

Spring 2019



The North Carolina DISCIPLE

Special Section

THIS FRAGILE EARTH

Also in this issue | PRACTICING RESURRECTION | EUAR



 **The North Carolina**
DISCIPLE

Diocesan House
200 West Morgan Street, Suite 300
Raleigh, NC 27601-1338
PHONE: 919.834.7474
TOLL FREE: 800.448.8775
FAX: 919.834.8775
WEBSITE: www.episdionc.org

The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

Bishop Diocesan

The Rt. Rev. Samuel Sewall Rodman, III
sam.rodman@episdionc.org
Diocesan House: 919.834.7474

Bishop Suffragan

The Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple
bishopanne@episdionc.org
Office of the Bishop Suffragan: 336.273.5770

PUBLISHER

Bishop Diocesan of North Carolina

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Christine McTaggart
christine.mctaggart@episdionc.org

MANAGING EDITOR / ART DIRECTOR

Summerlee Walter
summerlee.walter@episdionc.org

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE

The Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman
Christine McTaggart
The Rev. Stephanie Allen
Carl Sigel
Summerlee Walter
The Rev. Ginny Bain Inman

SUBSCRIPTIONS / CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Erin Sweeney: erin.sweeney@episdionc.org

SUBMISSIONS

All submission ideas are welcome and considered for publication. Email submission ideas to communications@episdionc.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters to the editor to communications@episdionc.org.



COVER PHOTO

Bluebirds hatch inside one of the bird boxes located at Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, as part of the church's Piedmont Patch Project (page 30). *Photo by Becky Dodge*

INSIDE COVER PHOTO

Bird boxes going up in the Piedmont Patch.

table of contents

SPRING 2019

features

- 4 A Very Late Spring
- 12 Many Hands, Amazing Work
- 15 This Fragile Earth
- 16 This Fragile Earth: The Plastic Mirror
- 18 This Fragile Earth: ZeroWasteChurch.org
- 19 This Fragile Earth: SustainIslandHome.org
- 20 This Fragile Earth: Changes Making a Difference
- 22 This Fragile Earth: Getting Started
- 24 Keeping the Peace
- 26 Creating an Anti-racist Future
- 28 Practice Resurrection
- 30 The Piedmont Patch Project



4



15



26



30

departments & more

- 6-7 Around the Diocese
- 8-11 New, Notable & Newsworthy



The North Carolina Disciple is the quarterly magazine of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. Other diocesan communication vehicles, including Please Note, a weekly e-newsletter, and the diocesan website, www.episdionc.org, are used for more time-sensitive, day-to-day news.

Contact the communications staff at communications@episdionc.org with any questions or feedback regarding these communications, or to submit ideas, articles and photos.




At a Glance Facts: This Magazine...

- Is printed with soy inks, which are more environmentally friendly than traditional petroleum-based inks.
- Is printed on FSC® certified paper — paper certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council™, an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests.
- Is printed and mailed in Morrisville, North Carolina. The printer has been using an internal paper recycling system for paper production since 1995.

Delivery occurs during the following months:

October / Fall Issue
 January / Winter Issue
 April / Spring Issue
 July / Summer Issue

A person with a backpack is seen from behind, walking through a maze of tall grass. The maze is composed of several paths that wind through the grass, creating a complex pattern. The person is in the lower-left quadrant of the image, and the maze extends towards the top and right. The overall scene is captured in a monochromatic blue-green color scheme.

By the Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman

A Very Late Spring

Though I understand it has made the rounds of social media in various forms, it was Lynn Hoke, our diocesan archivist, who recently gave me a primer on how to make sense of the seasons in North Carolina. It looked like this:

North Carolina's 12 Seasons

- 1) Winter
- 2) Fool's Spring
- 3) Second Winter
- 4) Spring of Deception
- 5) Third Winter
- 6) The Pollening
- 7) Actual Spring
- 8) Summer
- 9) Hell's Front Porch
- 10) False Fall
- 11) Second Summer
- 12) Actual Fall

As intended, the list makes me smile, but I also find it something of a revelation, especially The Pollening and Actual Spring. This year it is probably safe to say that Easter is taking place during Actual Spring, because even as I write this, my car is already covered in a thin film of yellow. Easter is about as late this year as it ever gets. Of course, the table for determining when Easter falls is almost as enigmatic as the North Carolina spring. Easter is always on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. If there is a Biblical connection to this formula, it is lost on me.

Yet there is something poignant and even poetic about the late date of Easter in 2019. It reminds me of a woman who was a member of our congregation in Milton, Massachusetts, who started attending our church after a long and illustrious career as an English teacher at Milton Academy. People who knew her as a teacher were a bit surprised she had begun attending St. Michael's. Her curriculum included the overtly religious

writings of any number of British luminaries, many of whom are buried in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, and she was always quite clear she found their religious sentiment somewhat suspect. In the beginning, she and her husband would show up at the 8:00 a.m. service and disappear almost immediately afterward. But gradually they began to linger, and then they began to show up at other events, including a midweek Bible Study. After a couple of years of increasing involvement, she joined our lay preaching group.

A KIND OF AWAKENING

Somewhere along the way, she shared with me her attendance at church coincided with a kind of awakening she had experienced in the form of poetic inspiration. Despite a lifelong vocation of teaching the poetry of others, she had never written any poetry herself until all of a sudden, several years into retirement, poems began to bubble up from somewhere deep within. They did not emerge fully formed, and she spent long hours shaping them. Eventually, she created a small folio of about 15 poems, and nearly all of them had some connection to biblical characters and the gospel narratives. The folio was titled, "A Very Late Spring."

So this year, as I reflected on the late date of Easter, I thought again of my parishioner, her story and her collection of poems from her own very late spring. I was reminded that the gift of resurrection reverberating through the Great 50 Days from Easter to Pentecost is a gift that can still surprise us. It dawned on me there is something instructive and important for us to recognize from my parishioner's journey: It is never too late to discover God doing a new thing in us, among us, for us and with us. Part of what it means to Become Beloved Community, and what it takes to get there, is to look for these moments, mark them, honor and celebrate them.

What is true for us as individual children of God is also true for the communities of which we are part, for our congregations make up the body of Christ. In "organizational development" language this is often referred to as the process of redevelopment, but I find the theological frame of reference more compelling and especially appropriate to the Easter season. A congregation's "process of redevelopment" can actually be a process of resurrection, rebirth and rejuvenation. This often takes the form of a new missional direction and focus. Sometimes it is in response to the changing landscape of the particular context of the congregation, whether that means the demographic or economic influences of the community in which it is located. Sometimes it is the result of a change in clergy leadership. Sometimes it is simply the movement of God's spirit, calling a body of people to reimagine their call, their

vocation and the way God is inviting them to engage with their particular corner of the world at a particular point in time.

On a recent visitation to St. Paul's, Smithfield, I saw a great example of this and was inspired by the ways they are growing in their connection with one another and to the community around them. It seems this reawakening is, at least in part, connected to their decision to build a labyrinth on the property. From its inception, the labyrinth was seen as a gift to the community as well as the congregation. It is visible and accessible to all. It is walked by members of St. Paul's and by friends, neighbors and even strangers who pass by and are drawn into this holy space. There is a sign of welcome with simple instructions at the entrance. I had the chance to walk it myself after my visit with St. Paul's and before the service with the congregation of San Jose, the Latino community with whom St. Paul's shares their worship space.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Easter is the season of resurrection, of re-imagining, of new beginnings and of our very late springs. Easter is a season to discover again the call to Become Beloved Community and ask ourselves how the Holy Spirit is inviting us, as a body, to respond to that call in our particular contexts. The gift in all of this is the invitation is not time sensitive, and it never expires. In fact, to paraphrase the old hymn, "it is new each morning."

It is why it is not too late to take your own next step toward Becoming Beloved Community. It is why today is the perfect day to start a new habit that reconnects you to the land on which you live, even if that land is in an urban setting. It is why it's the perfect time to reach out to a friend or colleague to take that first step on a project that speaks to your heart. It is why today is another chance to see, really see, those around you and recognize all the ways, big and small, we can demonstrate love for our neighbor.

At any point on our journey, at any stage in our vocational discernment, at any moment of our lives, God may be doing a new thing in us, with us, among us and for us. This is the Easter promise. This is the gift of resurrection power. This is the grace at the heart of our journey and at the center of our vocation as disciples making a difference, and as apostles called to bring the good news of the gospel to our generation, as communities of faith formed and shaped by our new life in the risen Jesus.

Happy Easter!

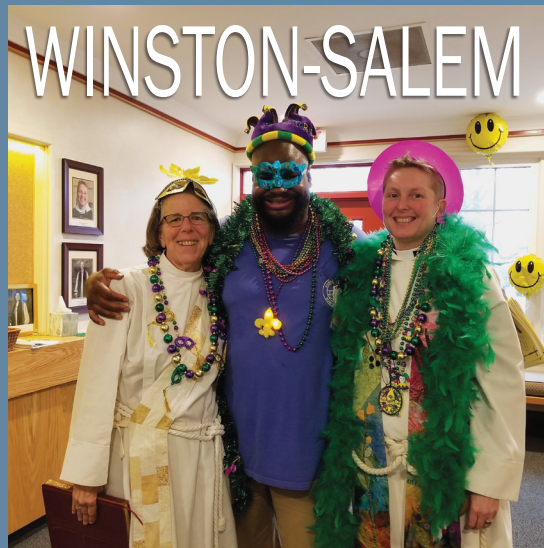
The Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman is the XII Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina. Contact him at sam.rodman@episdionc.org.

AROUND THE



The Rev. Rick Miles and parishioner Deenie Noll of St. Thomas', Reidsville, administer "Ashes to Go" in the Reidsville YMCA parking on Ash Wednesday. *Photo by John Bullock*

REIDSVILLE



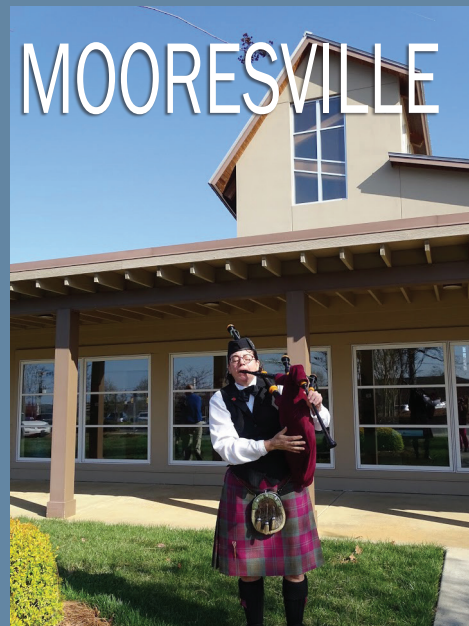
On the Last Sunday of Epiphany, the people of St. Anne's, Winston-Salem, celebrated Carnivale. *Photo by Linda Winikoff*

WINSTON-SALEM



The Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman celebrates the Eucharist with the Rev. Hector Sintim and members of St. Stephen's, Winston-Salem, on February 3. *Photo by Pamela Haynes*

WINSTON-SALEM



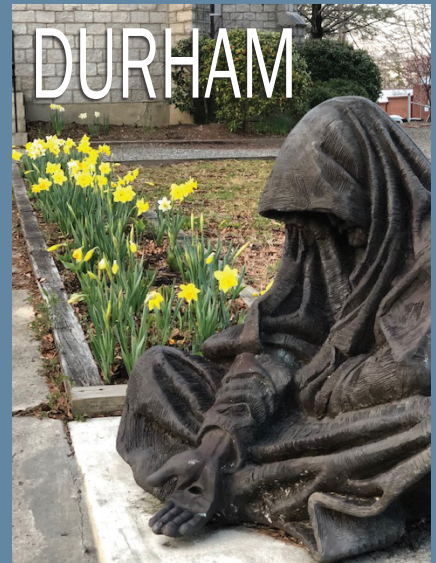
St. Patrick's, Mooresville, celebrated their feast day in style with a bagpiper to greet worshipers on St. Patrick's day. *Photo by Beth Dyess*

MOORESVILLE

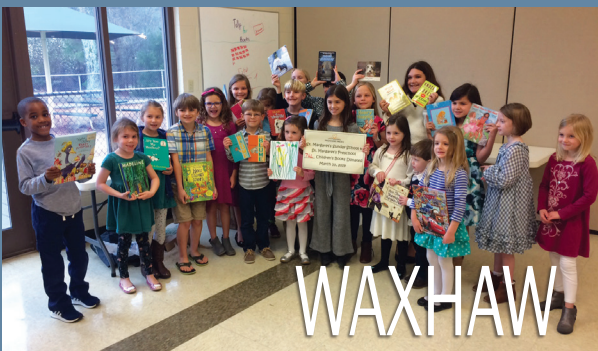
THE DIOCESE



The Rev. Habacuc Ramos-Huerta, rector of El Buen Pastor in Durham, joined the Rev. Helen Svoboda-Barber, rector of St. Luke's, Durham, for a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at St. Luke's. Mardi Gras pancake suppers are not part of the tradition in Mexico and many Central and South American countries, so this was a first for Ramos-Huerta. *Photo by Bill Gutknecht*



The iconic statue outside of St. Joseph's, Durham, juxtaposed next to daffodils perfectly encapsulates the spirit of Lent. *Photo by the Rev. Karen Barfield*



In early March, the children of St. Margaret's Preschool and Sunday School Program collected nearly 700 books in a book drive to support Promising Pages, a nonprofit organization that inspires underserved children to achieve their dreams by becoming bookworms. *Photo by Catherine Chintala*



Like much of the Diocese, St. Paul's, Louisburg, enjoyed a snow day this winter. *Photo by Al Wheless*



The Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman visited St Mark's, Huntersville, on February 17, confirming Justis Rhinehardt. *Photo by Alison Rhinehardt*



The adults of the parish pitched in to help during the annual youth Shrove Tuesday pancake supper at Emmanuel, Southern Pines. *Photo by Rebekah O'Donnell*

NEW, NOTABLE & NEWSWORTHY

CAMINANDO WITH JESUS: A NEW REFLECTION SERIES

For all the reasons the Lenten and Easter seasons are special, this year they are even more so with the debut of “CAMINANDO WITH JESUS” (“Walking with Jesus”), a weekly reflection series featuring voices from around the Diocese. Delivered to inboxes every Wednesday morning, each reflection focuses on the Gospel readings for the upcoming Sunday, and the text is shared in both English and Spanish.

CAMINANDO WITH JESUS offers a wonderful opportunity simply to take a midweek moment and reflect on the Gospel readings in your own mind as well as a chance to go deeper when you gather for worship on Sunday.

To take this weekly walk with us, subscribe at bit.ly/CAMINANDOWITHJESUS. Share the link with anyone who wants to go further on their spiritual journey.



BIBLE STUDY WITH BISHOP SAM NOW AVAILABLE ON VIMEO



Do you enjoy the thought of Bishop Sam’s monthly Bible study on Facebook Live but can’t watch because you don’t

enjoy social media? Problem solved! Bishop Sam’s Bible Study videos can now be found on the diocesan Vimeo channel (vimeo.com/episcopalnc).

If you’re not familiar with this offering, once a month, usually on a Wednesday at noon, Bishop Sam and a guest discuss a Bible passage on Facebook Live. Viewers are invited to comment and ask questions during the study, and Bishop Sam and his guest will respond live.

To watch or take part in Bishop Sam’s Bible Studies, simply like the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina on Facebook. To enjoy the archives, look for the videos on the diocesan Facebook page or the diocesan Vimeo channel in the “Bible Studies with Bishop Sam” collection.

NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE A PREPAREDNESS PLAN

If the last few summers have taught us anything, it is the need to have a preparedness plan in place. We pray this summer will be uneventful, bringing only gentle thunderstorms and nourishing rain, with nothing coming close to the hurricanes our region has experienced the last several years.

However, while we hope for the best, we must be prepared just in case. As summer approaches, it’s a great time of year to put a preparedness plan in place to be ready not only for adverse weather, but for medical emergencies, property

damage or any other situation to which your church might need to respond. If you have a plan in place already, this is also a great time of year to review it and reacquaint those involved with it.

If you need help getting started, you can find resources on the diocesan website. Simply look for the Preparedness Planning link in the Quick Links box on the homepage at episdionc.org.

LARRY STROUD JOINS DIOCESAN STAFF AS CONSULTING MISSIONER FOR BLACK MINISTRIES



The Diocese of North Carolina has added a new staff member dedicated to supporting our historically black congregations and developing ministries with people across the Diocese. In support of our diocesan priority of racial reconciliation,

Larry Stroud is serving as consulting missioner for black ministries, a newly created part-time position that identifies, recommends and tests ways to assist black congregations to revitalize the Church as they discern their varied calls for future ministry.

The consulting missioner for black ministries will reach out to the congregations and their communities in order

to listen to their stories of faith to honor their history and discern where the Spirit is leading them into the future; foster greater relationships with other parishes and missions through partnerships that reach across ethnic and racial boundaries; connect congregations, in partnership with the regional canons, to a variety of resources; and find new and creative ways to use our buildings for the glory of God by cultivating new ministries for the Jesus Movement.

This position is part of the New Visions Initiative of The Episcopal Church. New Visions is “an ongoing congregational renewal program designed specifically for congregations of African descent. Built upon a foundation of lifelong Christian formation, the initiative’s purpose is to spark new visions of mission-centered communities and find fresh ways for congregations to strengthen their ministries.”

“We are excited to have Larry join our staff,” the Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman said. “He has been doing similar work for the past three years as a volunteer, where he helped introduce Invite Welcome Connect to our historically black congregations. He brings strong networking skills and deep experience in church leadership and organizational development.”

Stroud also currently serves as diocesan head verger.

SACRED GROUND: NEW DIALOGUE SERIES FROM THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH EXPLORES RACE AND FAITH

A new offering from The Episcopal Church, Sacred Ground, is a film- and reading-based dialogue series on race and faith. Participants walk together through America’s history of race and racism while weaving in the threads of family story, economic class, and political and regional identity. It is an invitation for small groups to gather to learn, share and prepare to become Beloved Community.

Built around a curriculum of powerful documentary films, videos and readings, this 10-part series considers some of the major chapters of the United States’ history of race and racism. It focuses on Indigenous, Black, Latino and Asian American histories as they intersect with European American histories. Participants are invited to peel away the layers that have contributed to challenges and divides in the present day—all with a deep foundation in faith and love.

“Sacred Ground is a time and opportunity to hear the story of our past with regard to race, to hear our stories of our pasts,” said the Most Rev. Michael Curry, presiding

bishop of the Episcopal Church. “By listening to those stories and hearing them, and then telling our own stories together, and then looking possibly at the stories of our very faith, somehow, from the travail and the reality of all of those stories may emerge hope for a new day.”

Created by Katrina Browne, producer and director of the documentary “Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North,” this small-group resource is part of Becoming Beloved Community, the Episcopal Church’s long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation and justice in our personal lives, our ministries and our society. Sacred Ground is especially targeted to help white people talk with each other about racism past and present, their own racial identity, and the interwoven issues of class, region and ideology.

To learn more about Sacred Ground and to sign up for additional resources, visit episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground.

- from The Episcopal Church, Public Affairs

PARTNERS IN WELCOME OFFERS NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SUPPORT MINISTRY

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), the refugee resettlement ministry of The Episcopal Church, is proud to announce an innovative new program called Partners in Welcome (PiW). Through this program, EMM is building a mission-driven community rooted in loving God and our shared value to love our neighbor. This network is open to all organizations and individuals dedicated to welcoming newcomers, educating communities and developing advocates.

“Partners in Welcome is a community where we—individuals, groups, churches and communities—come together to learn from one another, support one another and inspire new people to become part of the refugee and immigrant welcoming movement,” said Allison Duvall, manager for church relations and engagement. “Through a creative online gathering space featuring a resource library, shared programming and connected community, Partners in Welcome members will gain knowledge in core areas of their ministry and grow as allies and advocates in the work

of welcome.”

The PiW online portal officially launched February 28, offering network members the opportunity to access resources, exchange ideas and connect with others involved in refugee and immigrant welcome. The Partners in Welcome program is made possible by a generous grant from the United Thank Offering.

“Partners in Welcome is exactly the sort of innovative program UTO is excited to support and bears witness to our ongoing commitment to Episcopal Migration Ministries’ important work with refugees. UTO is a mission of the whole Episcopal Church and Partners in Welcome will be an asset for the whole Church as we all strive to live into Jesus’s call to us to love and welcome all people,” said Sherri Dietrich, UTO Board President.

Visit episcopalmigrationministries.org/partnersin-welcome to learn more about the Partners in Welcome program and to apply for membership.

- from The Episcopal Church, Public Affairs

DIOCESAN EVENTS

April

28 Safe Church Training, Galloway Memorial, Elkin

May

15 Celebration of New Ministry for the Rev. Tim Martin, All Saints’, Hamlet
18 Safe Church Training, St. Thomas, Sanford

June

8 Ordination to the Sacred Order of Deacons, Canterbury School, Greensboro
21-22 Deacons Retreat, Haw River State Park, Browns Summit

Look for additional events and more detailed event information online at episdioc.org, or contact the Diocese at (919) 834-7474, toll-free at (800) 448-8775. Upcoming diocesan events and events from around the Diocese are also featured in *Please Note*, the weekly diocesan e-newsletter. Sign up on our homepage.

BEWARE OF EMAIL SCAMS

Over the last several months, a recurring email scam has been active once again. How it works: you receive an email from what appears to be your bishop, a member of your church’s clergy or someone else in a leadership position. The email is always cordial, friendly and familiar, and eventually it always asks for your help, usually in the form of gift card purchases, donations or some other directive that will cost you money.

These are scams—please do not respond to them. Unfortunately, there is no way to stop them, but you can be aware of them and, therefore, avoid them.

How will you know it’s a scam?

- Check the email address of the sender; it will not be your bishop, clergy or leader’s real email.
- Know these church leaders will not ask you for money via these methods...ever. If you receive such a request, ignore it.
- If you just are not sure, call your church (or the Diocese) to ask if there is a fundraising campaign using the message you received. If your church is doing fundraising of any kind, church staff will tell you exactly what messages are coming from them.

If you do receive a message like this, do not respond, but you can take action. Report it as spam to your email provider, and alert your church you received a spam message so they can spread the word to keep an eye out for it.

There’s nothing you can do to prevent these emails, but being aware and knowing they are a scam will reduce them to a nuisance you can easily delete.

BOTSWANA PILGRIMS COMING TO NORTH CAROLINA

In the Fall 2018 issue of the *Disciple*, you read about the experience of pilgrims from the Diocese of North Carolina as they traveled to Botswana, home of our companion diocese. The Rev. Canon Rhonda Lee shared the powerful experience and explained why these pilgrimages and companion relationships matter when she said, “[t]hey save us from abstraction and ground us in the Incarnation.... [C]onnections between parishes and ministries within our own diocese incarnate that love.... [C]onnections with [those] who live half a world away...are an even more vibrant sign of our unity and diversity.”

That distance of a half a world away will close for a while this summer, as nine pilgrims from the Diocese of Botswana—two priests and seven lay people—will visit North Carolina June 7-17. Plans for how we will welcome and host our companions are still in development, but please watch diocesan communication channels



The Rev. Canon Rhonda Lee greets a new friend during her pilgrimage to Botswana. Photo courtesy of Lee

in the coming months to learn how you might take part in nurturing and celebrating our companion relationship.

CONVENTION PREP IS UNDERWAY

Preparing for the Diocese’s Annual Convention can often seem overwhelming, but, as with so many things, it is easier when taken one step at a time.

In an effort to help congregations do just that, the Diocese is offering ways to learn more about all aspects of Convention and stay up-to-date on preparations.

The timeline outlining the steps happening between now and November is available online on the diocesan website. Look for the “204th Annual Convention” link in the Quick Links box on the homepage. All information related to Convention can be found there, and much will be added between now and November.

Readers of *Please Note*, the Diocese’s weekly e-newsletter, may also now be familiar with the new “Convention Prep” box, a quick place to check on any Convention-related news, resources and upcoming deadlines. (Subscribe to *Please Note* at bit.ly/PleaseNote.)

Last but not least, a new “Delegate Handbook” is coming soon. This resource is designed to help congregations understand what it means to be a delegate and to provide information about Convention and how it works, resources for learning about the positions for which congregations are expected to nominate candidates, and more.

The 204th Annual Convention will take place November 22-23 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem.

STAY IN TOUCH

Keep up with our diocese and bishops!



Episcopal Diocese NC
Sam Rodman
Anne Hodges-Copple



@EpiscopalNC
@samuelrodman
@bishopannehc



@episdionc
@bishoprodman
@ahodgescopple



www.vimeo.com/episcopalnc

MANY HANDS, AMAZING WORK

It's an old saying: Many hands make light work. There's truth in it, and more and more individuals and entities are proving there is another facet to it as well: Many hands produce great work.

There is a reason collaboration is being encouraged as a diocesan mission priority. Throughout the Diocese of North Carolina, collaborations are being created and discovered, the results of which have produced offerings supporting formation, social justice, Creation Care and more.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The inspiration behind the idea was simple. “I wanted to do something for Holy Week,” said the Rev. Canon Earnest Graham.

Many know Graham through his work as a regional canon for the Diocese of North Carolina. Many more know him—even if they do not know it—through his contributions to the *Disciple* in the last few years. For Graham is not just a member of the clergy and diocesan staff; he is a gifted artist as well, increasingly known for his graphic art and comic-book adaptations of the Bible.

He wanted to put that talent to use for Holy Week. “I hadn't seen it done in comic form,” Graham said. “[The Stations of the Cross] is something that really allows

for multiple images, and so I thought it was something I could share.”

He began work in December 2018. Friends and fellow graphic art fans the Rev. Dixon Kinser (rector, St. Paul's, Winston-Salem), the Rev. Josh Bowron (rector, St. Martin's, Charlotte) and the Rev. Joe Mitchell (rector, Good Shepherd, Asheboro) all expressed great interest in and support for the project, and before long Graham had invited them to be a part of it. Graham continued to contribute most of the art and some of the writing, while the others contributed both writing and art. The result of the friends' work is a beautiful journey for Holy Week in a medium not often used for such stories.

For Graham, the visual is as powerful a form of communication as any other. “The world today is visual,” he said. “And churches are using that more and more, although they've always used it to an extent. Just look at stained glass windows—they're definitely stories told in visual form.”

The Stations of the Cross is a powerful story in any form. “You aren't just hearing a story,” said Graham. “When you walk the Stations of the Cross, you're really walking with Jesus.”



Artwork from station one of The Stations of the Cross. By the Rev. Canon Earnest Graham

Walking the Stations of the Cross can be a form of meditation and a powerful experience. Bringing it to those either new to it or long familiar with it provided Graham, Kinser, Bowron and Mitchell the opportunity to connect with others the way they had when working on the project.

“Collaboration takes you down different paths than you’d ever walk if you were alone,” said Graham.

Their collaboration is a gift to us all. The Stations of the Cross are available for download, printing and sharing, either individually or as a complete comic book. Visit earnestillustrations.com to see them, or contact Graham at earnest.graham@episdionc.org.

THE MISSION ZONE

When you look at a map of Greensboro, three Episcopal Churches fall along the northern corridor. Each of the churches—Holy Spirit, St. Francis and St. Barnabas—have a distinct identity, yet their collective leadership saw an opportunity for ministry together. The question was: What form would that ministry take?

A year of discussion and discernment began in 2017 and included the Rev. Audra Abt (vicar, Holy Spirit), the Rev. Milton Williams (rector, St. Francis), the Rev. Randall Keeney (rector, St. Barnabas), the Rev. Canon Earnest Graham (diocesan regional canon) and the Rev. Beth McKee-Huger (diocesan regional deacon). As they came to know better each church’s ministry and shared thoughts on what they might offer together, they realized that formation and community outreach were the most likely ways to create a shared sense of identity that only enhanced individual church life.

The team applied for and received a Mission Endowment Grant at the end of 2017, and work together began in earnest in 2018. The plan was to focus in three areas: formation, social outreach and strengthening relationships with area young adults. It became a year of experimentation to see what might work and what wouldn’t.

What worked was worship. The three churches often offer joint worship opportunities, especially on special holy occasions such as walking the Stations of the Cross in downtown Greensboro. Group Bible studies, retreats and sharing experiences like watching Presiding Bishop Curry’s General Convention sermon have all proven effective.

Working together on outreach ministry has also provided common ground. The three churches have all provided volunteers to execute regional health fairs, pulled together in the aftermath of tornadoes going through Greensboro to provide relief and support to affected families, and become very involved assisting St. Barnabas as they continue to provide sanctuary to Juana Ortega.

What didn’t work as well was an ambitious initial timeline for implementing all of their plans, though



A combined choir from Holy Comforter, St. Martin’s and St. John’s, Charlotte, process into Holy Comforter for Evensong on March 17, 2019. Photo by Susan Brooks

expectations are to implement in 2019 the vision for reaching out to young adults and developing lay leaders.

“True collaboration grows from relationships, and that takes time,” said Abt. Despite overwhelming enthusiasm for the idea of the collaboration, the reality was that people remain busy and tended to see the joint projects as “one more thing” instead of a new way of thinking. But those involved are not daunted by the hurdle.

“Community doesn’t happen automatically, even with tremendous enthusiasm,” said Abt. “Relationship building still has to take place, and that can’t be manufactured.”

The hope is that as a rhythm is established from time spent together, whether through dinners, worship, formation events or community outreach, the gaps between congregations will begin to close, and the “Mission Zone” will simply be a wider network for those who want to reach out. Said Abt, “[The dream] is that congregations will go beyond just knowing each other and see all of North Greensboro as a spiritual home.”

JOINING VOICES: THE CHARLOTTE CONVOCATION CHOIR

Several churches in the Charlotte Convocation in the Diocese of North Carolina (Christ Church, Holy Comforter, St. John’s, St. Martin’s and St. Peter’s) have coordinated a series of services of Choral Evensong throughout the program year. On any given week, it’s possible to hear one of the city’s finest choirs lead Evensong.

Choral Evensong, one of the cherished and time-honored liturgies of the Episcopal tradition, was offered to the Charlotte convocation almost every Sunday during the program year in 2018-2019. Organist-choirmasters at three Charlotte convocation parishes joined forces to offer services of Choral Evensong on the third Sunday



Episcopal volunteers from Wake County churches raise a wall during the 2019 Episcopal Build. Photo by Olivia Bowler

of each month from September through March. Budd Kirby of St. Martin's, Patrick Pope of Holy Comforter and Alan Reed of St. John's led their choirs on a rotating basis at each parish, sharing duties of conducting and accompanying the services. These services complemented the twice-monthly Choral Evensong offered at St. Peter's under the direction of Elizabeth Lenti and the monthly offering at Christ Church under the direction of Ben Outen. St. Peter's parishioner Rob Smith created a website, choralevensongclt.org, that highlights the musical repertoire and location of the service each week and offers viewers the chance to read and anticipate what will be sung during the services.

Offering a distinct worship experience that in many ways is unlike Holy Eucharist, Choral Evensong (a sung form of Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer) is structured in a conversational manner, with verses and responses sung between the officiant and the choir, scripture lessons read by a single voice, and hymns and prayers sung by the entire assembly. Evensong enables both active and passive participation; one can sit and listen to nearly the entire service, allowing words both familiar and new to be heard and absorbed. Evensong sanctifies a period of time when the day is approaching its end.

The singers who offer their skills and gifts in the choirs that sing Choral Evensong enjoy a sense of shared purpose, camaraderie and spiritual joy through their offering of music as prayer. Nearly all of the third Sunday Evensongs in Charlotte this year have concluded with a parish-wide reception for those who attend, adding yet another dimension of fellowship and Christian community to this unique Episcopal liturgy.

- By Patrick Pope (Holy Comforter, Charlotte)

THE EPISCOPAL BUILD

Many, many churches throughout the Diocese of North

Carolina have relationships with their local Habitat for Humanity chapters. The work they do cannot be measured, but it is incredible, necessary and life-changing for the families with whom they partner.

In Wake County, it was no different. Several churches had deep and long-standing relationships with Habitat for Humanity of Wake County. What changed was when four years ago nine churches decided to come together to fund and build a home together.

Originally dubbed the "Episcopal Coalition," the group's efforts have since grown and morphed into the "Episcopal Build." Proposed at the start as a collaborative Lenten project, the timing of the now-traditional build sees the walls raised each February and the home finished several weeks later, with seemingly fewer weeks required each year.

Participating churches have gotten so good at working together, in fact, that 2019's fourth annual build is not the only home to which the Episcopal collaboration committed. In addition to their own, the Episcopal Build is helping Highland United Methodist Church build a home on a neighboring site.

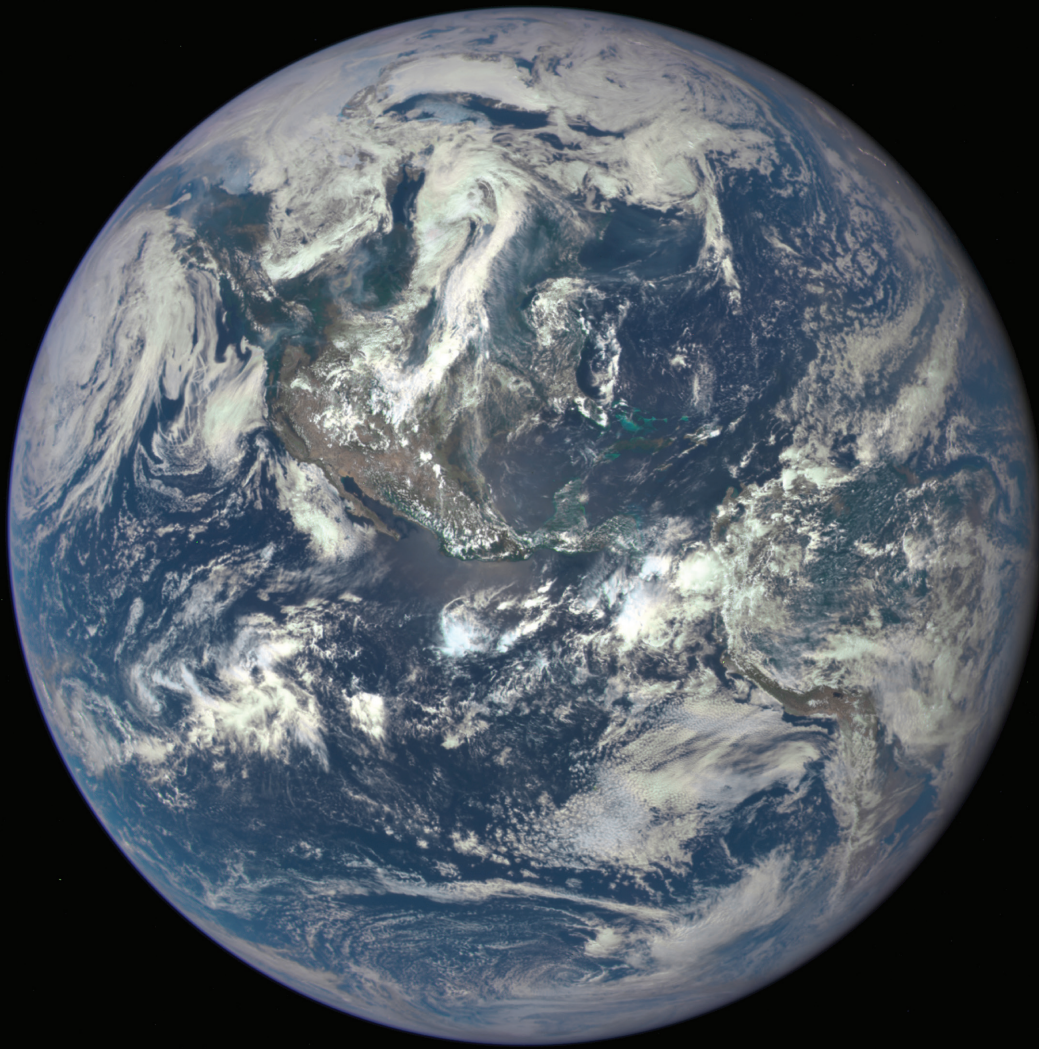
One thing the Episcopal Build proves is that none of us has to work alone, and there's great joy in partnering with groups who share common beliefs and core values, and with groups who are great at what they do, such as Habitat for Humanity. In this case, many hands create homes.

Participating churches in the 2019 build include:

- Christ Church
- Church of the Nativity
- Church of the Good Shepherd
- Episcopal Campus Ministry-Raleigh
- Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina
- St. Ambrose Episcopal Church
- Saint Augustine's University
- St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
- St. Michael's Episcopal Church
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church
- St. Timothy's Episcopal Church

• SHARE YOUR STORY!

• Are you or your church involved in a partnership with a story you want to share? We want to hear it! Contact communications@episdionc.org and tell us about the work and partnerships.



THIS FRAGILE EARTH

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s these little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu

It’s a rare thing when Easter, Earth Day and Arbor Day fall in the same week, and we couldn’t help but celebrate that 2019 trinity with a look at Creation Care. A priority of the Diocese of North Carolina, there are countless ways to start reconnecting with the land we call home. What the step is, is less important than the fact the step is taken, because it’s up to every one of us to care for this environment of which every one of us is a part.

By the Rev. Stephanie Allen

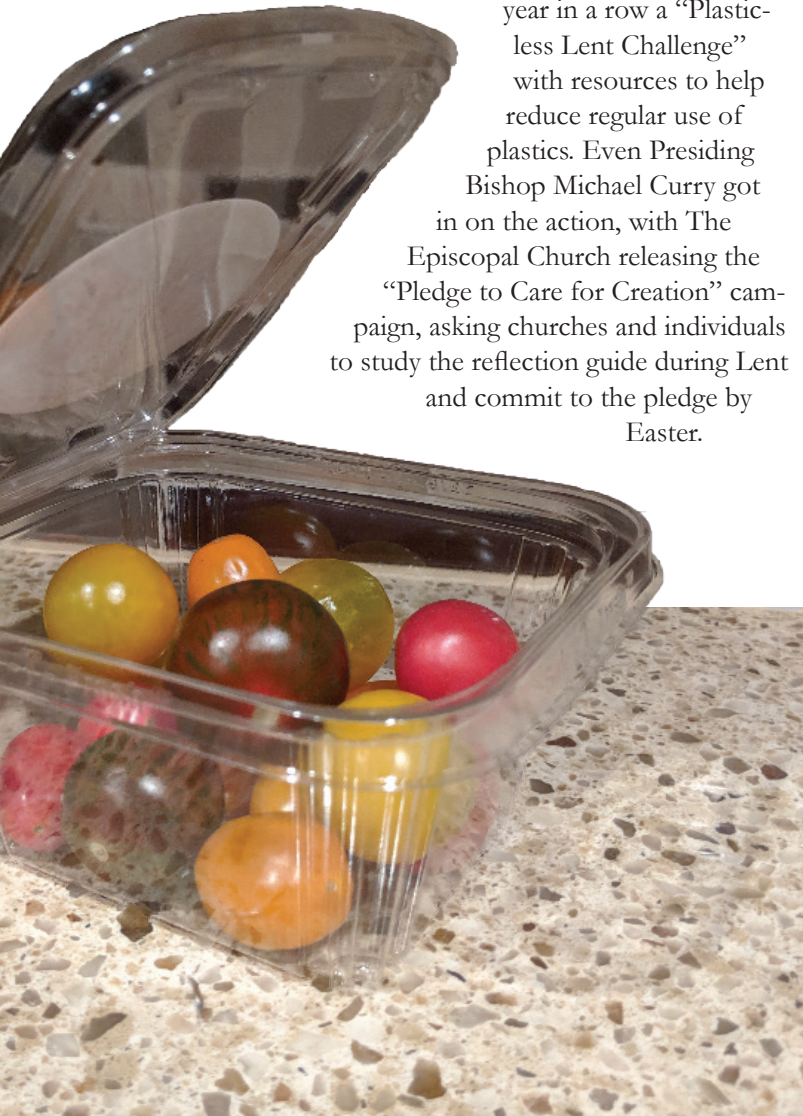
THE PLASTIC MIRROR

Questioning what one material means to us

In the classic movie “The Graduate,” recent college graduate Benjamin Braddock, played by a young Dustin Hoffman, is trying to figure out what to do with his life. A little exchange happens several times with one of his father’s friends:

Mr. Maguire: I want to say one word to you,
Benjamin. Just one word.
Benjamin Braddock: Yes, sir.
Mr. Maguire: Are you listening?
Benjamin: Yes, I am.
Mr. Maguire: Plastics.
Benjamin: Exactly how do you mean?

This Lenten season there were multiple opportunities to fast from plastic as a Lenten discipline. The “Living Lent” program from the Church of Scotland prominently featured giving up single-use plastic. The Church of England offered for the second year in a row a “Plastic-less Lent Challenge” with resources to help reduce regular use of plastics. Even Presiding Bishop Michael Curry got in on the action, with The Episcopal Church releasing the “Pledge to Care for Creation” campaign, asking churches and individuals to study the reflection guide during Lent and commit to the pledge by Easter.



A Google search of “giving up plastic for Lent” brings up millions of results. All these options leave us as befuddled as poor Benjamin Braddock: Exactly how do you mean?

A PLASTIC FAST

Why fast from plastic? Why take a pledge to care for creation? I know I can tune into certain news outlets that will tell me the planet is doomed, global warming is assured and human-created climate change is responsible for the destruction of us all. I can also tune into other news outlets that will tell me all of it is a hoax. What is a good Episcopalian, trying to follow in the Way of Love of Jesus, supposed to think about all of this?

Fasting from plastic is in many ways fasting from convenience. Convenience that, for many of us, comes at the expense of creation care. My productivity and busyness are my idols, and the convenience of plastics the temple that allows me to worship my own importance. Jesus said in more than one Gospel, “Where your treasure is, there is your heart.” How much do I spend on convenience?

Too much? Maybe. Is this just life as we know it today, and what else can we do? Maybe. As much as I rely on the very things we understand contribute to climate change, when I start to listen to that quiet whisper that I deserve all of these things and my way of life is too important to question, I become the center of my universe. Those whispers drown out the voice of God, who wants to be the center of my life, who desires my actions be oriented towards loving God and loving my neighbor. Consider the words of the Litany of Penitence read at Ash Wednesday:

We confess to you, Lord, all our fast unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives...

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people...

Our intemperate love of worldly good and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work...

What if we went old school, back to St. Augustine, St. Ambrose and Thomas Aquinas, and used the ideas of “cardinal virtues” to talk about climate change? Rather than gloom and doom or outright denial, what if we, as Episcopalians, examined our use of fossil fuels through the lenses of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice?

THROUGH THE LENS

What if I looked at my life with some prudence and wisdom, and opened my eyes to the consequences of climate change on my health, my children's health and the health of my planet? My quick drive through the drive-thru for an easy dinner has consequences via the resources used to make that convenience a reality for me. Where do we, as a culture, take certain ways of life for granted, telling ourselves things like mass transportation and renewable energy are not feasible or sensible? Is that prudent, or might we go deeper into wisdom to find alternate solutions?

I acknowledge I am using my trip through the drive-thru as a straw man. The health of the planet will not be restored if I simply stop it with the fast food. And it is not reality to say I will never again eat another hamburger from McDonald's. I'm simply not that good of a person. But if I start questioning my assumptions about the things I utilize to make my life work, if I can have the fortitude and courage to face the impact of my Costco membership with its easy access to must-buy fruit kept in a plastic clamshell that traveled a very long way, if I can have the courage to ask for God's help in finding a different way and ask for grace when I reach the limits of my imagination, what might that look like?

Speaking of Costco, I wonder what my interior life might look like if I spent more time around the virtue of temperance. I don't mean giving up wine for Lent. If temperance is the restraint of appetite, what are the things I tell myself I must have, the appetite for bigger and better for my church, my family, myself? Temperance asks us to consider well our choices as consumers. Temperance reminds us our souls are fed through communion with God. I believe temperance asks me to set aside the privilege I hold to think I am entitled to all that I own.

Which leads us to justice. We talk a lot about racism and racial reconciliation in the Diocese of North Carolina. Part of that work is a recognition there is a racial gap in the communities that create pollution and the communities that suffer the effects. In reporting on a study published in the journal "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America" (PNAS), National Public Radio said, "The researchers found that air pollution is disproportionately caused by white Americans' consumption of goods and services, but disproportionately inhaled by black and Hispanic Americans." What if the racial reconciliation, social justice and environmental ministries in our churches worked together to address the environmental impacts of racism? It could bring home the fact that while we might feel virtuous recycling the plastic bottles we drank during the meeting, it's more and more likely those bottles are actually going to end up in a landfill, leaking plastic particulates into the ground and ground water, or will be burned in an incin-

THE PLASTIC CHALLENGE

The role of plastic in our lives is a very good starting place to examine our life choices and the effects those choices have on the world around us. Learn more about the effects of plastic on the environment and how you can undertake your own "plastic fast" at any point in the year.

The Episcopal Church's Creation Care Pledge: bit.ly/EpiscopalPledge

Church of Scotland's "Living Lent": livinglent.org

Church of England's "Plastic-less Lent": bit.ly/PlasticLessLent

Study on racial gap between pollution creators and those who live with the effects: bit.ly/NPRStudy

"The Story of Bottled Water": bit.ly/BottledWaterStory

erator that resides in somebody else's backyard.

The actual virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice mean we have to question what really happens to those bottles when we are done.

TAKE HEART

Are you overwhelmed now? Hopeless? Back to gloom and doom? Take heart! Not only does our Christian tradition give us the four cardinal virtues, we also have the three "theological" virtues of faith, hope and love. We don't need to save the world; Jesus has already done that. We will affect change not by our own merit, but through the saving grace of God. Faith allows us to act, even if we don't know the result, even if we don't act perfectly and even when we fail. Hope allows us to see the possibility of a healthy planet restored to wholeness - a new creation that God has promised. Love gives us the power to love ourselves when we fail, love our neighbors to create a better place for them and to love our God who guides us through it all.

The Rev. Stephanie Allen is the rector at Nativity, Raleigh. Contact her at sa@nativityonline.org.

With the topic of climate change and creation care taking on increasingly urgent tones, the number become overwhelming. There are two resources, however, that provide clear information and

By Carl Sigel and Christine McTaggart

ZEROWASTECHURCH.ORG

Learning from Nature: Moving to Zero Waste

Developing approaches to addressing our ecological challenges, including climate change, can be daunting. We know some of the most needed actions like drastically lowering emissions are beyond what we can do as individuals. Clearly massive reductions need to be addressed by the large corporations and government. That is okay. We can still do our part in lowering emissions, and we can also take many other small steps. These can become big steps when many people take them. A groundswell of individual efforts can have a very significant impact.

Understanding how the world God created works can help us learn how to live in harmony with one another and the rest of creation. One trait found in nature, but not in humankind, is that in nature nothing is wasted—everything is recycled. In contrast, because of the way we live on Earth, humans recycle only 6% of materials. Consequently, we suffer from pollution of our air, water and land. The most straightforward way for us to avoid this problem is to stop being so wasteful.

To reduce our wastefulness life changes are necessary. Humankind has faced difficult challenges before, and we have demonstrated that by working together and by using our ingenuity, we can overcome great adversity. Reversing the current trend of climate change is another one of those challenges. We need to find ways to conserve valuable resources and to reduce or eliminate waste of food, water and energy.



Welcome To
ZeroWasteChurch.org!

Helping Churches Care for Creation



A ministry of the Church of the Nativity, Raleigh NC

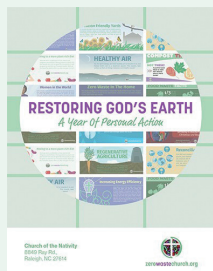
ZeroWasteChurch.org is a resource created as part of the ministry of Nativity, Raleigh, to help churches care for creation. Though built as a tool for congregations, the guidance it provides toward becoming a zero-waste church applies just as well to individuals seeking a path to a more eco-friendly way of life.

At its heart is “A Year of Personal Action,” a step-by-step guidebook intended to replace feelings of hopelessness and being overwhelmed with inspiration, information and ways to take action. Broken down by month, each month is assigned a different topic such as increasing energy efficiency, healthy air, conserving water and zero waste in the home. The pages include an overview of the topic and the potential impact simple changes can make, followed by small steps to implement those changes, a few each week. Finally, participants are provided additional resources to go deeper once the first steps have been taken. The best part is that it can be started at any time—who says a new year’s resolution has to start in January?

“A Year of Personal Action” is only the start of what can be found at ZeroWasteChurch.org. Insightful blog posts, theology, upcoming events and a multitude of resources await you. Whether you and your congregation are looking for your first steps or a deeper challenge in caring for God’s earth, ZeroWasteChurch.org provides a path to follow.

Carl Sigel is a member of the diocesan Chartered Committee on Environmental Ministry and a parishioner at Nativity, Raleigh. Contact him at cwsigel@aol.com.

NEXT STEPS



“A Year of Personal Action” can be downloaded today from the ZeroWasteChurch.org website.

of resources available to those wishing to take action has also increased to the point it can easily direction to get started or go deeper, whether as individuals or a congregation.

SUSTAINISLANDHOME.ORG

Tracking the impact

If ZeroWasteChurch.org gives us the way to plan our Creation Care steps, a new tool from The Episcopal Church provides us a way to measure the results and prove that every little bit helps.

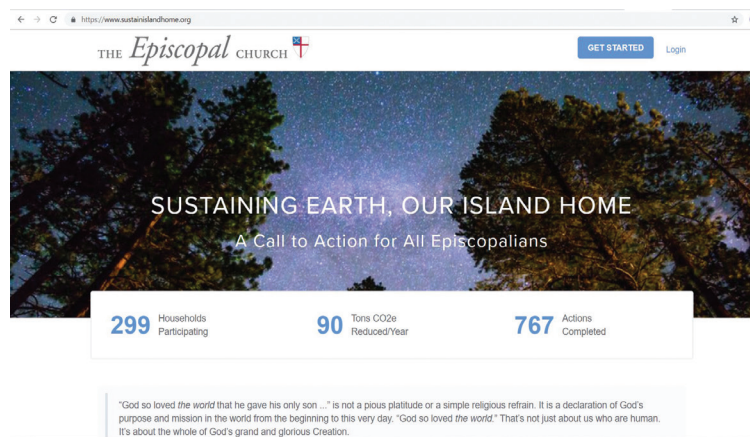
SustainIslandHome.org was created in and by the Diocese of California in partnership with Climate Solutions Net. It is a carbon tracker that helps users of the site see the carbon footprint they make, but it doesn't stop there. Users of the site also see the impact of changes they make, as an individual and as part of a congregation, diocese and the whole Episcopal Church. The idea is to show that every small contribution by a single person, when added to the efforts of others, really does make a significant collective difference.

The site focuses on areas in which everyone can make a difference, like energy efficiency and water usage, for example. It measures your impact on focus areas by looking at your local community, home life, transportation and habits. After setting a baseline based on information entered, estimates on recommended actions are provided to help make decisions about where to start making changes, or about what to leave alone where things are going well. As actions are chosen and begun, users can then begin to see the positive impact even small changes, like turning off the water when brushing your teeth, can make.

Getting started is simple. Users visit SustainIslandHome.org and select their diocese to begin building their profile. Though individuals can participate on their own, congregations and dioceses are part of the profile so participants can see how their efforts become part of the greater whole when added to the efforts of others. As more join the site, results based on individuals, congregations, dioceses and the Church will be seen.

All of the efforts are supported not just by data. The site also includes resources, helpful links and space for online discussion. The goal is to help create the community we need to be in order to build positive momentum in the effort to start reversing the damage done to our environment and embracing a way of life that is much more in partnership with the world around us.

The site is so new that the rollout is only just under-



way. Because of its work and commitment to Creation Care, the Diocese of North Carolina was chosen as one of five early adopters of the site. The final touches are being put in place throughout Lent with full access expected in time to celebrate Earth Day. As the site continues to roll out, every participating congregation will have its own page to help individuals come together and work as a team.

We encourage every person in the Diocese of North Carolina to explore SustainIslandHome.org, not just now in its early stages, but as it continues to develop and grow. The diocesan Chartered Committee on Environmental Ministry stands ready to help congregations become familiar with and get started on the site, and the Diocese will continue to share out information and updates on the progress of the site's implementation throughout the rest of the year.

No one person can fix the damage done to our environment, but together, we can. SustainIslandHome.org shows us just how true that is.

NEXT STEPS

To request an introduction to SustainIslandHome.org for your congregation, contact communications@episdionc.org.

CHANGES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In the last few years, we've been introduced to many churches and the steps they've taken in their commitment to Creation Care. From Nativity, Raleigh's Zero Waste initiative to St. Mary, High Point's Community Center's intentional design to qualify for a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification—one of the first Christian church buildings in North Carolina to do so—congregations have taken steps big and small to reconnect to the land around them. The steps and journey continue, and today even more churches around the Diocese of North Carolina are eager to share their stories in the hope we can all see the variety of possibilities no matter what our size or location.

STORMWATER PROJECT Good Shepherd, Raleigh

In the Spring 2018 issue of the *Disciple*, readers were introduced to rain gardens. St. Ambrose, Raleigh, installed a rain garden on church property as part of the property's wetland ecosystem. Designed to capture rainwater runoff from parking lots, sidewalks, roofs and other nonporous surfaces, the garden's plants absorb the water and the pollutants contained within it, preventing flooding and soil erosion.

Rain gardens do not have to be located in a natural setting to be effective, as Good Shepherd, Raleigh, is working to help demonstrate. In partnership with the City of Raleigh through the Rainwater Rewards Program, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension and NC State University, Good Shepherd is installing one of the area's first urban-environment rain gardens.

One of the environmental challenges of urban areas is the inability of stormwater, defined as the runoff from rain and snow, to be reabsorbed into the soil. Instead, it runs from rooftops to sidewalks and streets into drains, accumulating debris, chemicals and other pollutants along the way.

The rain garden at Good Shepherd will work to combat that. Strategically placed on the southwest corner of the church's property, the garden will capture the water running off from the church's roof and parking areas, while the plants absorb the water and pollutants before it can reach city drains.

"As part of our commitment to being good stewards of creation, we were looking for a project that would allow us to live into that aspect of our faith while also being good neighbors to our downtown Raleigh



The rain garden will run along the narrow strip of natural area between the parking lot on the southwest corner of the Good Shepherd property. Currently that space is prone to runoff and erosion. Photo by Kirk Royal

community and beyond," the Rev. Dr. Cheryl McFadden, associate rector for family ministry, explained. "By creating a space designed to combat all the stormwater runoff from the impervious cover surrounding our property, we not only are answering God's call to care for the Earth, we also are answering God's call to love one another—a two for one, if you will."

The project is funded largely through Raleigh's Rainwater Rewards Program and in part by a diocesan Green Grant, and work on the garden begins this summer. When it is complete, not only will Good Shepherd have a beautiful centerpiece on its property, it will also have an extraordinary example to help educate other local leaders on the benefits of urban rain gardens and making intentional environmental choices.

Follow the progress of Good Shepherd's stormwater project at cgs-raleigh.org, or like them on Facebook at facebook.com/cgsraleigh.

property to serve their surrounding community. A community garden was considered, but they wanted an offering that would draw people to the church, regardless of whether they attended.

So it was decided that instead of a food-producing garden, a sacred garden anchored in native trees would

THE ARBORETUM All Saints', Concord

Six years ago, members of All Saints', Concord, gathered to discern how they might best use their nine-acre church

be created. The goal was to build a park-like space where neighbors could visit, rest, learn and reconnect with nature.

It was not a project to be completed overnight; in fact, it was a project expected to take as long as 20 years to complete, with an end goal of building an “outdoor cathedral” in which all would be welcome in an atmosphere designed to foster spiritual tranquility and encourage a connection with the natural world. Every step of the process has been intentional, created as a series of “rooms,” except each room is a garden.

It was decided the garden would feature trees native to North Carolina, as native trees are more likely to thrive in the climate, less likely to grow uncontrollably and certain to provide food and shelter for bugs, birds and other animals. Eighteen species of trees were selected in all.

Visitors to the Arboretum find not just peace but information as well. Along the garden paths are placed “post markers,” each of which contain identifying information about the tree it stands in front of, as well as a QR code that can be scanned for additional information.

All Saints’ hopes to extend community education beyond their nine acres, as they are currently working toward becoming a Community Canopy partner with the Arbor Day Foundation (arborday.org). The Community Canopy program works with companies, cities, states and nonprofits to help educate neighborhoods and homeowners on the right trees to plant in given locations



The Learning Circle, part of The Path garden at All Saints, Concord, is a 12-foot-wide circle—one foot for each disciple—and 13 benches, the 13th of which is for Jesus. Photo by Mark Robinson

and provide easier access to those trees. The program also works to introduce community partners as sources of information and help build awareness of the work partners are doing.

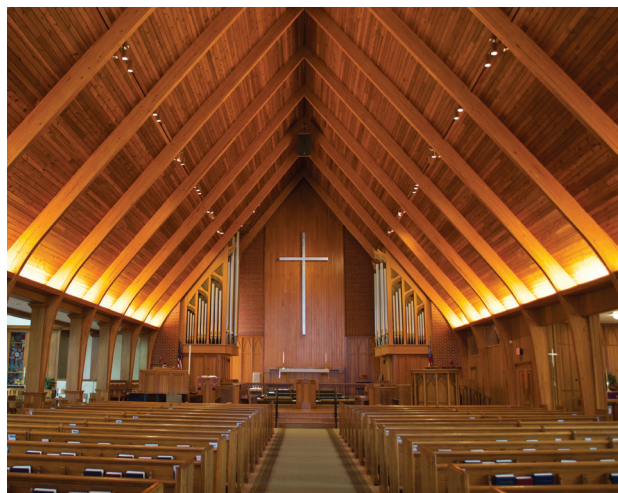
“One of the goals of the Arboretum is to show through our actions what good stewardship looks like,” said Mark Robinson, one of the leaders on the project. For six years, those actions have been intentional and tireless, bringing together congregation and community under the canopy of native trees, and the momentum built only continues to grow.

PROVEN RESULTS

St. Michael’s, Raleigh

One step leads to another, as St. Michael’s, Raleigh, has shown over the last several years. When it comes to Creation Care, they have worked closely with the diocesan Chartered Committee on Environmental Ministry, first starting a recycling program. As that took hold, they increased the recycling efforts, installing recycling bins around the church property and ensuring that hospitality materials such as disposable coffee cups and lids all met recycling standards. With the recycling established, St. Michael’s then began a composting program, so that all food materials, coffee grounds and filters, napkins and altar flowers found a way to be useful again instead of becoming waste.

Yet another effort has proven not only environmentally sound, but financially sound as well. Over the last few years, St. Michael’s has worked to convert all of their lighting to LED lights, including the nave in 2018. Results have shown the efforts were worth it. Comparing energy usage in the church with the former lights versus the LEDs, the new lights have reduced energy usage



Converting the nave of St. Michael’s, Raleigh, to LED lighting is the church’s most recent effort toward Creation Care. Photo by Susan Rountree

by 17%, and the church saw an energy cost savings of approximately \$200 per month.

Results like that can’t help but be encouraging, so St. Michael’s is now exploring solar panels in the hope of installing them on the roof of the church kitchen and Parish House.

FINE CHINA

Good Shepherd, Ridgeway

The steps taken by Good Shepherd, Ridgeway, in the name of Creation Care date back to Bishop Michael Curry's call at Annual Convention several years ago. Answering his call to take care of the world in which we live, Good Shepherd made the decision to stop using

disposable materials at their coffee hour. Since then, Janet Lesser, Good Shepherd's coffee hour volunteer, has ensured those who enjoy the church's coffee hour and hospitality do so on real china, silverware and cloth napkins, leaving only the coffee filters for disposal.

Today, Good Shepherd is in the process of fulfilling a long-desired goal: updating their HVAC system to a new, energy-efficient model.

COLLECT AND SEND

St. Stephen's, Durham

There are few among us who can say we haven't enjoyed a refreshing beverage in a red Solo cup or delighted in popping the air-filled compartments of bubble wrap. Unfortunately, neither of those, along with other commonly used items, are accepted in the City of Durham's recycling program.

St. Stephen's, Durham, did not accept the situation and instead searched for another solution. It came in the form of TerraCycle (terracycle.com), a recycling company that specializes in hard-to-recycle waste like plastic cups and coffee capsules. After completing a short application, St. Stephen's was accepted into the Solo Cup Brigade, allowing them to collect and send via a pre-paid address label the recyclable cups not accepted locally.

St. Stephen's also collects bubble wrap and packing peanuts for return to the Scrap Exchange in Durham, ensuring these materials are recycled or reused instead of heading for a landfill.



ONE STEP AT A TIME

Diocesan House

While the focus of implementing diocesan priorities often stays on the development of helpful resources and celebrating the work happening in our worshipping communities, it sometimes goes unrealized that the diocesan staff is on the journey to Becoming Beloved Community right alongside every member of our congregations. Though located in the center of downtown Raleigh, Diocesan House, too, is working to reconnect with the land.

Shortly after the announcement of the mission priority, staff members met to discuss what steps might be taken within diocesan offices to reduce waste. Recycling had long been in place, but staff wanted to do more. So in 2018, the Diocese began an in-office composting program, encouraging staff and visitors alike to take part. The effort took hold, and soon office supply purchases were adjusted to ensure as much as possible that disposable items are now made of compostable or



The compost bin in the back hallway at Diocesan House.

recyclable material. No staff can survive without coffee, but now the fix comes via reusable Keurig coffee filters instead of the single-use cups. These days instead of a full garbage can at the end of each day, it's the recycling and composting bins that fill, while the garbage can contains a fraction of what it once did.

Next on the list is exploring how the office might increase its energy-efficiency. As with any journey, it's being taken one step at a time, but those steps are steady and sure.

GET STARTED

If the preceding pages have shown us anything, it's that there is no one right way to get started in the work of Creation Care. There is much to be done, and there is room for us all to do it.

It's understood how easily we can be overwhelmed with the magnitude of the needs of Creation Care, so keep a few simple kindnesses in mind as you get started:

- **Step by step:** Don't try to do too much all at once. This isn't a sprint you'll complete and be done; this is a shift in thinking and the way you live. Set yourself up for success by taking steps you know you can implement, and let the new habits take hold before introducing the next one.
- **Set time frames:** One reason so many behaviors and habits are altered during Lent is because it provides a finite time frame to experience the new habit (or lack thereof) without committing to a lifetime. Follow that model, set a finite time frame so your focus remains on the new habit, and when the time elapses, assess how things are going and either continue or adjust as needed.
- **Don't be afraid to fail:** You won't know what's going to work for you until you try, and some of the things you try may just not work. It's okay. The trying is the important part, so if something isn't working for you, don't let it stress you. If you can, identify why it doesn't work, and adjust if possible or try something else. It's also okay to hit the reset button and make a second attempt.

FIRST STEPS

Looking for first-step ideas? Try these!

1. **Weekly Green Tips:** The Chartered Committee on Environmental Ministry offers weekly green tips on diocesan social media channels. Try one or two—you'll be surprised how even a simple change can have a profound effect on your thinking. Including the tips in weekly church bulletins is a great way to get your congregation involved as well.
2. **Green reflections:** Shared on diocesan channels the last day of every month, these reflections are informative, insightful and inspiring as they range among the various facets of Creation Care.
3. **Take the pledge:** The Episcopal Church called for 1,000 pledges to Creation Care during Lent, but there's no need to be so formal. Make a pledge to yourself to take a green step; making that promise to yourself in any form is a great way to keep it.

RESOURCES

There are literally millions of resources related to Creation Care out there, but here are a few proving helpful to our mission work:

- **The Chartered Committee on Environmental Ministry:** This diocesan committee is tireless in their work, sharing information, creating initiatives and working with congregations on their Creation Care efforts. If you need guidance or assistance—or if you'd like to get involved with the committee—don't hesitate to contact them. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/DioNCEnvironmentalMinistry>
- **Green Grants:** Offered by the NC Episcopal Church Foundation, Green Grants are intended to assist congregations make improvements to their building or grounds to conserve resources and energy, and shrink their carbon footprint. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/DioNCGreenGrants>
- **ZeroWasteChurch.org** (see page 18): Great starting point for churches and individuals; includes downloadable "A Year of Personal Action"
- **SustainIslandHome.org** (see page 19): New tool from The Episcopal Church to help track the impact of your positive changes
- **NC Interfaith Power & Light** (ncipl.org): A tremendous resource for information and action ideas (including free energy analysis)

TELL US YOUR STORY

The ways in which churches in the Diocese of North Carolina are committing to Creation Care are seemingly endless, each of which provides inspiration, energy and guidance for the rest of us.

Tell us your story! We want to continue sharing all the ways we're reconnecting with the land around us and showing our love for God's creation. To share the work your church is doing, contact communications@episdionc.org.

KEEPING THE PEACE

Individuals and congregations within the Diocese of North Carolina increasingly are engaging in direct action to bring an Episcopal voice to the public square. Whether it's Raleigh Episcopalians participating in Moral Monday marches, Greensboro Episcopalians demonstrating for immigration and prison reforms, or Durham Episcopalians walking in the city's annual Pride Parade, many individuals and congregations choose to express their Episcopal beliefs in part by participating in marches, demonstrations or public calls to action.

While each congregation and individual must discern where God's call leads, public engagement by Episcopalians within our Diocese follows a long tradition of direct action by people of faith, whether during the Civil Rights movement or recent Episcopal Church actions at an immigrant detention center during this summer's General Convention. Even if you are not called to this type of public ministry, many of the considerations and strategies of nonviolent public protest are helpful in navigating life's difficult conversations and tense interactions.

"The work of identifying and peacefully interrupting hateful speech or actions is one expression of our commitment to reconciliation," the Rev. Canon Rhonda Lee, diocesan regional canon, said. "Christians believe that God reconciled the world to Godself in Jesus Christ, but we also know that this world is still marked by sin. We are called to do what we can to embody love and justice, standing with those who are targeted for violence and witnessing to a better way."

The following framework and strategies are drawn from two trainings: a May 2018 Nonviolent Action Training for Clergy put on by Ready the Ground and hosted by St. Philip's, Durham, and a March 2019 Inciting Peace training put on by Faith in Public Life. Ready the Ground "strengthens movements for social justice in North Carolina, primarily through offering training in nonviolent direct action and marshaling." Their framework for deciding whether or not to participate in an action is helpful even if you do not plan to engage physically. Faith in Public Life is "a national network of nearly 50,000 clergy and faith leaders united in the prophetic pursuit of justice and the common good." Their recent training focused on how to identify, decode and rebuff speech that could move communities toward violence.

HOW DO WE DECIDE TO SHOW UP?

Ready the Ground frames it this way: When we intervene against the intimidation, oppression or threatening of a particular group, we are actually intervening on behalf of ourselves because we want to live in a world in which

no one is persecuted and everyone is able to exist safely. Allies—people who are not members of a targeted group but want to help—need to find ways to be supportive but not make themselves part of the narrative. This means holding space for people from affected communities to lead and organize, and using your privilege to make sure their voices, concerns and proposed solutions are heard.

"The primary role of an ally is to use your privilege to make room for other people in a place where their voice is not always welcome," Kahran Myers, Faith in Public Life North Carolina state manager explained.

HOW TO CHANGE MINDS

Faith in Public Life also recognizes the role words play in targeting groups for harm. While hate speech is easy to recognize, dangerous speech—speech that increases the risk that its audience will condone or participate in violence against members of another group—is far more subtle. Hate speech explicitly intends harm, and while the intent behind dangerous speech is not necessarily harmful, its impact can move communities toward violence. Dangerous speech is not limited to protests and counter-protests; it happens every day on social media and in casual interactions, so allies have plenty of opportunities to counter it.

"Speech can increase the risk of violence. It can also be one of the best tools to reduce it," Rachel Oliver, who led the Inciting Speech training and is a sociologist who studies dangerous speech, said in her presentation.

Oliver emphasized dangerous speech generally is based in fear, and attempts to combat it should address the underlying fears of the speaker. She explained that fear exists in the most primitive parts of our limbic system to keep us safe, so we are biologically wired to overestimate threats. Speech that plays on the notion a particular group is coming to take something from your community plays on fear. So does speech that warns of danger or promises greater safety. For example, dangerous speech targeted at men often references threats to women's purity or threats of violence against women coupled with a call to protect them. The emphasis on perceived danger allows both the speaker and the hearer to believe they are good people who don't hate or want to harm anyone but have no other choice if they want to protect their community.

Since fear of an outside group is an underlying motivation of dangerous speech, Oliver explained an effective technique in changing minds is helping people identify not with their own group of like people—whether delineated by race, gender, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation or identity—but with their broader community.

This is an especially useful technique when speaking to fellow Christians since the Bible is clear everyone is loved by God.

“It’s hard to get people to give up their identities, but can be done through helping people develop a new overarching identity that unifies them,” Oliver said.

She also recommended helping people construct a journey narrative to frame their changing beliefs. Doing so helps to avoid resistance based on shame or regret.

Myers emphasizes expecting the best in people as a framework for tough conversations.

“When people say things that are short-sighted or close-minded, and may seem malicious, it may just be ignorance to a reality that certain people face and they don’t,” she said.

IN OUR DIOCESAN LIFE

Of the five diocesan mission priorities intended to bring us closer to Becoming Beloved Community, “engaging in deeper dialogue and multi-layered conversations...with particular attention to race, political tensions between left and right, and the economic divide” is first. Without the ability to have difficult conversations in an honest and sincere way, we can make no progress toward Beloved Community.

Public witness is a form of those conversations. So are our interactions with each other, in person and on social media. As we have seen before, public witness and personal interactions can make a statement. They can make a difference. They can start or deepen a conversation that leads to change.

When violence, however, becomes a part of public witness against dangerous speech, it ends any chance of those conversations starting. Anger drowns out what needs to be heard. Emotional turmoil shuts down the open hearts and minds needed to have the conversations and recognize the actions required to bring about true change. Our work stalls.

We must remember that Jesus, too, faced those whose thoughts and actions differed from what he knew to be right. He advocated peaceful response, teaching us, “[y]ou have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43-45)

Summerlee Walter is the communications coordinator for the Diocese of North Carolina. Contact her at summerlee.walter@episdionc.org.



Triangle Episcopal churches march in Durham’s annual Pride Parade in September 2018. Photo by William Gutknecht

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGING *from Ready the Ground*

1. What goals do you have? Why is this action the best thing you can do now to accomplish those goals?
2. Are you centering/following people most impacted? Are you there to support or take up space?
3. Do you have a group who knows and trusts each other and have worked together on this issue for at least two years? If so, what do they think about this action?
4. Can we get a critical mass of people power to create more safety?
5. Does this strategy or tactic bring in people to join us and broaden our base?
6. Does this strategy/tactic strengthen our people’s resolve?
7. Is it offensive or defensive? Which serves us best in reaching our goals?
8. What are the ramifications of this tactic? Any possible collateral damage? Are we responding to baiting? If so, what are the ramifications?
9. Does this strategy/tactic endanger our people?
10. Does this strategy/tactic strengthen our people’s resolve?

CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST FUTURE

EUAR-sponsored 2019 Faith Summit on Racism and Child Poverty draws more than 400 advocates

Five years ago during a Racial Equity Institute (REI) training, Durham Episcopalians DeDreana Freeman (St. Philip's, Durham) and Cathy Rimer-Surles (St. Luke's, Durham) were sitting in the outer circle of chairs reserved for people who had already attended the training at least once. As they tell it, after hearing a first-time attendee in the inner circle identify herself as an Episcopal priest, during the next break they “descended” on the woman, who turned out to be the Rev. Dr. Jeanine Driscoll (now priest associate at Advocate, Chapel Hill). Collectively, the three women recruited other local Episcopalians to attend an REI training and started hosting book studies in which they discussed systemic racism in the United States.

From that collaboration, Freeman, Rimer-Surles and Driscoll, along with the Rev. Monnie Riggan (now deacon at St. Andrew's, Haw River) and the Rev. Javier Almendárez-Bautista (now associate rector at St. Paul's, Cary), founded Episcopalians United Against Racism (EUAR). On its website, EUAR describes itself as “an independent alliance of anti-racist Episcopalians from parishes primarily based in the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina...who are part of a growing movement of community members and people of faith who have devoted ourselves to the long-term, transformative work

of creating racially equitable systems and organizations.” As its goals, EUAR names internalizing the inseparability of racial equity and anti-poverty work, and engaging with people from all backgrounds to challenge structures that perpetuate white supremacy in an age of “colorblindness.”

One of EUAR's early projects grew from the founders' experiences trying to extend what they learned in REI training. While many REI training participants are motivated to attend at least in part due to their faith, the workshop does not discuss a faith basis for anti-racism work. In response, three years ago EUAR began designing an eight-module curriculum to guide conversations around systemic racism in religious communities. This spring, the curriculum debuted at a local Presbyterian church as part of its Sunday morning and evening adult forums. In response to tweaks made by the church, EUAR currently is writing two additional modules to establish a common language and perform a power analysis of race at the beginning of the curriculum. (One of REI training's major foci is building a common vocabulary and framework through which to understand systemic racism. Without this common understanding, conversations stall easily.)

PARTNERSHIPS

Working with a church from another denomination to expand the curriculum is one example of the way EUAR seeks out partnerships with groups doing transformative anti-racism and anti-poverty work. Another such partner is End Poverty Durham, a grassroots group seeking to mobilize community and faith organizations to eliminate Durham's 27% child poverty rate and 18.5% adult poverty rate within the next 25 years. (This is a city with a 2013-2017 median household income of \$56,393, per the U.S. Census Bureau.)

During spring 2018, EUAR had the chance to expand its impact with a new diocesan partnership through the Mission Endowment Grant. The group received \$25,000 for anti-poverty and anti-racism training. The grant has allowed EUAR to expand and enhance its anti-poverty/anti-racism collaboration with End Poverty Durham, and to promote the collaboration as a model for helping working poor families attain financial sustainability through partnership with non-profits led by people of color most impacted by poverty and racism such as Communities in Partnership (CIP).



Cathy Rimer-Surles and DeDreana Freeman address more than 400 attendees during the 2019 Faith Summit on Racism and Child Poverty sponsored by EUAR. All photos by Summerlee Walter

CONVENING

A major part of the work took place on March 7 at Union Baptist Church in Durham, when more than 400 people from Durham's nonprofit, advocacy, religious and education communities gathered for the 2019 Faith Summit on Racism and Child Poverty. The day-long event focused on anti-racism and advocacy training, and networking among people from diverse sectors of the Durham community already engaging in anti-racism and anti-poverty work. The goals for participants were threefold: to gain awareness and understanding of racism as the root cause of child poverty; to discover resources and services to reduce racism and child poverty; and to create collaborative steps for congregations and organizations to work together to reduce racism and child poverty in Durham.

The wide range of supporters and partners gives a sense of the deep and diverse wisdom gathered in the church: Duke Health, Duke University Chapel, Duke Office of Durham and Regional Affairs, North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, Self-Help Credit Union and the Center for Responsible Lending, the Methodist Federation for Social Action-North Carolina Conference, Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, First Presbyterian Church, Watts Street Baptist Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church. The Most Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church, delivered greetings via video. The Rev. Jimmy Hawkins from the United Methodist Church delivered opening remarks.

"We are living in a day when children face developmental challenges due to outside forces," he said, reminding participants that Christianity, Judaism and Islam all teach that we have a duty to care for children. He contrasted this mandate with the fact North Carolina is 15th among states in deep poverty, in which households earn 50% or less of the federal poverty level, and children of color are disproportionately affected. Hawkins introduced a theme that ran throughout the day: Race impacts not only wealth and poverty, but also areas as diverse as educational outcomes, health outcomes and access to transportation.

Freeman, one of the founders of EUAR and summit organizer, emphasized this point as she presented with co-founder and co-organizer Rimer-Surles.

"You live in racism," she said. "I live into being black. Cathy lives into being white. You have to undo that."

"It's not relevant to ask, 'Am I racist or not?'" Rimer-Surles said. "You have to ask, 'How does racism impact me?'"



The Rev. Jimmy Hawkins delivers opening remarks during the 2019 Faith Summit on Racism and Child Poverty.

Participants also heard from Ariel E. Guerrero from O & G Consulting, who did a racial equity analysis of Durham, and a panel of local nonprofit leaders of color who discussed the ways in which nonprofits that aren't based in the community can bring harmful assumptions and inappropriate solutions to bear on issues that might not even be a priority for members of the community.

During the afternoon, attendees broke into affiliate groups to discuss ways in which their work might intersect in the areas of education and healthcare.

"From infant mortality to life expectancy, race predicts how well you will do," Guerrero explained, adding that, while outcomes are tied to zip codes, if all else is equal, race is still the number one predictor.

NEXT STEPS

In addition to the summit, EUAR also used part of its grant to fund the EUAR divinity school intern, Madeleine Rebouche, and to update and enhance the organization's website. The grant also helps fund several anti-racism training scholarships as well as leadership development opportunities. Going forward, EUAR will continue the conversation around advancing racial equity with monthly roundtable discussions and action plans around the root causes of poverty. The eight-part curriculum will also be available soon via the EUAR and diocesan websites (euarofnc.org and episditionc.org, respectively).

Summerlee Walter is the communications coordinator for the Diocese of North Carolina. Contact her at summerlee.walter@episditionc.org.

LEARN MORE

Join the conversation around anti-racism work and eliminating poverty on the Episcopalians United Against Racism website, euarofnc.org.



By the Rev. Ginny Bain Inman

PRACTICE RESURRECTION

A reflection on Easter

*Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
The Lord is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

This bold Easter proclamation is the single most radical statement Christians ever make—especially Episcopalians who tend to avoid exclamation points in church. The claim that Jesus the Christ, the one crucified as a criminal on the outskirts of Jerusalem, has risen from the dead is both brave and crazy. If there is one thing we know for sure, it is that dead people stay dead. Yet every Easter, we put on our pastel finery and seersucker suits and make our way through a sea of lilies to stand together and assert that we believe in a God who has not given up on this world or us, a God who makes a way out of no way, a God of resurrection who raises us still.

TURNING FROM DESPAIR

You know the story by heart. As the Gospel of John tells it, while it is still dark, Mary goes to the grave. But when she arrives to say her last goodbye, the stone has been removed. Jesus is not there.

We know this is impossible. We understand the way

things work. All that lives, dies. We watched Rome crucify Jesus on a cross—a form of execution designed to cause maximum pain and ultimate intimidation. We saw his broken body anointed and put in the tomb. We stood witness as the stone was rolled across the entrance to the cave, and we resigned ourselves to the way of the world.

Yet the tomb is empty. Other disciples come and go, but Mary remains, rooted by pain and grief to an unfolding reality she cannot understand, and it is there he meets her. As Mary weeps at the edge of the empty tomb, Jesus calls her by name. “Mary,” Jesus says, and with one word, the light returns. “Rabbi,” she cries. And she turns.

She turns away from despair, away from the way things are and have always been—away from a Good Friday world—to embrace the full power of a love that has no end. She longs to hold on tight, but Jesus is already moving ahead.

“Go,” Jesus says. He knows there is plenty to paralyze us then and now: wars without end, racial unrest, the passing of political civility, economic uncertainty, growing extremism and violence. There are the pressing concerns of our daily lives: decisions about how to care for our

aging parent or unhappy child, regret about things we have done or left undone, a gnawing sense we are not fully who God created us to be. Jesus does not mince words. “Go,” he tells Mary, “go to my brothers.” And Mary goes, announcing to the disciples and anyone who will listen, “I have seen the Lord.”

EASTER IS NOW

The Easter narrative encapsulates the Way of Love, a way that begins with our turning to God and ends with going to share the Good News of God’s power to resurrect, heal and redeem. In the season ahead, we are challenged to consider how these two particular practices, named in the Easter Gospel, might shape our life and call.

For we are all marked by death. We know what it feels like to be entombed by pride or sin, dishonesty or regret. We recognize the repetition of being stuck on the same soundtrack, a continuous loop of all the ways we are not worthy or successful, or fall short. We are sick and tired of being sick and so, so tired. We weep or run away or insulate ourselves with a variety of addictions. It is a hard truth that crucifixion comes before resurrection. But God does not look away, even when we have dug our graves ourselves. What is the stone that needs to be rolled away for you?

Easter begins with an invitation to turn from an empty tomb towards the One who calls us each by name. The resurrection is a potent reminder that God never, ever gives up on us. There is no place God will not go, no person God does not love. No matter how we got there, God does not leave us in the grave.

Easter begins in the dark, but it doesn’t end there. The statesman Winston Churchill understood this. At the close of the funeral service Churchill planned for himself, a single trumpeter stood at the west end of St. Paul’s Abbey and sounded “Taps,” the song that signals dusk, the close of the day, and is frequently played at military funerals. As the last note faded away, silence enveloped the great space, and it seemed a fitting end to a full life. To the surprise of the congregation, another trumpeter then rose, this time at the east end of St. Paul’s that faced the rising sun. He played “Reveille,” the song that marks the morning, the call to a new day.

Death does not have the last word. This is the great Good News of Easter. Resurrection is not a limited-time offer. It is not a singular event that happened long ago in ancient Palestine. Easter is the ongoing claim that love is stronger than death (or depression or divorce), that we are made to be joy-filled and generous, and what seems like the end may be the beginning.

When the Alleluias fade and all that is left from Easter

morning is half a plastic purple egg and a package of Peeps (the fruitcakes of Easter), we can return to the routines of carpool or chemo, of cooking or classes, with renewed trust in the Risen Lord. We are not people who celebrate on Easter. No, we are an Easter people—formed by our experience of resurrection—a people who look for signs of hope, who act with courage in times of uncertainty, who keep faith in the face of fear, and who recognize that night ends and morning comes anew. Every single day.

Jesus left the tomb and will not stay where we put him. In every age, he refuses to be boxed in, limited, historicized or embalmed. The One who stretched out his arms of love on the hard wood of the cross so that each one of us might know the power of his embrace, is always going first, out in front, showing us the Way of Love.

“I have seen the Lord,” Mary exclaims. I have seen him bind up the broken-hearted and make a feast out of five loaves and two fish. I have seen him challenge Caesar, forgive a fraud and make the lonely smile. I have seen the real power of love to heal, transform and resurrect. You have, too.

Wendell Berry, the poet farmer, writes:¹

So friends, every day do something that won't compute.

Love the Lord. Love the world.

Take all that you have and be poor.

Love someone who does not deserve it...

Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.

Practice resurrection.

You, created in the image of God, are a full participant in the promise of Easter. Every time you manifest the redemptive love of God by praying for someone who has hurt you, by welcoming a stranger or comforting a child, you practice resurrection. Each day you confront injustice, stand up for someone who is suffering or see one who lives in shadow, you bring back someone from the dead. Do not stand at the edge of the tomb or construct a cave to keep you safe or contented or certain. Go. Live like one who has been called by name. Tell what you have heard and seen. Heal and forgive and serve. You are part of the loving, liberating, life-giving Jesus Movement. Practice resurrection.

Easter is not over. Easter is now.

The Rev. Ginny Bain Inman is the acting diocesan officer for adult formation and lifelong learning. Contact her at ginny.inman@episdionc.org.

¹ Excerpt from *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front* from *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint Press, 1999.



Patt Hatcher smiles for the camera during a native species planting day at Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill. Charles Rousseau holds a baby turtle. Ernie Bowen plants native grasses. Photos by Dawn Bland

By Christine McTaggart

THE PIEDMONT PATCH PROJECT

Church of the Advocate restores a patch of land to what once was

For the first 10 years of its existence, the Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, did not have a permanent home. Members of the Advocate embraced the gifts and unique perspective worshiping in a nomadic existence can bring, and after almost a decade of this approach decided they were ready and it was time to find a place of their own.

In January 2011, Advocate purchased 15 acres of land in Chapel Hill and from the very first set out to create a community haven of hospitality, worship and contemplation. It did not wish to exist as a standalone, single-thread entity; rather, it sought to develop and weave relationships to become a part of the fabric of the community.

COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

The congregation of the Advocate has lived by that goal from the very start. Their church building is itself a historic church from Germanton, North Carolina, moved to the Advocate’s site in 2012 and lovingly restored for its second life in Chapel Hill. In 2015, Advocate became involved with the Pee Wee Homes Collaborative after being approached by a small group of community members hoping to bring together a group of partners to build “tiny homes” as part of the solution to the increasing lack of affordable housing. Now a collaborative including the Advocate, nonprofits, builders and individuals with skills to share, the first of the homes are so close to completion the group is in the process of accepting applications from potential residents.

The Advocate’s latest step in its ongoing community journey is the Piedmont Patch Project, an initiative to reintegrate native flora and fauna in a space where urbanization had displaced it. Supported by a late-2017

Stewardship of Creation grant from The Episcopal Church, five acres of the Advocate’s “homestead” is dedicated to the project, with a goal to “transform our site into a food-producing and natural habitat, create a network of involved neighbors and provide numerous opportunities to educate and engage people of all ages and backgrounds.” It was never intended to be done alone and from the start has collaborated with local civic organizations, university science communities, skilled volunteers and the Johnson Service Corps. The door is always open for those who wish to become a part of it.

“The idea for the Piedmont Patch Project developed about the same time as the Pee Wee Homes project did,” said the Rev. Lisa Fischbeck, vicar of the Advocate. “We knew we wanted ours to be a community space. So as we thought about what we might do, we started to look at what was offered around us and then focus on what wasn’t, so we could fill that need.”

A PROVEN ECOSYSTEM

Often lost in the excitement of urban development is the cost paid by the displaced plants and animals. It is not simply a matter of soil and foliage now covered with asphalt and concrete; plants and “natural spaces” installed for the new developments are not necessarily compatible with native flora and fauna.

And though the new spaces may be full of beautiful flowers, plants and eye-catching flora, native plant species and the benefits they provide should never be easily discounted or dismissed. They are a necessary part of the comprehensive ecosystem and play a role in nature’s system of checks and balances. Native plants complement one another to ensure survival and work to inhibit invasive

species. They are designed by nature to adapt to and thrive in geographic seasons and weather cycles, and they provide food and shelter for local wildlife. Once established, native plants also need far less maintenance than their imported counterparts, as they are designed to flourish in the areas they call home.

Advocate envisions the Piedmont Patch as a sanctuary for displaced flora and fauna, a sanctuary described on the website as “grounds enriched with diverse, well-adapted native plants that will attract and nurture an array of wildlife, including butterflies, bees, birds, frogs, turtles and small mammals.”

“The Piedmont was originally like a prairie,” said Fischbeck. “In fact, it has been called the Piedmont Prairie. Most of the grasses brought in to the area today are not the grasses you’d find on that prairie, and that affects everything from the bugs to the animals.

“Our hope,” she said, “is not just to restore our five-acre patch but to educate and inspire others to do what they can as well. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a window box or a farm—anything anyone can do to help restore the Piedmont has a positive impact.”

This vision is not a dream, but an already flourishing reality. The pond was restocked with bass, brim and catfish to encourage fishing by the neighbors who have fished it for generations. In April 2018, 30 volunteers—including local garden clubs, landscapers, amateur botanists, (environmental) faculty and students from Duke and the University of North Carolina, staff and volunteers from the North Carolina Botanical Gardens, and members of the Advocate—planted more than 1,000 native grasses and wildflowers around the Advocate Pond and throughout the five-acre site. Signage accompanied the installation, providing photos and information about each plant.

It didn’t take long to see results. By summer, flowers were blooming, bees were pollinating and volunteers from the New Hope Audubon Society had installed bird boxes to encourage the return of bluebirds and brown-hooded nuthatches. The Johnson Service Corps installed an irrigation system to assist in watering the vegetable garden and other parts of the property.

As the plants have grown, so has the interest in the project and the importance of bringing back the regional plants.

EDUCATION

The project was never meant to be kept a secret. In fact, one of the components proposed in its grant application was the development of “digital and other educational resources for sharing in the community.”

A website was the natural place to start. Visitors to piedmontpatch.org can follow the progress of the project while learning about the various species planted

or picking up tips on things like creating a pollinating garden. The website also provides resources for learning more about topics such as native plants, invasive species and foodscaping, the practice of growing edible plants alongside ornamental varieties.

The Advocate also hosts quarterly presentations by professionals from the universities, the botanical gardens, local nonprofits and more. Advertised on Facebook and other social media channels, 60%-80% of those who attend are members of the surrounding community.

“We have been moved by the generosity of the botanical community,” said Fischbeck. “There are many outside the Church who have much to teach us, and in turn the work becomes a form of evangelism for us. We as a Church can’t do all this work alone, and collaborating with governmental and academic entities as well as those within and outside of the Christian faith not only teaches us, it allows others to see what we as Christians are about.”

The dream is to continue to extend the connections across generations. It is a hope of the project partners that, funds permitting, they may someday be able to hire an intern or graduate student to help document the project and start creating connections with local schools so students can come visit and learn.

COME VISIT

The Piedmont Patch is open to visitors whether the visit is scheduled or unscheduled. Those who stop by are encouraged to walk the path around the pond and enjoy the signs that help identify what’s growing. Take a look at the bees at work, or peek in the bird boxes to see if a bluebird is in residence. Catch-and-release fishing in the pond is available, picnic tables stand waiting, and the chapel is open to all who might like a moment of indoor prayer or contemplation.

For the former nomads of the Advocate, creating a haven so welcoming to others only deepens their own roots. The Piedmont Patch Project has “helped to integrate new people and create community both inside and outside the church,” said Fischbeck. “We learn from each other, from the professionals that come in and from the land itself. It’s really deepened our understanding of Creation Care.”

For those looking for their own seeds to plant, Fischbeck recommends first looking inward. “Creation Care is awfully big,” she said. “Start in an area that means something to you, and learn and build your awareness from there. It will spread exponentially as you start to see connections all around you and feel how connecting with creation deepens our connection with God.”

Christine McTaggart is the communications director for the Diocese of North Carolina. Contact her at christine.mctaggart@episdionc.org.



The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina
200 West Morgan Street, Suite 300
Raleigh, NC 27601-1338
919.834.7474 | 800.448.8775

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
RALEIGH, NC
PERMIT NO. 992

Until we read again...

COMMIT to making a change in support of Creation Care. Get started or go deeper, but take that next step (pages 15-23).

SUBSCRIBE to “CAMINANDO WITH JESUS,” the weekly Gospel reflection series featuring voices from around the Diocese in both English and Spanish, at bit.ly/CAMINANDOWITHJESUS (page 8).

FILE (by May 31) youth applications for placement on the ballot as a convocation youth delegate to the 204th Annual Convention.

BEWARE of email scams seemingly from clergy and asking for donations like gift cards. Report the email as spam and delete it (page 10).