousness, the helmet of your salvation, and the shoes of peace that come with your Good News. Give us the shield of faith to stop the arrows of the devil, and arm us with the sword of the Spirit, which is your Word. We pray Lord, that after each battle we will always be found standing firm in you. Amen. (from Ephesians 6)*

Other changes followed. The Altar Guild purchased albs—the basic, white robes worn during the service—for every young person and child who wants to be part of the worship service. And they all vest for the service—whether they are serving that day or not.

Previously, when children returned from Sunday school, they would go sit with their parents. Now, they sit up front, on one side of the choir chancel. And as the congregation sings "Lamb of God," the song used in place of the Agnes Dei, the third stanza is sung by just the children and youth.

The changes met some initial resistance, but Murangi is committed to sending a clear message that children and youth have important roles to play in the liturgy. It's not just for adults.

And the kids have gotten the message.

"Parents have told me that for the last three years, they no longer struggle to force kids to come to church," Murangi says. "Kids, including my own 5-year-old daughter, remind us parents about church."



**TOP LEFT.** students open their teen Sunday school class with prayers and praise, often for things happening in their lives at school.

**BOTTOM.** students and their Sunday school teachers now gather in the front of the church for a prayer and formal dismissal before heading to their classrooms.

Moreno also tries to hold at least one fellowship or service outing a month during the week, ranging from game nights, movies, and hayrides to handing out blankets to homeless people at a food pantry on Frankford Avenue or collecting coats for those who need them.

The monthly outings attract 10-15 kids, with those in the youth group inviting their friends. There's a positive message that comes with the trips as well, Moreno says: "The bond that unites us exists outside the building, outside of Sundays."

Moreno has introduced the young people to contemporary Christian music, playing it during classes and trips. And he keeps things loose during Sunday school, including games such as "Duck Duck Zap"—a modern variation on "Duck Duck Goose."

He also makes Sunday school relevant to their lives. They start by talking about items for prayer and praise, often drawn from their experiences at school. An essay. A social studies class. Adapting to a new English teacher. An upcoming state bowling championship tournament.

And Moreno relates Scripture—which is shown on the large screen TV—to their lives as well. The passage from Matthew 22: 37-40 comes up on the screen:

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

"Sometimes, we don't love ourselves very well," Moreno says, as the youths listen intently. "If you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, you're not going to be able to look at yourself in some negative way."

Talking with the kids about the youth group after class, one word invariably pops up: "Fun."



▲ The Rev. Murangi with his wife Yvonne and daughters Hannah and Rebecca

It's really fun," says India Haynesworth, 13, whose family had attended the church previously, stopped for a while, and then returned. "It's different than a lot of other Sunday schools I've been to."

Twin sisters Kamiyah and Makiyah Brunson, 13, who have been coming for a little over a year, agree.

Asked what they like about the youth group, Kamiyah mentions the games they play. Makiyah talks about how they pray for things that matter in their lives, and Aiden Gronski, 11, likes the activities, whether it's passing

out blankets to homeless people or going bowling.

They also feel like they are a part of the church, with their own space.

"Because of some of the small things we've done, kids aren't forced to come to church on Sunday. They know they have a role to play," Murangi says. "There's no magic to having young people in church other than ensuring that they feel a sense of belonging. The church should look at young people as fellow sojourners, and be willing to invite them to participate in every aspect of this journey." ■

“There’s no magic to having young people in church other than ensuring that they feel a sense of belonging.”

THE VERY REV. SAMUEL MURANGI

## U P C O M I N G D A T E S



- 4/23 | Experiencing Homelessness: Collaborative and Understanding Approaches, Gloria Dei, Philadelphia
- 4/27 | A Gathering of Episcopal and Episcopal Church-Affiliated Schools, Redemption Episcopal Church, Southampton
- 4/29 | Clergy Conference with Fleming Rutledge, Cape May, NJ
- 5/4 | Youth Mental Health First Aid, St. Luke's, Germantown
- 5/6 | Recognizing the Challenges of Reintegration & Building a Pathway to Care and Resources, Cranaleith Spiritual Center, Philadelphia
- 5/7 | Community Healing Ceremony, Cranaleith Spiritual Center, Philadelphia
- 5/11 | Anti-Racism Training: Race and Institution, St. Asaph's, Bala Cynwyd
- 5/18 | DIOPA Youth Leaders Plenary, St. Thomas, Whitmarsh
- 5/18 | Creating Healthy Congregational Cultures for Growth and Innovative Ministry, St. Mary's, Chester
- 5/22 | Naloxone (Narcan) Overdose & Rescue Training, Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Chestnut Hill
- 6/8 | Diaconal Ordinations, Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral
- 6/9 | Wear Orange Sunday, across the diocese
- 7/27 | Anti-Racism Training: Personal Racism, St. Asaph's, Bala Cynwyd
- 9/13 | Deacon's Conference, TBD

For more information on these and other events, please visit [www.diopa.org/events](http://www.diopa.org/events).

W E L C O M E



## A WARM WELCOME To Those Called to Serve in Our Diocese



**The Rev. Joel Daniels, St. George's Episcopal Church, Ardmore.**

The Rev. Daniels, PhD, is a native of Atlanta. After studying English at Columbia University as an undergraduate, he attended General Theological Seminary, and was ordained to the priesthood in 2007. Following ordination, he served as Associate Rector of the Church of St. Barnabas in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, focusing particularly on ministry with children and youth, and then began doctoral studies at Boston University in 2009. He received his PhD in theology in 2015. From 2015 to 2018, Daniels was Associate for Evangelism at Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in New York City. In addition to his parochial responsibilities, Daniels has maintained an active ministry of teaching and writing, serving as adjunct faculty at Fordham University and General Theological Seminary.



**The Rev. David Morris, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Germantown.**

The Rev. Morris joined the staff of St. Luke's Germantown in 2011 as an assisting priest and in December of 2018 was called to be the Rector. Ordained in the Diocese of Pennsylvania in 1995, he has worked in both parish ministry and as a chaplain in several area hospitals. He has extensive experience in youth retreats, adult mission activity and is actively involved in the planning and development of missional opportunities in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. Along with the staff, he is helping to design and expand the Episcopal Mission Center at St. Luke's Church.

## BEYOND SUNDAY



Each year the Free Library of Philadelphia selects a book for all to read as part of One Book One Philadelphia, to encourage dialogue and promote literacy. The Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square, used this as an opportunity to highlight the book's story and promote creativity. Around Jesmyn Ward's book "Sing, Unburied Sing," staff and volunteers created a Pop-Up Makers Space in February called "Create, Unburied Create" for all "ages and stages" with stations devoted to painting, modeling clay, a knit and sit station, just to name a few. Best part, they received people from outside the church community.

# BEYOND SUNDAY

The door is always open to the community at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Chester. Their food cupboard, which has been in operation for 35 years, serves an average of 70 families per week. In addition to serving the city of Chester, they also serve surrounding communities as an emergency food provider. The cupboard is supported by local volunteers, various community businesses and several Episcopal Churches around the diocese. The food cupboard is open every Thursday from 12:30-2:00pm.



# R E S O U R C E

## 'FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP' Coaching Available to Clergy

After a successful first year, the Diocese would like to make mentoring, or "faithful friendship," by an older, experienced priest more widely available to clergy.

Last year, Bishop Daniel started the initiative by asking four retired priests to serve as mentors to less experienced clergy in the Diocese, with an emphasis on assisting priests who are engaging new ministries. Those in the Diocese who have availed themselves of this opportunity have found it helpful and supportive.

Mentoring, or "faithful friendship," is one of the rich traditions in the church. Every ministry has challenges. An extra set of eyes and the wisdom that comes with years of reflecting on the experience of ministry can be very helpful to an active priest in developing strategies and dealing with challenges as they arise.

Many priests do not have mentors or colleagues to consult with about difficult issues. Often, parishioners make poor confidants and rarely are they unbiased about parish issues. Even those on a staff where there are multiple priests may benefit from a knowledgeable and independent ear.

Based on our experience over the past year, most mentors—who play a role similar to coaches—meet with their priests about once a month for an hour or two of conversation, encouragement and reflection on ministry. The meeting can be arranged at a mutually agreeable location or conducted by phone. In some cases, the meeting can take place by e-mail after initial face-to-face meetings.

Priests in the Diocese who would like to explore a mentor/"faithful friend" relationship with one of our experienced priests are welcome to call the Rev. K. Palmer Hartl at 215-925-1992.

The coaching team also includes the Rev. MaryJo Melberger, the Rev. Peter Stube and the Rev. Bill Wood.

- The Rev. K. Palmer Hartl

Learning & Discernment





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