

Spring 2017



The North Carolina DISCIPLE

FINEST KIND

A PROFILE OF THE
REV. SAMUEL RODMAN

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

PILGRIMAGE TO GHANA
WITH THE PRESIDING BISHOP

200 YEARS OF MINISTRY



 **The North Carolina**
DISCIPLE

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A statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe at El Buen Pastor, Durham
Photo by Javier Romero/El Buen Pastor, Durham

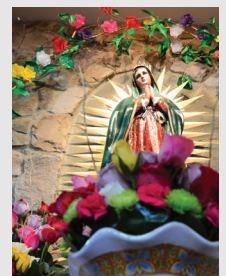
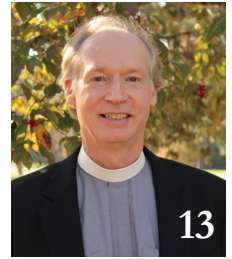


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The North Carolina DISCIPLE

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

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



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July / Summer Issue

The Next Steps Begin

By the Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple

These are exciting days, as we have a new bishop-elect, the Rev. Samuel Rodman. Now the next phase of transition begins: bringing Sam and Debbie Rodman “home” to North Carolina. A new set of preparations begins: consecration planning, finding a dwelling in Raleigh, and a pile of paperwork concerning consents from bishops and standing committees across our multinational province of The Episcopal Church. More committee work begins. The coordination of more logistics begins. Thankfully, our bishop-elect plans to visit the Diocese several times over the next two months in anticipation of beginning his ministry among us in early June.

At our Special Electing Convention on Saturday, March 4, we saw and felt the Holy Spirit’s powerful presence. We felt it most palpably and dearly in the four nominees themselves — each man offering himself in humble service to the glory of God and for the sake of the church and the world. What wondrous love is theirs to go through such an arduous process so faithfully and gracefully.

We saw and felt the holiness of God in the spirit of hospitality provided by the many staff members and volunteers who saw to every detail, from parking hundreds of cars to carefully orchestrating Communion for everyone in attendance, from food for the body to music for the soul. Even and especially in the very few glitches along the way, we saw a powerful spirit of patience and forbearance among our many members. When and if something was not going according to plan, we stayed calm, adjusted and carried on.

Though this is possible only by the grace of God, it must be acknowledged that various earthen vessels — i.e. God’s people — worked very, very hard and thoughtfully to bring about a day of prayer, discernment, decision and great thanksgiving. I saw an organist paying close attention to the timing of bells and music and the shape of liturgy. I saw a communications team artfully relaying information across a crowded space and out into the world for folks following from afar. I saw Standing Committee

members call an audible when the bishop diocesan pro tempore lost her place in the script. I saw pastoral care and sensitivity for all concerned in a complicated day of relay-ing news to the nominees and their families.

Most of all, I saw the people of God — clergy and delegates — faithfully and prayerfully listening to the Spirit of the living God.

As Bishop-elect Rodman pointed out in his remarks to the Special Convention following his election on the third ballot, the season of Lent prevents us from using the A-word. Even so, our hearts are glad and our spirits rejoice in the knowledge that God continues to bless the people of the Diocese of North Carolina and calls us to continue to move forward — boldly, faithfully and deliberately.

This means that while we are still waiting to welcome our new bishop we are not standing around. Not in the least! Our shared work to equip the saints for ministry continues at a heart-healthy pace (page 9).

Justice and Reconciliation Committee. Project Resource is harnessing the interdisciplinary talents of our diocesan staff and lay leaders to enhance stewardship efforts throughout the diocese. This is only the start of so much work being done on so many fronts.

As I listen to the news about our state, our country and the world, it is difficult not to feel alarmed and even discouraged. The evidence of deep divisions and shrill voices of aggrieved parties are impossible to miss. As I have written before, it is not a time to turn away or tune out. In fact, we should strive to be more informed and observant than ever. Never has loving our neighbors as ourselves been a more important act of faith and maybe even an act of resistance and sacrifice. It is essential to be as good at listening for the real pain and fear underneath all this conflict as it is to offer our own opinions as to the causes and solutions.

For me, however, my spirit is constantly and daily

Never has loving our neighbors as ourselves been a more important act of faith and maybe even an act of resistance and sacrifice.

Our diocesan priorities, the twin foci of evangelism and reconciliation, go hand in hand. To share the *gospel* of Jesus (or *evangelion* in Greek) means to share the good news that we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. As St. Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” (Corinthians 2:17-20)

We are learning to be ambassadors — or evangelists — of Christ’s reconciling “loving, liberating and life-giving love,” as the Presiding Bishop puts it. The best way to learn how to do this is to practice and train. By Easter Sunday an updated version of Go Speak: Sharing Our Faith cards will be available to use in your worship communities and institutions. This enhanced version contains new prompts to share how our faith in Jesus informs our work for racial reconciliation. These questions help each of us recall and unlock the moments where race, church, society, sin and grace have intersected in our own lives.

I am thrilled to announce that subsidies to attend Racial Equity Institute training are now available from the Racial

revived again and again by the joyful, worshipful and energetic life of our churches. As I visit all over this diocese, which is my calling as a bishop, and as I take hours each week to immerse myself in a different worship community, I am overjoyed to see all the signs of life and vitality from the smallest, most rural missions with a quarter-time priest to our largest downtown churches with multiple staff members. World-changing witness is measured by hearts, minds and bodies offered in thanksgiving and praise, not parochial reports!

Are our churches facing challenges and constraints? Yes. Some more than others. Are they daunted or despairing? Emphatically, no. Are they increasingly creative and adaptive? Indeed. Will some doors close? Probably. Will new opportunities arise? Most assuredly.

The journey that is Lent, the way of the cross, the road of discipleship with Jesus has never been an easy or pain-free path. But we trust in God. We’ve seen the coming of God’s glory. We share in the dream of God for reconciliation of heaven and earth embodied in the real presence of Jesus Christ: yesterday, today and forever.

The Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple is the bishop diocesan pro tempore of the Diocese of North Carolina. Contact her at bishopanne@episdionc.org.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Remember to send photos of happenings in the life of your congregation to communications@episdionc.org.

Photo by Jane Cunningham



Every Sunday afternoon, volunteers from the Prayers in the Park Ministry team at Holy Trinity, Greensboro, prepare bag lunches to be delivered to neighbors downtown.

Photo by Lisa Wallace



William and Robert Wallace take time to learn about and discuss the bishop election process.

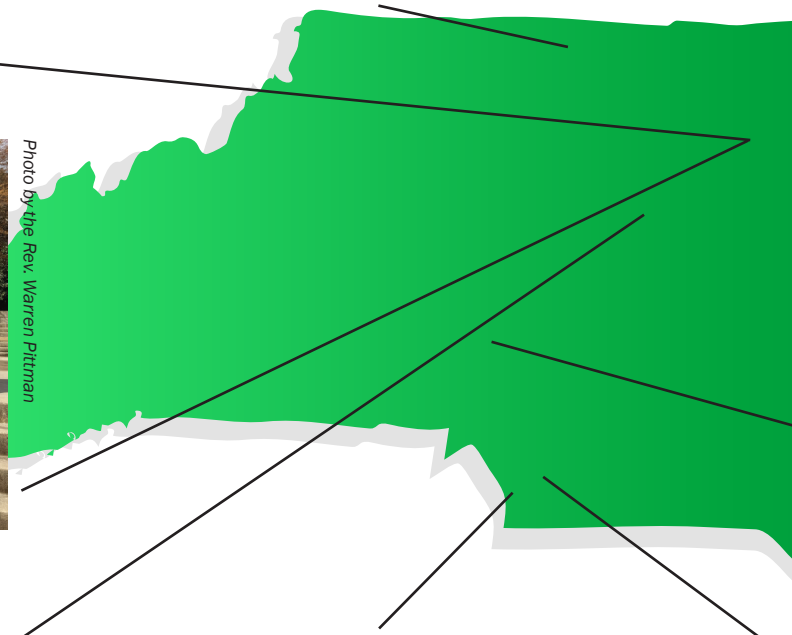


Photo by the Rev. Warren Pittman



The Rev. Alicia Alexis and the Rev. John DeBeer lead prayers during "Toward Healing Greensboro," a group of area residents who made a commitment to gather every Tuesday at noon to help heal the city's divisions.

Photos by Beth Crow



This year's Bishops' Ball at Camp Walter Johnson in Denton featured both fun and service, including the namesake ball and meal packaging with Rise Against Hunger (formerly Stop Hunger Now).

Photo by Joanie Cameron



On February 10, St. Margaret's, Waxhaw, hosted Hearts for Hope, a gala fundraiser for Outreach & Missions that raised \$19,000.

Photo by Marguerite Peebles



Photo by Mary Hawkins

Members of St. Titus', Durham, package meals for Rise Against Hunger (formerly Stop Hunger Now). Dawson Edwards plays his trumpet during a Sunday morning service at St. Titus'.



Photo by Susan Rountree

The Canterbury Shop at St. Michael's, Raleigh, on February 5 presented the Outreach & Missions Committee with a check for \$20,000 in profits from the shop in 2016. All proceeds from The Canterbury Shop purchases support Mission & Outreach efforts in the community. The Rev. Greg Jones, rector, accepts the check from Marilyn Stevens, Canterbury Shop Committee chair.



Photo by Jo Singer

The youth of St. Paul's, Monroe, show the results of their S-O-U-P-E-R Bowl of Caring drive benefitting the local community shelter.



Photo by Matt Addington

Youth at St. Mark's, Huntersville, participate in a cooking class led by parishioner Sue Bartlett to discover the "Theology of Cooking."

NEW, NOTABLE & NEWSWORTHY

MISSION ENDOWMENT GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

The Mission Endowment board met in December 2016 to review grant applications that support the ministry being done all around the Diocese. The board's recommendations were approved by Diocesan Council, and they are pleased to announce the following recipients of a Mission Endowment Grant:

St. Joseph's, Durham

This grant allows for the funding for a part-time community advocate who will build relationships with homeless neighbors and with neighboring churches, nonprofits, businesses, Duke University and some City of Durham government entities to help their homeless neighbors connect with housing and other needed services.

Winston-Salem Young Adult Ministry

This grant will help to support the birth of Episcopal Campus Ministry at Winston-Salem State University and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA). There exists a real need for a campus ministry presence at WSSU and UNCSA as they have been underserved, on our doorstep, and the Spirit's timing seems right. This is envisioned as an incarnational, Galilee ministry for and with but not limited to: the religiously unaf-

filiated, millennials, the "nones," self-identified Episcopal students, the marginalized, the LGBTQ community, the interfaith community, faculty, staff, those who love Jesus and seek his Church, and those who know or don't know Jesus and have been hurt by the Church.

St. Philip's, Durham

This grant will provide funds to revise curriculum and produce materials for the Journey to Adulthood program so they are suitable for reaching out to new ethnic communities and assisting congregations who seek to minister to and with teens from a diverse range of backgrounds and ethnicities. The support will allow St. Philip's to provide materials to enable congregations, youth leaders and teens to welcome and include new immigrants, refugees and people from diverse areas of their community that may not previously have found a welcome in The Episcopal Church.

For more information on Mission Endowment and other grants, visit "Grants and Scholarships" under the "Resources" tab at episdionc.org.

The next application deadline for Mission Endowment Grants is November 30, 2017.

'JESUS MOVEMENT' BUMPER STICKERS NOW AVAILABLE AS BANNERS

When last year's "Jesus Movement" bumper stickers became available, several area churches eagerly purchased a supply.

One of those, St. Paul's, Smithfield, went one step further. When the bumper stickers proved popular, they asked about the possibility of making them into a banner. With the help of Forward Movement (the producers of the bumper stickers) and a local print company, they have made that possibility a reality.

The "Jesus Movement" banners are now available. They come in two sizes: the standard size is 18" x 60". The larger 24" x 60" size allows for the inclusion of church service times.

The cost of the standard banner is \$30 (or \$50 for two); \$40 for the larger size (or \$60 for two). To order a banner, contact Bert Walker at North State Signs & Wraps; he can be reached at bwalker@northstatesigns.com or (919) 977-7053.



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS UPDATE

With all of the excitement of electing a new bishop diocesan, it's all the more impressive that no momentum has been lost in our other ministries, including Equipping the Saints (*Disciple*, Winter 2017). Here's what's new on a few of its fronts:

RACIAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee Offers Subsidies for Racial Equity Training

The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee (RJRC) of the Diocese is offering subsidies to parishioners and clergy who wish to attend Racial Equity Institute (REI) trainings.

REI training provides an analysis of race and racism from a systems perspective. In other words, it addresses racism not only from the standpoint of individual bias, but also by examining the historical roots of racism as it affects institutions — the church, education, health care, criminal justice, etc. — and what effect that has on the opportunities that white people and people of color have. Although it is a secular training, people of faith are well-represented in each training, and conversations during the training address religious issues.

The RJRC encourages each parish to have one or more members attend this training as a way to “seed” an understanding of racism from this perspective, and to have a common vocabulary and approach throughout the Diocese. To help defray the cost of the training, the Diocese, through the RJRC, is offering subsidies to attendees. Subsidies will be given as long as funds are available.

To learn more about or apply for an RJRC subsidy, please visit episdionc.org and look for “Equipping the Saints” in the Quick Links box.

STEWARDSHIP

New Project Resource Workshop Date Added

Following the success of its first offering, a second Project Resource workshop has been scheduled for Saturday, May



20, at Calvary, Tarboro. This free workshop introduces leaders in ministry to a basic understanding of the practice of year-round annual campaign planning and to the tools available through Project Resource, providing a framework for building a financial stewardship campaign in any church. Save the date; registration is coming soon.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

New Refugee and Immigration Resources Available

For those seeking resources relating to refugees and responding to recent political action, the Diocese has aggregated information on the diocesan website. A similar aggregation of information relating to immigration was also recently added.

EVANGELISM

New Go Speak! Cards Available for Order

The School of Ministry has updated the “Go Speak” card deck to include 10 new questions about reconciliation, in addition to several other revisions.

New decks will be available by Easter Sunday. Decks will be mailed to each church based on size. Each deck contains 30 cards.

New sample questions include: “Describe the first moment you remember being aware of your race. Describe the first moment you realized you were Christian. Which came first?” “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Rom 12:2). Share a story about the time you allowed God to change your mind about someone.”

To place a special order, contact Ayliffe Mumford at ayliffe.mumford@episdionc.org or call (919) 834-7474.

EPISCOPAL BUILD 2017 IS UNDER WAY

The 2017 Episcopal Build is under way, and you are invited to be a part of it, no matter what church you call home. Nine Episcopal churches and ministries in the Diocese of North Carolina have partnered once again with Habitat for Humanity of Wake County to fund and build a home with and for another hardworking family.

Volunteer opportunities are available at the Episcopal

Build site, with additional opportunities ongoing at another nearby faith build sponsored by Highland United Methodist Church.

For more information or to share your talents, check with one of the churches involved for volunteer opportunities or visit vhub.at/EpiscopalBuild2017.

CELEBRATE THE BICENTENNIAL!

The Episcopal Church in North Carolina is celebrating its Bicentennial April 21-23, 2017, at Christ Church, New Bern. A full weekend of events free and open to the public is scheduled to mark the milestone.

Though Saturday's Bicentennial Eucharist with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry is the only event that will require a ticket, which were distributed via lottery earlier this year, there are plenty of other things to see and do over the celebration weekend, including a history program, a guided walking tour and a special tour of Tryon Palace.

If you're not able to make the bicentennial weekend, you can still be a part of this special milestone. Be sure to see the special traveling exhibit when it stops near you, and submit your story for the "200 Stories" collection.

For more information on all things bicentennial, visit bicentennial.dionc.org. To learn more about the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina's history, turn to page 18.



Archival photo of a carload of Edgecombe County missionaries, circa 1900s.

DIOCESAN EVENTS

April

- 1 Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: Anti-racism Training, P.R. Library at St. Augustine's University
- 4 Safe Church Training, Level II, St. Martin's, Charlotte
- 9 Annual Service at Historic St. George's, Woodleaf
- 11 Renewal of Vows and Blessing of Oil and Chrism, Holy Comforter, Burlington
- 21-23 Bicentennial Weekend, New Bern
- 23 Safe Church Training, Level II, St. Luke's, Salisbury

May

- 20 Project Resource Year-round Stewardship and Generational Giving Workshop, Calvary, Tarboro

June

- 17 Ordination to the Sacred Order of Transitional Deacons, Good Shepherd, Raleigh
- 28 Pauli Murray Commemorative Service, St. Titus', Durham

Save the Date

- July 15 Consecration of the XII Bishop Diocesan, Duke Chapel, Durham

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

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Update on Organist Supply





In the last two issues of the *Disciple*, we shared an idea we hoped would lead to the creation of an organist "supply" list. Unfortunately, we did not receive enough of a response to make the supply list happen; however, one respondent shared a great resource.

The AGO (American Guild of Organists) is a national organist professional association, and there are chapters all over the country, including in North Carolina. If you are in need of a supply organist, the organization may be able to help; one of the subject tabs concerns substitutes available in your area.

For more information, please visit www.charlotteago.org.

STAY IN TOUCH

Keep up with our diocese through social media!

-  www.facebook.com/EpiscopalDioceseNC
-  www.twitter.com/EpiscopalNC
-  www.instagram.com/episditionc
-  www.vimeo.com/episcopalinnc

SAMUEL RODMAN ELECTED XII BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA

On Saturday, March 4, the Rev. Samuel Rodman was elected XII Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of North Carolina. Rodman currently serves as the Special Projects Officer for the Diocese of Massachusetts after spending five years as the diocesan project manager for campaign initiatives, in which role he helped to raise \$20 million to fund collaborative global and local mission initiatives.

Rodman was elected on the third ballot by the delegates gathered for a Special Electing Convention in Phillips Chapel at Canterbury School in Greensboro, North Carolina. He led in both the clergy and lay orders on all three ballots.

“I am deeply honored and grateful and, with God’s help, I accept this call to be your next bishop diocesan,” said Rodman. “The prospect of following and building upon the leadership and legacy of Bishop Michael Curry is both humbling and inspiring. I trust that the Holy Spirit, moving through the Diocese of North Carolina, will continue to light the way and guide our path together.”

The election is the culmination of a process that began when the Diocese of North Carolina’s former bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Curry, was elected Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church at the 78th General Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, in June 2015. Since Curry’s installation in November 2015, the Diocese has been led by the Rt. Rev. Anne Hodges-Copple. Elected bishop suffragan in the Diocese of North Carolina in 2013, she has served as bishop diocesan pro tempore during the extensive search.

Four nominees were a part of the search process. In addition to Rodman, the other three candidates were the Rev. George Adamik (rector, St. Paul’s, Cary), the Rev. Charles T. Dupree (rector, Trinity, Bloomington, Indiana), and the Rev. Canon Michael Buerkel Hunn, (canon to the presiding bishop for ministry within the church, The Episcopal Church).

In the clergy order, 130 votes were needed for an election, with 157 needed in the lay order. A nominee needed to receive the required number of votes in both orders on the same ballot in order to be elected.

Rodman was elected with 149 votes in the clergy order and 179 votes in the lay order.

Pending the canonically required consent of a majority of the Episcopal Church’s diocesan standing committees and bishops with jurisdiction, Rodman will be ordained and consecrated as the XII Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of North Carolina on July 15, 2017, at the Duke University Chapel in Durham, North Carolina.

771

ballots cast in
the lay order

605

ballots cast in
the clergy order

43
DAYS

of bishop
search video
watched



THE BISHOP SEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

✓ 3

ROUNDS
of voting

12

whistle
stops



4

EXCELLENT,
INSPIRING
CANDIDATES

Signs of Hope

A Reflection from the Bishop-elect

By the Rev.
Samuel Rodman

In the Epistle for Lent III, St. Paul writes: "...we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God ... but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

I have been focused lately, in my prayer, on hope. Not just because, as your bishop-elect, I have high hopes as Debbie and I prepare to join you in North Carolina. My focus on hope is rooted in the gospel promise that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit ...". Simply put: God's love in our hearts is the source of our hope.

Why is hope so important right now? In our divided nation the rhetoric on both sides has become increasingly frustrated, angry, desperate and despairing. As I listen, there is a level of both urgency and despondency I have not encountered before. One story that captures this is from a gathering of friends the other night, at which one woman said she is at a complete loss on how to stay in relationship with a person to whom she has been close for nearly 50 years because they are on opposite sides of our country's current political divide. The pain in this relationship was palpable.

The conversation touched the part of me that grieves when we are at odds with each other. It left me wondering if some of our difficulty here is that each side seems driven to place the blame for these challenges and woes on those who do not share our persuasion or perspective. But what if instead of focusing on what is wrong — the bad news, so to speak — we tried to pay more attention to what is right, to what is working, to signs of hope? There is an old adage in systems theory that if you want to transform an unhealthy organization or dynamic, you begin by focusing on where the health is, not by focusing on the un-health.

So what if we turned our attention to signs of hope around us and stories of progress? What if we turned our atten-

tion to the good news rather than the bad news (or even the fake news)?

Recently, a Lutheran pastor and colleague of mine, Ross Goodman, introduced me to a website called Future Crunch (futurecrunch.com.au), and specifically, to a blog post on the site called "99 Reasons 2016 was a good year." Here are some of the reasons, from this blog.

In 2016:

- World hunger reached its lowest point in 25 years.
- Incarceration rates of African Americans fell in the U.S. (The article points out we still have a long way to go, but this is a beginning.)
- Global malaria deaths have declined by 60 percent since 2000.
- New research showed acid pollution in the atmosphere is now back to the pre-industrialization levels prior to the 1930's.

These good news items give us reason to hope, but more than that, they are connected to a larger framework of good news — the good news of the gospel. This is the kind of information we, as The Episcopal Church, need to broadcast and celebrate, not to hide or ignore our divisions, but to offer a different starting point. Where are we working together well? Where have there been positive, life-giving impacts? What can we learn from these stories? In what ways do these stories reflect the gospel values we trust? In what ways, in this season of Lent, might these stories also point us in the direction of the resurrection promise?

As I look ahead to serving as your bishop diocesan in the first few months, I look forward to hearing more of the local stories, the signs of hope in North Carolina, that celebrate these same gospel values, and the resurrection promise at the heart of every person, parish, mission and chaplaincy in our diocese. Hope is the character of the church, and, as St. Paul reminds us: "...hope does not disappoint us...!"

The Rev. Samuel Rodman is the bishop-elect of the Diocese of North Carolina.



Finest Kind

A Profile of the Bishop-elect, the Rev. Samuel Rodman

By Summerlee Walter

The Rev. Canon Libby Berman has worked closely with the Rev. Samuel Rodman on the staff of the Diocese of Massachusetts for many years: while he led the \$20 million Together Now campaign to fund collaborative local and global ministries; while he launched the Mission Hub initiative, which established eight new or expanded ministries over the course of several years; and while as interim chief of staff he advised the Rt. Rev. Alan Gates and cared for his colleagues during a comprehensive diocesan staff reorganization.

But Berman first knew Rodman as a member of the Commission on Ministry while she was going through the ordination process. As one of her interviewers, Rodman asked a question that has stayed with her ever since.

What vision of Jesus' resurrection most resonates with you? Can you paint a picture for me?

“That image of him as a person of faith, and a person with delight in Jesus, has really stayed with me ever since he asked that question,” Berman said. “He asks questions and lives out of that kind of thinking about Jesus, always, even now.”

As his resume indicates, Rodman, elected the XII Bishop Diocesan of North Carolina during the Diocese's March 4 Special Electing Convention, has an impressive background in fundraising, organizational dynamics and long-range planning. Listen just to his colleagues' initial descriptions of him, however, and you wouldn't necessarily suspect the depths of strategic acumen Rodman brings to his professional life. Instead, the people who know Sam personally invariably use the same words to describe him:

faithful, trustworthy, kind, funny, steady, deeply spiritual, humble, thoughtful, pastoral.

Asked for a story that illustrates those qualities, though, his colleagues pause.

“Faithful is one of the most appropriate words that comes to me – faithful and steady – and I think that's perhaps the reason that no one thing stands out for me because it's just many years of a wonderful relationship that's always warm and faithful and built on trust,” said Lynd Matt, Massachusetts' director of development.

“Honestly I feel like one of his greatest gifts is the way he accompanies people,” said Steven Matthews, executive director of Massachusetts' South Coast Mission Hub. “And so it's just been steadfast. I've had a sense that I can call on him, that he was there and that he was praying with us....I can't think of a particular thing; I just know that I enjoyed being in his company.”

In person, Rodman is as engaging and warm as those who know him promise he will be. During our interview in preparation for this article, he asked me nearly as many questions as I asked him. As for his answers, Rodman's storytelling is positively Southern: elliptical, anecdotal, peppered with asides and explanations of how people and places intertwine. Before answering a question, he circles back to describe location, history and context, apologizing for the length of his answer as he continues onto the main narrative. Rodman provides a mini-biography of each character in his stories: his high school chaplain and mentor, the Rev. Dick Aiken, now retired and living by the Cape; the crew coach who attended Springfield College

and loved basketball; his 13-and-a-half-year-old dog, Neo, who is all black save for the white spot in the middle of his chest.

By all accounts, this focus on individuals and their stories is a Rodman trademark, born of a lifelong emphasis on relationships.

GROWING UP IN COMMUNITY

Nestled in the foothills of the Berkshires in rural western Massachusetts is the small summer community of Blandford, where Rodman's family vacationed throughout his childhood. The family's vacation home in the town, which became their year-round home when Rodman was in fifth grade, had first belonged to his father's parents, who then sold it to his mother's parents before Rodman's parents met. At the top of the hill presides the local landmark, a white Congregationalist summer church with a tall steeple that can be seen from all the neighboring towns. It was in this church Rodman was baptized at four years old.

While they were members of All Saints' Episcopal Church in South Hadley, Rodman's parents decided to wait to have all three of their children baptized in Blandford at the same time so both sets of grandparents could drive up from Florida to be present.

"I remember standing up front with my two sisters and being baptized," Rodman explained "It was a family

event but also a community event because we knew a lot of people in the community. As a four year old, I don't remember the ritual as much as I remember who we were surrounded by."

As a third grader, Rodman received his first Bible, a personalized copy imprinted with a misspelling of his middle name, Sewall.

"I loved the stories of King David, but not just the David and Goliath story, which is obviously the better-known one," said Rodman, "but also the story of David as a shepherd, slaying a lion to protect his sheep, and the deep friendship that David and Jonathan had."

After 10 years of public school, Rodman transferred before his junior year to South Kent, an Episcopal boarding school in Connecticut with required daily chapel. By the end of his first year, Rodman was voted president of the senior class — he is quick to point out the position was not at the top of the student government hierarchy, an honor reserved for prefects — because he "made some good relationships." He picked up rowing and experienced success, though he attributes that to being the right size for the sport.

While at South Kent, a school with a hockey rink and crew team but no gym, Rodman initiated a pick-up basketball team that eventually improved enough to participate in the intramural league at the much larger Kent School. During Rodman's senior year, his team won the

Photos courtesy of St. Michael's, Milton



The Rev. Samuel Rodman blesses a pet during a St. Francis celebration at St. Michael's, Milton. The congregation of St. Michael's, Milton, gathers for a group photo during a bishop's visitation in 1998.

league. The team continued after he graduated, eventually raising enough money to build a gym, hire a good coach and recruit players like the Boston Celtics' Isaiah Thomas, who played at South Kent for a year. Rodman does (jokingly) take credit for Thomas' professional success.

After graduating from high school, Rodman spent his undergraduate years at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, where he graduated with a B.A. in English in 1981. His senior thesis explored the effects of isolation on the human psyche in the works of novelist Joseph Conrad. He seemed genuinely delighted to be asked about the project.

"I was fascinated by the contrast between community and the absence of community and what that did to a person's heart, mind, soul and well-being," Rodman said of his capstone work.

It seems fitting, then, that Rodman's call to the Church grew not only out of a deep faith, but also from a desire to help communities form their identities around mission among and with their neighbors.

DEEPLY FORMED

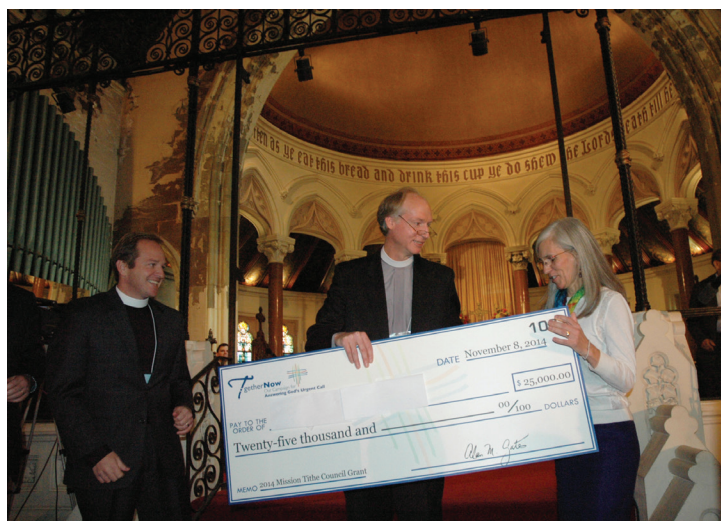
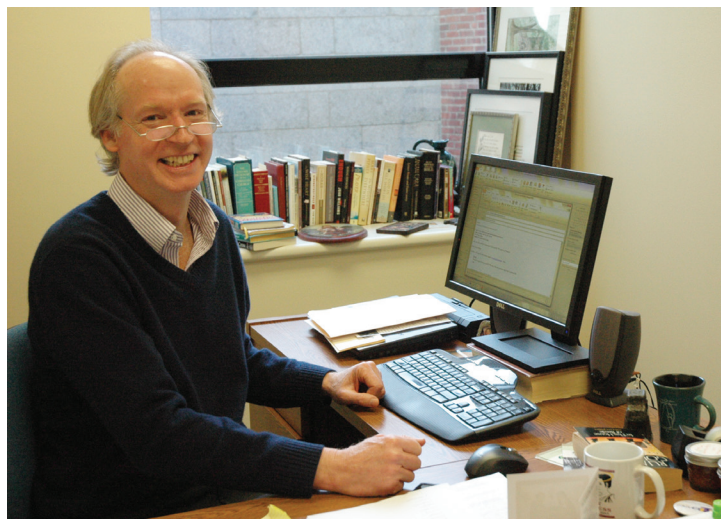
In the Q&A Rodman submitted to the Nominating Committee as part of the bishop search, he wrote, "My love for the [Church] grew out of a strong identification with the work of evangelism and mission." He attributes his evangelical heart to an early experience with a Baptist church in South Hadley. While his family attended Eucharists at All Saints', the Episcopal parish offered little outside of Sunday morning. Nine-year-old Rodman occasionally tagged along with his parents when they started attending a Wednesday evening Bible study led by a local Baptist church and held in a pizza parlor.

"I just really took to it," Rodman remembered. "I remember people sharing not only their love of the biblical story but connecting it with their own lives."

While he adopted into his spiritual perspective the evangelical bent of the Baptists he knew in his youth, Rodman is deeply formed in the Episcopal tradition. When church was cancelled one summer Sunday, nine-year-old Sam wrote a prayer and selected a reading for the Episcopal service he hosted in his family's living room. Rodman acknowledges the anecdote doesn't represent only prescient childish make-believe — he did feel a very early call to the priesthood.

Years later, his first job out of college was as a secretary in The Episcopal Church's Office of Evangelism and Congregational Development, where he worked with Wayne Schwab and Arlin Rothauge, two more people he considers mentors. One of Rodman's early claims to fame is typing the manuscript for Rothauge's extremely popular booklet about church growth and new member recruitment, "Sizing Up the Congregation for New Member Ministry."

Photos by Tracy Sukraw



The Rev. Samuel Rodman works at his desk in the diocesan offices of the Diocese of Massachusetts. Rodman presents a Mission Title Grant to El Hogar in Honduras during the 2014 Diocesan Convention as part of the Together Now campaign.

"Which was something of a feat because I never learned to type," Rodman laughed, "and if it hadn't been for the IBM Selectric with the Correcto tape, it never would have gotten done."

While working for the Episcopal Church, Rodman also met and fell in love with Deborah Nedurian at Grace Church, an Episcopal parish in New York City. The pair have now been married for 32 years.

Soon, though, Rodman decided to pursue the call to the priesthood he had felt since childhood. He remembers his time at Virginia Theological Seminary most fondly for the seminary's emphasis on preaching. At the time, VTS required students to deliver a sermon without notes in order to get a grade in their homiletics course. As a rector at St. Michael's, Milton, where he served from 1994 until 2012, Rodman continued the practice of preaching without notes when the occasion allowed it.



The Rev. Samuel Rodman with his wife, Debbie, during his tenure at St. Michael's, Milton. "He and Deb are an awesome duo," according to parishioner Heather Putnam.

"His sermons and prayers, all of it was just outstanding," said Ted Daiber, a parishioner who served as both a junior and senior warden under Rodman.

During his time leading St. Michael's, Rodman walked the congregation through a parish self-study every four or five years, according to the Rev. Hall Kirkham. Kirkham, now the church's rector, served there as a seminarian for a year during Rodman's tenure. Noting that most parishes conduct such a study only in the context of a rector search, Kirkham believes this dedication to self-evaluation demonstrates that Rodman is "not adverse to rolling up his sleeves and really working with a vestry and parish to decide where they need to go."

"He's not content to just sit still," Kirkham explained.

Rodman thinks congregations, like individuals, have vocations, vocations that shift over time. When he arrived at St. Michael's, he, with the help of the church's previous rector, discerned the congregation's vocation was to help its members understand what it means to be a community of faith. After several years of concentrating on formation for every age group and focusing attention on liturgy as a means of deepening their understanding of faith, the congregation felt well-grounded in their collective and individual spiritual lives. Then, according to Rodman, a shift happened.

"The community had become a community of

faith, and their next iteration, it became really clear, was to discover what it meant to be a community of faith engaged in mission," he said. That mission evolved to include work with Epiphany School, a tuition-free middle school for families living below the poverty line, and parish pilgrimages to Israel, Turkey, Greece and Italy.

What his parishioners remember most, though, is the confidence, respect and love Rodman inspired.

"People still talk about how it seemed like within a week or two of being rector, he knew everyone," Daiber reminisced. "He would say each person's name at the Communion rail. Everyone was kind of astounded, but he made a point of knowing everyone and knowing about everyone."

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

According to Berman, canon in the Diocese of Massachusetts, Rodman still makes a point of engaging people in genuine ways she says honors the Baptismal Covenant's call to "respect the dignity of every human being." She regularly encounters Rodman standing in the lobby of the diocesan offices, speaking with people from outside of the diocesan community, many of whom appear to be members of the unhoused population from the neighborhood. It is also not uncommon for Berman to see the same people riding up in the elevator with Rodman or leaving his office after prayer.

"It is a very stark and beautiful reminder of our call to respect the dignity of every human being regardless of who we are," Berman said.

As a clergy member of the diocesan staff, Rodman takes seriously the commitment to celebrate the weekly Eucharist held in diocesan house and to fill in at the attached cathedral when an emergency precludes one of their priests from leading a midweek service. Until recently, he dedicated one half-day a month to serving as a prayer partner with a member of an intentional community of young adults. According to Berman, though, these visible acts of prayer are only one part of Rodman's regular daily practice.

"In terms of intercessory prayer, my guess is that there is a very long list of people that he prays for regularly and earnestly and seriously," Berman said.

Rodman doesn't serve people only through his intercessions, however. He also provides tangible help and encouragement. Matthews — who was the runner-up for the mission hub job the first time it posted — remembers running into Rodman two years after his initial interview at an event hosted by Massachusetts' camp and conference center. Rodman, whom Matthews had never met face-to-face, told him the position was open again and encouraged him to apply.

"Sam really is 'finest kind,'" Matthews said, delivering

one of the highest compliments the Northeast has to offer.

“He’s one of the most thoughtful, capable, quiet leaders that I’ve ever met,” said Matt, who worked closely with Rodman during the Together Now campaign and earlier on the diocese’s volunteer Development Council. “And I don’t mean quiet like he’s in the background. He’s just always so grounded and leading from within. I think that comes from a very grounded sense of who he is, what his role is, what he’s capable of, and it also comes from a deep, deep prayer life.”

It is clear from listening to Rodman’s own theology that Matt’s assessment is true.

“To have the energy and to be able to sustain the work that we’re trying to do in the world — work that’s often challenging and difficult and often takes us into new territory outside of our comfort zones — we need that spiritual center to feed, energize and equip us, so in that sense there is a natural sort of ebb and flow — or continuity or connection — between mission and liturgy, prayer and action,” Rodman explained during our interview, echoing something he said during the whistle stop at St. Augustine’s University.

“There’s a line in the consecration service that says the bishop is charged to pray without ceasing for the people. That’s only possible if we have a more integrated understanding of how every breath we take becomes prayer and how every action we take is prayerful and how every action of our congregation is a worshipful action, and what that means in terms of the way it reshapes the mission. And vice versa, every time we worship we’re somehow engaged in connecting with the community around us in ways that we don’t maybe pay enough attention to yet.”

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

The Rev. Samuel Rodman celebrates Eucharist in Ephesus, Turkey, and by the Sea of Galilee during pilgrimages with St. Michael’s, Milton.



Photos by Heather Putnam

Your Questions, Answered

We put out the call on social media for your questions for the bishop-elect. Here are his answers.

Everyone is very concerned about your ACC affiliation.

I’d like to dodge it and say the UConn Huskies, who are not in the ACC, but I think at the start I have to go with Duke because Duke is hosting the consecration service. It seems only fair that I start there, but I’m not making a long-term commitment.

Bojangles or Cook-Out?

Cook-Out

What are three things that can always be found in your refrigerator?

Orange juice – I drink it every morning instead of coffee. There’s always eggs because I don’t eat enough of them. There’s always a jar of strawberry jam. I do still eat peanut butter and jelly occasionally.

Who would play you in a movie?

When I had hair, Julian Sands because people used to tell me I look like him. (Editor’s note: I googled Julian Sands, and he legitimately does look like Rodman.)

What are you currently bingeing on Netflix?

I don’t watch very much TV, other than sports. I really loved the PBS series about Gerald Durrell – *The Durrells in Corfu* – based on Durrell’s book, *My Family and Other Animals*. And we were big fans of *Downton Abbey*.

What are you currently reading?

I just finished *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. I’m about to start *Apostle: Travels Among the Tombs of the Twelve* by Tom Bissell. I will probably start reading a book written by a woman in my writer’s group – Louie Cronin – called *Everyone Loves You Back*, her first novel.

Do you have any pets?

I have a black lab-Brittany Spaniel mix who’s 13 and a half. He looks like a black lab with a longer coat. He’s all black except for one white spot in the middle of his chest. His name is Neo after the character in the *Matrix*. My daughters named him.

A LASTING LEGACY

200 Years of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

As we prepare to mark the bicentennial of the organization of The Episcopal Church in North Carolina, we do well to remember the daunting circumstances under which nine members from four founding congregations gathered in New Bern on April 24, 1817. Efforts at statewide organization in the 1790s had come to naught, and only one of the few surviving colonial parishes, St. James', Wilmington, had substantial communicant strength and a full-time rector. The Episcopal Church in North Carolina was still hampered by its colonial association with British rule, by the lack of clergy willing to come to the state and by the fact that other denominations, especially the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Baptists, had already formed vigorous congregations in many towns and villages. Simply put, the Episcopal Church in North Carolina had to play catch-up.

FACING CHALLENGES

Over the course of 200 years, the Church has almost always had challenges to face. Some of them reflect tensions within the denomination, such as the high church/low church split that generated considerable controversy throughout the 19th century. When the Rt. Rev. John Stark Ravenscroft became our first elected bishop in 1823, he introduced high church attitudes that struck some clergy as needlessly exclusive and confrontational. Ravenscroft's successor, the Rt. Rev. Levi Silliman Ives, promoted more Anglo-Catholic high church practices, such as private

confession, which proved so controversial that Ives left the Episcopal Church altogether and became a Roman Catholic. It was then left to the Rt. Rev. Thomas Atkinson to chart a path forward for the Diocese by upholding the high church principles of Apostolic Succession and ordination by bishops but rejecting Anglo-Catholic practices. More recently, the Church has contended with controversies over Prayer Book revision, the ordination of women and the blessing of same-gender unions. Like the issues of churchmanship in the 19th century, these topics have also proven highly contentious and strained the bonds of affection, prompting some to leave the Church altogether.

Other challenges reflect the context in which we find ourselves. For much of its history, North Carolina has been a place difficult to traverse. With large sections of the state sparsely settled, much of North Carolina has lagged behind other parts of the country in economic development and infrastructure. After organizing in 1817, the Diocese could not afford to elect its own bishop until 1823. Only in the mid-20th century has the Episcopal Church in North Carolina ceased to look to the North for missionary funds and personnel.

The Episcopal Church also has faced challenges arising from its social position. The colonial Anglican Church was identified with ruling elites, and the Episcopal Church continued to reflect economic and social privilege. In 1860, more than 50 percent of North Carolina's largest slaveholders were Episcopalians, although in the state as a

1587



Manteo and Virginia Dare are baptized at "the Lost Colony," the first Anglican baptisms in North America.

1734

St. Thomas, Bath, the oldest church building in the state, is constructed.



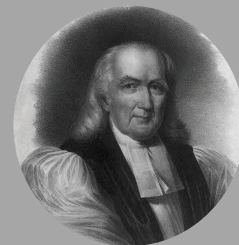
1817



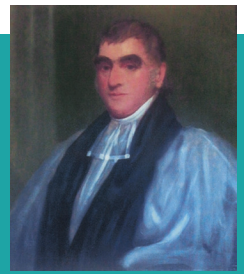
The Diocese of North Carolina is organized on April 24 as nine people from four founding churches gather at Christ Church, New Bern.

1819

Bishop Richard Channing Moore of Virginia is called to provide Episcopal oversight. He conducts the first recorded confirmations at St. John's, Fayetteville.



1823



Bishop John Stark Ravenscroft is elected as first Bishop of North Carolina, also rector of Christ Church, Raleigh.

whole there were 50 times more Baptists and five times as many Presbyterians. Even though the church was committed to slave evangelization before the Civil War and ministrations to the newly emancipated after, the paternalism of these efforts severely compromised their effectiveness. Episcopalians still struggle to know how best to address longstanding social divisions of race and class.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

But our history is more than a litany of challenges. It is also the story of how we have sought to rise to the challenge: to create and sustain vital congregations across this state, to nurture leadership through education, and to improve the lives of others in body, mind and spirit. An abiding source of strength for our church is our worship. The *Book of Common Prayer* has, as they liked to say in the 19th century, provided us with a liturgy that is “dignified, orderly and elevating.” Historically, the Episcopal Church attracted and retained members drawn to worship and devotional practices hallowed by tradition. This extended to church building as well. An important part of the Church’s legacy in North Carolina is found in the buildings erected, some of which continue to support active congregations after several centuries of use. St. Thomas’s, Bath; St. Paul’s, Edenton; Christ Church, New Bern; St. John in the Wilderness, Flat Rock; Christ Church, Raleigh; and Calvary, Tarboro, are just a few notable examples of enduring church architecture in North Carolina.

Another important facet of our legacy is a commitment to higher education and campus ministry. In the 19th century, many clergymen were also schoolteachers, and the history of many diocesan parishes is intertwined with local schools and academies. Three 19th-century institutions bear testimony to that ongoing commitment. St. Mary’s

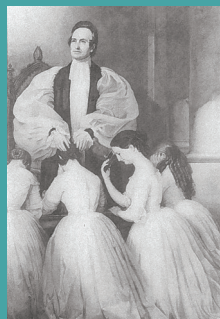
School in Raleigh has prepared generations of young women for vocations as leaders in their own communities and congregations since 1842. St. Augustine’s University, also in Raleigh, was founded in 1867 to train newly emancipated African Americans as teachers and ministers. It remains the flagship institution of African-American higher education in the Episcopal Church. Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill, began as a diocesan mission project to provide the ministrations of our church to students at the University of North Carolina. At its inception in the 1840s, it was the first denominational church building in Chapel Hill. Campus ministry remains a vital part of the mission of that parish — and indeed of the Diocese as a whole.

The Episcopal Church has also spearheaded important work in caring for the sick. Of the six general hospitals founded in North Carolina prior to 1890, four were the work of Episcopalians: St. Peter’s in Charlotte; St. John’s in Raleigh; the Dogwood mission in Asheville; and Good Samaritan in Charlotte. Good Samaritan, a hospital for African Americans, closed in 1961 as a result of desegregation. But the other three hospitals have evolved and become major medical centers: The Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, Rex Hospital in Raleigh and the Mission Health System in Asheville. The story repeated itself in the 1970s with the hospice movement, which, while instigated by Episcopalians, quickly became more broadly institutionalized.

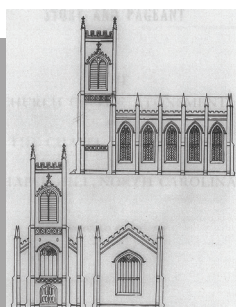
Much of the resourcefulness and creativity that enabled the Church to address issues came from women’s organizations. As early as the 1820s, when the Diocese was still in its infancy, the young priest-in-charge of St. John’s, Williamsboro, the Rev. William Mercer Green, lauded the “women of the church” for raising funds and seeing to

1842

St. Mary’s School in Raleigh is founded. (Bishop Ives confirms students at St. Mary’s.)



1842



Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill, begins as a diocesan mission to students at UNC. (Original architectural drawing)

1852

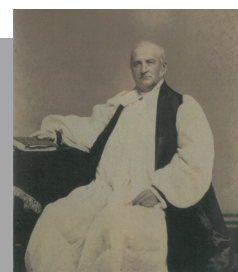
Bishop Ives goes to Rome and resigns as Bishop of North Carolina.



1855

In his Primary Charge to the clergy as a new bishop, Bishop Thomas Atkinson addresses head-on what he decries as the cultural captivity of The Episcopal Church and urges the Diocese to adopt practices that would open pews to everyone and draw clergy from all ranks of society.

1859



Bishop Atkinson helps establish St. Paul’s, Wilmington, as a bracial chapel without pew rents.

the renovation of colonial-era church buildings that had fallen into disuse. After the Civil War, Lizzie Jones and the Women's Sewing Society of St. Matthew's, Hillsborough, raised much-needed funds for mission work and the furnishing of the church by making and selling their needlework in markets extending from Pennsylvania to Alabama. By the 1880s, many parishes formed branches of the Women's Auxiliary and supported missionary enterprises at home and abroad. Indeed, the above-named hospitals trace the impetus for their creation to women leaders such as the indomitable Jane Renwick Wilkes in Charlotte.

CREATING DISCIPLES

Our church has been blessed with inspiring leaders. First and foremost must be Bishop Atkinson, who placed before this Diocese a call to fulfill the catholic ideal of the church and not rest content until the face of the Church reflected the face of society. In his Primary Charge to the clergy as a new bishop in 1855, Atkinson addressed head-on what he decried as the cultural captivity of the Episcopal Church and urged the Diocese to adopt practices that would open pews to everyone and draw clergy from all ranks of society. Atkinson practiced what he preached, taking the personal initiative to create and lead a robust biracial congregation at St. Paul's in his hometown of Wilmington. After the Civil War, he insisted that black congregations and clergy be seated in diocesan convention along with whites, a practice unique among southern dioceses. The enduring appeal of Atkinson's message can be seen in the fact that his successors — the Rt. Rev. Joseph Cheshire in 1908, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Fraser in 1971, and the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry in 2008 — all have invoked

Atkinson and his catholic vision for the church in their own convention addresses.

But inspiring leadership counts for nothing unless there are those willing to follow. The Episcopal Church in North Carolina has been blessed by numerous examples of faithful and sacrificial service from clergy and laity who embodied these ideals and worked to implement them. These men and women made the Church a credible witness to the gospel and engendered great loyalty and affection. In the 1870s and 80s, a cohort of young men took Atkinson's message and made it their own, preaching and planting churches throughout the North Carolina Piedmont. Chief among them were the Rev. Francis Murdoch, longtime rector of St. Luke's, Salisbury, and the Rev. William Shipp Bynum, a lawyer turned deacon turned priest, who helped found churches from Burlington to Winston-Salem. For several years, Bynum served as Diocesan Evangelist, crisscrossing the state and holding services in many towns and villages where no Episcopal church had been planted. Murdoch and Bynum thought nothing of preaching three or four times a day in different communities.

Also notable were two men who extended the ministrations of the church to African Americans. The Rev. Franklin Bush was a Boston-born, Harvard-educated priest who came to North Carolina to serve in Lenoir but subsequently determined to devote his life and ministry to the black community in Chatham County. His efforts helped make St. James', Pittsboro, one of the largest African-American congregations in the Diocese. The Rev. John H. M. Pollard was the first African American to serve on diocesan staff. As Archdeacon for Colored Work from

1865

After the Civil War, Bishop Atkinson insists black congregations and clergy be seated in diocesan convention along with white congregations and clergy, a practice unique among southern dioceses.

North Carolina is the only diocese from a Confederate state to send a delegation to General Convention.

1867



St. Augustine's University in Raleigh, is founded to train newly emancipated African Americans as teachers and ministers.

1876

St. Peter's Home & Hospital opens in Charlotte, the first of eight hospitals in North Carolina founded by Episcopalians.



1881



The Rev. William Shipp Bynum is named Diocesan Evangelist. In 1882, he travels 5,500 miles and preaches in 45 counties.

1882

Jane Renwick Wilkes accepts Bishop Lyman's appointment as the first Secretary of the Diocesan Woman's Auxiliary.



200 STORIES

As any bicentennial recollection makes clear, the story of The Episcopal Church in North Carolina is also *your* story. Your memories, your contributions, your experiences – we want to share them all.

The three dioceses of North Carolina are working to collect “200 Stories,” in writing and on video, to spotlight the people, places and events that illustrate the range of North Carolina Episcopal history.

We want the stories of lay and clergy leaders as well as parishioners. We want the interesting and inspirational. We want the miraculous, the truly special and the quiet everyday moment. We want the laughter and the tears, the memories and the hopes for the future. We want to incorporate as many voices and perspectives as possible and truly share with the world the rich history of our diocesan life together.

Please be a part of this and share your story. Visit bicentennial.dionc.org.

1898 to 1908, he personally oversaw congregations in Franklin, Warren, Vance, Granville and Halifax counties.

Lay people were instrumental in extending the Church into underserved areas. In the early 20th century, Sam Nash of Tarboro led Sunday schools and helped develop congregations throughout Edgecombe County. Starting in the Great Depression, Annie Cameron, a Hillsborough schoolteacher and graduate of St. Mary’s School, began making weekly trips throughout northern Orange County, picking up children (and sometimes their parents) and bringing them to Sunday school at St. Matthew’s. The vestry purchased a vehicle for her outreach that was dubbed “the gospel wagon.” This practice continued for more than 30 years.

North Carolina has also contributed local saints to the calendar of the Episcopal Church. Manteo and Virginia Dare are remembered for their baptisms in August 1587 at what is now called “the Lost Colony.” Dr. Anna Julia Haywood Cooper and the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray are notable African-American women educators and writers who met the challenges of racism and sexism with grace, passion and persistence, as they advocated tirelessly for the rights of others.

In 2000, North Carolina was home to another landmark event in the life of the Episcopal Church, when the Diocese elected the Rev. Michael Curry as the first African-American bishop to lead a southern diocese. And on November 1, 2015, Bishop Curry was installed as the 27th Presiding Bishop for the Episcopal Church, the first North Carolina bishop and the first African-American bishop to hold the position.

Without doubt, there is much for which to give thanks as we observe the 200th anniversary of the organization of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina. We recognize that challenges persist, wrongs must be righted and much work remains to be done, but it is work we will do. We will continue the legacy of creating disciples and making a difference.

The Rev. Dr. Brooks Graebner is the historiographer for the Diocese of North Carolina and rector of St. Matthew’s, Hillsborough. Contact him at history@episdioc.org.

1886



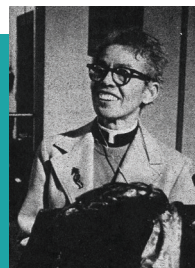
Samuel Nash and other members of Calvary, Tarboro, develop more than a dozen missions around Edgecombe County through 1930.

1918

Bishop Henry Beard Delany becomes Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, with oversight for black congregations in the Dioceses of North and South Carolina.



1977



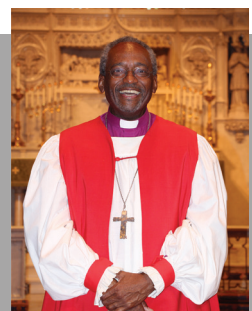
The Rev. Pauli Murray, the first black woman priest in the Episcopal Church, becomes the first woman to celebrate the Eucharist in North Carolina at the Chapel of the Cross, where her grandmother had worshiped

1978

The Diocese of North Carolina begins ministry to migrant workers in the eastern part of the state. (*Migrant workers line up to receive toiletries from the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry.*)



2015



On November 1, Bishop Michael Curry is installed as the 27th Presiding Bishop, the first from North Carolina and the first African American to hold the position.

Fear Not

A reflection on the *power of change*

Change is inevitable. It can't be stopped. Some fear it, some welcome it, but none can keep it from coming. So when it occurs, every one of us has a choice: pretend it's not happening, or face it and see what it has to offer.

IN NEED OF NOURISHMENT

For more than a century, St. Mark's, Wilson, was an anchor in religious, social and educational life for local African Americans. Chartered in 1887, the church has been through it all: economic ups and downs, black flight to the North, kids leaving to go to college, an aging population, the decline of church "cool," and the dwindling of finances, leadership and priests.

But in its heyday, back in the 1940s and 50s, St. Mark's had a full-time priest, a choir with a real organist, a certified lay reader and a robust congregation that actually included children and Sunday school.

Like any living organism, a church has to be fed. It has to be nourished if it is to be sustained. For many reasons, including that lovely frame of mind when times are good that things will never change, we did not do a very good job of nourishing our church over the years. We attracted no new people, relied on jaded ideas, and basked in the glory days — days when our Thanksgiving dinners with collards and cornbread stuffing were known throughout the community, and everyone looked forward to the annual concert by the St. Augustine's Choir.

Suddenly — or at least it seemed sudden — we looked around and found there was no one in the congregation under 50 years of age, there were no children and our deacon-in-charge had passed away.

ENTER FATHER PHIL

In 1991, the Rev. Philip Byrum, known affectionately to all as Fr. Phil, became the new rector at St. Timothy's, Wilson. St. Mark's had enjoyed a long-standing relationship with St. Timothy's; when we transitioned priests, the rector of St. Timothy's provided Eucharist once a month. We did morning prayer led by a lay reader on other Sundays.

When we lost our deacon and celebrant, Fr. Phil was a godsend. He continued the tradition of our churches' relationship, and we were able to have Eucharist. But it didn't

solve the underlying problem: We were still not growing.

We were very proud that we did not require financial assistance from the Diocese, despite the small size of our congregation. This perhaps may have given us some false sense of security and a certain amount of complacency.

At the same time, more and more Latinos moved into the Wilson area, and they didn't find the Roman Catholic church initially very welcoming. Fr. Phil, seeing the need of our new neighbors, established a Spanish-language congregation at St. Timothy's, called La Guadalupana. From that point, Fr. Phil found himself conducting four services on Sundays: 8:00a.m. and 10:30a.m. at St. Timothy's, 11:45a.m. at St. Mark's and 1:30p.m. at La Guadalupana.

After several years, having served as a priest for more than 30 years, Fr. Phil recognized it was time to retire from such a hectic schedule.

THE FORK IN THE ROAD

"[Change] is seldom sought out, but rather endured," says Fr. Phil. "It is to be found in manifold dimensions of our lives. No part seems to be spared, however much we may try to avoid it, or by whatever name we may call it. Change happens. It comes in happy times, and yes, in moments difficult and unwelcomed."

When change comes, it is that proverbial fork in the road where you must ponder which direction to take. As a congregation, we had come to realize we were probably dying, but we did not know how to reverse the tide. What we *did* know is that we were — and are — a congregation of faith. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" (Jeremiah 29:11)

In its 130-year history, St. Mark's has earned its reputation for reaching out to the community. Even in the most robust of times, its congregation was never large in terms of numbers, but that didn't stop St. Mark's from touching countless lives. One of the first schools for black children in the area was established in the then one-room church. A respected kindergarten program was established years later. Times changed, and needs changed, but no matter what shape or direction they took, St. Mark's rose to meet the challenge.

That tradition was about to be continued. As we examined our options at our fork in the road, we saw a need to fill our church with new life. We saw neighbors in need of a new church home.

So we extended an invitation: “Come share our church with us.”

A FAMILY OF FAITH

In 2000, following a Spanish-language Festival Eucharist on Easter Day, 200 worshippers, led by Wilson Mayor C. Bruce Rose, followed a processional cross and banners from St. Timothy’s to St. Mark’s. Spanish Easter hymns and guitars rang out. After almost four years at St. Timothy’s, the people of La Guadalupana were relocating to their new church home. Awaiting the processing Latinos at St. Mark’s were members of the congregation — mostly female, several whom were in their nineties. A new day was beginning.

The congregations continue to share the church. We celebrate bilingual services in English and Spanish on special occasions, and they are always well-received. Someday we may even see a day when our worshipping congregations will not be separated by language.

“I am often asked how the members of St. Mark’s and La Guadalupana get along as they work and live together,” said Fr. Phil. “Like any family, there are moments presenting challenges. But as a family of faith, we are people of God who work it out and move on together. It is a joy to know and love the congregation of La Guadalupana and share in the life that God calls us to live.”

St. Mark’s has had to overcome a lot in more than a century, including three major fires, yet like the phoenix, we rise and survive. This time, St. Mark’s is not just surviving, we’re once again beginning to thrive.

Since we welcomed La Guadalupana, the financial burden of trying to go it alone is lifted. The two congregations, working together, received a \$30,000 grant from the

Episcopal Church Women to assist in building a parish hall, called St. Mark’s House/La Casa de San Marcos. With our own parishioners and the assistance of volunteers who attend St. Timothy’s, we have a very successful after-school tutoring program. And we are most proud that a young fellow who once received tutoring in the early days is not only now a junior in high school and recently inducted into the National Honor Society, but also comes back to tutor other kids. In addition, St. Mark’s sponsors a summer program for kids and a food distribution program, and we gladly open our doors to the community for such programs as Alcoholics Anonymous.

I don’t know where St. Mark’s would be today had we not made that decision years ago to make a change. As Fr. Phil says, change can be difficult and unwelcomed, but it is not to be feared. Because it’s going to happen, and so instead of focusing on what might be lost, look ahead to what gifts it might bring.

Alice Freeman is a parishioner at St. Mark’s, Wilson. The Rev. Phil Byrum is the vicar of St. Mark’s and La Guadalupana, Wilson.

An archival photo of the congregation of St. Mark’s, Wilson, circa 1920s. The people of Guadalupana, Wilson, process on the feast day of their namesake. Photos courtesy of the Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina.



“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”
(Jeremiah 29:11)



FACING OUR PAST TO CREATE A NEW FUTURE

'The past is redeemed by daring to re-enter it.'

In early 2017, I had the privilege of traveling to Ghana with the Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, along with other bishops and current and former board members from Episcopal Relief & Development. As one of those former board members, I was eager to see the organization's work in action. More importantly, the racial injustice and tensions in our country, state and my own city of Charlotte drew me to learn more about the roots of those issues.

The trip was entitled "The Presiding Bishop's Reconciliation Pilgrimage to Ghana." A fellow pilgrim told me several of her friends had asked, "Why does going to Ghana help with reconciliation?" Presiding Bishop Curry would answer that question with advice he once heard from a Buddhist monk: "The past is redeemed by daring to re-enter it."

In Ghana, we re-entered one of the darkest periods of our past: the slave trade. Many of us knew something about the horrors of slavery in the United States – human beings held in captivity and treated like work animals, routinely beaten, separated from family and sometimes worked literally to death. But on the pilgrimage, we stepped even further back into the history, into a chapter about which many of us knew little. In Ghana we encountered the harsh realities – cruelties – faced before captives were forced onto the ships headed to the New World.

STEPPING BACK IN TIME

Our first step into that history took us to Pikworo Slave Camp in Paga, not far from the border of Ghana and Burkina Faso. I had never even heard of a slave camp. It was not so much a "camp" as a place where slave traders allowed their captives to rest for a week or two. By the time they arrived at the slave camp, many had already walked 800 kilometers (almost 500 miles) or more, from Mali, Burkina Faso and other parts of west-central Africa.

At this "resting place," the captives were tied to trees. They were fed once a day, taken with their hands shackled behind their backs to a big rock, where food was placed in indentations carved into the rock. People had to fight amongst themselves to get to the food, then drop to their knees and eat like animals out of the troughs. If they misbehaved, they were tied to rocks, lashed and forced to sit in the scorching sun, often left there to die. Those who died from punishment, mal-

nourishment or disease were buried in mass graves.

Historians know from the ages of the trees that the trees we saw were there during the slave trade. The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, presiding bishop's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation, wrote of one of the trees, "I hugged her, wept and thanked her for holding my chained ancestors as they slept and dreamt of freedom."

After visiting the slave camp, we boarded a bus, a plane and another bus to travel to Cape Coast, a fishing port and city in south Ghana. There had been no such easy transportation for the slaves. The slaves who made it to Cape Coast walked the entire 750 kilometers barefoot through forests, over rocky terrain or along dusty trails. Those who were too weak to make it were left to die along the way. They had no idea where they were going or why. When they finally arrived at the coast, they were taken to dungeons inside of British and European castles, often in the dark of night, where they heard the ocean for the first time. It must have been terrifying. *What is that roaring, crashing sound? What is happening? Will I ever see my family again?* There was virtually no light, no ventilation, no respite from the heat. They slept standing or literally piled on top of other human beings, wading in their own excrement. The stench in the dungeons is still there, more than 200 years later. The *darkness*, in every sense of the word, is palpable.

Missionaries from the Church of England established a mission and held services inside of Cape Coast Castle. It's difficult to imagine, priests preaching the Gospel, while fellow human beings were held in dungeons, treated more inhumanely than any animal. How could the priests have possibly spread the word of Jesus' love for all of God's children while standing only yards away from the dungeons? Sadly, the slaves were not thought of as fellow human beings but as chattel, commodities. The sophisticated and wealthy slave traders even had insurance for them. Losses were not thought of as losses of human life but losses of goods.

As we stood at the Door of No Return, the castle door through which slaves were taken to board ships, never to return to their homes or families, many in our group were overcome with grief and anger. Wailing, gut wrenching sobs. Quiet tears. Silent reflection. Prayers. Singing "Amazing Grace." I stood, as the descendent of slave owners, in shame. I have never felt so white or so out of place. I felt like an intruder who did not belong



Clockwise, top left: The Rt. Rev. Andrew Waldo, bishop of Upper South Carolina, at the Door of No Return. Cape Coast Castle. Trough-like eating “bowls” carved into stone at Pikworo slave camp. Entrance to male slave dungeon at Cape Coast Castle. Photos courtesy of Josephine Hicks



in this raw and emotional scene of African Americans reconnecting with their ancestors.

I came away in awe of every single person who survived what they went through just to get to the Door of No Return – surviving the months of walking in chains, the slave camps, the malnutrition, the dehydration, the heat, the lashings, the rapes, the dungeons, the emotional anguish. When I think about the hardship of the voyage to the Americas, the horrors endured in slavery and the relentless injustices heaped on their descendants throughout our country’s history, I am speechless. The strength, the resilience, the courage – it’s beyond incredible.

As I looked out at the ocean, I could only imagine

the ships coming and going. The waters that once took the slaves in small row boats out to the ships for their trans-Atlantic voyage are now teeming with local fishermen. The waters that meant chaos, terror and bondage now support new industry and new life. The Anglican cathedral that once was under the charge of a bishop and priests from the Church of England is now part of the Anglican Province of West Africa and led by a Ghanaian Archbishop. Clergy from the cathedral celebrate Eucharist with the fishermen on the beach outside of Cape Coast Castle. In the Diocese of North Carolina, we strive to reach out beyond our doors, to “Go to Galilee,” to be part of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. Just think about Ghanaian clergy who take

the redeeming love of Jesus and his body and blood to the fishermen on the same beach where shackled feet trod. There is some redemption there. Some glimpse of the kingdom breaking through.

MATCHING GIFTS AND NEEDS

Facing the realities and cruelties of the past were not the only stops on our pilgrimage itinerary. Quite the contrary; we also witnessed hope and new life by touring some of Episcopal Relief & Development's asset-based community development (ABCD) programs. These initiatives use an approach that utilizes existing gifts and capacities of people and their communities. The goal is to encourage change and development from within rather than an outside source, identifying where local assets meet local needs and creating sustainable development opportunities.

We met women who have expanded their farming capabilities with the help of donkeys, which pull the plows that till the fields and the carts that get the goods to market. Donkeys are easier for the women to handle than the bullocks (male bovines) typically used for plowing. With donkeys, women can plow the fields themselves. The donkeys are provided by Episcopal Relief & Development's partner Anglican Diocesan Development & Relief Organization (ADDRO), and the women slowly pay for the donkeys with their new earnings. One of the women we met, Esther, named her donkey "God Be With Her." Esther told us she can now afford school fees for her children with the increased income, thanks to better crop production and access to markets with the help of her donkey. We also met women whose businesses, such as basket weaving and shea butter production, have benefitted from micro-loans through ADDRO. These programs help those who have been systematically and historically under-resourced to build capacity with their own assets and skills. This is one of the ways that Episcopal Relief & Development empowers communities and pursues justice, in Ghana and beyond.

BRINGING IT HOME

Presiding Bishop Curry is eager for the entire Church to experience what we did in Ghana, at least vicariously. A Facebook page, "Presiding Bishop's Pilgrimage to Ghana," was created to share photos and reflections. The film crew that accompanied us is hard at work on videos. Episcopal News Service has already published several articles from the trip.

I encourage you to see it all, not just to learn more about the trip, but to understand how the roots of the work being done in faraway places like Ghana share the same roots of the reconciliation work we do here at home. I have been fortunate to see this work up close on

global, national, diocesan and local levels, and the work being done in local churches is every bit as important as that happening on global stages. You don't have to travel the world to make a difference.

Get involved in racial reconciliation efforts here. We have amazing resources in the Diocese of North Carolina, and a profound history to explore. Re-enter the past by visiting the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro, built on the site of the 1960 sit-in at the all-white Woolworth's counter. Visit the Stagville Historic site in Durham, one of the largest plantations in the pre-Civil War South, where restored buildings give a sense of the lives of the enslaved African Americans (900 at one point) who lived at Stagville.

Many parishes and congregations are talking about race and tackling injustice. For example, St. Philip's, Durham, has an active racial justice and reconciliation ministry designed to "(a) create spaces for members to listen and better understand racism and other forms of oppression, (b) collaborate with allies in Durham in order to understand our collective history of oppression and resistance, and (c) find creative, meaningful, and active ways to 'strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.'" St. Peter's, Charlotte, has held many community forums and discussions that tackle issues of systemic racism, bias and injustice. The parish reads and discusses books together – recent examples include *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates and *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving.

What's happening in a congregation near you? What can you start in your own congregation?

The diocesan website (episdionc.org) has a wealth of resources available to help individuals and parishes understand and start to address systemic injustice and racial inequality. The Racial Equity Institute also offers an excellent two-day training program to help lay a foundation of common understanding and vocabulary, and the diocesan Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee (RJRC) now offers subsidies to help parishioners attend (page 9).

Presiding Bishop Curry's hope for our trip to Ghana is the same hope we have for all reconciliation work. He said, "My hope is that this journey will help us reclaim and reface a common history that we have, a painful past, not for the sake of guilt, not for the sake of wallowing in the past, but for the sake of us, black, white, red, yellow and brown, finding ways to face our past and then turn in another direction and create a new future."

Josephine Hicks is a former Episcopal Relief and Development Board member and a parishioner at St. Peter's, Charlotte. Contact her at jhhicks725@gmail.com.



While visiting the Anglican Women's Development Center in Yelwoko, Ghana, Josephine bought a basket directly from the craftswoman, Patience. Photo courtesy of Josephine Hicks

IT STARTS WITH RELATIONSHIPS

What cultural competency training won't teach you

The dual diocesan foci of evangelism and reconciliation have generated a lot of enthusiasm among congregations and individuals. Some congregations are just starting to learn about anti-racism work for the first time, while others have been marching since the Sixties. Nervous stories from people new to sharing their faith out loud combine with sighs of relief from those who now feel comfortable saying the “E” word loudly and proudly without worrying about the negative stereotypes it accumulated throughout the years. No matter a church or individual’s comfort level with reconciliation and evangelism, there are basic principles that should guide our work.

Three members of diocesan staff who have experience working across cultural lines — the Rev. Audra Abt, missionary for Latino/Hispanic ministries; Toni Hagerman, missionary for Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte, the Diocese’s refugee services hub; and the Rev. Rebecca Yarbrough, a key member of the Galilee Ministries team — shared their advice for reaching out to new communities: immigrants, refugees or the neighbors we have yet to meet.

FORGET YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

“The biggest thing is letting people tell you about themselves instead of making assumptions,” Hagerman advises. She explains that sometimes a volunteer at Galilee Center will see a woman with darker skin wearing a hijab and assume she is a refugee, when in reality she is an American Muslim or the citizen of a European country who married a member of the American military and moved to North Carolina.

“They could be as American as apple pie,” Hagerman says.

Abt explains how, several years ago, medical professionals in California realized the healthcare field was not serving non-white patients as well as it could because unseen biases and unspoken assumptions were interfering with care. The solution was not cultural competency training, which can often amount to little more than a new set of human resources-approved assumptions about groups of people. Instead, physicians received lessons in cultural sensitivity, which trained them in every encounter to presume they don’t know and instead really listen to the patient.

“That listening takes a humility and a patience and a willingness to be wrong, a willingness to listen longer and to let go of what we think is the right answer,” Abt explains.

FOCUS ON FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

“We have to remember that refugees have been run out of their homes, and may not have really been ‘welcomed’ with love and full respect in the camps in which they stayed,” Yarbrough explains. “And they had to run a gauntlet to get into this country.”

Abt points out that welcoming a new family into a church is the same regardless of their race, country of origin or background: All visitors and new members need to feel they’re cared about, and who they are and what they bring with them matters.

“It’s not just about incorporating a new member into the established culture,” Abt says, “because everyone who comes through the door — anyone we encounter — brings a faith with them, brings something they know about God and about the world that we don’t.”

She suggests, to practice building relationships with people we believe are very different from us, starting closer to home by imagining each person we encounter, no matter how well-known, is someone we’re meeting for the first time in a cross-cultural encounter. How does that make you see someone who you’ve presumed to know? What does difference mean? Is it a barrier? Or is it just an invitation to be more open to somebody?

“We can spend a decade as part of a church community and not really know everything about the person sitting in the pew next to us and what they bring with them, how their faith might be articulated differently or lived out differently than ours.”

In interactions in which language barriers exist, Hagerman suggests keeping it simple.

“We all smile in the same language,” she says. “You can communicate ‘You are important, and you are welcome’ without any language at all.” As Hagerman points out, many non-English speakers understand simple, friendly phrases like “Good morning” or “How are you?” Hand gestures also help, as does participating together in activities that don’t require much spoken language, like gardening or cleaning up after a communal meal.

DON'T START WITH PROGRAMS

While English as a Second Language classes and bilingual preschool programs are vitally important resources churches can provide when there is a community need, these programs are effective and successful only after a church or organization has done the hard work of forming relationships with and really listening to members of the community they hope to serve. Leading with a program before doing the groundwork is a recipe for frustration and misunderstandings.

PARTNER WITH EXPERIENCED GROUPS

Churches interested in addressing immediate community concerns can be essential partners for organizations in need of donations, volunteers or space in which to conduct programming.

“Don’t focus on something being ‘your’ program,” Hagerman advises, “but help with the resources organizations need to do the good work they’re already doing on a shoestring budget.” The Galilee Center, for example, provides physical space to six different community partner organizations ranging from a Loaves & Fishes food pantry to Refugee Support Services to a counselor specializing in cross-cultural work. They have also dedicated several acres to a community garden.

For those interested specifically in helping to welcome refugees, Hagerman points out that, in the face of slashed government funding and widespread staff layoffs, what resettlement agencies need most right now is financial support.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Individuals coming out of the same community have common concerns, face common challenges and share common experiences. Abt emphasizes the importance of engaging with groups and advocates from the community whose members you or your church seek to engage. Finding ways to get involved with neighborhood coalitions, local advocacy groups or community centers where people speak out of and on behalf of their community demonstrates that a congregation cares about their neighbor’s concerns. The key to these interactions is for people from the dominant (white, middle-class) culture to be willing to take a back seat and listen.

Abt also encourages people interested in reaching out to members of a different community to do their own learning about the culture, history and issues affecting their neighbors. Both the internet and community leaders are good sources of information.

JUST START

Regardless of your or your church’s current level of involvement with evangelism, reconciliation or cross-cultural work, the most important thing is to start engaging with your neighbors — those you’ve known for years and those you are meeting for the first time — in genuine conversation, listening with a sense of openness and seeking to understand their perspectives. Regardless of cultural differences or disparate backgrounds, relationships are the foundation to welcoming and serving new communities.

MEET THE MISSIONER FOR LATINO/HISPANIC MINISTRIES

The Rev. Audra Abt assumed the role of missionary for Latino/Hispanic ministries earlier this year. Prior to starting her current position, she served at St. Andrew’s, Greensboro, as the assistant for mission/outreach and for ministry with children. Since 2013, she has been helping develop a bilingual house church ministry among Episcopalians who are Latin American immigrants and others from the U.S. (“The Open Door House Church,” *Disciple*, Fall 2015), and she continues this work as the Greensboro area missionary for intercultural ministries.

Abt has gathered resources for churches interested in beginning or enriching a Spanish-language worship service or other ministry with a Latino or Spanish-speaking population. Resources are available at episdionc.org on the “Latino and Hispanic Ministry” page. Contact Abt at audra.abt@episdionc.org.





Photo by Javier Romero/El Buen Pastor, Durham

(Clockwise from above) El Buen Pastor's youth soccer team is part of the church's league, which includes teams from the neighborhood not affiliated with the church. Three King's Day, an Epiphany celebration, features the Rev. John Heinemeier. El Buen Pastor distributes food to 150 people each month.

By Christine McTaggart

COMMUNITY CONNECTION



If you plan to sit and read La Iglesia El Buen Pastor's newsletter, it's wise to set aside some time. In any given month, the pages-long missive contains a couple dozen news updates, event notices, visitations, congregational activities, special events, community outreach opportunities and reasons to celebrate parishioners.

The vitality and health of this thriving congregation would be impressive under any circumstances, but what makes it truly remarkable in the case of El Buen Pastor is that they have done it all — and continue to grow — without the leadership of a permanent rector.

TESTED LEADERSHIP

For almost two years, the congregation of El Buen Pastor has been working to bring the Rev. Canon Habacuc Ramos-Huerta to Durham to lead the congregation. As a current resident of Mexico, the immigration proceedings to bring him to the United States have been tediously and increasingly slow. But the congregation believes he is the one to lead them and the one with whom they want to work, so they have pulled together to keep the growing momentum of El Buen Pastor going as bureaucratic gears grind.

"Leadership here is well-established," said the Rev. John Heinemeier, interim vicar for El Buen Pastor. "Things that have gone really well can be credited to tested leaders taking care of things."

The leadership is made up of 13 vestry members, six of whom are wardens — three junior and three senior. Vestry

terms have been kept flexible throughout the transition in order to maximize the leadership experience, but soon-to-be-implemented bylaws will regulate them moving forward. But the rotating terms will not be filled by volunteers who are subsequently left to fend for themselves. The current vestry is already working to identify and train leaders within the church in an effort to prepare them for an increased role so when the time comes, they, too, can continue to build upon what's already in progress.

REACHING OUT

There is a lot on which to build. El Buen Pastor is a church well-known in the Durham community, a reputation that's been honestly and organically earned through both intentional outreach and a consistent, genuine expression of welcome. The community has watched the changes made over the last 10 years, and they have been invited to be a part of them at every turn, regardless of whether neighbors were members of the congregation.

Church soccer fields became a community fixture and home to neighborhood kids and a local soccer league. A Noah's Ark addition to enhance the church playground welcomed children of all faiths. A hungry stranger's request for food became a pantry assisting 150 families every month.

"Whatever is needed, people put hands on it and get it done," said Ingrid Nunez, a member of the El Buen Pastor vestry. "People never say no. They decide to share their gifts. Sometimes they feel shy, but [John] is good at motivation,

and sometimes people don't know the gifts they have until you say 'please' and they come."

The list goes on and on. An observation by Nunez as she volunteered at the local courthouse led to a program that allows those sentenced to community service to do their hours at El Buen Pastor, precluding the need for a custodian or sexton. Vestry member Jesus Lopez learned to play the guitar when music was needed, and he now leads an all-volunteer choir at the Saturday night misa. He and fellow vestry member (and junior warden) Javier Romero recently pooled their skills to replace the ceiling in the sanctuary.

Heinemeier has been known to conduct funerals for nonmember neighbors in the community at no charge, and the congregation ensures whatever collection is offered at the service goes to the family. English as a Second Language classes are getting a boost this fall when the program will welcome instructors from Durham Tech, and the building is open to community Alcoholic Anonymous meetings.

The church serves as a resource hub for those confronted with immigration issues. If someone is arrested on an immigration-related charge, leaders at El Buen Pastor work to connect him with resources such as member Bailey Farrin, a lawyer who works almost every Sunday with those needing immigration assistance. Members also offer transportation and accompaniment to court dates, plus character testimony.

"One of the things that has kept the momentum going here is the congregation was and is ready to work," said Heinemeier. "They didn't need or want a 'relaxation time.' They wanted to work. They needed to keep going, to keep their ministries vital and responsive to the community."

"The key [has been] to let the people work where they want," said Mauricio Chavez, senior warden. "If they want to work in social areas, let them. If they want to work in the office, let them."

LIVING THE GOSPEL

During its transition, the leadership started with a focus on the existing and basic needs of the church. By ensuring those were fulfilled, they were then able to start planning and outlining expansion possibilities.

As they explored ways to make their dreams a reality, they, like so many other congregations whose hearts want only to minister, found familiar obstacles creating challenges, especially when it came to finances. They are a financially independent congregation, but as so often happens, dollars sometimes run short when it comes to outreach support.

"This congregation has more readiness for ministry than it has money to support it," said Heinemeier. "In many areas, they're ready to go, but lack finances or resources."

Enter The Episcopal Church. In late 2016, El Buen Pastor was named a Jubilee Ministry, meaning it is now a designated center recognized for its work to "empower the poor and oppressed in [its] community by providing direct services such as food, shelter and healthcare, and also by

advocating for human rights."

"I knew of this Jubilee opportunity," said Heinemeier. "So we applied for it. Mauricio Chavez will be its administrator, and before the spring is over, we'll be writing proposals for specific ministries including our food program, ESL programming, work with immigration and membership in Durham CAN," a nonprofit organization that works to organize Durham communities and develop local leadership.

In speaking with El Buen Pastor's leadership, it's clear that while they anxiously await the arrival of Ramos-Huerta, a prayer that was recently and joyously answered with the news he has finally been approved for travel to North Carolina, two other things are abundantly clear. One, no one at the church has any intention of allowing the momentum built over the last decade to slow in the least.

"I want to see us continue to grow," said Victor Orellana, vestry member and senior warden. "I want us to grow in spirit and in numbers."

Nunez and Lopez agree; both cite a bigger building as an item on the wish list, especially since the current site is on a flood plain that routinely floods the church. "The congregation has grown," said Lopez. "I see how it's grown, in different ways. Sometimes I look around and think our building is too small!"

"We want to have more programs that will reach and engage our youth," added Nunez.

The other thing that is clear to all who visit is what is at the heart of all things at El Buen Pastor.

"It's nice to come in to a Mass and pray, but that's not really living the Gospel," said Chavez. "We have to live the Gospel and share it with people."

"When people first come," said Orellana, "they feel welcome. They feel like they're coming home. When we welcome them in, we're welcoming them in to our home and family. They feel this is a good place, and they feel the Gospel."

At the end of the day, the congregation of El Buen Pastor has faced just about every challenge familiar to diocesan churches. But they simply refuse to allow any of those challenges to become permanent obstacles in their calling to live the Gospel.

"We have to find Jesus in our hearts because Jesus lives in us," said Nunez. "[So] keep an open mind. Believe you will find what you need. When we ask, people always come through."

"Even in hard situations, we work together," added Orellana. "That gives me a feeling of pride in this community. Sometimes hard situations make people walk away, but we're like a team, and we work as a community. That's why sometimes when I pull in to the parking lot, I feel like I've come home."

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Until we read again...

Make plans to celebrate the Bicentennial. Head to New Bern April 21-23, check out the traveling exhibit (schedule at bicentennial.dionc.org), or submit your story for “200 Stories” (page 18).

Connect with the communications team to share news and happenings from your church. Email high-resolution photos and story pitches to communications@episdionc.org.

Organize a gathering to try out the updated “Go Speak: Sharing Our Faith” decks, available this Easter.

Watch diocesan communications channels for information about tickets to the consecration of Bishop-elect Samuel Rodman at Duke Chapel on July 15.