



Iowa Connections

SUMMER 2023
VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1

**FUN,
LEARNING,
AND WORSHIP**



Summer Ministry School & Retreat

FROM BISHOP BETSEY MONNOT

An Invitation to the Practice of Listening



It is a rainy afternoon as I sit down to write this article, and my son is at baseball practice. Today's practice was scheduled a few days ago, and this morning it looked like a beautiful day for baseball: clear skies, reasonable temperatures, ground relatively dry from a few rainless days. Then, as the time for the practice grew closer, the clouds began to roll in and some scattered drops began to fall.

I checked to see if there was an email from the coach, calling off the practice because of rain, but nothing was there. I kept checking until it got to be time to actually leave to go to practice: still no email calling it off, and the rain was only mild. As it turned out, only a few of the players showed up for practice, and the plan was primarily to spend time in the batting cage. Coach decided to go ahead with practice and if they end early, the players can text their parents and be picked up.

This is a very practical way of doing things. The rain is what it is, some of the players self-selected out of practice, whether due to rain or due to other commitments, and the coach and team are going to do what they can with what they have. It makes

me think of farming, because farmers are generally some of the most practical people I have ever met. Of course, our culture here in Iowa is deeply influenced by the practicality of farmers. I think this practical aspect of our collective personality is going to play an important role for our diocese as we move forward as church together.

It is a cliché to say that the reason we do things in our congregations is “because we’ve always done it that way.” We Episcopalians love our traditions, from the Sunday liturgy to the annual parish picnic or the rummage sale. We inherited these traditions and we want to pass them on.

Sometimes, even frequently, things don't work out the way we want them to. There aren't families with young children any more at the parish picnic, and those who come are getting too stiff in the joints to want to sit on the grass to eat. The army of volunteers who used to gather to sort items for the rummage sale has dwindled to only a few, and it is too much work for them. Even Sunday liturgy is different, missing

people who have never returned since COVID, providing for live-streaming, maybe with fewer Sundays when a priest is available to celebrate Eucharist.

This is the time when we need to combine practicality with tradition in order to be able to move forward. When the rain might have caused a cancellation of baseball practice, the coach assessed the players who showed up, the actual rain that was falling from the sky, and the original

intent of the practice, and decided to move forward under the changed conditions. When changes in our church communities, our neighborhoods, or our broader culture affect the way we've always done things, we need to take a good look at what the reality is that we are living in, understand whatever the changed conditions are, and decide how to move forward from there.

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“As we deepen our connection to God, we get better at listening to God’s call and better at being open to receiving what God wants us to hear.”

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ON THE COVER: Breakout conversations during Bishop Betsey Monnot's gathering address at Summer Ministry School & Retreat 2022, Grinnell, IA. Photo by: T. Ruhland Petty

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Our Diocese is SO MUCH FUN!

by Ainsley

You may think that church is fun, but in our diocese, it's a whole new story. On a Saturday morning, my family picked up my cousin, Isabella, and our friend Ian and started driving to Boone, IA, for the big ski trip. I'm not a fan of skiing or long car rides, but I decided to go because I really wanted to be with my friends. When I got rolling down those hills with my friends, it was so much fun. After skiing all day, I was so tired and happy to be at St. John's by-the-Campus [in Ames, IA] where we could relax. We spent a night at the church, playing games and talking. It was so much fun!

When I woke up, all the breakfast was already made, and it was so good. Everyone helped cook and clean up after breakfast. I liked being in a different church.

I also talked to my friends about our summer camp, EPIC, where we spend nights in cabins and do fun activities. We go to the pool and lake, go hiking, and paint things! My favorite part about skiing and camping is making new friends. It's so much fun.

Ainsley is a member at St. Andrew's, Des Moines.





Pg. 4 & 5 photos from the annual Youth Ski Trip, held February 2023. Photos by A. Mellies

From Bishop Betsey Monnot, *continued from pg.2*

Grounding ourselves in the reality that is around us is one way of listening: we gather the facts that we need about the conditions around us, and we listen to what those facts are telling us. Another way that we listen is by listening to God. As we deepen our connection to God, we get better at listening to God's call and better at being open to receiving what God wants us to hear. Both listening to the reality around us and listening to God are first steps to moving into the future as church together in this diocese.

When we have listened to reality and listened to God, it is time to put what we have heard into action. We listen in order to act; we discern God's call in our particular context in order to take a step forward into the future that God has in mind for us. We need to learn to do this through experiments, trying new things, and remembering that we can always change as we learn more. Today's baseball coach made a plan for the practice, and let the parents

know that they might receive a text to come and pick up their players early if conditions changed. When we try an experiment at church, we can be evaluating it as we go, making changes as needed, or even ending the experiment early if it turns out to be the equivalent of a downpour during baseball practice.

Then, when our experiment is ended, we have the opportunity to look at what we have learned, what worked, what didn't, and begin the cycle again by listening to the new reality that we have created as a result of our experiment. After practice today, the coach will have more information about the players and about the next steps that he can take to help them grow into the best team that they can be. This is the way God calls us, one step at a time, into the future. We don't have to know the whole path, or even where exactly we are going. We just need to listen to God and to the reality around us, and then take the step that God shows us.

Agape Cafe Celebrates 30 Years of Serving Food with Dignity

by Judith Crossett

If it's Wednesday, the Agape Café is open in Iowa City—and now the café can say that year-round; this year we expanded to serve hot, made-to-order, free-to-anyone breakfast January through December. The café is located inside of Old Brick—originally a Presbyterian Church, the building is now a historic landmark serving as a community gathering space and home for various non-profit organizations.

What do you see when you walk into Old Brick? A large, high-ceilinged, wood-floored room with tall windows—a reminder of the building's many lives, including serving as a church. There are round tables seating 4 to 6 people each, with place settings, condiments, flowers, and a menu. Rather than using disposable items (like paper plates and plastic cutlery), the café's set-up mirrors a restaurant setting by using tablecloths, cloth napkins, and reusable eating utensils, inviting people to sit, be un-hurried, and reminded that this is not a one-time offering. The hospitable setting embodies the motto of Agape Café: "good food served with kindness"—and as much dignity as possible.

Sit at one of these welcoming tables and enjoy delicious, organic coffee; give your order to one of the volunteer waitstaff who come ask what you'd like to eat. What's for breakfast? Eggs, any style, with cheese if you like; bacon and sausage, home fries, grits, oatmeal, a fruit cup, toast (white or whole wheat), orange juice, and milk. A weekly special is listed on a prominently-displayed board: pancakes, French toast, biscuits and gravy, breakfast casserole, are a few examples. The café doesn't limit how much food a guest may order (except for the meat), so some very full plates are served and enjoyed.



Volunteers are the driving force and heart of the café. One loyal volunteer family has laundered all the linens for the café every week since the Café opened, thirty years ago. Volunteers set up tables; put out syrup, salt, pepper, packets of butter and jelly; keep the coffee flowing (and will bring guests coffee refills). Volunteers bring out high chairs for very small guests, and find child-sized glasses of milk or juice. Tuesday afternoons, volunteers are doing prep work—peeling and chopping potatoes and whatever else is needed ahead of the Wednesday breakfast.

"The hospitable setting embodies the motto of Agape Café: 'good food served with kindness'—and as much dignity as possible."

Other services have been added to the café to provide needed resources for guests: student nurses run a wellness table with blood pressure checks, advice on health matters, sometimes a foot clinic. And a grocery table offers foods that can be bagged and taken for later—fruit, breads, boxed and bagged sandwiches and salads, and other foods as available.

Agape Café was begun as a ministry of the University of Iowa Episcopal Chaplaincy; it remains a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa and continues to draw students to its volunteer pool of waitstaff, prep cooks, and clean-up crew. The pandemic



(A) Nursing students serving breakfast;
(B) Helping at the grocery table; **(C)**
 Prepping potatoes; Photos from J.
 Crossett



brought a brief hiatus in service, but the café figured out how to do grab-and-go meals as well as provide hot breakfasts to the city’s day warming shelter. Once the café reopened, the success of the to-go-only service resulted in offering both sit-down meals and boxed meals to go. The café serves increasing numbers of both, often approaching 100 meals served in the hour and a half (7:00 am to 9:30 am) orders are taken. Guests are free to sit and rest and visit until it’s clean-up time so that Old Brick, which has hosted the Café from the beginning, can be ready for the next group to use the space.

Agape Café builds community; it is a community of people who are lonely, people who are hungry, people who appreciate and share kindness and dignity, people who enjoy a place to eat at leisure with friends. It’s also a community of volunteers who’ve come, some for years, and who sit to eat together after the guests have left.

But just as much as Agape Café depends on guests and volunteers, it depends on generosity. The diocesan office extends its insurance coverage, manages payroll, accepts donations, and holds any reserve funds we have. Table to Table, HACAP, and many other agencies provide food for free or at reduced cost. Several churches in Johnson County of many denominations support the café. The café has successfully applied for grants from church-based outreach funds, some government sources, and keeps looking to other sources. But—as everyone who shops for family groceries knows—the price of food, by far the largest item in the café budget—continues to rise. Total annual expenses (food, salary, supplies) are about \$30,000, and the café isn’t there yet this year. We hope you’ll consider making a donation to Agape Café. Your donation not only helps keep the café open, but ensures that dignity and hospitality are on-the-menu for all guests, no matter their circumstances. The generosity of volunteers and donors like you sustain this life-giving community, and we hope you’ll consider a gift so we can continue to serve good food, with kindness, for many years to come.

The Ven. Judith Crossett serves as archdeacon for the diocese and as a deacon at Trinity Church, Iowa City.

Learn more and/or make a donation:
agapecafe.org/



QR Code How-To: open the camera app on your phone, hold your phone over the QR code on the right so you can see it in your camera’s viewfinder, then click on the notification that pops up

Let's Talk About It: Mental Health, Illness, and Faith

by Kris Leaman

Mental health impacts almost everyone in some way, yet it can be a topic we, as individuals and churches, shy away from discussing openly. We may be afraid that people will see or treat us differently if they know that we, or a family member, are struggling with our mental health; we may feel like we do not know what to say to someone who is struggling or experiencing a crisis, and we fear making the situation worse; we may feel shame at our own struggle, or maybe we just don't know how to talk about it. Removing the stigma of shame around mental health, which includes increasing awareness, is an on-going process we believe churches and Christians are called to participate in. To support this we, the

that base each session was built on the previous week, and Biblical references supported each topic. David also gave great examples from his own experience in coming alongside families, school districts, and the youth he shepherds.

As participants, we were challenged to be “noticers,” like Jesus saw those who were overlooked or ignored. We learned examples of what to look and listen for from people who may be experiencing or navigating a mental health challenge. We were challenged to listen—listen to the person and sit with them in the discomfort rather

People decide if it's safe [to talk to us] by watching our actions and overhearing our conversations.

Behavioral Health Ministries Team (BHMT), hosted a Lenten study focused on mental health and the Bible.

The Behavioral Health Ministries Team brought in David Galvan of Colorado Springs, Colorado to present on the topics of mental health and the Bible over four Wednesdays in Lent. David is a speaker, trainer, and educator who tackles the tough subjects of suicide in our youth as well as other serious mental health issues. He is called in to facilitate conversations and workshops about mental health in an effort to increase awareness and decrease stigma around mental health. He is also called in when tragedies occur, to assist with the trauma and grief a community is experiencing.

We met weekly online using Zoom and each topic invited rich conversation. We started with establishing a “base” of understanding of what mental illness is. From

Oh God, our liberation and shalom, we seek the power of your Spirit, that we may live in fuller union with you, ourselves, and our sisters and brothers with mental illness. Also grant that we may gain courage to love and understand each other. Amen.

Prayer for Mental Illness, Recovery, and Understanding from the National Alliance on Mental Illness

than script an immediate response to their distress—walk with them through the valley instead of telling them how to get out of it. We were encouraged to be a resource—to be someone who is prepared to notice, listen, and sit with others as they share their story. Finally, we talked about the impact on survivors who are left behind by a family member or friend who died by suicide. There was a deep discussion about the importance of being open to conversation, listening to those folks who may be contemplating suicide, and taking care of people grieving from a completed suicide. Our time together yielded thoughtful, difficult, and fruitful conversations, and we hope that all who participated feel supported and encouraged to share their own story and to listen to the stories of others.


The Rev. Kris Leaman serves as rector at St. Mark's, Fort Dodge.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

No matter where you live in the U.S.,
you can easily access 24/7 emotional support.

Call or text 988 or visit 988lifeline.org/chat to
chat with a caring counselor.

We're here for you.



Congratulations Bishop Scarfe!

Born in England, the Ninth Bishop of Iowa, the Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe took the oath of allegiance to become a naturalized U.S. citizen, as part of a naturalization ceremony held Friday morning April 14th, at the Central Branch of the Des Moines Public Library. We wish Bishop Scarfe a heartfelt congratulations on this momentous occasion!

Photos from Scarfe's naturalization ceremony. (R) the Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe with his wife Ms. Donna Scarfe; (Bottom R) L to R: the Rev. Lizzie Gillman, the Rev. Kathleen Milligan, the Rev. Jean McCarthy, the Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe, Canon Julianne Allaway, the Rev. Mike McCarthy, Mr. Ben Allaway



Small Acts Create Big Impacts

by John Greve



We were really happy to have the group of junior high youth with us [at Grace Episcopal Church, Cedar Rapids] as they engaged in a “Small Acts, Big Impact” gathering. They are from one side of this diocese to the other.

It was a day full of doing things for others, and it didn't take much time to do any of the tasks, partly because they were really enthusiastic. After everyone arrived, they went to visit the brand-new Coralville Food Pantry facility and to help bag groceries to be distributed the following week. They also bagged dog food for the pantry's clientele to feed to their pets. In doing this, they helped to feed fifty families. After that, they went shopping to make themed May baskets that were auctioned at Christ Church [Cedar Rapids] in a fundraiser for our companion diocese of Swaziland. Paula Sanchini from Christ Church came and talked about our relationship with our companion diocese of Swaziland. Then, they learned about the medical lending closet and helped to sort a lot of supplies in no time flat that will help dozens of people to heal and get better. At some point in all that, they worked on blankets to be given away.

"When people feel loved, they never feel alone. That is a big impact you can make every single day."

Each task done was a small act in itself. Small acts that will reach far beyond their circle of friends or their church, whose impacts they will never fully know. Well done, my young friends! I wish they could see the faces of those whom they are helping with those small acts. I know what it means to those they have served anonymously, because I used to work at the pantry and I do work at

the medical lending closet, and most people are truly grateful. But the best part of all is that for a moment, we become community with each other. We can best follow Jesus when we remember that we are all part of the same community, the same flock. He invites us to follow him and listen for his voice in everything we do. When we realize that we all belong together in the flock, that we all need the same care, that we all are meant to be together no matter what

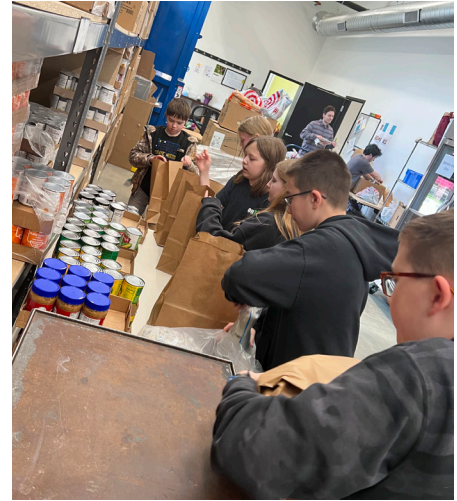
we look like, then we will know the amazing abundance that comes from God.

Someone once used the words in a prayer asking God to teach us the difference between reaching down and reaching out. Reaching down to someone means that you consider yourself to be above them. Reaching out

means you are equals and companions in life. So, as we seek to do small acts of kindness, let's remember to reach out. I also hope we all remember that we don't have to do something incredible to make a real difference to someone who is struggling in one way or another. When people feel loved, they never feel alone. That is a big impact you can make every single day.

If we keep finding ways to do even the smallest acts to help others, we can come just a little bit closer to the beloved community that is the kingdom of heaven. We are all God's beloved—every single one of us. God's love is limitless. Let's do our best to imitate it and spread it as far as we can!

The Rev. John Greve serves as rector at Grace Church, Cedar Rapids.



Fall Joint Chapter Meeting
Save the Date
August 26, 2023
10am - Noon on Zoom

The diocese is arranged into 10 mission chapters, with every congregation being part of a chapter. We meet twice yearly in a joint chapter meeting online via Zoom, usually in the spring and fall.

All chapters meet together in the first part of the meeting where information shared from designated speakers, and the second part of the meeting is when individual chapters meet in breakout rooms for more localized discussion.

Not sure what chapter you're in? Visit: iowaepiscopal.org/governance/#Chapters



The Life and Times of Calvary Episcopal Church

by Suzanne M. (Houts) Berry

My family, in which I was the oldest child out of eight, joined Calvary Episcopal Church in Sioux City in 1959. All born and raised Episcopalians, we came to Sioux City from Grace Episcopal Church in Estherville where I was born. At Calvary, faith was very strong, families were growing, and so was their dedication to the welfare of the church and its people. There were always luncheons for social hour at church and also at people's homes. We had many outreach activities, such as Shrove Tuesday, spaghetti dinners, pork chop suppers. We volunteered to help at the soup kitchen, and plant sales were one of our best fundraisers for our outreach program. Thinking back, vacation bible school was held together with Calvary and St. Thomas'. Our community bloomed with the help of God and his servants.

Many families donated items and contributed to Calvary's growth, and I would like to name some of them, as far as I can remember: the Kelly Houts family (my family)

gave the lighted sign to the church after my mother passed as a memory of her love and devotion to Calvary Episcopal Church. Penny Burns, Father Cowling and his wife created a choir. Pat and Vern Roberts were the last wedding in the old church. Dean and Sandy Shroll and family began our outreach program in 1994. Dan and Kay Pecaut and family. Ceil Knapp, Bob Fletcher and Charlie Kruse built the free-standing altar. Chuck and Dee Randall gave round tables for coffee time and replaced chairs with pews in the sanctuary in 1996. The Hildebrands presented the gift of Bibles in every pew. Jean Culver and family headed the CROP walk. Kay Pecaut and Ronda spent lots of hours painting and sprucing up the church. Mabel's Kitchen: a project done by Dee and Chuck Randall and Dick Pecaut with generous gifts from Mabel Larsen and others (labor was done by Harland VanVaulkingburg). Mabel was the hostess of coffee hour after church and also supplied flowers from her garden on the altar for many years. And there are so

The building is now ready for a new life, making a way to serve those seeking a new culture. God remains.

- Deacon Pat Roberts



Calvary's secularizing a consecrated building service. L to R (Front): Sue Berry, Karen Mackey, Rene Eastham, Kelly Houts; (Back): Toby Varvais, Deacon Pat Roberts, Rikki Robinson, Patty Houts, Rev. Stacey Gerhart, Amilcar Olivarez, Greg Jones; Photo from S. Berry

many more families not named here that shared God's love through working together as one.

I remember good food and great cooks; the sacredness of the altar guild, who wore white gloves when handling the vessels. There were girls becoming acolytes, and women becoming priests. I remember everyone dressed up on Sundays—my brothers wore suspenders and bow ties, the girls wore dresses with white veils on our heads, and my mom wore a brown hat with a veil over her forehead. There were two services and Sunday school was downstairs. When it was time for the children to dismiss and join their parents in church, the bell rang. The bell is still there today.

I was commissioned into the ministry development team about seven years ago, and many changes have taken place more recently. Our previous leader retired, our diocese transitioned to a new bishop, and our church accepted a merging with St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, also in Sioux City. Our purpose in this transition is to be faithful servants in the house of the Lord forever. As we combined with St. Thomas', it was time to secularize (or de-consecrate) Calvary's building. This process involved removing sacramental items, like the altar and baptismal font, and concluded with a liturgical service for this purpose.

On February 23, 2023 at Calvary Episcopal Church, 1308 South Cleveland in Sioux City, Iowa, we held the service for secularizing a consecrated building; it was a mission to be accomplished by many people to serve the Lord as one, and a declaration that I will only see this once in my lifetime. Walking through the big red door with my dad on one arm to say goodbye to the church that raised a lot of families, including ours, was a memorable experience. Seeing so many things gone, surrounded by the few remaining members as we closed this chapter of the church and our lives elicited strong emotions—there were tears shed, and many held mixed feelings. There were no words to adequately describe the personal nature of this beautiful service and the atmosphere surrounding all of us. The Reverend Stacey Gerhart and Deacon Pat Roberts were outstanding in

their appreciative hearts of all of us attending this sacred day of secularizing this consecrated building.

This transition is a chance to grow and for changes to be made. I can clearly see God is at work and we are the people that are accepting a new future sharing God's love and accepting his love with time and challenges to work together as one body in Christ himself. The building has found new life through its use by Lutheran Social Services in Iowa (LSI). Speaking with them and seeing the need for development and watching them grow makes me smile that this building is helping and serving others. LSI provides services for mental health therapy, behavioral health for youth, parental support and early childhood resources, services for people with disabilities, refugee and immigrant services such as housing, food, clothing and personal needs, and is working to resettle many Afghan refugees.

Today I am focusing on outside of the walls of St. Thomas' and discovering the task that has been presented to us on how to broaden outreach and communications to

the surrounding communities and be aware of the needs of others. I am continuing my spiritual journey by sharing God's love and my devoted faith in the Lord and living by the scriptures in the Bible through God's blessings with a kind and caring heart.

Everyone in the congregation of Calvary helped and worked together in sharing God's love and making it a beautiful worship place that we are very proud and sentimental of, and we remain devoted servants of God. Keeping that in our

hearts, God gives us grace, strength, and blessings to move on to another challenge for the mission to which we have been called.

Proverbs 3: 5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths."

Ms. Suzanne M. (Houts) Berry is a member of St. Thomas', Sioux City and was a member of Calvary, Sioux City from 1959-2023.

All good things must come
to an end. It is time to
accept God's challenge and
bring in the new changes
for this building while
we move on to our new
endeavors and look forward
to the future.

- Kelly Houts

Join us for the 33rd Annual Summer Ministry School & Retreat



FUN, LEARNING, AND WORSHIP

For over 30 years Episcopalians in Iowa have gathered for a weekend in the summer to learn church leadership skills, explore personal spirituality, or just find Sabbath time. Praying together sets a rhythm and tone for the weekend that culminates in Eucharist on Sunday morning. During the weekend, 8 hours are set aside for “track time” to get in-depth study in one track topic of your choice (track offerings change each year), or choose to do a solo retreat. Spend time catching up with friends and making new ones during meals and morning and evening social times, and enjoy free time built into the weekend’s schedule to socialize, rest, or do an activity. Come join us!



- **Location:** Grinnell College
- **Dorm Living:** air-conditioned
- **Golf Cart Transportation:** provided between dorms and the building where activities & meals are located
- **Meals:** buffet style and delicious
- **Cost:** will not be more than \$249.00 per adult for the whole weekend, and a la carte pricing can further reduce your cost.
- **Registration Deadline:** June 9th

LEARNING TRACKS:

Choose one "Track" to focus on for the weekend -- you'll spend 8 hours of "Track time" in groups of 4-12 people who are just as passionate about the topic as you are, guided by knowledgeable Track leaders who'll delve into the chosen topic. Some Tracks require advance reading, some don't, some tap into your creativity, all are designed to help you find new ministry or renew you for the ministry you are already doing. Each year, the list of Tracks contains a wide variety of topics from Bible Study, to Church Leadership to Personal Spiritual Development. You can even choose the Solo Retreat Track option if you want to pursue your own interests.



Pg. 14 & 15 photos from 2022 Summer Ministry School & Retreat; Photos by T. Rubland Petty & A. Mellies



CHILDREN & YOUTH:

Through 5th Grade:

Childcare will be available during track times. This is not a programmed time, but will be time for kids to play and build friendships with other kids across the diocese.

Entering Grades 6-12:

Attend with your family, and you're welcome to join any numbered track where you'll be treated like an adult.

Parents/guardians need to inform the Youth Missioner of their plans for their child(ren) during their scheduled track times.



WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Friday June 23

- 2:00pm-7:00 REGISTRATION CHECK-IN
- 5:30pm-6:15 Dinner
- 6:30pm-6:45 Welcome & Orientation
- 7:00pm-8:15 GATHER IN TRACK GROUPS
- 8:30pm-9:00 Night Owl Social Time

Saturday June 24

- 6:45am-7:30 Early Bird Social Time
- 7:30am-8:00 Morning Worship
- 8:00am-8:45 Breakfast
- 9:00am-11:30 GATHER IN TRACK GROUPS
- 11:40am-Noon Noonday Prayer
- 12:00pm-12:45 Lunch
- 1:00pm-4:00 FREE TIME
- 4:00pm-5:45 GATHER IN TRACK GROUPS
- 6:00pm-6:45 Dinner
- 7:00pm-8:00 GATHER IN TRACK GROUPS
- 8:15pm-8:45 Evening Worship
- 9:00pm Night Owl Social Time

Sunday June 25

- 6:30am-7:30 Early Bird Social Time
- 7:30am-8:00 Morning Worship
- 8:00am-8:45 Breakfast & Check-out
- 9:00am-10:30 GATHER IN TRACK GROUPS
- 10:45am-Noon Holy Eucharist
- Noon-12:45pm Lunch

2023 TRACK OPTIONS

Full track descriptions available online



STRENGTHENING CONGREGATIONS

1: Transformative Worship in the Absence of a Priest

The Rt. Rev. Betsey Monnot

This workshop is especially designed for worship leaders in congregations that worship without a priest on a regular basis. We will share tools, discussion, and practice in designing worship that can be transformative and deepen our connection to God.

2: Nurturing Spiritually Vital Congregations

The Rev. Canon Meg Wagner

Regardless of the size of your church, how can it be spiritually vital? This track will feature a mixture of practical ideas, spiritual exercises, and planning tools to help your congregation take the next step in spiritual growth.

3: What is a Deacon?

The Ven. Judith Crossett & the Rev. Pat Johnson

Join us in exploring the diaconate, including discerning call and formation. This track is designed both for anyone who may be discerning a call and also for those who are simply curious. Bring all your questions, thoughts, and open hearts.

SUPPORTING CLERGY & LAY LEADERSHIP

4: Church Office Administrator Retreat

Ms. Elizabeth Adams & Ms. Tina Austin

When was the last time the church administrator had a retreat? This gathering of administrative assistants from the Episcopal churches in Iowa is simply that. Wear comfortable clothes and bring your knitting, coloring, crocheting or another small relaxing activity with you!!

5: Ministry Amid the Eldering Process

Mr. Bob Sessions & the Rev. Stacey Gerhart

During this track, we'll examine the spirituality of aging, the eldering process, understand the changing role/purpose of this stage of life and use those understandings to find purpose in the life-cycle of the church. We'll also connect you to resources on the spiritual, moral, and practical dimensions of becoming an elder.

DEEPENING OUR CONNECTION TO GOD

6: In Times Like Ours: Prophets Speak Today

The Rev. Jean McCarthy

Where is it that we find our hope and courage to step out on a path forward during times of great lament? We will explore the Hebrew prophets and the prophetic voices today to seek that path, both individually and as a community.

7: Deepening Our Connection to God Through Art and Storytelling

Ms. Alescha Caldwell

This track will explore deepening our connection to God through storytelling and art. You can paint, draw, doodle anything that draws you closer to God. There is no prerequisite for ability.

8: Into the Oneness

The Rev. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Cultivate ways of consciously communing with The Sacred, and living life with greater flow, surrendered trust, and ease. We'll practice easy to learn Qigong, yogic sleep guided meditation, radiant heart meditation, and the soothing sound and vibration of singing bowls.

9: Spiritual Direction*/Solo Retreat

Ms. Helen Keefe & the Rev. Mary Jane Oakland

Keefe and Oakland are on-hand during the first and last track time to help open and close your self-directed retreat, including giving an overview of spiritual direction and helping you design your solo retreat. We encourage you to schedule one-on-one spiritual sharing sessions with one of them during the weekend, and do the rest of the weekend at your own pace.

**the time with Mary Jane and Helen is optional - you may still do the solo retreat completely solo or join any parts that will be helpful to you.*



SUMMER MINISTRY
SCHOOL & RETREAT
www.iowaepiscopal.org/smsr

Religious Life: A Resource for All

by Kevin Goodrich

“Religious life” is a term with specific meaning within the historic and present-day church. It refers to those who have taken vows in a Christian community, often known as an order. Members of such orders and communities are sometimes known as religious. Not in the general sense of that term used as an adjective to describe someone with religious beliefs or piety, but in the more specific sense of that term, used as a noun, to refer to people who’ve

the largest examples of this kind of order, and while it’s not specifically an Episcopal order, many Episcopalians are members of TSSF. These dispersed orders adapt the traditional vows and practices of residential religious life to the situations of individuals who have families, jobs, and other obligations. To join these expressions of religious life you don’t have to give up everything and live in a convent.



Members of religious communities in The Episcopal Church; Photo from religiouslifesunday.org public promotion materials

made vows within an order. The Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion have many religious orders, some with counterparts in the Roman Catholic Church. For example, there are both Episcopal and Roman Catholic Franciscans. Some orders or communities do not have counterparts in the Roman Church, such as the Order of Julian of Norwich—an Episcopal order of contemplative nuns.

Traditional religious life is the vowed life of monks and nuns, friars and sisters, living in residential community, and usually taking vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Episcopal Church has such residential communities. In recent decades many other expressions of religious life have emerged, with some orders being dispersed in nature and including married as well as single people. The Third Order of the Society of St. Francis Assisi (TSSF) is one of

The percentage of Episcopalians involved in religious life either as vowed religious or as an affiliate (sometimes called an oblate or associate) of an order is pretty small. However, the influence of religious life on The Episcopal Church and wider Anglican Communion is outsized for several reasons. For example, the Book of Common Prayer bears the marking of religious life,

with its emphasis on the recitation of the Daily Office (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline). A daily, liturgical, and scheduled cycle of prayer in common has been a hallmark of religious life for centuries. In addition, many devout lay persons and priests have found spiritual direction, insight, teaching, and refreshment by interacting with religious orders, often by going on a retreat at a residential community.

Also, for a long time if you wanted to learn about classic models of

"...many Episcopalians continue to find their life with God nurtured by interactions with religious orders, either virtually, in-person, or in-print."

Religious Life: A Resource for All, *continued*

spirituality and prayer, you'd often find yourself at a monastery. Thanks to the 20th century lay revival of spiritual direction across Christian denominations this is no longer a requirement. However, many Episcopalians continue to find their life with God nurtured by interactions with religious orders, either virtually, in-person, or in-print. Bishop Betsey Monnot has spoken of the role that the Episcopal monks of the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Boston, Massachusetts, have played in her own formation. Further, she has partnered with Brother James Dowd with The Benedictine Way community in Nebraska to bring contemplative prayer workshops across our diocese. Religious life is a wonderful and often underutilized resource for you, your congregation, our diocese, and the whole church. This is true whether or not you sense a calling to affiliate or join a religious order. I encourage you to invite a member of a religious order to speak to your church or group, to learn more about religious life, and to consider how it may help nourish and grow your relationship with God.

The Rev. Kevin Goodrich, who holds doctoral degrees in spirituality and theology, is a vowed friar in the Anglican Order of Preachers (also known as "The Dominicans") and serves as rector at St. John's Episcopal Church in Dubuque, IA.

Are you a member of or interested in religious life in our diocese? Contact Father Goodrich with questions and/or to be part of the "religious life network" of our diocese. This group will encourage one another in our shared commitments and support our wider diocesan family through prayer and other activities.

Email: FatherGoodrich@StJohnsdbq.org



Calling Young Adults!

Applications are open to young adults, ages 18-30, for our Companions Pilgrimage in Iowa
AUGUST 8-17

Get to know fellow young adults from the Diocese of Brechin in Scotland, the Diocese of Swaziland in Eswatini, and the Diocese of Iowa as we spend time together learning, exploring, and having fun!

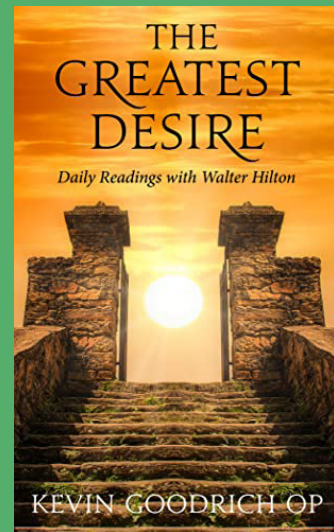


iowaepiscopal.org/young-adult

Experiencing God Through the Wisdom of the Mystics

Fourteenth-century mystic Walter Hilton was well known in the Middle Ages as a gracious and insightful spiritual guide. He was a canon lawyer who gave up a promising career to devote himself to a life of prayer and of guiding others into the depths of the Spirit. He was a best seller in medieval England, read not only by monastics and clergy, but by women and men with families and responsibilities in the world. Reading Hilton can help individuals kindle the fire of their faith to burn more brightly and to experience God more nearly.

The Rev. Kevin Goodrich, a vowed friar in the Anglican Order of Preachers (also known as “The Dominicans”) and rector of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Dubuque, IA recently edited a devotional volume of Walter Hilton’s writings entitled, “The Greatest Desire: Daily Readings with Walter Hilton.” In this little book, readers will discover “bite-size mysticism” that is a very accessible entry point into some of the church’s ancient wisdom on prayer, spirituality, and connecting with God. Intended for devotional use, many readers choose to meditatively read one page a day. These short readings may help to deepen your prayer life and to bring you into closer relationship with God.



“Walter Hilton's generous love of God and people is a lost treasure now uncovered to inspire our restless age with timeless spiritual insights and wisdom.



- Book endorsement by the Very Revd Nicola Sullivan,
Dean of Southwell Cathedral in the United Kingdom

FALL & SPRING



CARE PACKAGES

FOR RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

IF YOU KNOW A YOUNG ADULT IN THIS LIFE STAGE WHO MIGHT LIKE ONE, CONTACT:

AMY MELLIES
AMELLIES@IOWAEPISCOPAL.ORG

GILEAD Grants Inspire Ministries

APPLICATIONS OPEN
MAY 15 - JULY 15, 2023

by Traci Ruhland Petty

GILEAD (Growing Iowa Leaders, Engaging All Disciples) grants are available to support and equip leaders, congregations, ministry initiatives, and worshipping communities to thrive into the future. Grants are funded from the GILEAD Campaign, which was a 3-year diocesan fundraising campaign ending last year. The campaign grew out of some cool things that happened around the diocese from 2017-19 – many of you may remember the Revivals, Growing Iowa Leaders and Engaging All Disciples Days – congregations near to each other got together for these events and there were a bunch of different activities, guest speakers, leadership development opportunities, which all built on each other and we realized a need to be able to fund more of these types of offerings. And so, the GILEAD Campaign was formed, and it has funded 42 inspiring and innovative grant projects over the past 3 years. Because of your generosity, we are able to make grants available this year and next as well.



Do you have an idea for: a new project or ministry? reaching people in new places or in new ways? growing an existing ministry? If so, you may be eligible for a grant.

Make sure you schedule a time

to meet with a few members of the GILEAD Grant Review Committee to discuss your idea before you submit an application; they'll help you think through your idea so you can put forward the strongest application possible. It's a friendly process, so don't be intimidated if you haven't written a grant before, we're here to help!

Ms. Traci Ruhland Petty serves as the diocesan Missioner for Communications & GILEAD.

*NEW THIS YEAR:

See all available times and book your appointment with the GILEAD Grant Review Committee online

3-YEAR RECAP:

- 2022: 10 grants awarded, Totaling \$79,000
- 2021: 18 grants awarded, Totaling \$136,500
- 2020: 14 grants awarded, Totaling \$85,526

WHO CAN APPLY?

Congregations, worshipping communities, chapters, or individual members of the Diocese of Iowa may apply for GILEAD funds. Partnerships with non-Episcopal entities are welcome and encouraged, but an Episcopal entity must serve as the reporting agent and the project leader must be an Episcopalian who is a resident in the Diocese of Iowa.

GRANT CATEGORIES:

- Beginning a New Worshipping Community
- Beginning a New Ministry or Strengthening an Existing One
- Liturgical Space Renewal
- Support for Recently Ordained Clergy
- Formation for Youth or Young Adults
- Leadership Development
- Evangelism
- Expanding Tools and Technology

LEARN MORE:

iowaepiscopal.org/gilead-grants

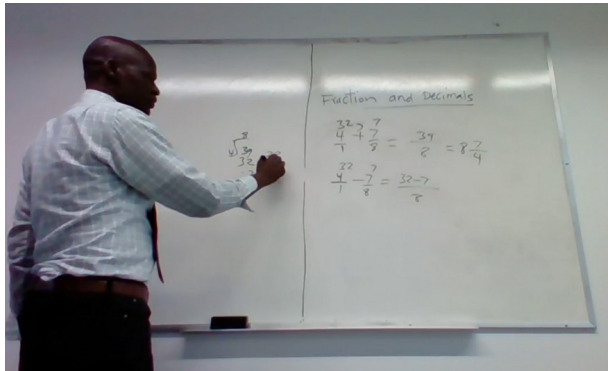


ACI Refugee and Immigrant Community Learning Classes

with St. Anne's, Ankeny

2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$5,000



Dhoal Larjin teaching fractions. Video screenshot.

AFRICAN COMMUNITY INSTITUTE



BEGINNING A NEW OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING MINISTRY

African Community Institute (ACI) is a non-profit that seeks to increase the educational skills of refugees and immigrants by providing citizenship, language, and tutoring services/workshops. This project will help fund needed tutors/trainers and materials for the services and workshops they offer. Last year, ACI's tutoring program helped about 20 refugee and immigrant children and youth with math and other subjects; those students saw higher grades in math and other subjects like reading and writing, and turning in homework on time and with more correct answers; some of those students have gone on to enroll at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and others have found employment. Additionally, ACI helped 15 people graduate from citizenship classes, and they've helped adults overcome other language and cultural barriers. In particular, ACI helps both youth and adult learners with ESL to help prepare them for citizenship classes, educational and employment opportunities, and general life skills. ACI is partnering with St. Anne's, which will help with space for activities, and continues to partner with the United Way, which helps sponsor some of the tutoring programs. GILEAD Grant funds will be used to help pay for tutors, trainers, and teachers, and for any needed learning materials for these services/workshops.

Grant main contact: Mr. Dhoal Larjin is a vestry member at St. Anne's, Ankeny, and is the founder and president of African Community Institute.

The ACI project helps me to do my math homework by myself.

- student

“

My children have improved a lot with math and their homework. I will bring them every week for the math class.

-mother of a student

Refugee Garden

with St. Andrew's, Des Moines

2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$5,000

BEGINNING A NEW OR
STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING MINISTRY

Lutheran Services in Iowa's Global Greens program works to reconnect former refugee farmers with the land as they build a new life in the U.S., and they have a list of over seventy refugees looking for garden space. After several months of research and discussion with LSI, St. Andrew's partnered with LSI to turn a large, rarely used plot of St. Andrew's land, just east of their parking lot, into a garden. The garden fills a need within the growing refugee population for garden space and serves as a joyful expression to the neighborhood of use of space and support for others at a basic level. LSI selects gardeners to whom the plots are assigned and monitors to assure their usage of the plots, as does St. Andrew's. The Dinka and Darfur communities associated with St. Andrew's were also extended invitations to participate. After the initial tilling and layout of the garden, each gardener or family is responsible for the planting, watering, and maintenance of their plot. St. Andrew's is responsible for providing access to water, fencing and a wheel barrow, along with mowing the lawn surrounding the garden, scenic landscaping, and potentially small seating area(s). Currently, water tanks are on loan from LSI until St. Andrew's can find a more permanent solution, and permanent fencing is needed. GILEAD Grant funds will be used towards the placement of a closer and ongoing water source and lumber to begin construction on permanent fencing.

Grant main contact: Ms. Deb Brewer-Cotlar is a member at St. Andrew's, Des Moines.

“ The benefits of reconnecting these refugee gardeners to the land goes beyond increased food security and self-sufficiency to improved physical and mental health, reconnection and passing along of agricultural heritage for younger generations, as well as community integration.



2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$5,000

ThreeHouse Campus Ministry: The Listening Post

with St. Luke's, Cedar Falls



Oftentimes they don't need more than a moment of reassurance; they simply need to be loved.

-the Rev. Elizabeth Duff Popplewell

BEGINNING A NEW OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING MINISTRY

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Cedar Falls, in partnership with ThreeHouse Collaborative Campus Ministries and other collaborating congregations, seeks to grow their ministry capacity with students and faculty at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), which includes being an active presence on campus, and to deepen their own faith and ability to follow in the ways of Jesus. The campus community longs to be seen and heard in a safe and welcoming space with no stipulations or limitations. Through campus and community conversations and in collaboration with UNI's Counseling Center, they have identified an increasing need for providing safe and welcoming listening spaces in which people can share their experiences of isolation, transitions, discernment, struggles, and joys. They believe a way to meet this need is through a project called The Listening Post, a regular and consistent space on campus staffed by trained volunteers from our collaborative churches who will engage in active listening, offer compassion, and provide resources on campus and in the community for individuals to connect with. The UNI Counseling center will provide volunteer training (Mental Health Ally program and Question Persuade and Refer program training) as well as serving as an on-campus referral resource. In addition, the UNI Gender and Sexuality Services Office

will provide Safe Zone Ally training and the UNI Military and Veterans Services Office Green Zone Ally will provide training to all designated listeners. Through this training, every designated listener will be able to provide pastoral care as well as be able to connect individuals with applicable resources. GILEAD Grant funds will help provide necessary training for volunteers, in order to equip them to provide the best support they can for those who stop by The Listening Post. It will also be used to purchase supplies, print resources, and obtain marketing materials.



Trained volunteers staffing The Listening Post ministry on UNI's campus.

Grant main contact: the Rev. Elizabeth Duff Popplewell serves as rector at St. Luke's, Cedar Falls

Clergy Support at St. Andrew's, Des Moines

2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$24,000

SUPPORT FOR NEWLY ORDAINED CLERGY

St. Andrew's has embraced mutual ministry through a team-based ministry structure and established many new relationships that have led to ministry partnerships. The Rev. Lizzie Gillman has been an integral part of Mutual Ministry to bring St. Andrew's into a post-pandemic world, building intentional relationships with the community, city, and organizations, helping to chart an innovative, sustainable course for the congregation. She's built a partnership with the Northwest Community fridge, which led to St. Andrew's housing the fridge on their property when the fridge was forced to relocate; she's worked with Deacon Eve Mahr to form a relationship with Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI), which has led to St. Andrew's becoming a site for LSI's Global Greens garden program for refugees; she takes an active role in community events, including City Council meetings, Neighborhood Association meetings, vigils at the Des Moines police station [photo bottom right], serves as a Courtroom Chaplain to support families (several defendants were charged with crimes connected to Black Lives Matter protests), and more. Gillman's work has laid the foundation upon which St. Andrew's can continue to build, but there is more work to be done. GILEAD Grant funds will be used to help pay Gillman's salary and benefits.



“Lizzie is excellent. She gives me candy and makes me feel welcome.”

Grant main contact: Ms. Leanne Williams serves as senior warden at St. Andrew's, Des Moines.

“Lizzie makes me feel safe.”



2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$15,000

Clergy Support

at St. Matthew's, Iowa Falls



SUPPORT FOR NEWLY ORDAINED CLERGY

St. Matthew's for all of its history of over one hundred years has been a mission congregation. For the past forty years it has always relied upon part-time or visiting clergy. As the availability of visiting clergy became scarce, they began searching for alternatives and also realized the need to have a larger presence in the community to help them grow and prosper. They hope to find an enthusiastic, recently-ordained priest who will become a community presence, can help with the rejuvenation and diversification of St. Matthew's membership, a raising of its profile in the community, and for the spreading of the Gospel to the rapidly diversifying population of Iowa Falls and surrounding area. GILEAD Grant funds will be used to help fund the salary of the clergy person, which will in turn help grow the congregation and build a wider presence in Iowa Falls and the local community.

We believe that we, and the recently ordained person whom we call, will all be successful if we base our joint efforts on building our faith in Christ Jesus, using our God-given reason, talents and skills, and appreciating our time-tested Episcopal liturgy, history, and traditions.

Grant main contact: Mr. Harvey Nicholson serves as senior warden at St. Matthew's By-the-Bridge, Iowa Falls.



Electronic Sign at St. Stephen's, Newton

2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$5,000

EVANGELISM

St. Stephen's lighted church sign is over 30 years old and is not repairable. It has been used to spread information about St. Stephen's events, 12 Step Group events, and ecumenical events involving the other eight (8) churches in a four-block area of St. Stephen's (i.e., the Christmas Church Walk and Carol Sing, and the Stations of the Cross at Easter). Additionally, Biblical quotations are on the sign in an attempt to spread the Gospel of Christ. They are proposing a new, electronic sign that will be computer generated and thus can carry far more information and convey it in a more noticeable manner. Many from the groups meeting at the church and from the general public have commented that "they miss the messages and information from the sign." St. Stephen's has already spoken with several of the 15-16 12 Step Groups that use the church on a weekly basis, and they are eager to have a sign that helps spread the word about their offerings; the 12 Step and other groups that use St. Stephen's will have input into using the sign. GILEAD Grant funds will be used to purchase the sign and computer program and other necessary installation components (i.e., a base/brick enclosure, electrician and installation expenses).



Grant main contact: Ms. Rita Baker serves as senior warden at St. Stephen's, Newton.

“

[We] have spoken to some of the 12 step groups about being able to get their meeting times out there so they're excited for the sign.

-Rita Baker



Safety Net for Service Corps Participants

in partnership with **Tiffany Farrell**

“
Oh my goodness!
What a generous
offering!
- Wendy Karr Johnson,
Program Manager for ESC

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In an effort to keep the connection between the church and young adults, this project intends to provide safety net funding to young adults involved in service year programs (ex. Episcopal Service Corps, Young Adult Service Corps, AmeriCorps). Programs tend to provide minimal monthly stipends to its corps members; when emergencies arise, or gas prices are high and you are moving across the country, money can become tight. Small stipends can also prevent young adults from traveling home for the holidays or special events. Having recently completed a year of service with the Episcopal Service Corps, this grant's project leader learned more about the structure and support systems offered and not offered through such programs. Although service years encourage simple living, the monthly stipends do not cover all expenses for many in these programs. This makes this opportunity less accessible for those who are already vulnerable to financial struggles. With programs covering the globe, even traveling to the program can create a barrier. Having funds available to help with these necessary but unforeseen or uncovered expenses may

encourage young adults who are unsure of whether or not they can afford to serve to go ahead knowing that there is a safety net provided to them from the diocese. Corps members would be able to fill out an application to use funds for a wide variety of reasons, such as (but not limited to): travel expenses, car repairs, medical bills, moving expenses, etc. GILEAD Grant funds will be used as this “safety net” funding for corps members, available to corps members upon application approval.



Grant main contact: Ms. Tiffany Farrell is a member at St. Luke's, Cedar Falls.

Simpson Youth Academy Scholarships

in partnership with Rev. Eric Rucker

2022
GILEAD
GRANT
RECIPIENT

\$5,000

FORMATION FOR YOUTH OR YOUNG ADULTS

The Simpson College Youth Academy is a year-long, ecumenical program for Iowa high school youth grounded in the conviction that young people have gifts and power that are essential for the healing of the world now. Through college-level intellectual engagement, training in worship and prayer leadership, and reflective service around community issues, we help youth step into mature young adult Christian faith as they discern their particular callings as agents of justice in their churches and the world. The Academy requests a GILEAD grant to provide tuition scholarships for Episcopal youth, LGBTQ youth, and youth whose racial or economic status inhibit their ability to pay tuition for the program's summer residency. Scholarships for these populations address critical needs in our communities: first, the Episcopal Church in America is rapidly aging and shrinking, thus urgent, intentional investment in forming young Episcopalians is needed to sustain our church institution; second, American LGBTQ youth are faced with consistent marginalization at higher rates than non-LGBTQ youth by the general public and by religious communities; and third, this diocese is committed to acting tangibly to combat racial and economic injustice. Therefore, the Diocese and Academy's decision to offer financial assistance to such youth would be a prophetic statement of radical welcome for queer and BIPOC youth in the name of Christ. GILEAD Grant funds will be used to pay for scholarships and programming fees for four high school youth who are Episcopal, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, or economically disadvantaged to participate in the Simpson Youth Academy program for only \$100 per student.



Grant main contact: the Rev. Eric Rucker serves as an assistant priest at St. Andrew's, Des Moines, and as director at Simpson Youth Academy.



Photos: Simpson Youth Academy participants; by E. Rucker

[SYA] is so helpful and is creating young people who learn what to do with their desire to challenge injustices. SYA is making the world a better place and creating hope.

- 2022 participant



African Community Institute Tools & Technology

with St. Anne's, Ankeny

EXPANDING TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

In Polk county, about 2,000 refugees and immigrant adults and children do not have access to learning through technology because they do not have access to computers nor know how to use them. As the number of refugees and immigrants continues to increase, a solution is needed for this technology and skill gap. These technical barriers prevent adults from accessing higher learning and job opportunities and children are more likely to drop out of school and/or not seek further educational opportunities. African Community Institute helps children and adult refugees and immigrants with computer knowledge, and the technology also allows ACI to provide language classes, tutoring services, Bible studies, and other workshops. GILEAD Grant funds will be used to expand ACI's technology, including computers, printers, iPad, and laptops.

Grant main contact: Mr. Dhoal Larjin is a vestry member at St. Anne's, Ankeny, and is the founder and president at African Community Institute.

“
The best thing that happens is the improvement of the refugee and immigrant children in the program because they are learning much better than before they got the ipads.”

“
We have seen an increase in participation in math and ESL classes.”



AROUND THE DIOCESE WITH BISHOP MONNOT

Visitations since the winter 2022 issue of this magazine was published



ST. JOHN'S, MASON CITY



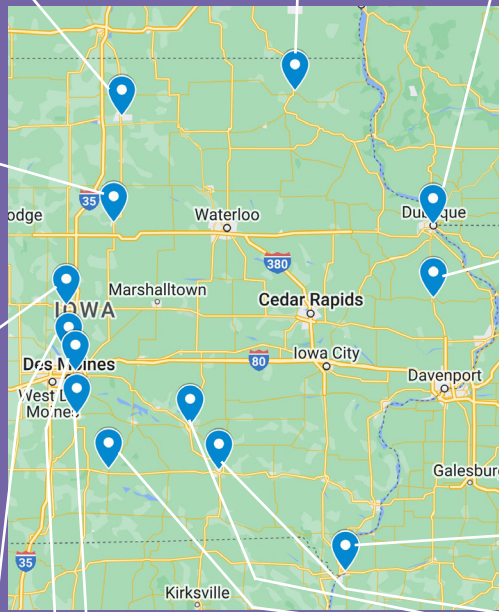
GRACE CHURCH, DECORAH



ST. JOHN'S, DUBUQUE



ST. MATTHEW'S BY-THE-BRIDGE, IOWA FALLS



ST. MARK'S, MAQUOKETA



ST. JOHN'S BY-THE-CAMPUS, AMES



ST. JOHN'S, KEOKUK



ST. ANNE'S BY-THE-FIELDS, ANKENY



ALL SAINTS, INDIANOLA



TRINITY CHURCH, OTTUMWA



ST. MARK'S, DES MOINES



ST. ANDREW'S, CHARITON



ST. JAMES', OSKALOOSA

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

BISHOP VISITATIONS

- May 21 St. Peter's Church, Bettendorf
- May 28 Trinity Cathedral, Davenport (Pentecost)
- June 4 Trinity Cush, Des Moines (Trinity Sunday)
- July 2 Grace Church, Charles City
- August 27 St. Alban's Church, Spirit Lake
- September 9 Regional Confirmation Service, St. Timothy's, West Des Moines
- September 10 St. Luke's Church, Cedar Falls
- October 8 Church of the Savior, Orange City
- October 15 St. Paul's Church, Council Bluffs
- October 29 St. James' Church, Independence
- November 5 Christ Church, Burlington
- November 12 Grace Church, Boone
- November 19 St. Paul's Indian Mission, Sioux City
- December 3 St. Thomas' Church, Algona
- December 10 St. Andrew's Church, Des Moines
- December 17 St. Luke's Church, Des Moines

GET CONNECTED

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diocese@iowaepiscopal.org

eNewsletter:

Comes out monthly



Bishop Monnot with (Below) acolytes at St. Anne's, Ankeny; (R) confirmands at St. James', Oskaloosa. Photos from B. Monnot



HIGHLIGHTS



STAY CONNECTED

Website:
iowaepiscopal.org

Facebook:
IowaEpiscopal

YouTube:
DioceseofIowa
Communications

For the most up-to-date information, including the bishop's visitation schedule, upcoming events, resources, and more, visit the diocesan website.



UPCOMING

GILEAD Grant Applications Open	May 15-July 15
Dismantling Racism Training	June 3
Zoom Open Office Hours with Bishop for Clergy	June 6
Underground Railroad Pilgrimage, SW Iowa	June 9-10
Summer Ministry School & Retreat	June 23-25
EPIC Youth Summer Camp	June 26-30
Episcopal Youth Event (EYE)	July 4-8
Iowa Episcopal Clergy Conference	July 27-29
Young Adult Companion Dioceses Pilgrimage	August 8-17
Fall Joint Chapter Meeting	August 26
Church Audits Due to Diocesan Office	September 1
Dismantling Racism Training	September 16
Deadline for Convention Delegate Certification	September 20
Iowa Episcopal Clergy Retreat,	October 5-7
Diocesan Annual Convention	October 21-22
Loneliness Workshop Series	October 28, November 11, November 25, December 9
Dismantling Racism Training	November 4

2023 Stewardship Share Report

1st QUARTER 2023 - AS OF MARCH 31, 2023

CITY	CHURCH	2023	2023	AMT DUE	RECEIVED	(OVER)
		ASK	COMMITMENT	3/31/2023	3/31/2023	UNDER
Algona	St. Thomas' Church	\$ 3,123.00	3,123.00	780.75	780.75	-
Ames	St. John's Church	41,706.00	41,706.00	10,426.50	-	10,427.00
Anamosa	St. Mark's Church	918.00	1,500.00	375.00	-	375.00
Ankeny	St. Anne's by the Fields	10,475.00	8,863.14	2,618.76	-	2,619.00
Bettendorf	St. Peter's Church	16,346.00	16,346.00	4,086.51	4,086.51	-
Boone	Grace Church	951.00	951.00	237.75	158.50	79.00
Burlington	Christ Church	29,678.00	21,000.00	5,250.00	3,500.00	1,750.00
Carroll	Trinity Church	3,782.00	3,782.00	945.51	3,782.04	(2,837.00)
Cedar Falls	St. Luke's Church	38,259.00	38,259.00	9,564.75	6,376.50	3,188.00
Cedar Rapids	Christ Church	43,968.00	43,968.00	10,992.00	9,828.00	1,164.00
Cedar Rapids	Grace Church	7,794.00	7,794.00	1,948.50	7,794.00	(5,846.00)
Chariton	St. Andrew's Church	2,256.00	3,000.00	750.00	3,000.00	(2,250.00)
Charles City	Grace Church	753.00	753.00	188.25	188.25	-
Clinton	Christ Church	18,276.00	18,276.00	4,569.00	-	4,569.00
Coralville	New Song Church	14,118.00	14,118.00	3,529.50	3,529.50	-
Council Bluffs	St. Paul's Church	2,870.00	3,600.00	900.00	900.00	-
Davenport	St. Alban's Church	9,858.00	8,874.00	2,218.50	2,218.50	-
Davenport	Trinity Cathedral	88,861.00	112,526.00	28,131.51	28,131.51	-
Decorah	Grace Church	3,806.00	3,806.00	951.51	951.51	-
Denison	Trinity Church	1,792.00	2,000.00	500.01	2,980.00	(2,480.00)
Des Moines	St. Andrew's Church	34,264.00	26,000.00	6,500.01	13,999.99	(7,500.00)
Des Moines	St. Luke's Church	32,048.00	13,106.00	3,276.51	2,184.34	1,092.00
Des Moines	St. Mark's Church	500.00	500.00	125.01	500.00	(375.00)
Des Moines	St. Paul's Cathedral	61,167.00	55,000.00	13,749.99	9,251.09	4,499.00
Des Moines	Trinity Cush	500.00		125.01	-	125.00
Dubuque	St. John's Church	24,176.00	10,000.00	2,499.99	-	2,500.00
Durant	St. Paul's Church	2,638.00	2,638.00	659.49	659.50	-
Emmetsburg	Trinity Church	862.00	862.00	215.49	215.49	-
Fort Dodge	St. Mark's Church	40,502.00	40,502.00	10,125.51	10,125.51	-
Fort Madison	St. Luke's Church	2,137.00		534.24	300.00	234.00
Glenwood	St. John's Church	1,466.00	1,466.00	366.51	488.68	(122.00)
Grinnell	St. Paul's Church	11,573.00	10,000.00	2,499.99	2,521.59	(22.00)
Harlan	St. Paul's Church	1,406.00	1,406.00	351.51	351.51	-
Independence	St. James' Church	1,782.00	1,782.00	445.50	445.50	-
Indianola	All Saints Church	539.00	539.00	134.76	179.68	(45.00)
Iowa City	Trinity Church	71,952.00	71,952.00	17,988.00	17,988.00	-
Iowa Falls	St. Matthew's By-the-Bridge	1,644.00	1,644.00	411.00	348.34	63.00
Keokuk	St. John's Church	15,934.00	7,200.00	3,983.49	1,200.00	2,783.00
LeMars	St. George's Church	500.00	500.00	125.01	145.60	(21.00)
Maquoketa	St. Mark's Church	2,596.00	2,596.00	648.99	432.66	216.00
Marshalltown	St. Paul's Church	6,796.00	6,796.00	1,698.99	1,132.66	566.00
Mason City	St. John's Church	22,078.00	20,430.00	5,107.50	5,107.50	-
Mount Pleasant	St. Michael's Church	3,871.00	3,871.00	967.74	967.74	-
Muscatine	Trinity Church	18,926.00	18,926.00	4,731.51	4,731.51	-
Newton	St. Stephen's Church	7,742.00	8,000.00	2,000.01	2,000.01	-
Orange City	Church of the Savior	2,607.00	1,300.00	651.75	-	652.00
Oskaloosa	St. James' Church	7,424.00	7,424.00	1,856.01	1,856.01	-
Ottumwa	Trinity Church	5,017.00	3,655.00	913.74	913.74	-
Perry	St. Martin's Church	6,883.00	6,883.00	1,720.74	-	1,721.00
Shenandoah	St. John's Church	4,920.00		1,230.00	-	1,230.00
Sioux City	St. Paul's Church	1,378.00	1,378.00	344.49	-	344.00
Sioux City	St. Thomas' Church	15,027.00	15,027.00	3,756.75	2,504.50	1,252.00
Spirit Lake	St. Alban's Church	10,654.00	10,654.00	2,663.49	2,663.49	-
Storm Lake	All Saints' Church	4,621.00	4,621.00	1,155.24	385.08	770.00
Waterloo	Trinity Church	8,199.00	8,199.00	2,049.75	2,829.46	(780.00)
Webster City	Church of the Good Shepherd	4,682.00	4,682.00	1,170.51	1,170.51	-
West Des Moines	St. Timothy's Church	68,998.00	57,000.00	14,250.00	9,500.00	4,750.00
TOTAL		\$ 847,599.00	780,784.14	199,998.54	175,305.26	24,690.00



(A) Members from Calvary, now merged with St. Thomas', Sioux City, carrying on Easter hats tradition, Photo from S. Berry; (B) The Rev. Fred Steinbach (St. Andrew's, Chariton) visits with Sacred Heart Catholic church's youth group about local homeless ministry, Photo from F. Steinbach; (C) Companions in Ministry meeting; (D) Dismissal at Chrism Mass from Deacon Jeanie Smith (St. Timothy's, West Des Moines); (E) Easter Vigil at St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines; (C, D, E) Photos by T. Rubland Petty; (F) Board of Directors November 2022 Retreat; Photo by B. Monnot



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CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE CENTER
NEWTON, IA

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Iowa Connections

WINTER 2023
VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2



**GATHER AT
THE RIVER**

Young Adult Companions Pilgrimage 2023

FROM BISHOP BETSEY MONNOT

Together on This Transformative Journey



From the Opening Eucharist of the 171th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, October 20, 2023 at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Today, this scripture, has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Because that is what we, each of us, gathered here this evening, are all about. We, the body of Christ, gathered here to worship God, to open our 171st Annual Diocesan Convention, to join in the celebration with the seven young people who come to be confirmed this evening, that is what we are all about. We are about what Jesus was about.

We, the members of the Body of Christ, the only body that Christ has in this world now, are called to do his work: to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. As Christ came into the world to fulfill this scripture, we have inherited that call as members of Christ's body.

Now, what exactly that looks like for each one of us as we live out our ministry in the world will vary considerably. As each one of us is given gifts, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, we go about our ministry in the world as members of Christ's body, in various different ways, but always, always, on a journey to grow up, as Paul put it, to grow up into Christ. That growth, that maturing process, that journey of transformation is life long—and beyond this life—and none of us can claim to have arrived already.

And where did we begin this journey of transformation? We sometimes forget. But this evening, we have a reminder through Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones: we began this journey as dry bones ourselves. We began this journey, as we remember on Ash Wednesday, as dust, as completely without life, and all that we are, and all that we have, has been given to us through God's grace.

God brought Ezekiel to a valley that was full of bones, and they weren't just bones—Ezekiel says they were very dry. There was no hint or shadow of life left there,

even the scavengers and the insects were finished with these bones. And they were all jumbled up, not attached to each other, just a big pile of dry bones in the valley.

And God told Ezekiel what to do, and Ezekiel prophesied, and as he did, God's power caused those bones to re-form themselves into complete skeletons, and then while Ezekiel kept prophesying God's power caused muscles, and flesh, and skin to form over the bones, and so they were complete

bodies, but there was still no breath in them.

Now remember, throughout the Hebrew Bible, in order for there to be life, there has to be breath. So when Ezekiel says there was no breath in the bodies, it means there was no life—these were complete bodies, but they were not alive. And God tells Ezekiel

“... the church is the place for us to support each other as we continue in this transformation, moving closer to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ”

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ON THE COVER: Young Adult Companions Pilgrimage 2023 Group Photo at the Iowa State Capitol

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Jesus: The Man, The Myth, The Person

by Amy Mellies



EPIC Summer Camp 2023 Group Photo; Photo by: A. Mellies

The week of EPIC, our diocesan summer youth camp, is a chance for our youth to leave their home lives behind and build community with others around the diocese. It's a chance for many to be who they truly are, authentically themselves, and be welcomed into a community of youth and adults who accepts them as they are. This is so important for many of the LGBTQIA+ youth in our state, now more than ever. We want to create a place for any youth who might not have a home church to find their community and feel like they belong. The youth of our diocese have so many good ideas, caring hearts and voices they want to use. It's up to the adults in their lives to walk with them on this journey of faith and help them use the gifts and talents each of them has, and we (camp staff) are grateful that for one week each summer we have that privilege.

This year our theme was "Jesus: The Man, The Myth, The Person," and we learned about who Jesus truly was. Did Jesus feel emotional and physical pain? How did Jesus process joy and grace? How did Jesus accept and love all people, just as they are? Our staff did a wonderful job of helping to answer these questions and give specific instances in scripture of how Jesus did all of the amazing things he did during his short life on Earth. The hope of the week was to show our youth that Jesus went through

many, if not all, of the same things they are experiencing. And yet he faced his fears and gave up his life for all of us.

As with most years at EPIC, we had a year of firsts. It was the first time for many staff and campers, the first time Bishop Monnot was able to join us, the first time our campers had a choreographed dance off with CCC (Christian Conference Center) staff, the first time we offered a quiet space, and the first time we offered a non-binary cabin for our campers. We are already looking forward to hopefully even more firsts next year.

Ms. Amy Mellies serves as the diocesan Children and Youth Missioner..



Staff Reflections

This was my first experience ever to be at a camp. Yes, 65 years old and this is my first time as a camper. One of the things that I witnessed was the outpouring of support for the youth in our diocese. Everyone at camp supported each other and did their best to listen and to learn about each other, and the stories that they have experienced in their lives. We were blessed with some very fine leaders. We were also blessed with some really challenging air quality issues. It was beautiful to see so many of our campers, leaders, and staff be willing to be flexible.

The church services that we had outside were very spiritual. The music was outstanding. I just loved how the kids got involved and shared their love for each other. God is working very well in our youth. These outings that we have with our young people are their church. We need to foster, support, and encourage young folks and others to be a part of this beautiful congregation. Thank you for letting me be a part of this. And I pray that I can continue to be a part of this.

- Rev. Catherine Schroeder



This was my first year seeing EPIC through from start to finish. When did it start? December 2022 and probably earlier for our leaders Amy and Kristina. All my previous years I just showed up for staff training the days before and had no idea how much planning went into a week of EPIC. Many great people spent seven months of time committed to EPIC.

Camp came during a rough patch for me so I was a bit hesitant leading up to it. However, as campers began arriving on Monday afternoon, I knew I was in the right place. I knew I was called to be there to welcome campers, new and returners, with open arms. Camp provides an opportunity to come as your true, authentic self, which we don't most days [outside of camp]. This year we implemented both a non-binary cabin and a soft space campers could go to when feeling overwhelmed. This allowed even more of us to show up as our true selves. Even though EPIC isn't necessarily vacation it is my vacation, and that's how much I love it and value its worth.

- Tiffany Farrell

Prophetic Witness and Voicing Our Values in Public Policy

by Wendy Abrahamson

Some wonder if it is appropriate for Christians to speak to public policy issues. We believe so. Over and over in scripture we are commanded to care for those in need, to tend those on the margins and the poor. Over and over Jesus steps across cultural lines of what is “appropriate” toward those who need care. He tells us explicitly to feed people; he tells us explicitly to be with those who are alone; he sends us to proclaim healing and release and good news. In our country and system of government, distribution of these good things (medical care, food, housing, safety, dignity) is significantly set in motion or inhibited by public policy legislation; this is why we must be there. In addition to Christians importantly supporting those in need with ministries such as food banks, through legislative witness we hope to be impactful at the distribution source. It is also a way to publicly witness and offer testimony to our faith—we lobby specifically, explicitly, as Christians.

In 2017 the Diocese of Iowa began our public policy ministry: Faith in Action. It started as a volunteer registered lobbyist to help inform Iowa Episcopalians about bills in the General Assembly, to lobby lawmakers on issues we care about as Christians, and to network with lobbyists of other faith groups (like the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodists, and Interfaith Alliance of Iowa). A registered lobbyist would be able to “declare” (the technical term) diocesan positions on bills in the Iowa Legislature Online Lobbyist System, which lawmakers, the public, and media access to see who officially supports or opposes a given bill. The inspiration for Faith in Action was the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which for decades has informed Episcopalians on federal issues and is part of The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations.



Gathering at the Statehouse for Episcopalians on the Hill 2023; Photo from W. Abrahamson

At the outset the diocese consulted with our chancellor to ensure that if we established a registered lobbyist as a religious body, we would not violate federal restrictions; we learned that religious organizations are free to speak in the public square on issues, including by lobbying, and are only prohibited from endorsing candidates for office or working on political campaigns. We also comply with State of Iowa policy allowing for volunteer lobbyists whose time lobbying is not the majority of their job.

Guidelines were established: bill declarations must align with General Convention and Diocese of Iowa Convention actions, and if unsure the lobbyist consults with the bishop and/or The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations; activities must be communicated to the diocese at large about declarations, subcommittee hearings, and rallies at the Capitol; and prior to the start of the legislative session the lobbyist must consult with the bishop to consider issues to track. And as a ministry sometimes addressing sensitive issues, Faith in Action must keep the bishop up-to-date and aware of its legislative activities.

The Rev. Wendy Abrahamson (St. Paul's, Grinnell) suggested this ministry in 2016 to then Bishop Alan Scarfe who approved, and Abrahamson became the first registered lobbyist. She attended a convention in Washington, D.C. in 2017, Ecumenical Advocacy Days, that included training and hands-on practice lobbying lawmakers with other Christians. After a couple years, the Rev. Marcus Haack (Trinity, Iowa City) joined and served as a second registered lobbyist until he retired last year. The Rev. Lizzie Gillman (St. Andrew's, Des Moines) joined not as a lobbyist, but as a networker to community organizations. Now, under the episcopacy of Bishop Betsey Monnot, Faith in Action continues to be wonderfully supported by the bishop of Iowa.

A Facebook group was established for Faith in Action to communicate quickly; members can follow it as well as post. Like the lobbyist, the page has participation guidelines such as no endorsement of candidates or political parties, no memes or uncivil conversation, et cetera. Ms. Traci Ruhland Petty administers the group for the diocese and there are three moderators: Mr. Vince Preston, the Rev. Alice Haugen and the Rev. Diana



Faith leaders meeting with legislators at Clergy Day on the Hill 2023; Photo by T. Ruhland Petty

Wright. In the 6ish years of the Facebook group there have been very few instances where moderators have needed to step in — a wonderful testimony to the spirit held by the group — which currently has 450 members. A more recent technological support was created by Traci Ruhland Petty: a page on the Diocese of Iowa website that provides access to Iowa legislative information and areas we focus on.

...through
legislative witness
we hope to be
impactful at
the distribution
source.

From the beginning Faith in Action has hosted an annual gathering during the legislative session called "Episcopalians on the Hill," which we encourage everyone to attend. This is an opportunity to visit our beautiful statehouse, learn about bills under consideration by the legislature, and watch debate in the Iowa Senate or House of Representatives (if debate coincides with the visit). It is also an opportunity to hear from Episcopal lawmakers and friends like Representative Ross Wilburn (St. John's, Ames), Representative Bob Kressig (St. Luke's, Cedar Falls), Senator (retired) Rob Hogg (Christ Church, Cedar Rapids), Senator Sarah Trone-Garriott (Lutheran pastor and honorary Episcopalian), and Ms. Connie Ryan, Executive Director of Interfaith Alliance of Iowa. Attendees also meet and lobby their own Iowa lawmakers if they are available. Episcopalians on the Hill has been well attended from the start and is a great way to get to know other Episcopalians interested in and/or involved in advocacy and justice work.

Last year the Rev. Stephen Benitz (St. John's, Mason City) inspired Faith in Action to host a weekly statehouse gathering of Episcopalians during the session

called "Cassocks at the Capitol." Meeting on Mondays for an early lunch at Tasty Tacos by the statehouse, the group would then attend Interfaith Alliance's Moral Mondays at the statehouse and then go to the rotunda to lobby. Lay and clergy were encouraged to attend, and clergy encouraged to wear cassocks. This visual, public witness as Christians definitely increased our presence, and Cassocks at the Capitol will be a feature of Faith in Action as we continue.

It is not likely our lobbying has changed the course of any bill, which may be another reason to wonder why we do it. Last year a small group helped with brainstorming about Faith in Action, and where it is now that it is about six years old. What emerged was the insight that while hope is always there to have a gospel effect on public policy, equally important is public Christian witness. For example, students and media regularly contact our lobbyist during a session with questions on why the diocese declared a particular way on a particular bill. They are interested to know that The Episcopal Church in Iowa has beliefs and speaks up. The brainstorming group also had insight that perhaps most important may be the witness and support Faith in Action gives our own dear siblings in our pews and communities: to LGBTQ+ Episcopalians so they know their church not only stands alongside them, but that the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa advocates for them in the statehouse where bills supporting or hurting LGBTQ+ people are generated; to those new to America, for them to know The Episcopal Church in Iowa not only stands alongside them, but advocates for them in the halls of government where the response to those from other nations may be supportive or hurtful; to those among us who are in need, so they will know that not only will we literally provide food, we speak to legislation that is impactful on how it is shared and who is fed. This ministry of Faith in Action is a tangible way we live out our faith — a way of being Christ's feet and hands in the world, called to show up and stand with the oppressed and share God's hope and never-ending love with each other.

The Rev. Wendy Abrahamson serves as rector St. Paul's, Grinnell and as a registered lobbyist for the diocese.

Scan to read more about Faith in Action, featured in this 2020 Episcopal News Service article



PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

HOW-TO & TIPS

CONTACTING LEGISLATORS

TIPS

- Let them know who you are and where you're from
- Keep it short, to the point, and personal
- See if you can get insight into how they make their decisions
- You can refer to how our diocese/ denomination has registered on the bill or views a topic

YOUR LEGISLATORS

- House Representative
- Senator
- <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- For a particular bill, reach out to members of the sub-committee and full committee
- <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees>

WAYS TO CONNECT

IN PERSON

- Visit the Capitol when in-session
- Public entrances: ground floor, on the south and west sides of the building
- From ground level, go up 2 floors to the legislative chambers
- Fill out a note requesting to see a legislator, hand it to a page
- If the legislator is in and available they'll come out to meet with you

EMAIL & PHONE

- See tips above
- Leave your contact information so they can get back in touch with you

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS

- Members of the public can speak at subcommittee hearings, either in-person or online via Zoom
- See agenda for Zoom details

REFERENCE

- See how the diocese has registered on a bill
- We're always in line with The Episcopal Church
- Search "Client": Episcopal Diocese of Iowa
- <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/lobbyist/reports/declarations>



***Faith in Action:**
a diocesan advocacy & public
policy ministry that strives to
strengthen and deepen discipleship
by maintaining a spiritual voice and
forum for active Christians to speak
out about the problems Iowans face.*

A



B

(A) Iowa State Capitol; Photo by T. Rubland Petty. (B) Episcopalians gathered for the Peoples' Prayer Breakfast 2023; Photo from B. Monnot

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From Bishop Bestey Monnot:

I am very enthusiastic about our new partnership with the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry. As a sponsoring diocese, we will be able to influence the course offerings of the school and have a flexible partner in creating curricula that meet the needs for formation that we discern for all orders of ministry. They offer tracks for both ordination and lay leadership, or you can take a class simply for personal enrichment. Our students will have access to financial assistance reserved for students from sponsoring dioceses and will be formed in cohorts with students from nearby dioceses with similar ministry needs. I am especially excited about the comprehensive diaconal studies track and the four tracks designed for lay ministers preparing for licensing as preachers, evangelists, catechists, or pastoral leaders. I encourage you to learn more about their offerings and I look forward to our continued partnership.

*Scan the QR code
to learn more*



A Pilgrimage Along Iowa's Underground Railroad

by Ellen Bruckner

A pilgrimage to Underground Railroad sites today offers opportunities to explore Iowa's history as well as one's own history and landscape in the context of seeking freedom. In June, a small group of ten Iowa pilgrims did just that.

An introductory meeting on Zoom organized the journey. A week later pilgrims gathered in person at St. John's in Glenwood ready to explore sites along the route toward freedom. Our trip included sites in Southwest Iowa known to be stops along the Underground Railroad. Although there is not much recorded history of the Underground Railroad because of the dangers not only to freedom seekers but also to those who helped the enslaved journey toward freedom, we got a glimpse into their journey and experiences.

The Underground Railroad in Iowa operated in the mid-1800s with stations along an east-west line spanning the state. Missouri identified as a slave state and Iowa as a free state so for many enslaved persons in Missouri the border offered a desperate dream of hope for freedom. Stories tell us that folks left their enslavers with no possessions – no maps, often only vague directions based on landmarks. When they finally reached a station, they would then be conducted to the next station. For those crossing Iowa the goal was Chicago or Detroit and then Canada. Completion of the journey on the Underground Railroad depended on those along the route who believed freedom was the preferred way of life. Freedom seekers, often hunted from the moment they first ran, put their lives into the hands of these station masters and conductors. It's hard for us to imagine the depth of fear that went along with the hopes.

I'm still haunted remembering the terror I felt while in the secret room hidden behind the Hitchcocks' basement cupboard. Looking up through the gaps in the slats of the dining room floor, I imagined the freedom seekers' hearts beating out of their chests while earnestly praying that the bounty

hunters wouldn't be able to hear the pounding of the fugitives' hearts. And what if someone in hiding sneezed or coughed or a baby cried? All of their bravery and energy expended to overcome challenges on the Underground Railroad would evaporate in a split second! And to think that they were only doing what comes naturally to humans.

- Stacey G., pilgrim

Iowa during this time was a mixture of vast grasslands and forested rolling hills. The ups and downs of the Loess Hills are a clear picture of how arduous the travel on foot must have been. Pilgrim Ruth R. shared her reflection on this, saying:

Seeing the Todd and Hitchcock houses helped me realize how isolated these havens were in a landscape with very few settlements and roads. I gained appreciation for what an arduous, often lonely, and always dangerous journey freedom seekers experienced as they fled from slavery in Missouri and Kansas. The "conductors" who aided them also risked imprisonment, fines, and violence from enslavers and even from fellow Iowans. I came away from the pilgrimage marveling at how determined and courageous the freedom seekers and those who aided them were!

Our first stop was the John Todd House in Tabor, IA. Todd and his wife lived their faith and their belief in freedom for all. It was here we heard the story of a young woman who knocked on the front door of Todd's house late one night seeking shelter. As pilgrim Karen M. shared,

My mind kept focusing on the phrase 'a knock on the door' and the fear that must have engulfed that slave. And the question about what we would have done had we been there to answer.

All of us have
been changed
in some way...



Group photo of the pilgrims, 2023; Photo from E. Bruckner

Our travels continued to a secluded cemetery near Percival, Iowa. While recognizing how important honoring our loved ones with marked graves is to most of us, I also recognize how many do not have a marked grave where family come to remember the love passed from generation to generation. How sad to not know what happened to a family member when they fled for their life.

Driving the back roads offered the opportunity to reflect on the depth of the hope for freedom of those who attempted a journey with only stars and some cryptic directions as guides. Maybe we all have experienced some of the uncertainties and fears in our lives today as we seek freedom from any kind of oppressive system.

The next day, after worship at St. John's in Shenandoah, we headed north to the small town of Lewis, IA. "Reverend Hitchcock used his home to assist in the safe passage of fugitive slaves (or Freedom Seekers) through southwestern Iowa on their way east and north to freedom during the mid-19th century," (Hitchcock House website). Once again, we heard about a courageous family living their faith and beliefs.

Not until this morning did I really begin to process my feelings. I did not realize how emotionally exhausted I was. This pilgrimage has left me humbled at what human beings had to tolerate in order to live. What they had to tolerate in order to be free. How the "conductors, etc." and their families lived in order to

live their beliefs. Following the footsteps, footsteps that thousands of people have walked, fugitive and free, was gut wrenching. Yes, we pointed out articles in the homes that we had seen before but the "spirits" of the homes seeped into my body and thoughts. What to do now? For me personally, educate myself on opportunities no matter how small.

- Donna M., pilgrim

Concluding this trip did not mean the pilgrimage actually ended. All of us have been changed in some way because of these stories and because we opened ourselves to the Spirit and allowed that transformation. We parted from each other pondering this transformation and what responses might be in front of us.

... opening many doors for me to deepen my understanding of the devastation of slavery and how it continues today. And now I want to continue the journey looking behind those doors learning and listening to whatever I might be called to do. I continue to think about the woman in Tabor knocking at the Todd door and hope I am always ready to respond to anyone who may knock at my door.

- Judy S., pilgrim

Ms. Ellen Bruckner is a member of the Diocese of Iowa.

This pilgrimage was sponsored by the Beloved Community Initiative.



From Bishop Betsey Monnot, *continued from pg. 2*

to prophesy to the breath so that they may live. And Ezekiel prophesies to the breath, and the breath comes into them, and then they are alive, standing on their feet.

And here is something else important when we are reading the Hebrew Bible and talking about breath. The word for “breath” in Hebrew is ruach. So when Ezekiel is prophesying to the breath, he is prophesying to the ruach. And when the breath comes into the bodies and brings them to life, it is the ruach that comes in to the bodies and brings them to life.

And in Hebrew, ruach doesn’t only mean “breath.” Ruach also means “spirit,” as in the Spirit of God that was at the beginning of all creation in the book of Genesis. That same word in Greek, pneuma, is the one that Jesus used in the gospel reading today when he read from Isaiah, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

So in order to be alive, in order for life to exist, there has to be ruach, spirit, breath. That was true for the dry bones in the valley that God showed Ezekiel. And it is true for us as well—we live because we have God’s breath, God’s spirit, giving us life, just like those dry bones. Without ruach, we are dry bones. Our lives are entirely dependent on the gift of ruach that God gives us so freely.

So, that’s where we started this journey of transformation—we started being called into life by God and being filled with God’s spirit as we breathe, every breath, ruach, filling us. And then we are called by God

to grow and to learn and to listen and to serve, as Paul told the Ephesians “until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

Well, I don’t know about you, but I think I’ve got a long way to go on this journey of transformation, of growing and learning and listening and serving. And if you feel the same way, then you’re in the right place, because the church, the disciples of Jesus gathered together in community, the church is the place for us to support each other as we continue in this transformation, moving closer to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

And today, we are celebrating a particular moment on the journey of transformation that we are all taking. Today, we have the privilege not only of worshiping together as a diocesan community, but of celebrating the confirmations of Harold, Juliann, Clio, Claire, Oliver, August, and Charleigh. These seven beloved children of God are choosing this evening to confirm the promises that they were too young to make for themselves when they were baptized. In Confirmation, they are renewing those baptismal promises and taking them on for themselves, choosing to continue on the path of transformation that was begun in them at their baptisms.

This is an important moment in the lives of these seven young people. And it is an important moment for this diocesan community, because the rest of us will be



promising to do all in our power to support them in their life in Christ. That's a big promise! That is what we promise at every baptism and every confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation of baptismal vows, to do all in our power to support them in their life in Christ.

And that also means that other people made that same promise when we were baptized and confirmed, or received, or reaffirmed our baptismal vows.

It means that, if we take these promises seriously, we are really all connected with each other in a beautiful web of mutual promises and support. It means that we take our own journey of Christian discipleship seriously and we also take each other's journeys seriously. And that is a lifelong commitment, to our own journey of transformation and each other's journeys, and to the journeys of these seven who are being confirmed this evening.

It's never complete, you know, this journey of transformation. It's ongoing, no matter how old we are. And no matter what, the transformative journey of Christian discipleship never ends.

And one of the many challenges of being Christian is being called to do things that you don't know if you can do. Like, say, to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

That's big stuff. Hard stuff. And it is work that won't be complete any time soon. But right now, at this moment



in history, at this time of war and oppression and fear and climate crisis and millions of people all over the globe not having access to the things they need to live, like food and water and shelter, right now, this is what Jesus calls us to, as the Body of Christ, doing Christ's work in the world. We all follow that call in our own unique way, with our own unique gifts, all as part of our own unique journey.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the lord's favor."

Today, this scripture has been fulfilled, in your hearing.

pg. 12 & 13: Confirmands with Bishop Monnot; Photos by T. Rubland Petty



The diocese is arranged into 10 mission chapters, with every congregation being part of a chapter. We meet twice yearly in a joint chapter meeting online via Zoom, usually in the spring and fall.

All chapters meet together in the first part of the meeting where information shared from designated speakers, and the second part of the meeting is when individual chapters meet in breakout rooms for more localized discussion.

Not sure what chapter you're in? Visit: iowaepiscopal.org/governance/#Chapters



Gather at the River: A Young Adult Companions Pilgrimage

by Traci Ruhland Petty & Amy Mellies



This past August, we had the privilege and pleasure of hosting young adults, coordinators, and bishops from the dioceses of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland, in southern Africa), Brechin (in Scotland) and Iowa for a ten-day pilgrimage filled with relationship building, learning, and having fun together. This was not the first time people from these dioceses have gotten together. Our three dioceses have had a companion relationship which has included praying for, learning from, and visiting each other for over thirty years; and young adults and their bishops had taken part in previous pilgrimages to Swaziland in 2014 and Brechin in 2016. Originally Iowa was going to host the third leg of the pilgrimage in 2020, which we obviously postponed due to the pandemic, and thankfully we were able to bring the pilgrimage to fruition this year.

We (Amy & Traci) served as the Iowa coordinators for the pilgrimage. We worked with coordinators from the other dioceses, all of our bishops, and consulted with various other partners throughout the planning. The biggest challenge we faced as coordinators was what to include in our time together. How do we narrow down the many potential activities and experiences? What things will people from three different countries find value in doing together? What do we want to learn and share that we can bring back to our home dioceses and communities?

A way to frame our time together was gifted to us the year before, when all three bishops were able to meet at the 2022 Lambeth Conference (an international gathering of Anglican bishops to discuss church and worldwide affairs). Coming out of the Lambeth Conference were specific mission themes or “calls” to help guide bishops’ time and work together during and after the conference, and these calls gave us the guide we were looking for to tie our time together.

The calls we used as the framework for our young adult pilgrimage to guide our learning activities and group discussions were: Anglican Identity, Evangelism, Creation Care (Environment and Sustainable Development), and Reconciliation and Beloved Community. For Anglican Identity, we worshiped together at Christ Church in Cedar Rapids, St. Paul’s Cathedral in Des Moines, Prairiewoods Retreat Center in Hiawatha, and our hotel in West Des Moines; we talked about what it means to us to be Anglican - whether it was something we’d thought about or been really aware of previously, how we were seeing our shared identity play out in our pilgrimage together; and we shared what the church being “alive” means to us.

For Evangelism, we discussed what the word “evangelism” means to us individually and in our home contexts; we



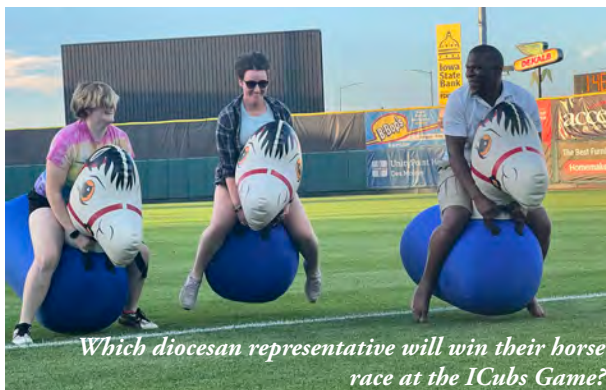
Getting ready to visit the Meskwaki Powwow



Tree Planting at Christ Church, Cedar Rapids



Fun at Smash Park



Which diocesan representative will win their horse race at the ICubs Game?

learned what it looks like (or doesn't look like) in each of our dioceses; and we even got a little bit of practice in, as our large group was often asked where we were from and how we knew each other, sometimes leading into longer conversations about why we came together for this trip.

For Creation Care, we learned about eco-friendly and sustainable practices at Prairiewoods where we stayed for part of the trip; we toured the World Food Prize Hall in Des Moines which showcases agricultural and humanitarian pioneers; we discussed creation care in our communities and imagined together what a “better world” might look like; and we planted a tree together in recognition of and continuing commitment to creation care, our companion relationships, and the global Anglican Communion Forest initiative.

For Reconciliation, we visited Old Brick in Iowa City and learned about how Agape Café partners with the university's nursing students and other local organizations to provide a sit-down weekly meal; also at Old Brick we visited the Beloved Community Initiative, learning about the history of racism in the United States and Iowa in particular, and how people are taking active roles in reconciliation efforts and dismantling the harmful ideas and prejudices that keep us from being in beloved community with each other; we toured the Jordan House in West Des Moines and learned about the Underground Railroad and how individuals and groups combated racism and oppression; we visited the Meskwaki Annual Powwow and experienced the celebration of community and our differences; and we discussed what reconciliation and justice mean to us and how we can hold both our differences and our unity. As we discussed these calls and what things look like in our own contexts, we recognized that government and laws have an effect at our local and diocesan levels; with this in mind, we also toured the Iowa State Capitol, learning about how our government works and how we can be involved.

We balanced our learning and discussion time with some “typical American” fun experiences, including going to the Iowa State Fair, an I-Cubs baseball game, an American diner, and playing mini golf, foosball, arcade and other games, all of which were great fun! It was especially enjoyable getting to experience these with some who had never done them before - it was another great reminder about pausing to be grateful and to find the joy in an activity that you may be accustomed to.

Throughout this experience, we were reminded that we're part of this bigger world-wide community. Our pilgrimage time taught us that we could celebrate our differences and learn from each other while at the same

time find and take joy in the commonalities we share as Christians and as humans. These young adult companions' pilgrimages help us grow our three-way companion relationship, fostering greater connection not only with our companions but with the Anglican Communion global community as a whole, and we hope to continue these connections moving forward. We're excited to see what the future holds both for this group and our companion relationship, and we're incredibly thankful to everyone who made this pilgrimage possible.

Ms. Traci Rubland Petty serves as the diocesan Missioner for Communications & GILEAD and Ms. Amy Mellies serves as the diocesan Missioner for Children & Youth.



Scan to watch a video about the pilgrimage and hear from the pilgrims themselves about their experience



Rebirth and Renewal: A Team's Experience of Genesis II

by the team at St. Peter's, Bettendorf

The Genesis II team members at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Bettendorf agree that Genesis II has been instrumental in deepening understanding of what it might mean to "do church" in a world that often does not embrace organized religion. Genesis II is a process that helps congregations re-vision, try on new behaviors, and connect in new ways to their neighborhoods. The cohort facilitators have provided many ideas, in a wide variety of formats, to stimulate and challenge our thinking.

St. Peter's team members describe Genesis II as an endeavor that:

- helps us deepen our faith, build and sustain relationships among us and prepares us with skills to serve our neighbors and build relationships with them.
- is a rebirth of our potential, redefining our abilities and looking at future goals.
- is a way of finding God within us and discovering how we can spread the word.
- gives us language that fosters renewal in the ways we think about ourselves, our church and our community; has two components that are equal in importance and emphasis: building relationships, and acquiring skills and tools for renewal.

The team at St. Peter's found the spiritual autobiography activity particularly useful and meaningful. Four of the five team members shared their autobiographies with the group. This proved to be a profound experience, and one that strengthened the relationships among group members.

While the facilitators have offered many activities and approaches, they have also encouraged us to tailor Genesis II to the needs of our congregation. St. Peter's is a moderate sized congregation in an urban area. All team members are also on the vestry. The most challenging aspect of our work has been engaging the congregation as a whole. We expect that our efforts over the next six months will focus on bringing the whole community of St. Peter's along on this pilgrimage, and we hope to continue deepening our faith and relationships as we journey through this process together.



GENESIS II

Re-Vision and Renew

The Genesis II team at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Bettendorf is comprised of Carolyn Krenos-Bodnar, who is the team leader; Rector Elaine Caldbeck; Ghada Hamdan-Allen; Jane Heesch; and Robert Petrie.

PRAY FOR OUR COHORT OF PRACTICING CONGREGATIONS:

St. Thomas', Algona

St. Peter's, Bettendorf

St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines

St. John's, Glenwood

St. Stephen's, Newton

St. Martin's, Perry

St. Timothy's, West Des Moines



Episcopal Youth Gather from Across the Church

by Amy Mellies

This past July I was able to attend the Episcopal Youth Event 2023 (EYE23) with seven youth from the diocese and chaperone Jeff Cornforth. We flew to Washington, D.C. on July 4th. Yes, you read that right, July 4th, Independence Day. A day when everyone wants to be in our nation's capital to celebrate our independence, right? Since we were heading to the University of Maryland, College Park, we missed most of the hustle and bustle, but could see some of the fireworks from campus later that evening.

The theme for the event was Regreso a Casa, which means "returning home." After missing out on EYE 2020, this was a restart to the world-wide event! It



Left: Iowa youth delegation and chaperones; Below: Youth dancing during EYE23; Photos by A. Mellies. Bottom pgs. 18 & 19: EYE23 group photo; Photo from B. Monnot



also is where our diocesan Youth Ministry Team was able to find our theme for the year: “You were made for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). We had a lot of fun, learned some things, met a lot of new people, and collected stickers from all over the church. It was really amazing to see so many youth in one place, singing, laughing, worshiping and learning together as one body of Christ.

I have heard that several of our youth have been inspired to do more in their churches and communities since then. If you are one of the lucky congregations who had youth attend EYE23, please stop and ask them some Sunday about their experience. Maybe they can share a presentation on it! Our diocese is blessed to have so many amazing young people who are gearing up to make changes in our communities. Why? Because they were made for such a time as this, and so are we.

Ms. Amy Mellies serves as the diocesan Children and Youth Missioner..



Exploring Faith and Building Community at Simpson Youth Academy

by Eric Rucker

The Simpson Youth Academy (SYA) is an ecumenical ministry for Iowa high school youth. SYA helps young people prepare for college, explore faith, social justice and vocation, and build community with adult mentors and peers as they develop leadership skills. SYA is directed by Episcopal priest Rev. Eric Rucker, and has received GILEAD Grants the past three years to support student scholarships. SYA brings youth to live and learn on Simpson College's campus for ten days each summer and then provides retreats and local mentoring for the cohort throughout the academic year.

Iowa Episcopal youth compose part of the SYA cohort each year. We sat down to talk with Brian, a high school youth who attends St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Des Moines, and who is currently part of SYA. Read on for his thoughts!



Additionally, please consider nominating current 10th-12th graders in your church or community for SYA next year. To explore making a nomination, contact Rev. Eric Rucker at eric.rucker@simpson.edu.

The Rev. Eric Rucker serves as an assistant priest at St. Andrew's, Des Moines and as director at Simpson Youth Academy.



Above: Simpson Youth Academy 2023; pg. 17: Brian, currently part of SYA; Photos by E. Rucker.





How has SYA been for you so far? What are some of your favorite things about this community?

SYA was a lot of fun, I'm definitely going to the retreats and events for the rest of the year when I can. My favorite things about this community would be that it is friendly, relatable (for the most part), accepting, and understanding.

What was the most important thing that happened to you during the summer residency?

I learned how to understand the Bible better.

SYA discusses a lot of stories from the Bible and concepts about faith and leadership. What were some of the biggest things you learned about faith and leadership at SYA?

I learned that leadership is told and practiced in the Bible by example: Jesus and his followers are a good example of leadership.

SYA also explores social injustice and issues. What justice issues are you passionate about and why? Are there issues SYA helped you develop passion and awareness around?

I'm passionate about accessibility for people with disabilities, as I have been around disabled people all my life. I have developed more awareness on the issue of climate change as well.

There is a lot of conversation happening about what "the future church" will look like, and how to get "young people" back into church. What advice would you give churches for how to welcome and support high school youth in their faith journeys?

The best advice I can give is to accept young people, to look past their problems and mistakes. If a church can't look past a person's mistakes or their problems then the church probably has issues. Another piece of advice would be to adapt, not compete, and look past disagreements.

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St. John's, Ames: \$5,000

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"Every Step is Home" Book Review

by Mel Schlachter

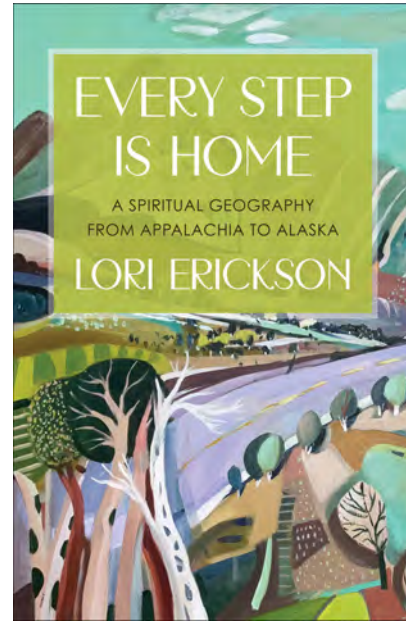
Aficionados of Lori Erickson's book series on the theme of her blog "The Spiritual Traveler" will find her new book "Every Step is Home: A Spiritual Geography from Appalachia to Alaska," expanding the ground for her spiritual encounters. She trusts, of course, that it will expand our ground too.

Erickson's earlier book "Holy Rover" took us to remarkable holy sites around the world. This new book starts out pursuing "the sacred in America" by visiting special places deemed holy, presently or historically. Then her "sacred scan" looks to the four elements of earth, air, fire and water; expands further with animals and lights in the heavens; then picks up the sacred in relationships, a theme she explored in depth earlier in "The Soul of the Family Tree." Is there anything left to be sanctified?

Erickson reports that some impetus for this book came from the COVID pandemic, plus death of family members. Her wanderlust needed to avoid virus-laden plane flights as much as possible, so she and her husband Bob Sessions (who contributes some fine photographs to the enterprise) set off around this country to new places and a few familiars.

She stays focused on the sacred as it is present at each site. Her visit to Tennessee's Dunbar Cave suggests that spiritual experiences have "a physical trigger" for her, which indicates to her the place is sacred. What makes a site holy? Is it because many people will have a unitive, healing or transformative experience there? And thinking of Moses and the burning bush, can one person find any ground, anywhere, imbued with sacred energy? Could Erickson find a comparable experience in the heart of a major city?

Our author is less interested in these questions than she is establishing the credentials for a given place or an element of nature. She does it well. The dirt of El Santuario de Chimayo in New Mexico literally grounds us in the experience. Some places may have a familiar ring for us—California redwoods, Hawaiian volcanos, northern lights—others like Chaco Canyon, the mound builders of Ohio, and the hot springs of Oregon, not so much. We receive her experience, and also rich background information for every subject. Erickson has done her homework, making the mystical elements of her quest anchored, like Chimayo, in context and history



as well as her "physical triggers." In the latter she teaches the reader one path into apprehension of the holy.

My favorite chapter in "Every Step is Home" is "Mounds: The Ancient Ohio Trail." I visited one of those mounds a long time ago, when kids could still play games on them and the anthropologists had not yet exerted good control and information boards. In recent times I have visited many mounds along river bluffs in Iowa. They can give a visitor a strong sense of presence, of an awesome purpose that may remain unknown to us even if we can share its effects as a gift from spirit ancestors. Erickson gets it.

And she wants the readers to get it, to immerse themselves in holy places, holy pilgrimages bringing one's own yearnings. Nothing aloof or cult-like here. Lori Erickson is an Episcopal deacon, and one imagines fulfilling her vocation by encouraging others in the path she has found so rich and life-giving.

The Rev. Mel Schlachter is a retired Episcopal priest and pastoral counselor residing Iowa City.

Dancing on the Water

by Betsey Monnot

Bishop's Address from the 171st Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa on October 21, 2023

Dear friends, I am absolutely delighted to address you at this, my second Diocesan Convention as your bishop. This past year has been a year of being "Drenched in the Spirit," and now we are "Dancing on the Water."

A year ago, I introduced three priorities for our work together as a diocese: strengthening congregations, supporting clergy and lay leadership, and deepening our connection to God. We have spent the last year focused



on these priorities, and, as a diocese, we are stronger because of it. Collectively, we have been learning some new habits and taking some risks, trying some new things and learning from experiments.

Within the priority of strengthening congregations, some of our congregations have been working with the churchwide opportunity Genesis II, learning new habits and ways they might move outside the walls of their buildings and learn more about what God is already up to in their neighborhoods.

Also, at almost every visitation I make, I present a workshop from the College for Congregational Development called "The Purpose and Work of Any Congregation." Each time, we have the opportunity to look at the congregation through a new lens, and consider how they are going about the essential work of gathering the people who God is calling to join them,

offering opportunities for the Holy Spirit to transform the lives of those who gather, and prepare them to be sent out to be Christ's body in the world. Those are the three movements: Gather-Transform-Send.

The College for Congregational Development and its work was also the focus of our 2023 Clergy Conference. Together, the clergy learned, and thought about how to apply their learning to their own congregational contexts. I want to take this opportunity to tell you that the clergy of this diocese are an absolutely remarkable group of people, and it is a joy and a privilege for me to work with them. Please join me in showing your appreciation for the amazing clergy of the Diocese of Iowa.



Within the priority of supporting clergy and lay leadership, we began this year with an opportunity for many clergy to be trained as coaches. Some of those who attended have been continuing the coaching relationships they developed at that time, and it is my hope to offer more training in the year to come.

Some of the best support for leaders comes when they gather together and share their experiences. I know that there are many groups in this diocese that gather regularly to share support, including the Small Church Zoom call on Monday mornings, the Clergy Text Study Zoom call on Thursdays, and the Companions in Ministry

group for clergy who are newly ordained or new to their positions. If you don't have a group of leader colleagues to gather with, please create one—you will find that it enriches your ministry and expands your capacity to do the work that God is calling you to do. If you need the support of the diocesan office in creating your group, please reach out.

A year ago, I created the positions of canon to the ordinary and archdeacon, and the Rev. Canon Meg Wagner and the Venerable Judith Crosssett have been continuing their



work supporting clergy and lay leadership throughout the diocese in many ways. Please join me in thanking them for their hard work and support throughout the year.

Within the priority of deepening our connection to God, we have had the wonderful opportunity this past year to work closely with Brother James Dowd, prior of Incarnation Monastery and The Benedictine Way in Omaha, NE. You may remember Br. James from last year's convention, when he gave the keynote address. In the past year, Br. James has offered four contemplative prayer workshops throughout the diocese, and just last month he led our 2023 Clergy Retreat. I look forward to continuing to work with Br. James in the future as we continue with this priority of deepening our connection to God.

Of course, at its best, everything that we do as congregations and as a diocese has some role in deepening our connection to God. That is, after all, what church is all about. So it is appropriate to remember that everything we do as a diocese takes place set within the cycle of the liturgical year, as we move from Advent's preparation to the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany, through the penitential and reflective season of Lent to the great celebration of Easter and its fifty days, with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and then the long green season leading back to Advent.

Worshiping together, moving through these seasons and celebrations as a community, helps all of us deepen our connection to God.

In addition to work on our priorities, there are a few more things from this past year that I want to mention. As we have moved through the liturgical seasons and celebrations, I have continued on my first round of formal visitations. As of today, the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa has 54 active congregations. I have been physically present with all but six, whether for a visitation or for some other occasion. Of those last six, I will visit three still in this calendar year, and the remaining three soon in the new year. So if you haven't seen me at your church yet, you will soon!

One of the congregations that I visited in this past year was All Saints in Indianola, which later made the decision to close. I also had the opportunity to visit The Way Station, a diocesan ministry, in Spencer, which has also made the decision to close. Both All Saints and The Way Station had wonderful times of ministry and sharing the gospel, and each of their legacies will live on in the lives of the people they impacted. We are a resurrection people, and death, even death of a beloved church or ministry, never has the last word.

Speaking of words, there are a lot of words in the Iowa State Legislature, and I spent some time this year adding to them. I joined other Episcopalians on several occasions at the Capitol to lobby legislators on proposed legislation that impacted some of our deepest held beliefs as Christians. Jesus calls us to love God and to love our neighbor, and in our baptismal covenant we promise to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being. Love of neighbor, justice, and the dignity of every human being were all at risk in the Iowa legislature this year, and I felt called as a Christian leader in Iowa to take my part in the legislative process. I personally spoke with legislators about proposed legislation affecting the LGBTQ+ community, reproductive healthcare, and the



death penalty. You have heard from me already about some of these issues, and I expect this work will continue next year.

I also want to share with you some of the deep joys of the past summer. I spent almost twenty-four hours at EPIC camp, our diocesan youth summer camp. I also attended the Episcopal Youth Event (EYE) in Maryland, along with our diocesan delegation. After EYE was "The Episcopal Church Revival," and to cap off my summer I joined the "Companion Dioceses Young Adult Pilgrimage" with young people from the dioceses of Eswatini, Brechin, and Iowa. I want to tell you very clearly: The Episcopal Church is very much alive, here in the Diocese of Iowa and in the broader national and international Episcopal Anglican community. The young people I was with this summer are today's church, and it was energizing and exhilarating to be with them.

Another joy of this past year is the work of the new Leadership Council and the group that we have been calling the Expanded Leadership Council. The Leadership Council consists of the bishop, the canon to the ordinary, the president of the Standing Committee, and the vice president of the board of directors: myself, Meg Wagner, Elizabeth Duff Popplewell, and Paula Sanchini. This group has been gathering on Zoom about once a month since the beginning of this year, considering questions of discernment, vision, and strategy for the diocese, and how we might design a process for the entire diocese to be involved in listening for God's call to us at this time.

The members of the Leadership Council decided to expand our circle. This group has been asking questions about who we are and where God is calling us as a diocese, the purpose of church and the purpose of a diocese, and how we might open up these conversations further. Some of the work of the Expanded Leadership Council is reflected in the agenda of today's Convention, and I hope you will enjoy the opportunity to join these conversations. This work is ongoing, and you will hear more about it in the year to come.

Of course, everything that we do as Christians is grounded in the call to ministry that each one of us has as a baptized member of Christ's body. This call is rooted in our baptismal covenant—baptismal ministry is everything that you are called to do because you are a Christian, whether that is



EPIC Youth Summer Camp



Episcopal Youth Event (EYE23)



Young Adult Companions Pilgrimage

serving in your local congregation or on a diocesan body, or the way you do your work in the world, or your prayer life: all of it is your baptismal ministry. Part of the job of the church is to support each person in their baptismal ministry.

The joy of baptismal ministry, joy in following God's call, joy in living together as Christ's body, in God's love made manifest in the person of Jesus, that joy is part of this year's theme, "Dancing on the Water." Throughout this year, we will be listening for Jesus' call to us to step out of the boat onto the water, trusting in him to keep us safe as we follow his call.

Now, stepping out of a perfectly good boat feels like a big risk. We have never walked on the water before, let alone danced on it. Why take this risk?

Well, it turns out that maybe the boat isn't quite as watertight as it used to be. Our world is changing rapidly. Five years ago, we could not have predicted what today's world looks like. We cannot predict the world five years from now: we only know that it will be different from today. The church needs to learn to be flexible and agile, to respond to the changes in our world as they come, to structure ourselves for the church that is emerging, not the church of the past. All of this will be part of the diocesan-wide discernment process as we look for God's vision for us and listen for God's call to us.

It also turns out that our existing structures are telling us that it is time for change. As you may have heard earlier this year if you have been part of the Joint Chapter Meetings, or if you attended one of the pre-Convention budget hearings, the budget that will be presented to you today is unprecedented. It reflects where we find ourselves as a diocese, that is, in a time of transition and discernment. We are learning what it means to take the risk of stepping out of the boat to follow the call of Jesus. You will hear more about the budget later in this convention, and I urge you to vote to pass it when the time comes.

As we reflect on change and on the passage of time, it is natural to feel a sense of grief. We may grieve our own personal losses. We may grieve lost abilities as we age and our bodies change with time. We may grieve for the state of the world and of all creation, as we seem to be moving farther and farther from God's vision.

We may grieve for the changes in our communities and churches, as our congregations shrink and our average age rises, as we remember fuller pews and more young people in church, and as we find ourselves needing to let

go of some of the ministries that served our communities and God's people. As things change, grief is natural.

And so I invite you in a moment to turn to someone near you, maybe someone you haven't spent much time with yet today, and share some of your grief with that person. Part of what we do as Christians is to bear one another's burdens. Share the grief that is in your heart, whatever that is. Each person will have one and a half minutes to share, and we have a timer on the screens. Go ahead and share your grief.

(the people spent time sharing)

Thank you. As we share our grief, as we bear one another's burdens, our own burdens ease and we may feel lighter. In the middle of even the darkest grief, we may also find moments of joy. After all, we are resurrection people, and we know that resurrection always follows death.

Earlier in this address I shared some of my recent joys with you. It is a joy to work alongside of the remarkable clergy of this diocese. It was a joy this past summer to spend time with young people from this diocese, from across The Episcopal Church, and from our companion dioceses in the Anglican Communion. It is a joy to worship together with you in your own congregations, as I make my visitations throughout the diocese. I know that you hold many joys in your hearts, and as you have just shared grief with someone near you, I invite you to turn to that same person and share joy. Again, each person will have one and a half minutes to share.

(the people spent time sharing)

Thank you, and if you will indulge me just a little longer, I want to share one more joy with you. This is your diocesan staff, on Star Wars Day this year. It is an absolute joy for me to work with these outstanding human beings: Anne Wagner, Traci Ruhland Petty, Julianne Allaway, Tina Austin, Amy Mellies, Meg Wagner, John Doherty, and Elizabeth Adams. They are an incredible team, and



*Diocesan staff on
Star Wars Day*

they work very, very hard on behalf of this diocese. Please join me in thanking them for all they do.

We are moving forward into the future with joy, dancing on the water, even as we acknowledge our grief and recognize the risks we are taking in stepping out of the boat to follow Jesus. The thing about the risk, though, is that the real risk is in refusing to follow Jesus' call to step out of the boat. The real risk is in staying a boat that is not suited to the conditions that we are facing in this changing world. The boat we are in might be sinking slowly, but it is sinking, and even though it feels scary, stepping out of the boat and following Jesus' call to walk on the water is the safest thing we can do now.

In the coming year, we will continue with our three diocesan priorities: strengthening congregations, supporting clergy and lay leadership, and deepening our connection to God. As we do, we will also be discerning, as a diocese, God's call to us. This discernment will lead to a renewed vision for the diocese, and will inform our future strategy and structure. Through all of this we will be developing new habits as a diocese, that will support us as we move into the future.

You see, the changes we are facing in the church are not the same as problems that can be solved so we can go back to the way we were before. The church is never going to return to some golden age, no matter what techniques or solutions we use. It's not like we broke our wrist and need a splint until the bone heals and we can get back to normal.

Instead, what the church is facing is a new chronic condition. As with a chronic health condition, the church's condition can be managed for the greatest health and vitality by learning new habits, new behaviors, and by adjusting our expectations. We will never return to the past, but our future can be bright and exciting.

In the future, we as a church will need the habit of prioritizing our spiritual life, our connection to God, both as individuals and as congregations. There is no reason for a church to exist if it is not rooted firmly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and in the praise and worship of the Trinity.

In the future, we as a church will need the habit of meeting our neighbors, so that we are more able to love them, as Jesus commanded us to do.

In the future, we as a church will need the habit of developing smaller new Christian communities, supported by clergy but led primarily by lay leaders. We will need many of these small—even tiny—communities, that may gather on days other than Sunday and in places other than churches, to worship together and to do the work that God calls them to do. We as a church will need the habit of supporting these new communities, and they in turn will need habits of their own in prioritizing their spiritual life, reaching out to their neighbors, and supporting other new Christian communities.

In the future, we as a church will need the habit of taking measured risks and doing experiments that might make us feel uncomfortable. We will need the habit of learning from those experiments and continuing to try new things as we reach for the Kingdom of God.

In the future, we as a church will need the habit of listening, deep, deep listening, to each other, to the community around us, and to God, as we continue to discern what God is calling us to do.

Finally, in the future, we as a church will need the habit of courage, courage to step out of the boat and into the future that God calls us to, confident that if Jesus is really calling, we can not only walk on the water but we can dance.

We are the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa: one church, one body, united in Christ's love, dancing on the water.

Diocesan PRAYER

Holy God of abundance and life, we thank you for the gift of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Iowa in which we live out your call. Stretch our minds and the capacity of our hearts as we learn and grow into the community of disciples that you dream of. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us as we seek your plan for the future of this diocese. Enliven our faith as we learn to take risks in following Jesus. Strengthen us as one church, one diocese, united in Christ's love, and bring us in joy to the day when we step out of the boat and dance on the water, in the name of Jesus who calls us.

Amen.

Please stand in body or in spirit and join me in prayer. Joining our voices together we pray:

MORE PHOTOS FROM DIOCESAN CONVENTION



(A) Gathering to learn about youth ministry; (B) Procession from the Marriott to St. Paul's Cathedral downtown Des Moines; (C) Group discussion during breakouts around proposed topics; (D) New clergy with Bishop Monnot - C. Schroeder, C. Potter, B. Monnot, J. Harrison, B. Gross, P. Gennett; Photos by T. Rubland Petty

CONVENTION KEYNOTE

**“All the Trees of the Field Shall Clap
Their Hands: Cultivating a Diverse
Church Ecology for
God’s Emerging Future”**

*The Rt. Rev. Craig Loya
Bishop of the Episcopal
Church in Minnesota*



AROUND THE DIOCESE WITH BISHOP MONNOT



CHURCH OF THE SAVIOR, ORANGE CITY



ST. ALBAN'S, SPIRIT LAKE



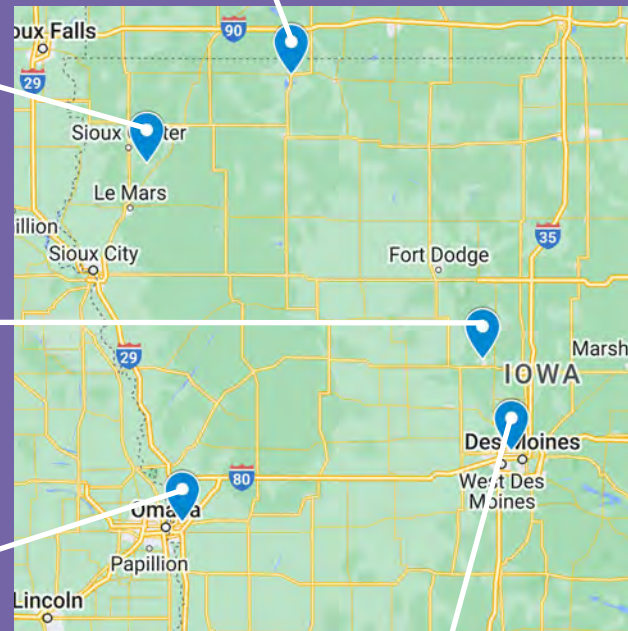
GRACE CHURCH, BOONE



ST. PAUL'S, COUNCIL BLUFFS



TRINITY CUSH, DES MOINES



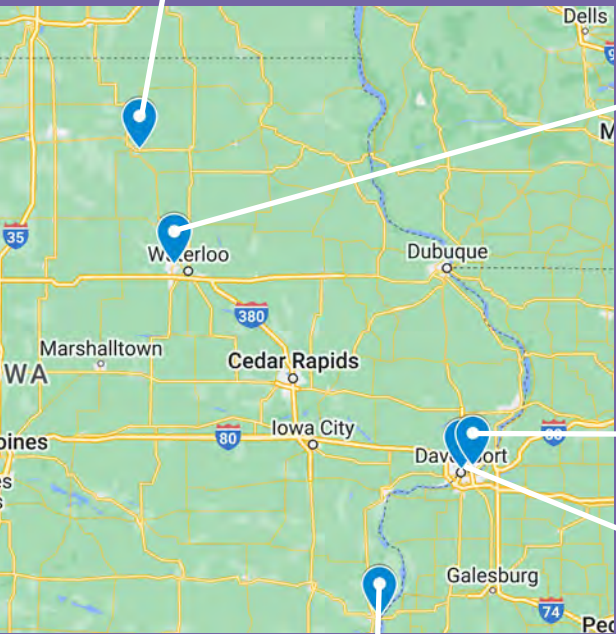
Visitations since the summer 2023 issue of this magazine was published



GRACE CHURCH, CHARLES CITY



ST. LUKE'S, CEDAR FALLS



ST. PETER'S, BETTENDORF



CHRIST CHURCH, BURLINGTON



TRINITY CATHEDRAL, DAVENPORT

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

BISHOP VISITATIONS

- December 3 St. Thomas' Church, Algona
- December 10 St. Andrew's Church, Des Moines
- December 17 St. Luke's Church, Des Moines

- 2024
- January 7 St. John's Church, Glenwood
- February 4 St. James' Church, Independence
- February 11 St. Mark's Church, Fort Dodge
- March 10 St. Alban's Church, Davenport
- March 24 St. Paul's Church, Harlan (Palm Sunday)
- March 30 St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines (Easter Vigil)
- March 31 Trinity Cathedral, Davenport (Easter Sunday)
- April 7 St. Stephen's Church, Newton
- April 14 St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines
- April 21 St. Thomas' Church, Sioux City
- April 28 St. Timothy's Church, West Des Moines
- May 19 St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines (Pentecost)

GET CONNECTED

Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

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 (515) 277-6165
diocese@iowaepiscopal.org

eNewsletter:
 Comes out monthly



This magazine:
 Comes out summer
 & winter



*L to R: Visitations with Trinity
 Cush, Des Moines; Christ Church,
 Burlington; St. Peter's Bettendorf;
 Photos from B. Monnot*

HIGHLIGHTS



STAY CONNECTED



For the most up-to-date information, including the bishop's visitation schedule, upcoming events, resources, and more, visit our website.

UPCOMING

Loneliness Workshop Series December 9

Diocesan Office Closed December 25-January 1

2024

Youth Ski Trip February 2-4

Youth High School Event February 17-19

Iowa Episcopal Clergy Conference March 11-13

Spring Joint Chapter Meeting April 6

New Beginnings Youth Event April 12-14

GILEAD Grant Applications Open May 15-July 15

Summer Ministry School & Retreat June 14-16

EPIC Youth Summer Camp June 17-21

General Convention of The Episcopal Church June 23-28

Church Audits Due September 1

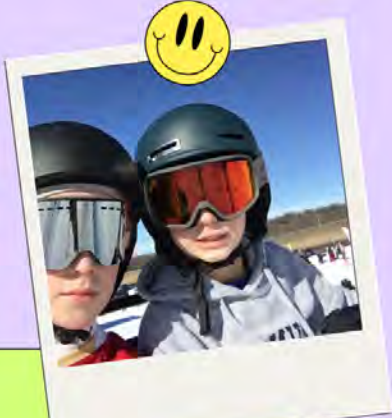
Iowa Episcopal Clergy Retreat September 12-14

Diocesan Annual Convention October 26-27

YOUTH 2024 EVENTS

SAVE THE DATES

FEB 02-04	SKI TRIP 4TH-12TH GRADE SEVEN OAKS, BOONE & ST. JOHN'S, AMES
FEB 17-19	TBD HIGH SCHOOL EVENT 9TH-12TH GRADE
APRIL 12-14	NEW BEGINNINGS 6TH-9TH GRADE ST. TIMOTHY'S, WEST DES MOINES
JUNE 14-16	SUMMER MINISTRY SCHOOL & RETREAT GRINNELL
JUNE 17-21	EPIC SUMMER CAMP 4TH-12TH GRADE CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE CENTER, NEWTON
JUNE 23-28	GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 9TH-12TH GRADE LOUISVILLE, KY



**"YOU WERE MADE FOR SUCH A TIME
AS THIS." ESTHER 4:14**



FOLLOW US TO
KEEP UP TO DATE





Above: EPIC 2023 Summer Camp Worship. Photo by A. Mellies

REGISTER BY
JANUARY 26

YOUTH SKI TRIP

FEBRUARY 2-4, 2024
SEVEN OAKS, BOONE & ST. JOHNS, AMES
GRADES 4TH-12TH

[HTTPS://WWW.IOWAEPISCOPAL.ORG/CHILDREN-YOUTH](https://www.iowaepiscopal.org/children-youth)

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

and Happy Holidays



from diocesan staff