



OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT



The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we gather to worship and grow into the Jesus Movement. This edition of The Episcopal Church at Work will share stories of the people and programs that have helped our parishes, dioceses and fellow Christians walk in the Way of Love in these unsettling days.

The Sustaining Power of Small Group Ministry

The COVID-19 pandemic has recalibrated how we worship together and has highlighted the importance of Small Group ministry.

What is Small Group ministry? It is a gathering of people who meet to share prayer stories, reflect on scripture, and pray together, supported by resources created by the Office of Evangelism. These resources outline all that a parish or parishioner needs to launch a small group in their faith community. Leveraging the truth that we learn best when we are in a relationship with

others, this ministry includes detailed guides and support resources for the formation of small groups.

We invite you to explore these resources, and create a Small Group in your parish that will support and enhance your faith community. Visit our website: iam.ec/smallgroups.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20



Photos: Br. Steve Starr
Grace and St. Stephen's, Colorado Springs, CO

Good News Gardens

In the early weeks of the pandemic, good news seemed elusive. But as with many of God's blessings, Jerusalem Greer, Staff Officer for Evangelism, realized good news was growing right in front of her—in her garden.

Taking a page from the history books and the Victory Gardens of World War II, in June 2020 the Office of Evangelism launched Good News Gardens. The Evangelism Team envisioned Good News Gardens as a means for individuals and parishes to connect with the hope and promise of setting a seed in the soil. If individuals and parishes would use their gardens to help address food scarcity in their communities, Good News would be abundant.

Tapping into existing resources, the Office of Evangelism launched a social media campaign and created a series of webinars on gardening. The Good News Gardens Facebook group, Agrarian Ministries

Episcopal Church, quickly grew to more than 1,000 members. In the group, members share stories of their gardens and their harvests, and how they are using God's blessing to heal and support their communities.

Partnering with the Office of Creation Care, the Office of Evangelism has widened the scope of the effort, connecting backyard gardens to caring for the Earth, learning to be better stewards of the land, and sharing the bounty with local food pantries. With webinars and podcasts on the horizon, Greer sees this outreach as an opportunity to evangelize locally and share the Good News of our faith through the fruits of our labor.

As with our gardens, the Good News Gardeners are settled in for the winter, looking forward to the new life that will come with the Spring. Join us on Facebook at Agrarian Ministries - Episcopal Church!

Photo Credit: Honoré Farm and Mill

**Community Gardens
support Communities**



Can You Hear Me? Getting Churches Online

Anecdotally, attendance at church services is growing, with increasing numbers of parishioners and seekers logging on to Zoom from their couches and kitchen tables to services across the country and around the world. One rector at a New York City church shared that more than 1,000 people remotely attended a Sunday service this past August. On a normal Sunday in August, less than a tenth of that attendance would be expected. Smaller churches are seeing similar attendance bumps.

The move online was swift and startling as parishes and vestries adapted to the new normal by purchasing new equipment, teaching parishioners how to connect, reconfiguring coffee hours, and coordinating remote choirs and readers. This has helped ensure that the worship of our faith communities remains robust.

The Office of Communications of The Episcopal Church is led by Episcopal Church Digital Evangelist Jeremy Tackett and supported by Manager for Special Projects Christopher Sikkema.

They were at the ready to provide guidance from a distance and, on occasion, in person. Working through several time zones, the communications team answered emails and texts from dioceses and parishes across the country, helping them to troubleshoot—even on Sunday mornings—a time when tech help is often difficult to access. While most churches have gotten into the swing of things, Jeremy and Chris are still fielding calls and developing communication packages and webinars to further develop the capacity of churches to leverage the technology to enhance the relationship of the church to its parishioners.

Though one day we will stride into pews and worship together again, the lessons learned through the pandemic have helped us all think creatively about worship and ministry. How our churches will use technology going forward will continue to rely on the expertise and commitment of the hard-working Episcopal Church communications team.

*Photo: Br. Steve Starr
Grace and St. Stephen's, Colorado Springs, CO*



Dismantling Racism Support Aids Dioceses in Putting Faith into Action

At a June 2020 virtual meeting, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church awarded \$150,000 in special assistance each to the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky and the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. The Council approved the one-time Dismantling Racism allocations in response to the challenges these two Dioceses confront in discerning how to engage their communities in faithfully responding to the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and others.

The Church at Work reached out to Bishop Craig Loya, who was consecrated and installed just a few weeks after the killing of Mr. Floyd, to learn how the Episcopal Church in Minnesota is engaging with this work.

“This support is a blessing to us,” Bishop Loya says. “Moving prayerfully, our first step was to convene a Diocesan Advisory Group and plunge them into a summer of in-depth discernment work.”

The Advisory Group identified three areas in which they felt the Diocese could have the greatest impact in advancing racial justice: partnering with local community groups, encouraging youth and young adult volunteerism and formation, and creating anti-racism resources for parishes and church plants available in multiple languages. (The Twin Cities area is home to large Hmong, Karen, and Equatorial African immigrant communities.)

The Diocese is now partnering with *Twin Cities Stand Together*, a newly formed coalition of service groups that have a powerful mission, but no space. Loya was able to offer *Twin Cities Stand Together* room to work and gather in the historic Gethsemane Episcopal Church in downtown Minneapolis, which became vacant when the congregation re-formed as a house church. Gethsemane will also house a new faith community whose spiritual practices will be centered around anti-racism.

Loya and the advisory group saw an opportunity to empower young people in anti-racism work by providing operating and program funds for the Episcopal Church in Minnesota Service Corps’ Circle of the Beloved, an intentional Christian community on the northside of Minneapolis who engage participants in faith formation and social justice work. Remaining funds will be used to create an anti-racism curriculum specific to Minnesota with help from the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing.

Loya reminds us that “our work as Christians is no different today than it has ever been. We are called to walk the Way of Love and root ourselves in the way of Jesus every day.” With the support of The Episcopal Church, an innovative bishop, and an energized faith community, the Episcopal Church in Minnesota is embarked on an exciting new leg of this journey.



Parishes and Pews Taking it to the Streets

Ministry is about connection and communion. The COVID-19 pandemic has pressed clergy to re-envision pastoral care. Our faith leaders have responded with creativity and spirit to the needs of their communities, from drive-by Blessings of the Animals to driveway pastoral counseling. The many ways in which Episcopal clergy have met the challenges of these times is inspiring! Please consider making your gift to the BLESS Annual Appeal in honor of a clergy or layperson who has supported you during these tumultuous days.



*Photos: Br. Steve Starr
Grace and St. Stephen's,
Colorado Springs, CO*

In the News

Who Are We?

A Survey of Clergy

Becoming a Beloved Community takes many forms. One form is to know who our clergy are so that they can shape whom and what they want to become. In partnership with the Church Pension Group, The Episcopal Church is undertaking a demographic study of our clergy, current and past. In addition to informing policy and pay structures, our primary goal is to reflect the communities and parishes we serve. This survey will tell us who our clergy are, past and present, and who they may become through their work with the Church. As the recorder of ordinations, The Church Pension Group is well situated for this important and sensitive work. We urge all members of the clergy to join us in Becoming a Beloved Community.



Prayer/Meditation

O God of peace, by whose grace the abbess Hilda was endowed with gifts of justice, prudence, and strength to rule as a wise mother over the nuns and monks of her household, and to become a trusted and reconciling friend to leaders of the Church: Give us the grace to recognize and accept the varied gifts you bestow on men and women, that our common life may be enriched and your gracious will be done; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Saint Observances

18 November

Hilda, Abbess of Whitby

25 November

James Otis Sargent Huntington
Priest and Monk, 1935

28 November

James Otis Sargent Huntington
Priest and Monk, 1935

02 December

Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon, 1637

31 December

Frances Joseph Gaudet
Educator and Prison Reformer, 1934

WAYS TO GIVE

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by making your gift today.

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iam.ec/2020

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