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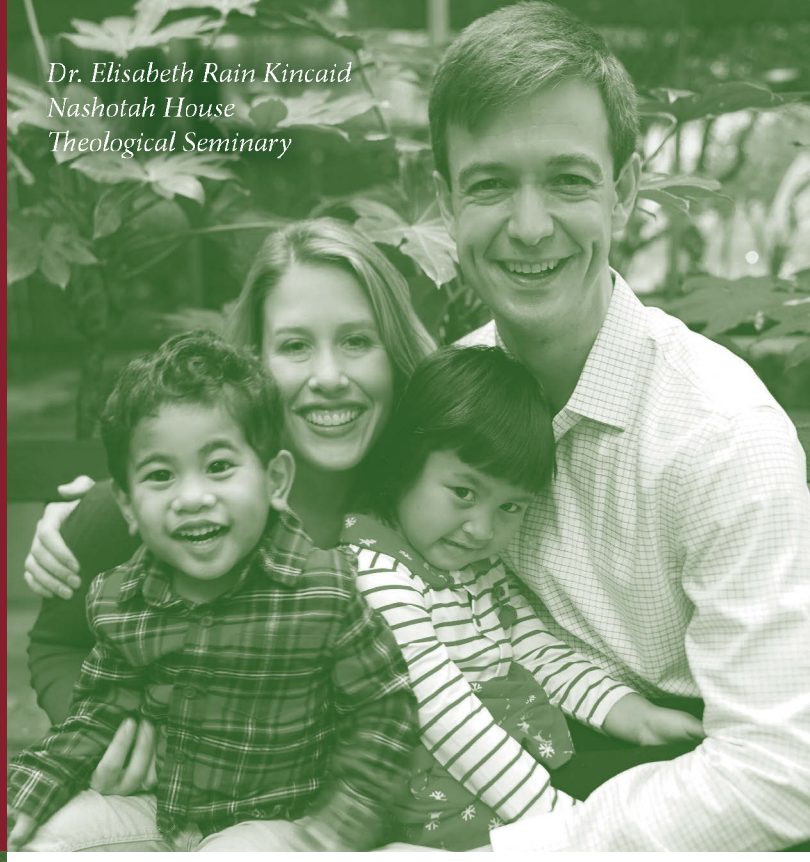

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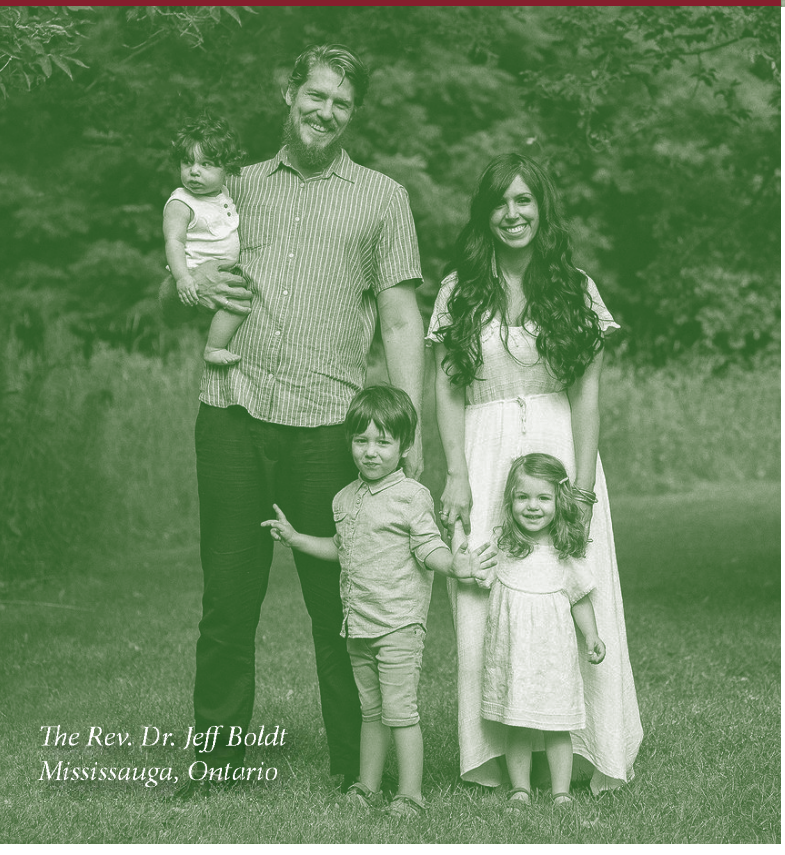

The Rev. Dr. Jeff Boldt
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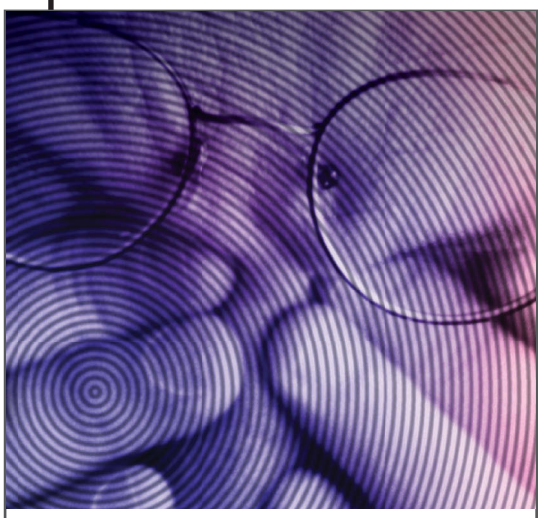

ON THE COVER

Social isolation, tough circumstances within clergy families, frustration-fueled conflict in parishes, nervous church budgeting for 2021 — all of it together makes the pandemic status quo feel unsustainable (see p. 10).

Geoff Strehlow illustration from PhotoDisc

The Living Church

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The Living Church is published by the Living Church Foundation. Rooted in the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion, the Living Church Foundation seeks to champion the catholic and evangelical faith of the one Church and to hasten the visible unity of all Christians.

Dunkle to Step Down at GTS after Academic Year

By Kirk Petersen

The 13th dean and president of General Theological Seminary has announced he intends to resign at the end of the academic year, bringing an eventful seven-year tenure at the nation's oldest Episcopal seminary to a close.

The Very Rev. Kurt H. Dunkle made the announcement November 9 at a regularly scheduled meeting of the seminary's Board of Trustees, on the campus in New York City.

In a letter to the seminary community, Dunkle said he has discerned that the Holy Spirit "is calling me to conclude the season and make room for room for the next person called to lead General. It's not about any particular event or circumstance. Rather it's a call, that powerful word only fully understood by a life in Jesus."

In a separate press release, GTS said that since assuming leadership in 2013, Dunkle:

- Oversaw the reaccreditation of the seminary;
- Led the seminary from a $3 million deficit to a balanced budget;
- Oversaw the creation of two new degree programs: doctor of ministry and master of arts of ministry.

Controversy arose when he had been on the job a little more than a year, when eight of the 10 full-time faculty members walked off the job and demanded that Dunkle be fired. They accused him of micromanaging, harassing, and bullying, and made other more inflammatory charges. "Simply put, we must respectfully inform you that if Dean Dunkle continues in his current position, then we will be unable to continue in ours," they said, in a letter to the board of trustees.

In what the *New York Times* called "a tale of hardball negotiating tactics gone awry," the board sent back a letter saying the professors' resignations had been accepted. Most of the professors were ultimately reinstated, although none of them remain on the faculty today.

The evening before the board of trustees meeting, Dunkle spoke at length with *TLC* in a wide-ranging interview. He looked back on his tenure to date, discussed the purpose of seminaries, expressed hope for the future of the Church, and yes, talked about the faculty incident. A much longer version of the transcript below is posted on livingchurch.org.

Dean Kurt Dunkle at commencement. (GTS photo)

It hasn't been a really good time for the Episcopal Church in the last few decades, in terms of shrinking membership and attendance, and there's been some shakeout in the world of seminaries as well. Do you see that process continuing, do you think there's some hope of turning it around?

There's absolutely hope to turn it around. The members of the Church – the big body of Christ, the million or two million people in our Church – their job is to do the ministry of Jesus. To go out and change lives. Their job is to go out and protest injustice, to lobby Congress, to begin feeding programs, to talk about and do something about racial injustice. All those things.

The clergy of the Church of course are to support that. But they have an even narrower job. It's three things, and if they can do the three things, then they can do the fourth thing.

The first is to make sure that they know, and know about, God. It's about learning the stories. Jesus constantly used stories. The writers of the Pentateuch, the writers of all the books of the Old Testament, the Pauline letters – everything revolves around story. So, knowing and knowing about God is learning those stories, and learning them so well that they in fact become your story.

The second thing is, the priests in our Church need to fall in love with Jesus, again and again and again. That is largely an emotive decision. Jesus is so magnetic, so life-changing, so life-enhancing, that to live life outside of the body of Christ wouldn't be worth living.

And the third thing is, we have to recognize and respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit. That's the way God gets us going in life. In the creeds, we say 'we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.'

If our seminary students, the future leaders of the Church, can do those three things, then they can do the fourth thing. And that's to teach people how to do that for themselves, and then to send them out into the world to do all the ministry that God has imagined, and change the face of the earth.

But if what we're doing is training clergy to be sort of hyper-active parishioners, then who is there to actually teach people how to be hyper-active parishioners? It's not that one is better than the other, it's simply the job definition. This is my standard speech for years at General.

How do we stem the decline in the Episcopal Church? We go back to that fundamental basic. I'll use commercial terms. The only product that we sell is life in the kingdom of the Triune God. If what we're selling is [good works], then we're selling the wrong thing, because everybody else is, too. They're

just selling a different twist on it.

If we give up our primary job of selling life in the kingdom, and therefore giving people the fuel to go out and change the world, then nobody else is going to do it. I think that is the primary reason the Episcopal Church has been shrinking.

Bishop [Michael] Curry's message is the Jesus Movement, and it's spot on. That is the antidote for decline in the Episcopal Church. It's not further social action. Social action is what comes out of the Jesus Movement. The clergy have a very clear job, to make sure there are enough people out there to have a movement.

ACNA Bishop Ousted Over Priest's Misconduct

By Kirk Petersen

A bishop of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) resigned abruptly on October 29 at the request of the Standing Committee of the diocese, for allegedly mishandling a serious pastoral issue regarding sexual misconduct by a priest.


Hobby

The Rt. Rev. James "Jim" Hobby, who was consecrated the Anglican Bishop of Pittsburgh in 2016, allegedly "Failed to act with urgency, transparency, and timeliness when an accusation of sexual misconduct by a member of the clergy was brought to his attention," according to a November 2 announcement from the Rev. Jeffrey Wylie, president of the Standing Committee. "To be clear, this misconduct involved another adult who is a clergy member."

Hobby has overseen a period in which churches in his diocese reached a groundbreaking settlement with the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, resolving litigation about church properties stemming from the decision by his predecessor to leave the Episcopal Church in 2008.

Hobby's resignation represents the second time this year an ACNA bishop has left office for an offense related to sexuality. On June 2, the College of Bishops voted to revoke the holy orders of Ronald W. Jackson, who had recently retired as Bishop of the Diocese of the Great Lakes. The penalty means Jackson is no longer a priest in the ACNA, let alone a bishop.

In explaining the sentence of deposition, the ACNA announcement said: "Bishop Jackson admitted to the use of pornography over many years and pleaded guilty to the charges of sexual immorality and conduct giving just cause for scandal or offense [*canonical citations omitted*].

Bishop Hobby has been treated less severely. Kristen Parise, the communications director for the ACNA Diocese of Pittsburgh, told *TLC* that "Bishop Hobby is still a bishop in good standing in the ACNA" and remains a member of the denomination's College of Bishops. She declined further comment.

In a statement about his requested

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resignation, Bishop Hobby said:

> *While this grieves me, I accept that accountability is an important part of the Christian life. As Bishop, I am accountable to the Archbishop and elected Standing Committee of the Diocese. Therefore, for the good health of the Diocese, I have resigned my office with immediate effect so that the search for my successor can immediately begin.*

Pittsburgh is one of five dioceses where a former Episcopal bishop left the Church a decade ago, accompanied by many parishioners, and eventually established a rival diocese in the ACNA. In a 2018 article headlined "Pittsburgh Leads in Reconciliation," *TLC* reported that the Episcopal diocese had reached "a distinctively Christian compromise resolution" with nine ACNA churches that were the subject of litigation over property ownership.

Under the agreement, the nine churches will own and control their buildings, while paying a small annual assessment to the Episcopal diocese. The annual assessment — 3.25 percent of operating revenues for the first 20 years, and 1.75 percent in perpetuity thereafter — recognizes that the Episcopal Church had a "trust beneficiary" interest in the properties because they had operated for many years as part of the Episcopal Church. An ACNA priest on the negotiating team likened the agreement to an amicable divorce.

English Clergy Protest Four-Week Worship Ban

By Mark Michael

The Church of England's two archbishops and the Bishop of London joined the country's Roman Catholic cardinal, the chief rabbi, and senior Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu leaders in protesting UK prime minister Boris Johnson's decision to ban public worship for four weeks.

"We strongly disagree with the decision to suspend public worship during this time," the faith leaders wrote in a November 3 letter. "We have had reaffirmed, through the bitter experience of the last six months, the critical role that faith plays in moments of tremendous crisis, and we believe public worship is essential."

The nationwide lockdown, which public health authorities have urged since coronavirus cases began to increase rapidly in early October, took effect on November 5. Pubs, restaurants, non-essential shops, and gyms also are shuttered, though schools and universities may remain open. The prime minister said there was "no alternative" to the extensive restrictions.

Churches may remain open for private prayer and for broadcasting worship services. Funerals may also be held, with attendance restricted to 40, but most weddings are banned. The restrictions are less draconian than those proposed in the spring, when even entering the church for live streaming was prohibited by directives issued by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and then-Archbishop of York John Sentamu.

The religious leaders' public letter notes the great efforts religious communities have undertaken to protect worshippers since public services could resume in July and argues there is "no scientific justification" for the severe restrictions.

They also said that worship was essential to the social support that religious congregations provide, noting that "without the worshipping community, our social action and support cannot be energized and sustained indefinitely. Our commitment to care for others comes directly from our faith, which must be sustained and strengthened by our meeting together in common worship." Communal worship, they also said, is also invaluable as a means of coping with trauma and loss caused by the pandemic, especially among ethnic minority communities. They also described it as "an essential sign of hope" and "part of the journey to recovery."

The Rev. Ian McCormack, vicar of St. George's in the Meadows, an Anglo Catholic congregation in Nottingham, agreed with interfaith leaders' assertion that public worship had been safe. "Since churches were allowed to reopen, we have gone to great lengths to make our buildings COVID-secure," he said. "Indeed, many people have commented that they feel safer inside church than in any other indoor public setting. I am unaware of any evidence which suggests churches are hotspots for infection, which is why a number of bodies have called upon the government to release such information if it exists."

New C of E Resource for Discernment on Sexuality

By Mark Michael

The Church of England has launched an extensive set of teaching resources designed to support "a new process of discernment and decision-making on questions of identity, sexuality, rela-

tionships, and marriage."

The Anglican Communion News Service suggests that Living in Love and Faith (LLF) may be "the largest research and consultation project into identity and sexuality carried out by a Christian church."

A diverse team of 40, which included LGBT people as well as noted conservatives, collaborated on a 468-page book, and a "learning hub," which contains a five-session video course, podcasts, and films to help local parishes engage with the controversial topics. The Rt. Rev. Christopher Cocksworth, who also serves as chair of the church's Faith and Order Commission, led the process, and Dr. Eeva John, former director of pastoral studies at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, was the coordinator.

"These learning resources are the fruit of an extraordinary collaborative process", said Cocksworth, who is the Bishop of Coventry. "This has involved intense and prayerful study and reflection as well as listening to as wide a range of voices and experiences as possible."

"Questions of identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage are deeply personal with real life consequences. Engaging with these resources will be enriching and, at different points for different people, deeply challenging and uncomfortable."

The LLF documents make no formal recommendations. The book begins with a substantial presentation of traditional teaching and then surveys changes in science, society, and the teaching and practice of other religious bodies, including the case made for the acceptance of same sex marriage in the Episcopal Church.

Most of the book's substantial theological work around issues of identity, sexuality, and marriage are found in its third part, "Making Connections: where are we in God's story," which presents areas of agreement and disagreement between members of the coordinating committee. A following section explores the process of theological discernment and reflection, considering how we hear God through the Bible, Creation, the Church, cultural contexts, experience and conscience, and prayer and spiritual guidance.

A closing portion contains transcripts of conversations between people of different views, modeling respectful and loving disagreement about difficult issues. Other resources in the teaching hub, especially the 17 five-minute story films, give space for the presentation of a variety of theological views and life experiences. Film subjects include practicing Anglicans of diverse races and ages who are married, single, divorced, widowed, gay, lesbian, transsexual, and intersex.

LLF was commissioned by the church's House of Bishops after an earlier series of churchwide "Shared Conversations" based on the 2013 Pilling Report led to an essential stalemate at the February 2017 meeting of General Synod.

The House of Bishops issued a report before the synod meeting in response to Shared Conversations. It stated that among them there was "little support for changing the Church of England's teaching" summarized in Canon B30, which says that "the Church of England affirms, according to our Lord's teaching, that marriage is a union permanent and life-long, of one man with one woman." The bishops did, though, believe "there was a strong sense that existing resources, guidance and tone needed to be revisited."

An impassioned debate broke out in General Synod in response to a motion to "take note of" or approve the bishops' report, with many advocates of same-sex marriage expressing deep disagreement. In the subsequent vote, the bishops supported the report 43-1, but lay delegates approved it by a narrower margin of 106-83, while the clergy voted not to take note of it 100-93.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby was the final speaker on the motion. Noting the intense division within the synod, he said that "to deal with that disagreement, to find ways forward, we need a radical new Christian inclusion in the Church, with a basis founded in scripture, in tradition, in reason, in theology, in good, healthy, flourishing relationships, in a proper 21st-century understanding of being human and of being sexual." Pointing ahead to Living in Love and Faith, he said continued, "That will require a remarkable document put together with the Bishops, but put together by the whole Church — every single part, not excluding anyone."

The Rt. Rev. Sarah Mullaly, the Bishop of London, will chair a diverse group of bishops charged with guiding churchwide discernment using the resources over the next two years. A year of engagement with the materials is expected to be followed by a process of decision-making that could lead to a vote about same sex blessings or marriages by the autumn of 2022.

Evangelical ethicist Andrew Goddard, who served on the project's coordinating committee, said that it highlighted "the need for the church to explore much more *holistically, theologically, and biblically* both our shared understandings and commitments, and also our serious disagreements. To help with the latter, the book seeks to enable different perspectives to be heard in ways those who hold them will recognize as fair. In so doing it draws out the complex connections between the various contentious issues explored. It also explores the deeper underlying theo-

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logical questions which so often make even dialogue – let alone agreement — about them so difficult."

Bishop Christopher Cocksworth is a member of the Living Church Foundation.

Briefly…

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has demanded that a British bishop resign over the bishop's criticism of the funeral of a cat. **Doorkins the Magnficat**, a much-beloved 12-year-old tabby, was interred in the churchyard of Southwark Cathedral in late October. Bishop of Burnley Philip North took umbrage, asking if the ceremony was "a joke." PETA, apparently not joking, said the bishop should be fired for speciesism.

Arsonists touched off fires that destroyed two churches within hours of each other in southwest Ontario, Canada. The current rector of one of the churches, St. Andrew's Anglican in Muncey, said the blazes may be the result of anger over a **disgraced former** priest who committed sexual assaults on young boys procured there in the 1970s and 80s. The ex-priest, David Norton, was already incarcerated for a similar crime when he was convicted in 2018, so it is not clear why the fires would be set now.

The **Anglican Diocese of Tasmania** will make a payment of $3.65 million in compensation to survivors of sexual abuse, part of what is believed to be a total liability of $23 million. The Australian diocese is expected to sell properties to fund its obligations under the National Redress Scheme.

Correction: The Rev. Inez Velarde, whose picture graced the cover of our November 1 issue, was incorrectly identified as a lay pastor. She has been a priest since 2013. We apologize for the error.

Training Young Leaders to Wage Peace in the Holy Lands

By Kirk Petersen

"If you want lumber, you have to plant trees." That's how the Rev. Canon Nicholas Porter describes the mission for Jerusalem Peacebuilders, the inter-faith, non-profit organization he has led since 2011. JPB hopes to help create a next generation of leadership in Israel and Palestine that will be devoted to coexistence and peace.

In past years, the centerpiece of this effort has been a series of residential summer programs in the United States, bringing together Israeli and Palestinian high school students from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze backgrounds for two weeks of "intensive, residential, peace and leadership training," he said.

The programs have other purposes, of course: travel, have fun with a bunch of other high school kids, and create lasting friendships that transcend religious and political differences.

Then came COVID-19.

It was obvious that "we can't put them together in that kind of pressure cooker," Porter said, so the organization designed a one-week hybrid program for August, primarily online, but including some socially distanced, physical gatherings.

It made no sense, and might not have been possible, to send kids from the relatively healthy Mideast into the maw of the world's worst pandemic in America. So the programs was be based in Israel, with the in-person components in Jerusalem and Acre, a coastal city about 20 miles from the border of Lebanon.

Then at the 11th hour, the Israeli government tightened its restrictions on public gatherings, so that the pro-

Summer campers in 2019 (above and below) Jerusalem Peacebuilders photos

gram would have to be entirely online.

Let's pause here for a thought experiment. Think back to a time when you had a youth-group experience, overnight or longer, that was spiritually or intellectually fulfilling. You may remember sharing games, activities, and meals with kids you had just met. Maybe some mischief occurred. Maybe you stayed up until 2 a.m. having earnest discussions.

Then imagine trying to recreate that experience entirely online. The idea doesn't inspire optimism, but Porter was surprised by how well it worked. He said the kids adapted well to the Zoom platform, and he noted that it's easier to attract quality speakers for an online seminar than for a physical visit.

The newly consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Jerusalem, Hosam Naoum, took part in a panel discussion with prominent representatives of the Jewish and Muslim faiths: Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, a Palestinian Islamic scholar at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem.

Despite the lack of personal contact, the summer program even managed to tick the 2 a.m. box. Sarah Aweidah, a new regional co-director at JPB, said at the end of an evening session, the kids "wanted to stay, so we left Zoom open" — and some of them stayed up talking until 2 a.m.

Aweidah is a 25-year-old Palestinian — "almost 26," she said — from East Jerusalem, with a degree in engineering. She was pursuing a career in hotel management at Jerusalem's storied King David Hotel when she took some time off to help lead the JPB summer programs in 2019.

"I realize they had something special, so I made an abrupt career change," she said. She joined the JPB staff and enrolled in law school at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, a Tel Aviv suburb. She plans to use her law degree in the service of peace efforts.

Jerusalem Peacebuilders is not a one-and-done summer camp, it's a four-year program. Kids who join in the ninth grade are asked to commit to it for four years, and "we have about a 92-percent retention rate," Porter says. There were 61 participants and staff in the 2020 summer programs, including 20 Jews; 12 Christians; 27 Muslims; and one each Druze and Alawi, the latter of which is a branch of Shia Islam.

The organization started out as a summer program in 2011 with 11 participants. "That was all we could get," Porter said. In 2016 JPB began working with the Israeli school systems to offer classes in peacebuilding, communications, conflict resolution, and social justice. They are active now in more than 30 schools in the Holy Lands.

"Schools in Israel are segregated," Porter said starkly. There are schools for Jews and schools where Christians and Muslims study together. JPB seeks to build bridges across the communities.

"I'm not naïve enough to believe that JPB is going to 'bring peace to Israel and Palestine,'" Porter said. But "we can contribute to that change."

Between the summer programs and school-year classes, "we've had direct impact on thousands of young people," he said. "We have trained, empowered, and energized individuals who will be agents of change in their society."

Jerusalem Peacebuilders is a partner of the Living Church Foundation.

Stress Compounded for Clergy in Pandemic

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald
Correspondent

Having led spiritual direction with priests in crisis since 1998, the Rev. Ed Cardoza has helped clerics navigate the deep personal impacts of many catastrophes, from the 9/11 terror attacks to the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

Ten months into the COVID-19 pandemic, he said the state of clergy mental health is the worst he's ever seen.

"This is the first time I've heard clergy folks say, 'I'm really thinking about ending my life,'" said Fr. Cardoza, co-founder of Still Harbor, a nonprofit with spiritual direction services based in Arlington, Massachusetts. Since March, about 20 percent of his clients have expressed "strong suicidal ideation." Another third were not thinking about leaving ministry until this year, but now sees no other option.

"I have noticed a profound lack of joy in priests," said Cardoza, who works largely with Episcopal clergy and finds them wounded by the inability to be present with their flocks. "If you're not filled with joy and the energy of community, then no wonder why you're thinking about: 'Maybe it's time for me to pack it in.'"

Social isolation, tough circumstances within clergy families, frustration-fueled conflict in parishes, nervous church budgeting for 2021 — all of it together makes the pandemic status quo feel unsustainable for growing numbers of men and women of the cloth, as Cardoza has learned.

Tragedy has underscored how worst-case scenarios aren't merely hypothetical. In May, Charleston megachurch pastor Darrin Patrick drew national attention to clergy vulnerability when he ended his own life. Then in September, 30-year-old Episcopal priest Melissa Kean also took her life, according to a statement from Bishop of Colorado Kimberly Lucas, who used the moment to urge anyone suffering from mental health woes to get help.

"In this time," Lucas said, "where many of us are dealing with competing demands and the emotional, spiritual, and mental toll of social isolation… I encourage you: speak to someone. Reach out."

As a group battered by knock-on effects of pandemic stress, clergy have plenty of company. In the 2020 Stress in America Report, the American Psychological Association finds that 78 percent of Americans say the pandemic is a significant source of stress in their lives. What's more, 67 percent say their stress has increased as the pandemic has worn on.

Cumulative and intensifying stressors are now wearing clergy in particular ways, even though many have adapted at least somewhat to online worship, pastoral care via Zoom, and other innovations. Surveys taken both ecumenically and inside denominations point to a worsening mental health situation that's leading dioceses to make more supports available. Among the findings:

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, about 16 percent of church workers were treated for mental health disorders such as major depression or anxiety during the first half of 2020. That's up 6.1 percent from the same period a year earlier.

20 percent of Protestant clergy rate their mental and emotional well-being as below average or poor, according to a national survey in August by Barna Group. That was up pointedly from 11 percent in April and two percent in December 2015.

Among Roman Catholic priests, 62 percent said their morale has been impacted somewhat or very much by the pandemic, according to a May-June survey by Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Eighty percent said they see the pandemic impacting the morale of priests in their dioceses.

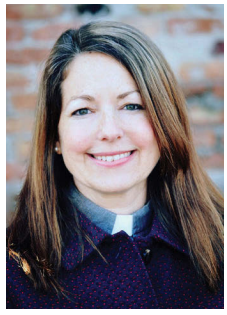
In August, 64 percent of United Church of Christ clergy were judged to be doing fair or poor in terms of mental health, according to survey results from regional conference staff in 12 geographic areas.

"I know from my research that the poorer mental health comes from being isolated, feeling alone, feeling like there's no hope and no support," said Sarah Griffith Lund, the UCC's Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice, and author of *Blessed Are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family and Church*. "Having a community of practice [bringing cler-

Adrenaline got us online [for worship in March], and adrenaline got us through Easter, but boy, Easter feels a long way away."

Cardoza

Drymon



Lund

O'Connell

gy peers together] will remind people we're not alone, we're not isolated, there is hope and we do have support."

The pandemic is making it hard for clergy to renew themselves and be effective. Although many are experienced in ministering in crises, they're usually not going through the disaster themselves while also trying to help others cope with extreme stress. Yet that's what's needed this time — not just for the sprint last spring, but also for what's become a marathon without mileage markers and no end in sight, according to Jeff Thiemann, President and CEO of Portico Benefit Services, which manages health claims for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) 11,000 affiliated workers.

"People aren't taking time to rest," Thiemann said, "but one thing we do know is that we cannot run this marathon on adrenaline alone. Adrenaline got us online [for worship in March], and adrenaline got us through Easter, but boy, Easter feels a long way away."

Laypeople can inadvertently compound their clergy's mental health woes. In settings where conflict has lingered unresolved, for instance, clergy are increasingly being scapegoated or viewed with heightened distrust, Thiemann said.

"I've heard clergy talk about… a lack of trust within the congregation that the pastor is actually working because they don't see [the pastor] visible in the way that they saw them before," Thiemann said. "They're asking for documentation to show me that you're actually working full-time. Meanwhile a lot of [pastors] are putting in way more time and energy than they did before to adapt to the new way of doing this."

Working extra pandemic hours is a story familiar to the Rev. John Drymon, rector of Trinity Church in Findlay, Ohio. Pre-pandemic, he used to lead two Sunday services in person. Now he leads three in order to allow for sufficient social distancing at each. But that's not all; he also pre-records a fourth service which he then edits and posts on Facebook and YouTube.

Pandemic stress has at times stirred up the chronic anxiety that Fr. Drymon says he manages with a combination of medication, psychotherapy, and spiritual direction. The pace of pandemic ministry has been "exhausting," he said, but he's taking only half the vacation time he's earned this year because the demands of ministry have kept him mostly at work. He was working in August when he finally felt himself "coming up on hitting a brick wall," he recalled.

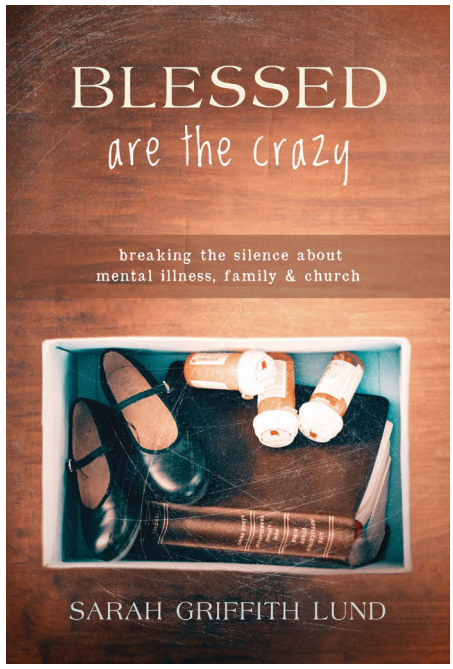
"A lot of it was the stress of trying to reinvent the wheel" and do ministry without physical presence with parishioners, Drymon said. "It was a lot of extra hours leading to fatigue and irritability."

He recognized his irritability for what it was — a mental health warning sign — and pivoted to recommit to healthy habits. He's feeling better now, he says, though still fatigued at times. He credits his reinvigoration of several routines, especially his 20-year daily habit of saying morning and evening prayer, which he says keeps him grounded. As an added bonus, a few parishioners now join him for morning prayer online each day.

"I reminded myself," Drymon said, "what those great ascetical theologians of old, like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, talked about. Just keeping at it, even if you are in a period of spiritual aridity or coming into a dark night. I found that over a period of six weeks, I was able not only to stop the tide of a negative outcome for my own mental and spiritual health, but really come out the other side a bit stronger and more energized."

Dr. Lund, the UCC officer, manages her own pandemic stressors in her role as senior minister at First Congregational Church. She is in recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), she said, but hasn't been notably hampered by that condition this year. She says she is doing "very well," which she attributes to what she calls "wellness practices." She sees a therapist, maintains friendships, and sustains routines to regulate healthy eating, exercise and sleep.

"I've found that people who had pre-existing mental health conditions and had a method of support in place are doing better [in the pandemic] than people who are not accustomed to addressing mental health challenges," Lund said.



To stay mentally healthy, clergy are supplementing individual disciplines with group engagement. In the Diocese of Massachusetts, they're learning to rely on peers to make sure they're doing OK and keeping up with self-care, according to Canon for the Southern Massachusetts region Kelly O'Connell. In one of her four deaneries, clergy have gone from meeting monthly pre-pandemic to gathering weekly now on Zoom. Efforts are also underway to make sure every clergyperson in the Diocese of Massachusetts is part of a peer support group.

Now with the arrival of Advent, tired clergy in Massachusetts are receiving an early Christmas gift: prerecorded sermons, preached by diocesan staff, for each week covering the Feast of Christ the King (Nov. 22) through the Baptism of Our Lord (Jan. 10). The idea is for them to use one or more to feed their flocks in the holy seasons of Advent and Christmastide — and take off the time they would have spent sermon-writing.

"I do worry about their burnout, I guess, more than anything," said Bishop Carol Gallagher, canon for the Central region of the Diocese of Massachusetts. "We've had a couple [of priests] inquire about taking leave for mental health reasons. I do think there's a rise in that. But I'm actually pretty positively amazed at how creative people are being in the midst of all of this."

What Mentally Ill Persons Wish Their Clergy

By Shirley O'Shea

This essay was first published on October 16 on Covenant, the weblog of the Living Church.

In the summer of 2016, I experienced a profound bipolar depression that made daily functioning for me impossible. The breakdown — this word best describes my experience — had been coming for years, and now I was totally incapacitated, barely able to eat, sleep, or speak.

After I had been in the psychiatric hospital for a few days, I requested a pastoral visit. I was still able to reach out to God, or at least to ask for someone else to do so for me. The hospital was far from my home and so my priest asked a priest from a church near the hospital to visit me.

The nearby priest smiled broadly throughout his visit. He told me that he knew, indeed the Holy Spirit was telling him, that great things were in store for me. I had once believed that great things, high achievements, were in my future, and my teachers and professors had predicted the same thing, years ago. Ever since, I had tried to fulfill their, and my, expectations. But now, it was all I could do to rise from my bed in the morning and feel the air against my skin.

The priest asked if I wanted him to pray for me, and I heartily assented. He began his prayer in English, and then started to make utterances in another language that sounded rhythmic and throaty. I wondered at this, and after the priest concluded his prayer, I asked him if he had been praying in Hebrew. "No," he said. "I was praying in tongues. Are you comfortable with that?"

I was shaken by the experience, but in my diminished state was afraid to tell the priest that, No, I did not like to hear praying in tongues. I wanted to hear something I would understand. I had never heard anyone pray for me, or anyone else, in glossolalia, and I was frightened. I wished that the priest had asked me at the outset if I had ever been prayed over in tongues, or better yet, I wished he had kept to English. It seemed the priest was more interested in an esoteric religious practice than in providing me with assurance of God's presence.

As someone who has lived with bipolar type 2 disorder for the past 35 years, I am pleased to have witnessed significant improvements in the understanding of mental illness, including in the church and its leadership. Many in the church understand there is a large biological component to mental illness, and that medications may offer considerable relief from suffering – so spiritual interventions are not sufficient to help an afflicted believer recover. Indeed, there are clergy serving congregations faithfully while doing their best to manage the symptoms and pain of their own mental illness. God's people are not immune to disorders of the brain.

Ponder the brain for a moment. I consider it to be the apex of God's creation. The human brain is like the universe in its seeming infinitude of capacity, with nearly 90 billion neurons compared to the 100 billion galaxies in the universe. The brain features axons constantly firing information to dendrites, forming neural pathways that affect the way we experience and act in the world. This miracle of biology processes nearly unlimited information and drives all behavior. The heart is a magnificent organ, pumping blood every moment of every day of our lives, even before we are born. But it does so only because the medulla, a part of the reptilian brain, directs it to do so. The brain is gorgeous and intricate, yet subject to malfunction and disease.

So, the first thing a clergyperson should understand is the astonishing complexity of the organ implicated in our suffering. Persons with disorders such as major depression, bipolarity and anxiety are experiencing disorders of the prefrontal cortex — the advanced section at the front of our brains — as well as of the limbic system, part of the mammalian brain. Individuals with schizophrenia suffer from disorders that involve practically all areas of the brain.

Just as a person with a herniated disc does not savor his pain and use it as a means to be coddled, a person with a mental illness does not wallow in his pain and wish to manipulate others to meet their own needs. A long time ago, an otherwise well-meaning priest who knew about my illness said I was "captivated by looking into the abyss." While a person with a psychiatric illness may appear fixated on her painful feelings, it is much more likely that she is trying to make sense of them and figure out how to overcome them. So, clergy, as others, must be careful not to assume that the mentally ill individual is deriving any self-centered or pathological pleasure in feeling ill.

Clergy should understand that people with mental illness are most likely

very scared, for numerous reasons. Their brains are doing some horrible things to them. They may feel so deeply depressed that they fear they may never recover, and therefore may never be able to make a living, raise their children, or be a fully present and responsible spouse. They may have unwanted, intrusive thoughts that are disturbing at best, terrifying at worst.

If a person seeking spiritual counsel from you discloses such thoughts, please try to respond with calm understanding. Assure them God is with them even when they have such fears, and that while the fears are not permanent, God's love is. During my 2016 illness, I was in anguish thinking I might never be able to raise my then-9-year-old son. My depression was so deep that it did not even occur to me to ask for God's help in recovering for the sake of my son. Everything seemed wrong about me and my world, and I did not want to risk God's saying no. But God's love and mercy were with me, and I have been able to raise my son in a way that, for the most part, I feel good about.

This brings us to one of the most painful and confounding aspects of being a Christian with mental illness — the experience of the perceived absence and silence of God. When interacting with individuals in this situation, clergy and the Church must be the embodied presence of God.

When I look back on my illness, I recall wondering where God was and why he was withholding himself from me, but I also knew that God was so intimately close that I could not perceive his presence. Just as you cannot see your own heart or lungs beating or breathing, I was unable to see God moving in my life. My mind was in turmoil, but God was with me, slowly working in my brain and my spirit to bring about my recovery.

So please remind the mentally ill, again and again and again, that God is with them, but for reasons we simply cannot know, it is often terribly unclear what he is doing in our lives at certain times — particularly during episodes of mental illness.

Sometimes God's people receive a message from clergy or fellow believers that the Christian life is one of uninterrupted joy. But the authors of the Scriptures knew better. Please share with mentally ill Christians passages from the psalms of lament and other writings in the Bible that show that anguish, inner darkness (which is fear) and the felt absence of God have been experienced by some of his greatest servants — above all his Son. However, please do not ask us to read the Book of Job. God's answers in the whirlwind are not quite what we need at such times.

While a person struggling with acute mental illness will likely not be able to hear this, someone beginning to recover may benefit by hearing that living with and recovering from mental illness may confer considerable wisdom, about themselves, other human beings, and the nature of God. This growth will enable them to be more open to God and his call to service, and more loving and compassionate with their own family, their church family, and indeed with strangers.

Human inter-connectedness is crucial for the mentally ill. Isolation is quite literally dangerous. Hospital and home visits are probably more welcome than clergy realize. Consider calling a recovering person once a week to check in and see how she is doing. Do not be discouraged if it takes a few months for her to start saying, "Well, I'm doing a little better now…" Recovery from a severe episode is slow, and hard work.

Last, please support the work of psychotherapy. Do not assume that psychotherapists are anti-religion. Many see religious faith as integral to a person's wellness and are completely respectful of a person's beliefs. Remember that psychotherapists have also witnessed the psychic damage of toxic religious practice and are careful to monitor for its presence in their clients. But, as my Jewish secular humanist therapist has said of belief in God, "It's kept people on the planet." If a therapist is not respectful of a believer's faith, then he or she is not worthy of their license.

Psychotherapy is a journey. It is not navel-gazing, or pure self-exploration. It is more things than I can write here. It is a process of gaining a richer, fuller meaning of what life and relationships require of us and offer us. It can be searing because the truth has the capacity to burn and hence purify us. It can be joyful because we learn to see the good in ourselves. One of the greatest things a clergyperson can do for someone with mental illness is to affirm that goodness.

Shirley O'Shea is a freelance writer residing in Oneonta, N.Y., with her husband, Geoff, and their son, Jeremy. She has worked as a paralegal, elementary school teacher, and newspaper reporter.

All I Really Need to Pray I Learned from the Litany

By Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

The Litany has replaced Holy Communion at my church.

This is not an act of anti-sacramental aggression but, like so many worship matters these days, a practical necessity. Located as our church is in one of the busiest parts of already-busy Tokyo, and sensitive to the Japanese public's bafflement even under normal circumstances at Christians' insistence on weekly in-person gatherings, our church council made the hard decision to nix the body and blood of Christ as long as the coronavirus remains a live threat.

But after enjoying weekly communion for so many years, our English-language congregation has been left with a gaping void at the end of our service. I tried a few other options before finally deploying my old friend, the Litany. I think it will be with us for some time. There are worse consolation prizes.

I didn't even realize when I started us on the Litany that Luther, too, dusted it off and cleaned it up for evangelical use in a time of public emergency (though in his case it was the threat of Ottoman invasion).

All I knew was that the Litany was a standby in midweek Lenten services of my childhood. I remember tracking along as the petitions grew bulkier and bulkier — the one on the bottom of p. 171 in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* maxes out at ten straight petitions — and breathing a sigh of relief when we hit the downslope toward the Kyries once again.

But I remember just as powerfully the key change halfway through, as the Litany moves from the deprecations and obsecrations to the intercessions, dropping down to a new note of urgency, gravity, and need.

On and off throughout adulthood, when my own prayers have been empty or weak or distractable, I have turned to the Litany. Now, in this crisis year of 2020, I've come to appreciate it afresh. Everything I've ever thought I was learning for the first time, every challenge I've faced without preparation, turns out to have been there in the Litany all along. It was just waiting for me to notice it.

Sunday liturgy had already trained me well to ask for mercy and to ask it of the Holy Trinity, so the opening call-and-response of the Litany is familiar and unsurprising. Unique to the Litany, though, is the twice-repeated "Be gracious to us; *Spare us, good Lord*," which not so subtly suggests the likelihood of its opposite.

From there the Litany moves into more detailed pleas for deliverance: from sin, error, evil, "the cunning assaults of the devil," and — one that hits close to home in a country still traumatized by the 2011 tsunami — "from an unprepared and evil death." War, bloodshed, violence, sedition, and treason were obvious if distant things to ask for deliverance from — and, thank God, still are in my part(s) of the world — but deliverance from "corrupt and unjust government" feels more relevant than ever. Also named here: epidemic. And drought and flood. And earthquake. Was the Litany written for Japan?

Anymore, Barth's famous dictum about preaching with a newspaper in one hand suggests to me only captivity to the news cycle. But his advice also seems unnecessary for those who pray the Litany, as it casts out each disaster in turn — including one that the newscasters never mention: "…and from everlasting death: *Good Lord, deliver us.*"

The Litany's not all so grim. Its obsecrations call upon Christ's whole lifespan, part by part, to help us. It's like putting on armor. "Incarnation" and "holy birth" were easy accoutrements for me as a child; "agony and bloody sweat" were a bit alarming, but now I find them welcome allies. "Resurrection and ascension" likewise seemed obvious, but it took friendships with Pentecostals and long struggles with the book of Acts before I really grasped the necessity of "the gift of the Holy Spirit" — as well as the later intercession "to accompany your Word with your Spirit and power." Working as a pastor now in one of the least-Christian corners of the planet, I find myself drawn to this petition more and more.

The form of the Litany I know from modern Lutheran hymnals follows Luther's German Litany in content, but it lumps many of the petitions together, each of which used to stand alone. The current arrangement does not result in the most logical categories, hence the aforementioned 10-petition monster. Yet the comprehensiveness and eloquence of the intercessions can scarcely be improved upon.

So we begin by imploring *God* to govern the Church (imagine that!) and to see to it that the human servants at work in the Church actually "love your Word" and exhibit "holiness of life" in order to be "faithful workers" in "your harvest." God remains the active agent throughout. Schisms are to be mended by God, "causes of offense" are to be overturned by God, the straying are to be gathered up by God. God is asked to "beat down Satan under our feet," "raise up those who fall," "strengthen those who stand," and "comfort and help the fainthearted and the distressed." All aspects of civil government are offered up to God's guidance, as are travelers, women in childbirth, children, the sick, broken families, orphans, widows, and widowers.

Actually, that last term is an addition to modern iterations of the Litany. Its historic omission strikes me as odd, given the high mortality rate of wives in Luther's time, but presumably widowers were much less vulnerable than widows. Other timely additions are prayers for the unemployed (about 10 percent in the U.S. right now) and the emendation of "captives" to "prisoners," especially given how prison systems have expanded in the last century, and

not often in the service of justice.

I can't honestly say I'm saddened at dropping the prayer that God "grant to our emperor perpetual victory over all his enemies," as Luther had it. Frankly, I have a hard time believing Luther really meant it, either, of the very man who set a price on his head. But maybe I underestimate his magnanimity.

Yet the prescience of praying "to help us use wisely the fruits and treasures of the earth, the sea, and the air" continues to astonish me. And it was not until I really grasped St. Paul's insistence that Christ came for the *un*godly that the petition "to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to reconcile us to them" unveiled to me the full extent of its gospel logic.

If anything, what I've found is that the Litany itself has a strange prescience. More than once I've discovered that, by means of the Litany, I've been praying for a person or a situation without even knowing it. The "epidemic" is only the most obvious of these. I'm not infrequently startled when one of these long-prayed, barely-noticed words of deprecation, obsecration, or intercession suddenly leaps off the page at me in light of new information. So *that's* who I've been praying for.

Luther revived the Litany for a time of crisis, but it quickly found a place in the hearts of congregants and stayed the course even as life resumed a somewhat more normal pattern. Everyday life has crisis enough, of course, but there's no substitute for long training in advance of the decisive battle, whenever and however it comes.

So, I will continue to strap on Christ's agony and bloody sweat. I'll keep asking for God's Word to be accompanied by his Spirit and power. And I'll certainly go on imploring for deliverance from this epidemic.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Note: Two good studies of the history of the Litany and its present-day use are by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Restoring the Great Litany in the Lutheran Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 81 (2017): 321–330, and Mark A. Michael, "The Deprecations, Obsecrations, and Other Scattered Treasures of the Litany," *Lutheran Forum* 48/1 (2014): 20–24.

The Rev. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson is Associate Pastor at Tokyo Lutheran Church *in Japan, where she lives with her husband and son. She co-hosts the podcast "*Queen of the Sciences*: Conversations between a Theologian and Her Dad" and is the author of* Sermon on the Mount: A Poetic Paraphrase *and* Pearly Gates: Parables from the Final Threshold.

We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God; and that it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church Universal in the right way, We beesech thee to hear us, Good Lord.

St. Jane de Chantal and St. Francis de Sales, December 12

(One of a series of articles on newly named saints in Lesser Feasts & Fasts 2018, as adopted by the 2018 General Convention.)

By Ryan Pollock

You've heard it said that fish don't know that they swim, that birds don't know they fly: some truths are so basic, so simply ever-present, that we don't often think too deeply about them at all. That God works, and that God "works through people," especially his own, is one of those truths so true it's easy to forget.

Jane de Chantal's (1572-1641) biographers note an early life characterized by loss and despondence: born in Dijon, France, she lost her mother before her second birthday, her husband before her thirtieth, and three of her children in infancy. Inheritance law required she take her remaining three children to her father-in-law's estate, where she suffered the cruel inhospitality from him and his housekeeper. There she would stay for seven years, petitioning the Lord for a spiritual director, and the grace to forgive the man who had accidentally killed her husband. Nevertheless, her steadfast devotion during this period frequently shines through: "I abandon myself forever to Thy arms. Whether gentle or severe, lead me henceforth whither Thou wilt…"

Francis de Sales (1567-1622), so the story goes, was almost born a man of the law: known for his legal prowess from a young age. He was eventually given the unenviable bishopric at Geneva, stronghold of Calvinist ideology. Francis knew hardship, too, and while his life is not nearly as tragic as Jane's, he did spend significant time hiding from assassins, and enduring beatings by the mob for his Catholic convictions. Nevertheless, he made it his mission to evangelize the "pretend reformers," even those he imagined were staging a coup no better than biblical Absalom's.

Jane met Francis during a series of Lenten sermons he gave at Dijon's Saint Chappelle. One sermon in particular, on the virtues of forgiveness, opened her heart to forgive her husband's killer. Overcome with gratitude, Jane asked if he would become her long-hoped-for spiritual director, and he agreed.

Francis shared with Jane his dream to establish an order of religious sisters dedicated to the virtues of Mary at the Visitation, and this dream quickly becomes hers too. This Congregation of the Visitation of Holy Mary would practice Mary's humility and meekness, especially in their admittance of women religious who were much themselves in need of service – those in poor health and old age, those whom other parts of society would find easy to cast aside. The sisters would follow an Augustinian rule. Francis' care for Jane and spiritual sisters would continue, and this can be seen especially in his lovely corpus of letters, including his famous *Treatise on the Love of God.*

Photo: flicker

St. Francis de Sales giving the Rule for the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary to St. Jane Frances de Chantal

Francis was declared a saint in 1665, Jane in 1767. There are today 130 autonomous monasteries of their order, spread across the globe. If it's not too much to say, Francis and Jane's "chance" meeting reminds me of the Visitation itself. Because God works, and because God works through people, meeting the right person can change everything.

Ryan E. Pollock is a publisher with Best Version Media, a premed student, and a parishioner at St. Louis King of France Catholic Church in Austin, Texas.

Most Gracious God, who has bidden us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before you; Grant that we, like your servants Francis and Jane, may see and serve Christ in all people, and know him as the giver of all good things; Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Mapping the Terrain for Engagement on Human Sexuality

The Church of England has produced a series of major reports in the last century that have influenced discussions of significant theological and ethical topics throughout the Anglican Communion, including within the Episcopal Church. The *Living in Love and Faith* project, released on November 9, is the C of E's most significant attempt to date to address issues of human sexuality, marriage, and identity in a spirit of charity and mutual respect.

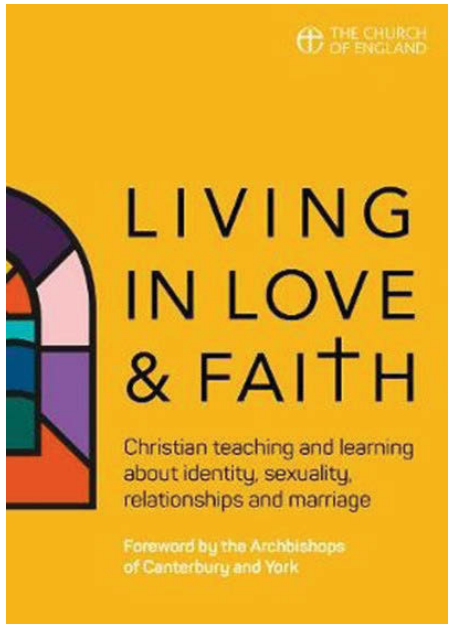
Review by Oliver O'Donovan

In the mid-twentieth century the Church of England used to attract admiration for its treatment of challenging contemporary moral issues. The form it used was the working-party report: a small group of members with intellectual authority would weigh the conflicting arguments and come to common conclusions that would be offered to the General Synod.

The first thing to understand about Living in Love and Faith (LLF) is that the conception is quite different. To confront the stubbornly unyielding disagreements on sexuality and marriage, there were good reasons not to follow the classic pattern. We face an emotionally fraught issue resistant to any kind of "expertise," a synod entrenched in opposed positions, a church feeling constantly wrong-footed by a morally censorious society. The strategy, shaped by the courageous missionary and pastoral ambitions of the two archbishops, was to widen the discussion.

The theologians and other experts were not forgotten, but they were made to listen more carefully and at greater length to the strong feelings of ordinary worshippers. A network of interlocking task forces was deployed under the patient coordination of the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth. No formal conclusions were sought, and the extensive reflections on the consultation are presented not for "adoption" but to be "engaged with." The engagements are meant to be as wide as possible, and the work is disseminated in multi-media format, the text of the book being supplemented by on-line and video resources. (I should mention that I have had access only to the book.) The success of the enterprise will stand or fall by whether these wider engagements succeed in building on its work or simply go round the old circles again. At 468 pages, it presents a dangerous incentive to careless skim-reading, and it will fall to the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, to ensure that the text is engaged with as carefully as it deserves.

It is immediately obvious that *LLF* is conceived as an undertaking internal to the *English* church. From the quotation of statistics to the quotation of liturgy — and there is a lot of both — the horizon is bounded by Herefordshire on the west and Northumbria in the North. Though some notice is taken of ecumenical, even inter-religious considerations, these, too, are set in the national context. The underlying question is, of course, nothing if not international and intercultural. It is bound up, in ways that are evident, if hopelessly complicated, with the spread of global capitalism, communications technology, and human rights. Its church dimensions are globally ecumenical, and its Anglican dimensions have threatened the life of the worldwide communion. Those who look for suggestions as to how the international and ecumenical commitments of Christian faith can be reinforced in the face of this solvent will find little to satisfy them. But where there are limits, there are also opportunities. Doing things nationally has been broadly an Anglican principle, and the English church has sought to exploit its national potential for a discussion among those who belong to a common context. In place of a global overview it offers a purchase on the state of discussion as it stands in one church.



Living in Love and Faith
Christian Teaching about Human Identity, Sexuality and Marriage

The Church of England
(churchofengland.org)

What initially promises to be a rather dispersed and ill-focused address to the question turns out, happily, to be the opposite. There is intellectual integrity to these reflections. If the paradox is permissible, they are "classically post-modern." Reflection begins from the church's doctrine as found, unchallenged until recent days: marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman. This is not presented

(Continued on next page)

Mapping the Terrain

(Continued from previous page)

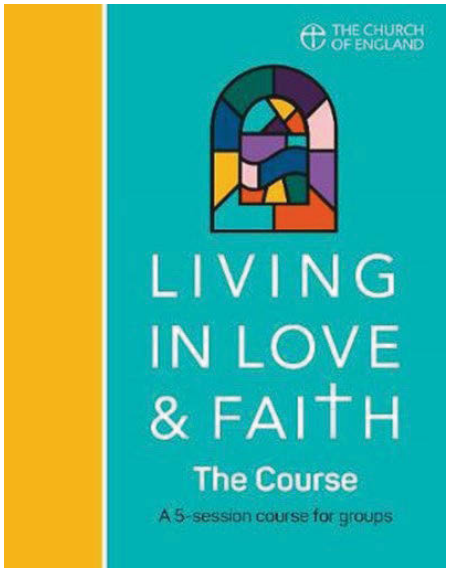
as a problem to be got round, but as a deep-rooted existing commitment bound up with Christian faith in the place of both men and women in God's creation.

In the opening section of the study the doctrine of marriage is presented with a clear conviction of its strengths, its adaptability to human aspirations and experience, and its sacramental openness to the experience of God's love in Christ. That some members of the church think it "ripe for development" does not invalidate it, but neither is the suggestion of development ruled out. Our current situation simply demands that we undertake some exploratory questioning around it.

Living in Love and Faith does not pretend to complete that exploration, only to guide its first steps. Written in a comparatively popular style — plainly, but without slumming — it adopts a reassuring homiletic tone, addressing its readers in the second person. Argumentative material is laced with constant acknowledgment of the feelings involved, and on its own account, too, it tends to emotional expressiveness. Its most striking departure from a traditional format is to interweave discussion with short personal profiles of Christian people — how many of them, I wonder, drawn from clergy families? — who illustrate different angles from which readers of the book may be expected to experience it. These profiles are called "encounters" and "stories." They are in fact little statements of personal conviction, not directly taken up in the argument but allowed to speak for themselves and stretch the reader's imagination to encompass the breadth of the assumptions brought by those who live and worship in the church.

The first major aim of the document, it appears, is to *complicate* our view of the current discussion, to banish the accursed binary alternatives and expel the great over-simplifications that stultify the debate. This demands something serious of the reader, who must be willing, while not abandoning what he or she holds true, to absorb more information, to acquire more insight into the logic of other approaches, and so on. The result is a rewarding fulness of description, especially admirable in the second part, "Paying Attention." That section follows the course of current disagreements along experiential, scientific, and ecclesiological lines, not allowing any of these three approaches to swallow up the others. It is hard to imagine the reader who will not discover something in the account that he or she will feel the need to take more note of in the future. Great care has been taken not only in compiling the descriptive material but in presenting it.

The second major aim is to model an approach to Christian debate. The



third and fourth sections ("Making Connections" and "Seeking Answers") explore the factors to which Christians must give weight, while still stressing their complexity and insisting that a Christian view does not depend solely on the outline story, minimally understood. That story, of faith, humanity and church, must be concretely mediated through Scripture, doctrinal tradition, and complex historical experience. These lead into the short fifth section ("Conversing"), which takes the place of a conclusion. It consists of a sequence of four discussions of different focal topics, which are edited and simplified versions of discussions actually conducted among some of the participants. Their aim is to model a constructive mode of discussion, not only involving "respect" for those with different views but also the search for perhaps unsuspected affinities and convergences.

Unpretentious as this exercise appears, it is the true climax of the work, carrying the weight of the dialectical task. It seeks to unpack the "packages" sufficiently to allow the search for significant areas of fruitful common ground to emerge. No one point of view is proposed for the church's adoption. Nor (less obvious, but equally important) are the different points of view proposed to the church as acceptable *alternatives,* any one of which could be endorsed. They are presented simply as a map of the terrain on which engagement can go forward, a gathering-point for Christian discussion. The need for further convergence and deeper mutual understanding is always in view.

Twenty-five years ago, in the so-called "St. Andrew's Day Statement," I and a few colleagues informally attempted to open up a theological debate about sexual orientation (not then as complicated a question as it appears today) by offering a handful of theses with the invitation to those who disagreed to engage them and take a position in response. That initiative fell flat, partly because the strategy for debate was not understood in an atmosphere where the winner-take-all conception of debate was pervasive. Now, after an exhausting quarter of a century, comes another attempt to achieve the kind of engagement we sought, this time along more fully developed lines.

What kind of "engagement" is this? Not to establish a *position*, but to define a *field* of positions that can meet and challenge each other intelligibly within the authenticity of Christian faith. It will, of course, involve being prepared to think in some detail *about* the document and *with* the document, not merely passing judgment for or against it or taking it as read. It will involve taking up the claims it echoes and asking questions like: How far could I possibly go with that? To which of these positions am I closer, and why?

LLF deserves to succeed. Its work has been done painstakingly and generously, and if it elicits the kind of engagement it seeks, it

cannot help but change the mood. As the mood changes, the questions will evolve. For it is an implication of the way it has set about its work that not every question needing to be asked has been asked sufficiently. I will not, then, be mistaken for a carping critic if I identify three matters on which *LLF* has evidently not spoken the last, or in some cases the first, word, but which will need to be taken up as the "engagement" proceeds further.

First, of the various complaints that may be raised against *LLF* from the conservative side there is one that I would take seriously, which is the way it talks about God. The theological matrix is familiar enough from church documents and homilies of these times: Love is the sole name of God, and "whoever lives in love, lives in God." The Bible is a book about loving community, injustice is the sole sin, and the Eucharist the sole sacrament. Though undeniably inspired by scriptural and especially Johannine sources, the presentation of God is troubling for its loss of mystery and tension.

God as hidden, God as truth, God as judge: those warnings about the distance of the divine from the human cannot be ignored without the knowledge of God collapsing into a kind of consolatory knowledge of ourselves. With the loss of depth in our conception of God, of course, there goes a loss of depth in self-knowledge. Where there is no "Repent and believe the Gospel!" — no narrow way to enter, no cross to take up — the individual subject settles down to become a unit of society equal to all other units; "every human being regardless…," with no challenge to self-discovery. What an older generation called *existence,* that is, the unique and incommunicable demand of living in coherence with oneself, disappears from view.

Secondly, there is the question of "feeling," which our document frequently acknowledges and not infrequently displays. There is no need to apologize for feeling these days. The reign of the clear-thinking rationalist and his icebox brain has long gone; all philosophers today interpret feeling as a way of knowing. The gift of feeling is the capacity to respond to difference, to appreciate the variety of goods in God's created world, and to respond positively to time as a sequence of changing feelings — allowing consolation after disappointment, new excitement after old, and so on.

But precisely this gift is its limitation: we feel one thing at a time, and in feeling one thing intensely become oblivious to another. Feelings overwhelm other feelings; they cut out the knowledge of *this* by prioritizing the knowledge of *that*. The risk of privileging feelings is that we lose sight of the enduring and eternal, which, by framing our feelings, makes them accessible to us as a continuing strength. The question of how we are to evaluate feelings becomes more complex when it is not only a matter of our own convictions, but of how we may share them in public contexts. Thoughts are moderating and dialectical, seeking agreement; feelings are dialectical and opposed, at odds with one another.

The risk of privileging feelings is that we lose sight of the enduring and eternal, which, by framing our feelings, makes them accessible to us as a continuing strength.

The true locus for public feeling, Christians have maintained, is worship, where we are taught to rejoice and lament over the right things, and, indeed, in a unifying way. Liturgy needs the discipline of words and form and ritual acts to provide a stability that can afford unity to many and be a resource for one, in the face of shifting and conflicting feelings. In public debate we cannot be too careful about how feeling is introduced. The conviction that if I insist on my feelings long enough other people will have to share them is a truly destructive one. Not only will they not feel as I feel, but neither shall I, so I end up protecting a line of seaweed from which the tide has withdrawn.

It is a delicate matter to create a discussion in which different people with differently felt experiences can understand one another's feelings as belonging within a common range, without experiencing an intrusive *demand* for feeling that they cannot meet and should not try to. Our authors have struggled to find a balanced treatment: expressive enough to allow feelings and reticent enough to permit differences among them.

Closely related to the question of feeling is a third matter, not much raised, though it ought to be. Can there be a successful discussion of sexual experience that is not deliberately and self-consciously *inter-generational?* The way a human being receives the experience of his or her sexuality, together with the range of feelings that go with it, changes importantly with the phases of life. Sexuality shares the unfolding character of all lived experience, but the discussion of sexuality seems to have lost sight of this. "Growth" and "development" are words that were once part of the discourse but have come to be dropped, perhaps out of distrust for certain claims associated with the idea of "maturity." The various personal profiles that accompany this study, while full of biographical detail, contain no hint as to the age of the person presented, as though they had all signed up to the aspirations of Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell: "London society is full of women [and men] … who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years."

One result of this we cannot easily laugh off: the complete absence of childhood from the discussion. Children are mentioned in passing as among the sexual victims and as those who wish to assert their sexual identities. But what of "childhood," that phase of unfearful personal self-experience that we used to believe young people had a need and a right to enjoy, until they were emotionally ready to leave it? Wordsworth's complaint about the ed-

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Mapping the Terrain

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ucational debates of his day — "'Tis a child, no child, but a dwarf man!" — is more than justified by our current sexual debates, too.

To be sure, collective compositions like *LLF* can only achieve so much focus and coherence. Multiple authorship inevitably leaves gaps and creates imprecisions. But only multiple authorship can discover a route to convergence. What *LLF* has to offer is not another piece of clear advice from some clear-sighted individual, but rather ground on which 40 members of the church from different starting points can move forward together.

The good news is that that ground really exists. It has been charted with care and circumspection. Its strategic approach, modesty of ambition, and scrupulous attentiveness to the manner of execution offers the church more, perhaps even on the score of focus and coherence, than it had a right to expect. It sets us the challenge of discussing the topic in a way that leaves the old pre-emptive solidarities behind. It will become clear over time whether the church is capable of rising to the challenge.

The bishops, meanwhile, must be encouraged to give the reception the time it needs, and not to be in too much of a hurry to "lead the Church of England into making whatever decisions are needful for our common life," as they express themselves rather busily in their concluding note. The atmosphere of "needful decisions" is not one that will help the careful pondering and mutual appreciation that *LLF* has sought to model. The commission has worked with admirable patience. The church is being asked to learn new skills of mutual patience. It would be a tragedy if the whole attempt foundered on impatience in the House of Bishops.

The Rev. Canon Oliver O'Donovan is former Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at the University of Oxford and professor of Christian ethics and practical theology at the University of Edinburgh.

De terra veritas

Finding Hope in My Father's World

We sang "This is My Father's World" at least once every year in the church of my childhood, on the Sunday of the church picnic at the town park. This was about the only hymn we knew that mentioned the natural world: "of rocks and trees, of skies and seas, his hands the wonders wrought." When I hear the tune, I instinctively smell fried chicken and listen for the crack of a bat from the softball game after lunch.

In later years, as I began to think more seriously about the content of hymn texts, I turned up my nose at this one. Lots of landscape description, stitched together with a few platitudes. Golf course spirituality, I thought, is made of such stuff as this. And that vaulting optimism of the final stanzas:

> This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget:
> That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
> This is my Father's world, why should my heart be sad?
> The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let earth be glad!

Awfully chipper. Surely, this was the versifying of a vague, overconfident American Protestantism, yet to face reality in the trenches; the song of a man who has all the goods of life presented on a silver tray.

A first glance at a biography of the hymn's author, the eccentrically named Maltbie Babcock, seemed to confirm all my suspicions. Babcock was a leading figure of late 19th century Presbyterianism, a college athlete with a warm personality and rhetorical flair. He began his ministry in Lockport, New York, where he took long, meditative walks along the Niagara Escarpment, the high limestone ridge over which the mighty falls eventually plunge. Before heading off, he would tell his wife Elizabeth he was venturing into "my Father's world."

Syracuse University awarded Babcock an honorary doctorate when he was still in his 30s, and he ascended quickly to a prominent pastorate in Baltimore, where the largest stained-glass window the Tiffany Company ever produced is dedicated to his honor. He went on to serve New York's historic Brick Presbyterian Church, which paid him the then-astounding annual salary of $30,000.

A year later, in 1901, he took a steamship to the Holy Land. During a stopover in Naples, he fell ill of brucellosis, and experienced an intense recurrence of deep depression that had dogged him throughout his adult life. Ten years before, after losing a second son in infancy, Babcock had slipped away quietly to a sanitarium to be treated for "nervous prostration." His Italian doctors found him largely resistant to treatment, and he committed suicide by slitting his wrists and ingesting mercuric chloride. He was only 42. The brightly hopeful nature poem adapted for "This is My Father's World" was published by his grieving widow in a collection a year later.

The poetry still seems a little saccharine. But the hymn is more profound

when seen for what it surely was: a song of praise in the midst of deep inner pain; a testimony of God's faithfulness and watchful care from a man who believed, but at times struggled to find such assurances meaningful. The hymn's cheeriness is perhaps less pretense or denial than a self-fashioned form of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), one of the best-known and widely effective forms of mental health treatment available today.

In poems like this (and others much like them), Babcock was affirming those things he knew were true of God, human life, and the world around him, even as his emotions were pulling him into agonizing self-doubt and moral confusion. Repeating these truths expanded his sense of what was truly possible and checked his self-destructive thoughts and impulses. Like all good methods, this one was not infallible; but the resiliency it evoked gave Babcock time to be of valuable service to God and humanity.

Babcock's hymn is like those confident declarations of God's redeeming power that usually close the psalms of lament. The author of Psalms 42 and 43, for example, confesses that "tears have been my meat day and night, while [my enemies] daily say unto me, 'Where now is your God?'" It feels, he says, like his bones have been broken, and God seems distant. "Why have you put me from you?" he rails.

And yet, looking on the wonders of nature (are the "heights of Hermon," with their thundering cataracts so different from the Niagara Escarpment?), the psalmist remembers again God's promise to support and assist him. He punctuates his anguished cries with a hopeful refrain:

> Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul?
> And why are you so disquieted within me?
> Put your trust in God.
> For I will yet give thanks to him,
> Who is the help of my countenance, and my God.
> (Ps. 42:6-7, 14-15; 43:5-6)

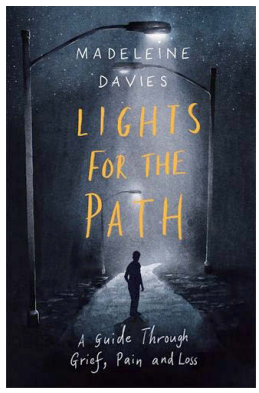
There are few aspects of human life more entwined than faith and mental health. And yet, mental illness is rarely discussed as openly as it should be within Christian congregations. Sometimes those who suffer in these ways are cruelly stigmatized. We are happily past the days when psychological training suggested that most religiosity is neurotic, though studies show that many therapists remain reluctant to introduce their patients to spiritual coping methods, even when they recognize that such treatments would likely be helpful.

Pioneering figures like Harvard Medical School's David Rosmarin have made great strides in bringing faith and CBT closer together. Duke's Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health publishes an excellent series of free manuals for psychologists and parish clergy outlining scriptural and theological resources for countering unhelpful thinking, as well as simple spiritual practices for grounding and refocusing those in distress. Returning to God's promises can bring deep consolation, by allowing us to make sense of an overwhelming world and discovering ways to face each day with patience and renewed hope.

Several features and reviews in this Advent issue connect Christian faith and mental health, a timely theme when rates of anxiety and depression are rising precipitously. Many around us long, perhaps unknowingly, for the Lord to "rend the heaven and come down," bringing rest for our weariness and comfort for our loneliness (Isa. 64:1). We pray, as we are able, to the one who, in Babcock's words, "is the ruler yet," even when it is hard to glimpse his ways. We trust that he *will* return on a day when all his people who have persevered in hope amid suffering may sing "let the heavens ring! Let earth be glad!"

—Mark Michael

BOOKS



Lights for the Path
By **Madeleine Davies**
SPCK Publishing, pp. 160, $15

Robust Theology, Pastoral Sensitivity

Review by Todd FitzGerald

Madeleine Davies's *Lights for the Path* is a soothing balm for young people experiencing the death of a loved one and navigating the turbulent waters of grief. Immediately, the author establishes her authority as a fellow traveler and wise guide, so vital for anyone trying to connect with teenagers. With an authentic voice, Davies shares her own journey through her mother's cancer diagnosis, her mother's death when the author was 12, and her experience of the vicissitudes of the grief landscape.

With a vulnerable and honest tone, Davies includes her own story as a thread holding the chapters together. Throughout the book, her returns to her story are well-timed and germane to each successive theme, whether anticipatory grief, theodicy, or remembering. Authors, ministers, historians, counselors, poets, doctors, and teachers, when these experts' ideas are in Davies's hands, add depth to her treatment of the subject. The voices of others who have suffered, with which the author concludes 10 of the chapters, broaden the appeal and efficacy of the book. The reader benefits from Davies's personal story of loss, but the inclusion of the interviewees' stories expand the narrative to include many other circumstances, such as suicide, automobile crash, or substance abuse, under which people face death and grief.

As regular church attendance continues

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to decline in the United States (and even more severely in Davies's United Kingdom) and moral therapeutic deism spreads among youth in the West, the most valuable elements of *Lights for the Path* are the author's robust theological analysis and extraordinary pastoral sensitivity. At a time when more people lack any belief structure or regular practices with which to navigate life's ups and downs, Davies's contribution to literature for teenagers navigating grief is sorely needed.

Without being preachy or dogmatic, Davies invites teens to situate their tragic experience, with all their questions and emotions and confusion, in the midst of the Christian story. Resurrection hope, for example, is thoroughly treated with scriptural evidence and a pastoral insight that will resonate with those familiar with the Bible and those who are not.

The author manages to weave together biblical exegesis and theological insights that are substantial yet appropriate for an adolescent audience. Psychologist and priest Joanna Collicutt, for example, enhances the author's exploration of the fear of death and the Christian claim that believers are liberated from death and the fear of it. Additional theological insights from poet and priest Malcolm Guite, and New Testament scholar Tom Wright deepen Davies's exploration of God's providence and Christian eschatology, respectively.

Davies's pastoral attentiveness is a clear note that sounds throughout the book. She begins and ends the book with a prayer that the reader will experience light during the darkness of their grief. The vulnerability of Davies's writing provides a point of shared contact with the reader's experience. In vivid detail, that vulnerability is surely reassuring to the teens who will read the pages in which Davies shares the dread of repeatedly waking up to her mother's diagnosis as "aftershocks," and the confession that she found her mother's funeral "disturbing."

The author's sensitivity for the age and reading level of the reader influences the entire book, but it is specifically on display when Davies defines terms like "aneurysm," or when she tells the reader to re-read a comforting line "as many times as you need to." In many different forms and places throughout the book, the author's reassurance that God "walks with us through whatever we face" will be comfort to readers' broken hearts.

I have been challenged and encouraged by Pope Francis' "art of accompaniment" as a corrective to a compassionate but incomplete pastoral care. As he states in *Evangelii Gaudium*, when we accompany another person, we are "to make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze…[and] to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (*EG*, 169). Davies's book is not only a healing gift to teens, it will be reassurance for the pastoral ministry of those who accompany teens in order "to make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze."

Certainly, I expect *Lights for the Path* to be a gift I might give to students facing loss as I walk alongside them. In addition to using the book in this way, I also anticipate giving it to other adults I know who are providing support and comfort for teens, including parents, coaches, school counselors, and advisors. Due to Davies's thorough research, wide-ranging interviews, and her own theological insights and those of her mentors, *Lights for the Path* is a gift to all who have the great privilege to accompany teenagers with faith, hope, and love through their turbulent adolescent years.

The Rev. Todd FitzGerald is chaplain of St. Stephen's Episcopal School, Austin, Texas.

A Thick Account of Mental Illness

Review by Shirley O'Shea

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.
–Lamentations 1:12

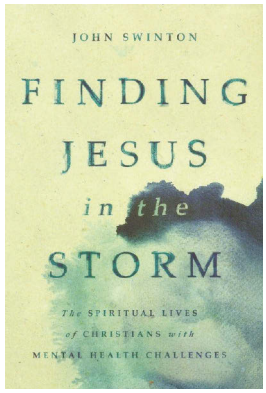
Not long ago my 12-year-old son challenged the emphasis in public education on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (a.k.a. STEM). "Why do they focus on the world outside?" he asked. "Why don't they focus on the world inside?"

John Swinton's new book, *Finding Jesus in the Storm* attempts to enter the inner world of those among us who struggle with making sense of and coping with life's turmoil, pain, and fear. He focuses especially on those who attempt to live meaningful and faithful lives as disciples of Jesus Christ, as they sort out the ramifications of that medical designation called mental illness. Swinton challenges what he sees as an externally focused, overly medicalized, empirical approach to helping individuals with what he calls "mental health challenges" to achieve recovery.

Swinton is a former psychiatric nurse, now a practical theologian and an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland. He is chair of divinity and religious studies at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland.

This book represents a significant step forward in the church's response to the phenomenon of mental illness among its faithful. With almost one in every five persons in the United States living with a mental illness, according to the National Institutes of Mental Health, this book is essential reading for clergy and church leadership.

Dr. Swinton's compassion and respect for those living with mental health challenges and unconventional psychological experiences is evident on every page. I and many other Christians who live with a mental health challenge, and those who care for these individuals pastorally or as a friend or loved one, will appreciate the complete absence of judgment and Dr. Swinton's deep desire to understand the world of those with mental health challenges, and what they need to maintain faith during episodes of, or chronic, profound psychological pain.



Finding Jesus in the Storm
The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges
By **John Swinton**
Eerdmans, pp. 224, $25

Finding Jesus in the Storm begins with Swinton's discussion of the distinction between "thick" and "thin" narratives about the experience of mental illness. While he writes "this book is not intended to be seen as arguing against psychiatry," he is quite critical of the how psychiatry is, in his view, usually practiced. Psychiatry, with its perceived heavy reliance on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5, limits its focus to assessing symptoms and assigning labels, which in turn determine treatment regimens. This is, in Swinton's view, a thin, or superficial, approach to a complex and utterly individual experience. In the beginning of the book, he writes about a lecture by a professor of psychiatry who admits to having only about 15 minutes to meet with each patient.

Swinton fears that the medical model tends to be reductionistic and dominated by a biological understanding of the human being, and this also results in a thin understanding of what a person with a serious mental health challenge is experiencing. The fear of biological reductionism in diagnosing and treating mental illness seems to be common among Christians, but Swinton acknowledges that, despite its limitations, a biological treatment approach that includes psychotropic medication is usually part of the healing journey.

However, according to Swinton, treatment for persons with severe psychiatric disorders — he focuses on major depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder, unfortunately neglecting generalized anxiety disorder — should equally include a "thick" understanding of the individual's experiences, perceptions and beliefs about his or her disorder. In my experience as a person living with bipolar disorder, more psychiatrists than not have addressed the many facets of my personality and inner and outer worlds, including the role of faith as a support and source of hope.

Swinton does not include any discussion of the role of psychotherapy in the work of healing persons with mental health challenges, which is where thick narratives are shared. In the U.S., the dominant model of treatment for serious mental illness is medication to provide relief from debilitating symptoms, so that the individual may engage meaningfully in the psychotherapeutic enterprise. Any therapist worth his or her license will acknowledge the role of religious faith in a person's inner world — both its positive, life-affirming messages, as

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well as the tragic reality of toxic religion that may contribute to an individual's psychological suffering.

Swinton interviewed over 30 individuals living with mental health challenges, and surprisingly, the portions of the interviews included in the book do not provide enough thick narrative to help the reader understand the depth of suffering, their experiences with stigma, and what persons with mental health challenges would consider helpful in terms of support from the Church. (Shirley O'Shea's essay, "What Mentally Ill Persons Wish Their Clergy Understood," begins on page 18 of this issue.) Swinton does note, at length, the value of reading and explicating the psalms of lament, and emphasizes the value of teaching about the role of darkness, suffering, and the silence of God in human experience. Such teaching is often a helpful balm, allowing believers who cannot experience the joy of faith in their illness to hope that God understands their anguish and will eventually bring them into the light again.

As one of Dr. Swinton's interviewees states, "It's so fascinating what people's brains can do to them." People with severe mental challenges often have profound insights into the nature of God and our own nature. Getting to know such persons, befriending them, and hearing the wisdom they possess from having to look into the abyss is a work the church must begin to take seriously. Reading this book is a first step. Let us hope it is the first of many such compassionate and intelligent books on faith and mental illness that recognizes the dignity of those with severe mental health challenges.

Shirley O'Shea is a freelance writer residing in Oneonta, N.Y., with her husband, Geoff, and their son, Jeremy. She has worked as a paralegal, elementary school teacher, and newspaper reporter.

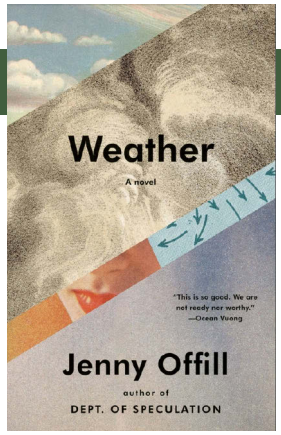
Climatology for the Storm-Tossed Soul

By Tim Bascom

Lizzie, the narrator of Jenny Offill's new novel *Weather*, is a witty, winsome observer whose reflections on contemporary American life are not only entertaining but profound — a rare combo in a culture so distracted by the flailing firehose of disasters and shifting trends and media spin. Maybe it is Lizzie's struggle with anxiety and depression that gives her such depth, but she is definitely worth getting to know, and *Weather* is essentially an opportunity to become her confidant. That is because, unlike traditional plot-driven novels with their attention to large events, this novel is driven by the narrator's connection to other characters and to us — the readers.

The entire story is delivered in the form of brief journal-like reflections by Lizzie, who privileges us with glimpses into her personal web of interconnectivity while allowing us to also look into her unguarded psyche. It's an intimate story, in that sense, and we are pulled along by the rare gift of such open access. Lizzie, a university librarian, has a self-deprecatory way of winning us over, finding humor even in the pain of depression. For instance, when given the opportunity to start moonlighting for a former grad-school mentor with a new podcast titled "Hell or Highwater," Lizzie is comically noncommittal. Her mentor wants her to respond to the flood of emails coming from listeners who are "either crazy or depressed," and Lizzie replies that she needs to think about such work "because it's possible my life is already filled with these people."

Indeed, her life *is* filled with such people, including a weary adjunct professor who can't finish his dissertation and keeps getting locked out of his classroom, or a groggy, perpetually late, car-service manager who felt forced to let his



Weather

By **Jenny Offill**

Knopf, pp 225, $23.95.

drivers go and now sleeps in the only remaining car so that he won't miss calls.

Most notable among the "crazies" is Lizzie's own brother, Henry, a former addict whom she has had to rescue at great cost to her well-being. Henry, who still relies on her for emotional support, always seems vulnerable. He shows up late for their usual restaurant date, drenched to the skin. He gets worked up about a woman at his NA meeting who is ranting about people improperly disposing of anti-depressants, which supposedly get ingested by earthworms, which then leads to birds ingesting them and losing motivation for breeding.

The reader, like Lizzie, can see the potential for disaster when this at-risk brother meets Catherine — an acquaintance of Lizzie's who turns out to be another former addict. Soon enough the recovering users have moved in together and Catherine is pregnant. Then the baby arrives, and Henry is so stressed that he starts bathing the infant at a distance, with a squirt gun. He stops going to his NA meetings, gets high, cheats on Catherine, then gets thrown out of their shared apartment, which means he ends up on the couch in Lizzie's living room instead, where the fragile sanity of her nuclear family is completely disrupted.

Prior to this crisis, Lizzie's husband and son are her only refuge. Her husband is a grounded man who jumped into designing educational video games because he could see that his PhD in classics was not going to provide a paycheck. He is an empathetic stoic who expects life's difficulties but doesn't brood. And their grade-school son is a normal-enough child who throws a slobber frog for the dog and sings a song about all the stages of the moon and wants his mother to take a piece of gum out of the prank pack but warns her that a metal spring will snap down on her finger and "it hurts more than you think."

These two are her one "safe place" — until Lizzie's brother invades and begins playing video games all night on the couch in the living room. Then Lizzie's husband, ever practical, arranges a family vacation. When Lizzie refuses to go, out of fear for her brother who is now saying that his baby daughter is hers to care for *if* anything happens to him, Lizzie's husband and son leave on the vacation anyway, and she is left in this vulnerable state, trying to negotiate her worries without any buttresses. She begins to stay out late at a bar, where she becomes attracted to a visiting war correspondent. She feels the temptation to leap out of her life, joining his. . . .

Rather than spoil what happens next, I will only say that, if you like lyrical, segmented writing, and if you enjoy connecting the dots, you will not be disappointed. With her snatches of perceptive observation, Offill creates a beautiful constellation of new meaning, which emerges slowly but prompts all sorts of worthy contemplation. She is obviously acquainted with the angst of our era, and she is — through the character of Lizzie — giving us a way to negotiate that mental-health quandary.

By the way, the listeners of the podcast "Hell or High Water," whom Lizzie has reluctantly agreed to counsel by email, are mostly worried Americans who have begun to anticipate wholesale disaster due to global warming and technological overkill and civil unrest. They feed Lizzie's own dread, and she turns everywhere for answers, attending meditation classes, going to church with her over-zealous mother, stockpiling things that might help in an apocalypse, reading about the desert fathers, considering a run to Canada with the footloose war correspondent, and — most importantly — sharing her thought-life with us, the readers.

When this sad-but-funny woman returns from work one day and changes into her "least depressing underwear," she quips, "Now I am a brand-new person." But in fact, there can be no sudden conversion for Lizzie, and no symphonic denouement. In the end there is only a walnut falling on a roof.

Read carefully, giving attention to what can be found between the lines of this remarkable story, and you will come away enlightened by a candid, thoughtful soul who is making a journey that seems quite familiar, a journey that we are all making right alongside her!

Tim Bascom is author of two prize-winning memoirs about life in Ethiopia as a son of missionaries, plus the recent collection of stories, Climbing Lessons.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Appointments

The Rev. **Clarence B. Baker** is priest in charge of Trinity, Pine Bluff, Ark.

The Rev. **William Baker** is priest in charge of Ascension, Staten Island, N.Y.

The Rev. Dn. **Mike Ballard** is deacon of Redeemer, Mobile, Ala.

The Rev. **Ann Barker** is rector of St. Joseph's, McDonough, Ga.

The Rev. **JD Barnes** is rector of Emmanuel, Rapid City, S.D.

The Rev. **Maxine Barnett** is rector of All Saints,' Baldwin, N.Y.

The Rev. **Kate Bast** is rector of Trinity, Melrose, Mass.

The Rev. **Stephen Batten** is rector of Trinity, Chocowinity, N.C.

The Rev. **Richard C. Bauer** is rector of St. Edward's, Lancaster, Pa.

The Rev. **Jennifer Beal** is bridge priest of St. Anne's, North Billerica, Mass.

The Rev. **Rosemary Beales** is interim rector of St. Aidan's, Alexandria, Va.

The Rev. **Nathan Beall** is rector of Middleham Chapel and St. Peter's, Lusby, Md.

The Rev. **Robert Beazley** is rector of St. Michael's, Mandeville, La.

The Rev. **Daniel Bell** is priest in charge of St. Mark's, Burlington, Mass.

The Rev. **Michael Bell** is director of spiritual care services at PIH Health, Whittier, Calif.

The Rev. **Kim Capwell** is interim rector of St. James, Wilmington, Del.

The Rev. **Arthur "Art" Callaham** is chaplain of Episcopal High School, Houston.

The Rev. **Bryan Callen** is curate of St. Andrew's, Bryan, Texas.

The Rev. **Ed Cardoza** is missioner for property stewardship of the Diocese of Massachusetts.

The Rev. **Diane Carleton** is rector of All Saints,' Torrington, Wyo.

The Rev. **Bill Carlin** is supply priest of St. Luke's, Chickasha, Okla.

The Rev. Dn. **David Chatel** is deacon of St. Stephen's, Brewton, Ala.

The Rev. **Nancee Cekuta** is rector of Holy Trinity, Fayetteville, N.C.

The Rev. **Bruce Cheney** is rector of St. Thomas, Oriental, N.C.

The Rev. Canon **Katie Churchwell** is dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Oklahoma City, Okla.

The Rev. **Sheelagh Clarke** is priest in residence of Holy Innocents, West Orange, N.J.

The Rev. **Noel Doherty** is supply priest of St. Luke's, Bartlesville, Okla.

The Rev. **Bob Donnell** is deacon of All Saints,' Mobile, Ala.

The Rev. Canon **Michael P. Durning** is priest in charge of Good Shepherd, Dunedin, Fla.

The Rev. **Monique Ellison** is priest in charge of Messiah and St. Matthias,' Baltimore.

The Rev. **Kevin Emge** is ministry coordinator of Trinity, Ottumwa, Iowa.

The Rev. **Ryan Eikenbary** is priest in charge of St. Anne's, Stockton, Calif.

The Rev. **Claire Elser** is curate of Grace & St. Stephen's, Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Rev. **Dawn Enderwood** is interim pastor of St. John's, Oklahoma City, Okla.

The Rev. **Nicholas Evancho** is priest in charge of St. Martin in the Fields, Grand Island, N.Y.

The Rev. **Meghan Dow Farr** is priest in charge of the Northern Highlands Benefice of the Diocese of Eau Claire (Ascension, Hayward, Wisc.; St. Luke's, Springbrook, Wisc.; St. Alban's, Spooner, Wisc.; & Grace, Rice Lake, Wisc.).

The Rev. **Donna Foughty** is rector of Christ Church, Harwich Port, Mass.

The Rev. **Tom Gartin** is priest in charge of Faith Church, Cameron Park, Calif.

The Rev. **Anny Gennato** is rector of St. Augustine, Rocklin, Calif.

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The Rev**. Charles Kiblinger** is priest in charge of St. Mark's, Venice, Fla.

The Rev. **Debra Kissinger** is interim rector of St. Paul's, Duluth, Minn.

The Rev. **Benita Keene Johnson** is associate rector of St. John's, Western Run, Glyndon, Md.

Father Sergeii is a novice of the Order of Julian of Norwich, White Lake, Wis.

The Rev. **Lyndon Shakespeare** is rector of Holy Comforter, Broomfield, Colo.

The Rev. **Wes Sharp** is associate of Cathedral of the Advent, Birmingham, Ala.

The Rev. **Tara Shepley** is priest in charge of St. George's, Middlebury, Conn.

The Rev. **Sam Sheridan** is assistant rector Immanuel-on-the-Hill, Alexandria, Va.

The Rev. **Anna Shine** is missioner of Appalachian State University, Third Place, and St. Luke's Church, Boone, N.C.

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The Rev. Dn. **Marian Sive** is director of the healing ministry at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center, Greenwich, N.Y.

The Rev. **Lars Skoglund** is rector of St. Michael's, Racine, Wis

Ordinations

Priesthood

Pittsburgh (for Tennessee): **Wes Hill** (priest associate, Trinity Cathedral, Pittsburgh).

Rochester: **Josh Barrett** (pastoral leader of Redeemer, Addison, N.Y. and pastoral associate of Christ Church, Corning, N.Y.)

Springfield; **Christopher Ben Simpson** (rector, Trinity, Lincoln, Ill.).

Washington: **Savannah Caitlyn Ponder** (assistant rector for ministries to youth, families, and children, St. John's, Lafayette Square, Washington, D.C.)

Washington (for Western Massachusetts): **Kevin Antonio Smallwood** (associate rector, Grace, Silver Spring, Md.).

Western Louisiana: **Andrew Armond** (chaplain, Episcopal School of Acadiana, Lafayette and Broussard, La.), **Laurent De Prins**

Western North Carolina: **Jared Grant** (curate, Ascension, Hickory, N.C.)

Wyoming: **George Harty** (parish priest, St. George's, Lusk, Wyo.), **Jennie Ketner** (parish priest, Christ Church, Douglas, Wyo.), **Kristin Lee** (parish priest, St. Christopher's, Cheyenne, Wyo.), **Kenli Lowe** (parish priest, St. Andrew's, Meteetse, Wyo.)

Retirements

The Rev. **Michael Carroll** as priest in charge of Todos los Santos, Meriden, Conn.

The Rev. **Susan Copley** as rector of Christ Church & San Marcos, Tarrytown, N. Y.

The Rev. Canon **William Derby, O. G. S.** as rector of St. Edward the Martyr, New York.

The Rev. **Thomas Faulkner** as vicar of Christ Church, Sparkill, N. Y.

The Rev. **Jack Gilpin** as rector of St. John's, New Milford, Conn.

Ms. **Gail McShane** as diocesan co-ordinator of the Diocese of Southeastern Florida.

The Rev. **Keith Talbert** as rector of St. Paul's, Foley, Ala.

The Rev. **Nancy Turner-Jones** as rector of St. Barnabas, Montgomery, Ohio

The Rev. **Hillary West** as rector of Epiphany, Herndon, Va.

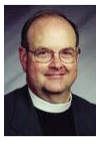
The Rev. **Joseph Wilkes** as rector of St. Andrew's, Methuen, Mass.

South Carolina: **Rosario Francis Tortora** (associate, Grace Cathedral, Charleston, S.C.).

South Dakota: **Cody Maynus** (rector, St. Andrew's, Rapid City, S.D.)

Deaths

The Rev. Dr. **Manning Lee Smith,** who led small-town congregations throughout the Appalachian region while serving as a college administrator and counselor, died October 4, aged 77.



Smith grew up in Charles Town, West Virginia, and after earning a degree from Wake Forest, prepared for the ministry at Virginia Theological Seminary. He later received a master's degree in counseling and a doctorate in education from the University of Maryland.

After his ordination in 1968, he became vicar of Emmanuel Church in Moorefield, West Virginia, and went on to serve congregations in Ashland, Kentucky, and Charleston, West Virginia, and as chaplain of West Virginia State College. His longest tenure was as rector of St. Matthew's Church in Oakland, Maryland, for 12 years, and he remained in that community for the rest of his life.

Smith resigned from St. Matthew's in 1986 to become director of student services at Garrett Community College in McHenry, Maryland, a role he held for 14 years. He was one of the founders of the local hospice chapter and worked as a behavioral counselor with the county health department. He was chaplain of Oakland's volunteer fire company and directed the oompah band for the town's Oktoberfest for 40 years. After retiring from his college work, he served for seven years as rector of St. James Church in Westernport, Maryland. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Katharine, their two children, and five grandchildren.

The Very Rev. Dr. **Ronald Wayne Summers**, a longtime priest of the Diocese of Lexington, died October 24, aged 83.

A native of Lexington, he was a graduate of the University of Kentucky. He felt a call to ministry at an early age as a member of the Baptist Church and served as a pastor in the Christian Church before becoming an Episcopalian in his late 20s. He prepared for the priesthood at the now-defunct Episcopal Theological Seminary of Kentucky.

He was ordained in 1976 and served first at St. Raphael's Church in Lexington before becoming rector of St. Andrew's, Fort Thomas, Kentucky, where he served for 25 years. He was very active in community life, serving on numerous boards. He was especially proud of his work with the Wood Hudson Cancer Research Library in Newport, Kentucky.

Upon his retirement in 2009, Bishop Stacy Sauls appointed him dean of the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr at the diocesan camp, Cathedral Domain, in recognition of his faithful support of the camping ministry for decades. He also served interim posts at Christ Church, Harlan and Holy Trinity, Georgetown, Kentucky, and taught Bible studies and greeted visitors from the receptionist's desk at Lexington's Christ Church Cathedral. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Lou, and their daughter, Rebekah.

SUNDAY'S READINGS | 1 Advent, November 29, 2020

Isa. 64:1-9; Ps. 80:1-7, 16-18; I Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

The Heavens Opened

The church year begins not with personal resolutions to do better but with a desperate cry for help. "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence — as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil" (Isa. 64:1-2). God is the fire that sets the bush ablaze, though without consuming it. God is a rolling boil that makes the water pure, which, I imagine, when cooled, becomes a new font of everlasting life. God is a *living flame of love* (John of the Cross) before whose brightness and holiness humans appear "unclean" and their "righteousness as a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isa. 64:6). Is this hard to hear? Yet, immediate recognition is impossible to ignore. We all fade like a leaf; the wind takes us away. Whatever virtues we have, for which we should be grateful and diligent in cultivating, are rooted not in natural goodness but the grace of God flashing from an open heaven.

Jesus tells a story about divine intervention. "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven" (Mark 13:24-27). Having earlier predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the sacrilege of its temple, an event which occurred in 70 A.D., Jesus went on to speak in cosmological images of a darkened sun and moon and falling stars. Speaking this way, Jesus was drawing upon well-known literature and stock images that announced the day of the Lord's intervention. Indeed, Jesus said, "he is near, at the very gate" (Mark 13:29). The moment of God is near and now. The kingdom of God is at hand.

In a time of relative personal security and social stability, these foreboding signs may seem strange. In truth, however, a crisis of one kind or another is never far away, or at least the threat of it, and even times of happiness and comfort are haunted by an awareness that exist in *in the time of our mortal flesh*. Nothing mortal will last. Our only help is in the name of the Lord who made the heavens and the earth. "O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us" (Evening Prayer).

We are called, then, to be alert to the arrival of God from moment to moment. Jesus says, "Keep alert" and "keep awake" (Mark 13:32, 35). God has come in the creation of all things and their preservation through time. God has come in the calling of a people, in their journey to freedom and responsibility under the law and as a nation. In the fullness of time, God has sent his Son to redeem us from sin and death. And now, in this very moment, God sends the Spirit into us to make us sons and daughters of God.

In Christ, we are being enriched with speech and knowledge of every kind; we are being strengthened in our testimony to Jesus Christ. We have so much, and yet we have not arrived. "We wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:7). Wait! And let fire make you a living flame of love.

Look It Up

Read Revelation 3:8.

Think About It

Heaven is an open door. Come, Lord Jesus!

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SUNDAY'S READINGS | 2 Advent, December 6

Isa. 40:1-11; Ps. 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Pet. 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Migration

"Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery'" (Ex. 13:3). Second only in importance to this seminal story, the Old Testament tells a long and complicated saga, not about going to and founding the land of promise, but of returning to it.

From the mid-eighth century to the mid-sixth century B.C., the nation of Israel, or rather, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, were under constant political threat, first from the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. In the end, the nation was destroyed, its temple torn down, and its inhabitants deported to Babylon. The event is generally dated 587-586 B.C.

The psalmist describes the bitterness of captivity in a foreign land, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered you, O Zion. As for our harps, we hung them up on the trees in the midst of that land. For those who led us away captive asked us for a song, and our oppressors called for mirth: 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.' How shall we sing the Lord's song upon an alien soil? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joys" (Ps. 137:1-6). For a generation, for a full 70 years, the people of God wept and hoped for a return to their land and their temple.

In the fulness of time, Babylon fell to the Persians, and under Persian rule, the Jews were allowed to return home. The prophet Isaiah announced the great moment, saying, "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid" (Isa. 40:1).

A universal longing reverberates in this ancient story, the hope for a home, a familiar landscape, a center of worship, a common culture, a sense of belonging, and being, all of which are echoes a more profound longing, the longing for God. The Jews went home, and they went home to their God. "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and all the rough places plain" (Isa. 40:3-4). This great migration was the great act of God. "The Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him" (Isa. 40:10). He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep" (Isa. 40:11).

Like all great stories, this one was repeated, again and again. For instance, we hear it in the opening words of St. Mark's gospel, "The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness; 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight'" (Mark 1:1-2). John the Baptist prepares a way for "one who is mightier than I," that is, for Jesus. In this retelling, Jesus becomes our homeland, temple, culture, being, and belonging. Baptized into His Spirit, we find comfort, tender love, divine food, and protection.

In a sense, we prepare for the Lord by constant longing. "Do you not feel yourself drawn with the expectation and desire of some great things?" (Thomas Traherne)

Look It Up

Read Isaiah 40:9-10.

Think About It

Your God will lead you home.

SUNDAY'S READINGS | 3 Advent, Decemberr 13

Isa. 61:1-4, 8-11; Ps. 126 or Cant. 3 or Cant. 15; I Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8; 19-28

Love and Vengeance

We celebrate Advent, the arrival of the Lord, mainly for the joy and comfort and mercy found in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We wait for him as if we have not met him, and yet knowing what we do, anticipate his love and mercy and healing.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus entered his hometown synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah. After reading, he sat down and said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Jesus read an abbreviated section of a more extensive prophecy, all of which speaks to the ministry of Jesus.

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion — to give them garlands instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations, they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastation of many generations" (Isa. 61:1-7). Hearing these words, we may join our hearts with the consensus of the faithful throughout the centuries. Jesus is our desire, love, joy, longing, and happiness! He is entirely to be loved, worshiped, and praised. He is our Good Shepherd.

Not surprisingly, we find it strange to hear tucked amid so many words of encouragement this ominous phrase, "to proclaim the day of the vengeance of our God" (Isa. 61:2). The vengeance of God against the ungodly is a theme not hard to find in Scripture, but does it apply to Jesus? In a sense, we should be bold to say, "Yes, it does." Jesus frequently engaged in arguments and conflicts, all of which were ultimately a conflict with sin, the flesh, and the devil. More succinctly, Jesus came to defeat the Evil One, and, to us, this defeat may feel at times like vengeance. We are, as today's collect says, "sorely hindered by our sins," and it is precisely this hindrance that Jesus came to strip away and defeat. Jesus comes "to help and deliver," a rescue operation for our good.

The prophet Isaiah says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in God" (Isa. 61:10). "My whole being" is not available if hindered by sin, which is why sin must be acknowledged and forgiveness sought, not only in every liturgy, but in every moment. The New Being cannot exult wholly until the Old Adam is put to flight.

God wants your soul, your whole being, to proclaim the greatness of the Lord (Magnificat). God wants to sanctify you entirely, to make you a participant in the divine nature by keeping you sound and blameless (I Thess. 5:23). This involves a purgative love. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Stripped and cleansed by the love of Christ, a kind of emptiness results, an awareness that I am here as a witness. John the Baptist said, "I am not the Messiah, I am not, no!" Similarly, we are not the cause of our own salvation. No. We are witnesses, vessels, New Beings. Purged of sin and born again, we shine like the brightness of the sun.

Look It Up

Read the Magnificat.

Think About It

Cast down and sent away empty is the *hidden* work of love.

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