DIOCESAN DIGEST

DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA

FALL 2022

THE MISSION PRIORITIES ISSUE

DIOCESAN DIGEST

FALL 2022

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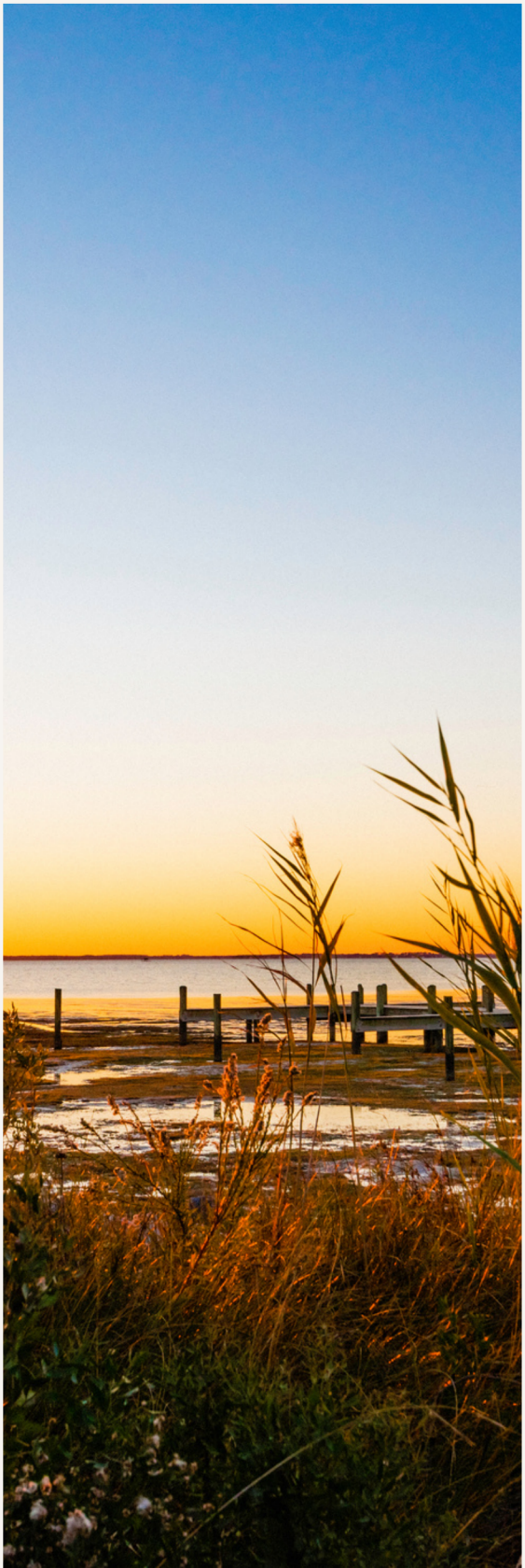
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our Mission Priorities issue! After our Mission Priorities were adopted at Convention this year, we were excited to pursue a Digest issue that shares and celebrates the ways in which we are and we will live into our four Mission Priorities. Collecting your stories here in this issue has been a delight, and seeing the way God has and will inspire our diocese to walk forward in love and filled with the Spirit. May you be blessed this day and everyday here in the Diocese of East Carolina, and happy reading!

In Christ,
Sara

Sharing our stories,
Sharing our life in Christ.



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Our Mission Priorities

We are the Diocese of East Carolina, children of God, called to follow Jesus and to continue in the ways of The Episcopal Church.

God blesses us in the beauty and bounty of the land where we live and through the diversity of the people with whom we share life.

As Church, we are called to be good stewards of all of God's gifts, and to use them to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

We have discerned that God's Holy Spirit is calling us to:

LEAD: Support each of our worshiping communities to identify and equip lay and clergy leadership who will engage them in more fully living into the promises of our Baptismal Covenant

LEARN: Develop and host collaborative opportunities for life-long formation for faith and ministry for all the baptized, to be offered in person and online across the diocese

SERVE: Encourage every congregation to strengthen or build local networks with ecumenical, interfaith, and other community partners for the purpose of serving the needs of the most vulnerable in their midst

HEAL: Advocate for justice and peace for all of God's children, working together to remove obstacles that prevent equitable access to resources, while building bridges that work to reconcile and heal the divides between us

BISHOP'S CORNER: ON IMPLEMENTING OUR MISSION PRIORITIES

Much of the positive feedback I received after our most recent Diocesan Convention centered on the four presentations that had been offered relative to our Mission Priorities. Each of our four speakers reflected on how we might live into one of our then-proposed Mission Priorities.

Not too surprisingly to me, the Mission Priorities were later adopted by members of Convention without a word of opposition or dissent. Perhaps that's because the priorities came after a multi-year long process of discernment, or perhaps it was because some were doubtful that the priorities would have any practical impact on the life and ministry of our Diocese.

With this edition of our *Diocesan Digest*, it should be obvious that the work of implementing our four new mission priorities is well underway. With this article, I'd like to offer something of an overview of some of the work to date.

ON IMPLEMENTING OUR MISSION PRIORITIES

As our Convention ended, our Diocese moved quickly into our annual budget process. Those seeking funding from the Diocese were encouraged to explain how their request would assist them in helping us all live more fully into one or another of the Mission Priorities.

Members of the Finance Committee paid close attention to these requests, and the resulting first draft of our 2023 budget reflects their work. As was communicated in the pledge request letters sent out to our congregations, a new position was included in our proposed budget, a budget that can certainly be attained with our congregations pledging at the level of 10%.

Oversight of our annual budget process is provided by members of East Carolina's Executive Council, as is the oversight of the life and ministry of our Diocese. Beginning with our July meeting, the Executive Council spent significant time on planning for the implementation of our new Mission Priorities, and this pattern will continue, even as the responsibility for implementation is something that all of us share.

As you'll see in this *Diocesan Digest*, there are lots of powerful stories from across East Carolina that bear witness to the ways in which God is active in our midst and in the world around us, calling to faithfully proclaim the good news of God's love for us all.

ON IMPLEMENTING OUR MISSION PRIORITIES

At our recent Clergy Conference, I shared details of some ways in which we have already begun to work at implementing our new mission priorities.

Here's a brief overview of some of what I reported then:

LEAD

- Leaders of our Commission on Ministry, Standing Committee, and School for Ministry have worked with me to clarify our expectations of those who will be formed locally for ordained ministry
- The Small Church Leadership Project has been launched in order to assist us in better calling and equipping leadership for East Carolina's smallest congregations; see the article in this *Digest*!
- A board is now in place to lead East Carolina's School for Ministry, and they are tasked with building a robust "school" which will support in the formation of lay leaders, deacons, and priests for congregational ministry

ON IMPLEMENTING OUR MISSION PRIORITIES

LEARN

- Our Diocesan Supported Confirmation is well underway, with the hope that this will grow into an annual resource
- The senior staff of Trinity Center have met with the staff of Diocesan House to consider ways that we might more fully collaborate. We are already sharing our "communicator," and we expect to be able to host an increased number of opportunities for folks to "learn" together

SERVE

- The Deans of our five Deaneries have met at least twice to begin imagining how their work can better support the building of strong networks for more local ministry, already imagining ways in which their/our focus will be less hierarchical and more relational
- We are planning to partner more fully with the Diocese of Southwest Florida as their people support others to recover and rebuild after Hurricane Ian; Rev. David Wyly of St. Stephen's in Goldsboro has come to us from that diocese and is working to help coordinate this partnership
- The Executive Council will be considering the possibility of establishing a new companion diocese relationship with an Anglican/Episcopal partner somewhere else in the world

HEAL

- Our proposed 2023 Diocesan Operating Budget currently includes funding to hire a Missioner of Ministry with People of African Descent; see the related article in this *Digest*

This edition of the *Diocesan Digest* offers lots of other stories about how we are working together to align our common life around the four Mission Priorities that we adopted at our Convention in June. We will continue to share stories like these, through future editions of the *Digest* and using other forms of communication. For now, enjoy all that this edition of the *Digest* offers for your consideration, and prayerfully imagine how God might be calling you and your congregation to respond to the invitation of Jesus to follow!

Peace and blessings,

LEAD

SUPPORT EACH OF OUR WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES TO IDENTIFY AND EQUIP LAY AND CLERGY LEADERSHIP WHO WILL ENGAGE THEM IN MORE FULLY LIVING INTO THE PROMISES OF OUR BAPTISMAL COVENANT

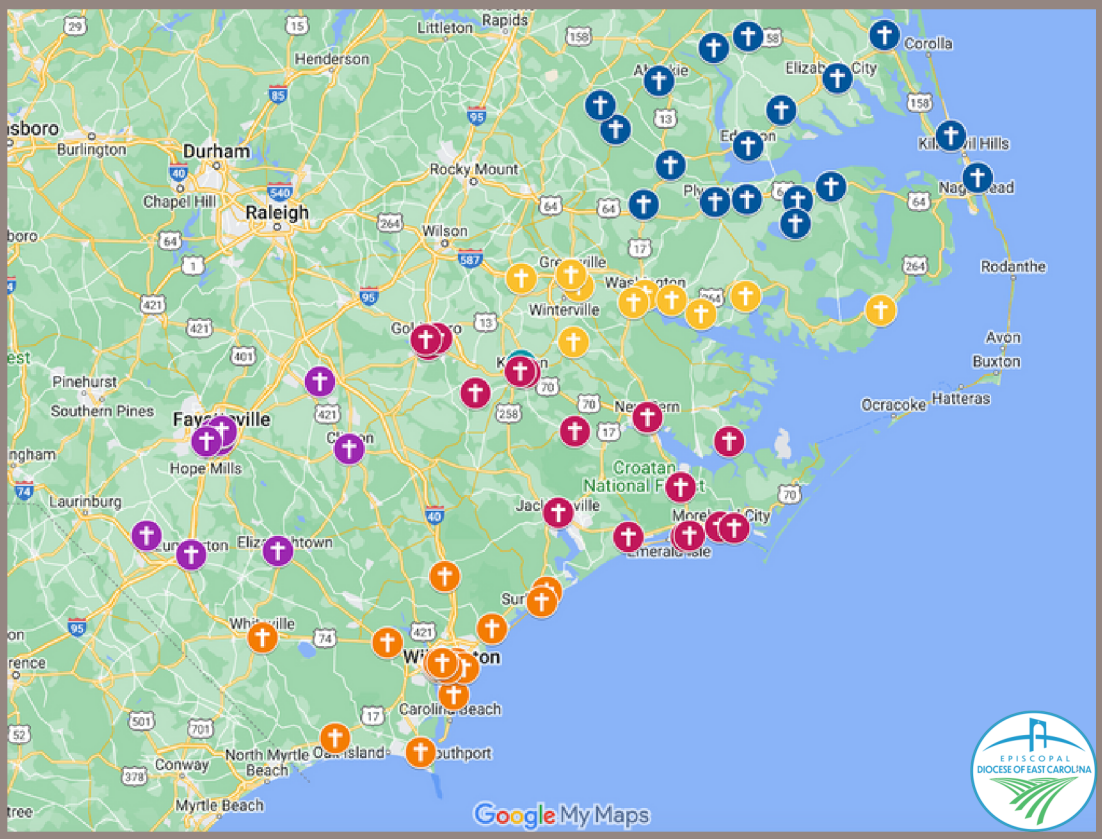
SUPPORTING OUR SMALL CONGREGATIONS IN EAST CAROLINA

The Diocese of East Carolina is made up of approximately 67 worshipping communities not including campus ministries. Nearly half of our congregations are in small towns, and/or they are small enough that they cannot afford to have a priest dedicated to their worship and pastoral needs. While the experience of being a small parish can feel singular, it's a quite common experience for more than one third of our congregations.

These smaller congregations usually must rely on supply priests who are usually retired from full-time ministry and are willing to occasionally "supply" a pulpit on a fee-based arrangement. Even this fee, usually $300 plus mileage per Sunday, is a challenge for very small congregations on a weekly basis.

Further, some of the congregations are located in sparsely populated communities where priests are unlikely to retire, making finding someone to supply very difficult. Our research tells us that a congregation without a consistent periodic priestly presence suffers and struggles to stay alive. For us, this is especially true in the northern part of the diocese.

These small congregations could eventually die as the members age, because attracting newcomers has proven to be very difficult when they are without clergy. Our own history has taught us that we must work to find a solution, or the church communities in these small towns will simply fade away. But, we believe that if we can find a workable way to have a regular clergy presence in the parishes, they will have a fighting chance of rebirth and renewal.



Our Small Church Leadership Project

To support our small congregations and find a workable solution, we have a project underway as part of our implementation of our first Mission Priority to survey our smallest congregations, seeking greater clarity about their needs for clergy and lay leadership and then develop a plan to collaborate in addressing those needs. Our goal in collecting survey data from our small congregations and then formulating a subsequent plan of action will hopefully provide that chance. For now, this project is being partially funded by a $25,000 grant from the Isabel James Lehto Foundation.

We have hired help for this Small Church Leadership project, Mr. Tommy Drake, to engage in this survey project.

Mr. Drake, who is the process to be ordained a priest, expresses his excitement for this endeavor, noting, “Bishop Skirving called me to this work after I served two summers as a Chaplain to the Outer Banks. Most of my work will involve listening to these smaller parishes tell me who they are. I believe that small churches are often in the best position to lead us on the path of revival and renewal. Smaller congregations can be an invaluable resource and gift to the wider church at a time of unprecedented transformation when the whole church is looking for new ways of serving a new generation in a new world. I am eager to begin to discover ways that we can encourage and nurture leadership in them.”

Mr. Tommy Drake

An Essential Contribution from St. James, Belhaven

The Lehto Grant will cover a good portion of the cost of the project; however, one congregation, St. James in Belhaven has contributed housing for Mr. Drake, the cost of which is equivalent to $1,000 per month for the term of the project that we anticipate taking seven months.

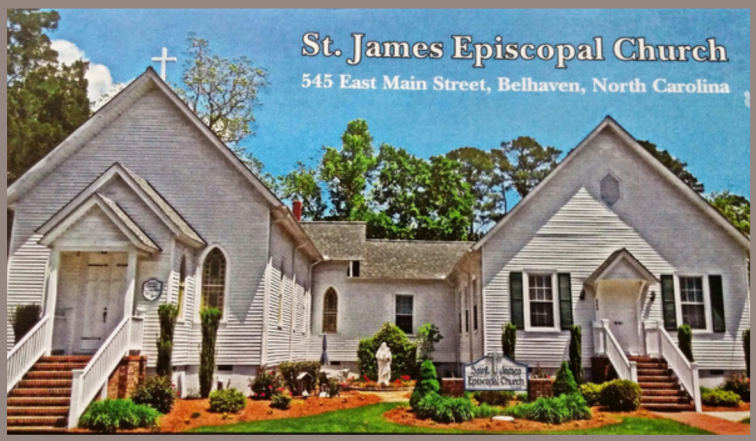
St. James, Belhaven undertook the work to refurbish their rectory, which they are offering rent-free to support this small church leadership project. The location of the house is ideal, as Belhaven is within the geographical area of most concern in our diocese.

Refurbishing the home took significant work, and, like all construction and renovation projects, was much more effort than St. James anticipated. Their renovations began two years ago with help from the diocese's Foundation and another $25,000 of donations from St. James members.

St. James's contribution to this project is invaluable, and Tommy Drake shares, "I have already been warmly welcomed by the folks at St. James, Belhaven. They graciously made their beautifully renovated rectory available to me, which provides an inviting and comfortable place to live and work."

On his moving day, Tommy was greeted with a welcome basket from the folks at St. James, yet another shining example of the hospitality we know our small churches extend.

We look forward with hope to the ways in which our small but mighty congregations can thrive in this leadership project.



Clergy Conference 2022

By Rev. Canon Mollie Roberts

Clergy conference was a great experience this year. The Rt. Rev'd Frank Logue gave two presentations: the first about the people who attended Lambeth, and the second about the "business" of Lambeth. We were reminded how much our different contexts affects how we see the issues of the day. That is especially true for some of the provinces in the Anglican Communion, but we are in communion because we want to be not because of any authority that requires it. Our Bishop also made two presentations: one was impromptu and was mostly a Q & A, the other was about work toward implementation of our Mission Priorities; he also reminded us that we shouldn't wait for the "diocese" to do the work, any person or group can work to further God's Kingdom.

We also took Tuesday afternoon off, giving all clergy the freedom to enjoy down time. Twenty-eight of us took on the Mini Golf challenge. The seven foursomes reported having great fun. Two food trucks provided an excellent dinner Tuesday evening, and Sandy Skirving prepared the excellent food, including charcuterie boards, for the opening reception. Trinity Center's new Executive Director, John Koch, introduced himself. A good time was had by all.

CLERGY CONFERENCE GALLERY

October 24-26, 2022

Taking an "ussie"

Bishop Frank Logue shares about Lambeth Conference

Music for worship

Canon Mollie Roberts and Rev. Susan Hood were twinning!

PARTNERING FOR MINISTRY

Holy Innocents, Seven Springs & St. Francis, Goldsboro

Two of our parishes-Holy Innocents in Seven Springs and St. Francis in Goldsboro-took a leap of faith this year in collaborating to share a priest, which their parishes could not afford individually.

The Rev'd Whit Stroud began serving as Deacon-In-Charge at both Holy Innocents and St. Francis in June 2022; as of his ordination November 16, 2022, he is now Priest-in-Charge.

Sr. Warden of St. Francis George Moye says, "We are thrilled to be teamed up with Holy Innocents so both parishes can have the benefit of a clergyperson. This would be very difficult for St. Francis alone, and we are blessed to have Whit," also noting that "We are very enthusiastic about our future."

The Vestry of Holy Innocents shares, "We must say it is a wonderful blessing to see our church living and breathing, again! After the stagnant months of Covid to see our church bustling with activity since Rev. Whit's arrival is a marvelous sight!"

Partnering and committing to sharing a priest is a delicate process to undergo, as both parishes need to be geographically close and must find a candidate who fits well with both church communities. We are overjoyed that St. Francis and Holy Innocents found their good fit!

PATH DISCERNMENT RETREAT 2022

By Deacon Mary Mac Shields and Carla Richardson

On September 23-24, within the peaceful confines of Trinity Center, twelve people gathered for the PATH Discernment Retreat of 2022. Attendees included five members of the Commission on Ministry as well as seven parishioners from across the Diocese who were discerning God's call in their lives. The overnight retreat began Friday with social time, when everyone had the opportunity to share the stories of how they had come to this event on their faith journeys. This socialization time was described by a participant as especially meaningful, as it facilitated the sharing of thoughts and feelings for the retreat. The evening concluded with Compline in the Julian Chapel.

Saturday began with Morning Prayer. The day's activities centered on four presentations given by Reverend Mollie Roberts, Canon for Diocesan Life and Leadership, and Rev. John Pollock, President of the Commission on Ministry and Rector at St. Andrew's in Morehead City. Session One was titled "Willingness" and discussed the differences between being willing versus willful, what is required when genuinely trusting God, the many aspects of asking for help and saying yes, and balancing our willingness and fear. Small group discussions followed each presentation. These follow-up discussions provided time to question, ponder and further develop new relationships.

Session Two was titled "Attentiveness" and focused on listening to our inner voices and recognizing "nudges from God." Rev. Pollock contributed to maintaining the peacefulness of our experience by playing his guitar and leading us in song. He further wowed the group with his musical talents by playing the bagpipes. Breaks were provided to allow for prayer, quiet discernment, and Spiritual Direction.

Following lunch, Session Three was presented. This presentation invited the participants to remember their journeys must be traveled one step at a time, and to use all their worship tools to "stay in the loop with God and to patiently wait for clarity."

The PATH Retreat concluded in the early afternoon with Session Four, allowing for small group discussion and potential "next steps."

Participants found their interactions to be highly valuable and exchanged e-mail addresses to facilitate ongoing relationships. Participants were grateful for the opportunity to gather and build community, for appreciation that PATH was provided in an overnight format, and for the opportunity to discern God's calling in their lives at such a quiet and peaceful place as Trinity Center.

CURSILLO MINISTRY: LEADING AND LEARNING AT EC-100

BY SANDRA LOUCKS

Diocesan friends of the Episcopal Cursillo Ministry, Eastern North Carolina marked the 100th retreat weekend on August 21st, 2022 at Trinity Center! In attendance for the celebration were leaders, clergy, and Cursillistas from EC #1 through EC #100. EC #1 was held at Camp Leach in Beaufort County over 40 years ago. For those of us who have only been a part of this ministry since it was moved to the Trinity Center, it was joyful to learn more about the history and good works across so many years.

The history of Cursillo goes back much further than 40 years as an international and national program. The goals and purpose of the ministry are very much in line with our current diocesan mission priorities, especially as God's Holy Spirit calls us to LEAD and LEARN.

In the words of the National Episcopal Cursillo Ministers, "The goal of Cursillo is to bring the world to Christ by empowering adult Christian leaders through the use of a specific method, which equips and encourages Christians to live out their Baptismal Covenant to serve Christ. Its purpose is to help those in the church understand their individual callings to be Christian Leaders".

The word Cursillo means “little course”. In my opinion, our little course is packed with wonder-filled moments that reinforce the joy of being a Christian. To me, Cursillo is about:

- Pilgrimage, retreat, stillness
- Serving and learning how to be served
- Loving and letting yourself be loved
- A community who lovingly hold up the mirror to help you see yourself, or stand by as you discover.
- Brothers and sisters in Christ who build up each other
- Clergy who let themselves be known.
- Leaders who do not suggest they know everything, because they are growing right alongside individuals experiencing the weekend for the first time.
- A heart-opening experience, year after year, which helps us reach for all the gifts that God offers.
- Important (4th Day) reunions in which support and growth continue

Since my first Cursillo weekend, I have become a Eucharistic Minister which includes the distribution of Holy Communion to home-bound parishioners. The service for these special visitations includes this collect: “Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people, in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.” “O lover of souls” touches me deeply every time we read it aloud together.

I believe the Cursillo Ministry is filled with the Lord’s mercies, compassion, graciousness and glory and that those who take part in it can LEARN what God intends LEADERSHIP to look like for them. I believe souls are lifted and souls are loved.

Please ask your fellow parishioners if they have been or will become a part of this wonderful ministry. To find out more, please visit these websites:

www.cursillodec.org
www.episcopalcursilloministry.org

EPISCOPAL CURSILLO MINISTRY
Diocese of East Carolina

LEARN

DEVELOP AND HOST COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFE-LONG FORMATION FOR FAITH AND MINISTRY FOR ALL THE BAPTIZED, TO BE OFFERED IN PERSON AND ONLINE ACROSS THE DIOCESE

LIFELONG FORMATION IN EAST CAROLINA

By Emily Gowdy Canady

As of July 2022, I have marked my 12th year of service in this diocese, having spent almost two years in the role of Missioner for Lifelong Christian Formation. It is a privilege and joy to serve the people, parishes and organizations of this diocese. Throughout the process of discerning Mission Priorities for our diocese, components of Lifelong Christian Formation were clearly stated and were an undercurrent in many of the submissions, and at times more clarification about what exactly Lifelong Christian Formation is or what it could be was needed.

Some of you may be familiar with the Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation. The charter was adopted at General Convention in 2009 and serves as a foundation and a springboard for dioceses, congregations and ministries as they engage in this fundamental work. It says that Lifelong Christian Formation in the Episcopal Church is "lifelong growth in the knowledge, service and love of God as followers of Christ and informed by Scripture, Tradition and Reason." The Charter also pushes for engagement of all generations in the holistic work of continual growth as faithful Christians.

This holistic approach calls us to be intentional about how we structure and support Lifelong Christian Formation initiatives and ministries. It asks us to take into consideration learning modalities and context and calls us to value relationships and foster discipleship. Informing, forming and transforming are the three ways The Charter calls us to be intentional in how we structure formation ministries. To INFORM, means we impart knowledge of the Christian faith so that, who we are, and how we live, is shaped and influenced by what we know. To FORM means we nurture people's identity and lifestyle as disciples of Christ. To TRANSFORM, means we promote the personal and social transformation of the world according to the kingdom of God that Jesus preached.

In order to inform, form, and transform we must create spaces, places and ways where God INVITES all people into a life of prayer, service, education and worship; where God INSPIRES all people to experience their faith journey through the lens of worship, scripture, reason and tradition; and where God TRANSFORMS all people to live into their baptismal promises, serving, witnessing, empowering, and holding all accountable.

It is important to know and acknowledge this significant and holy work has been ongoing in the Diocese of East Carolina. It didn't just begin with a position on Diocesan staff dedicated to Lifelong Christian Formation. It has been happening at Vacation Bible Schools, in bell choirs, and at Diocesan Youth Events. It has been experienced on college campuses, in parish supported after school programs, and at summer camp. The people of this diocese have been creating spaces all over the place for God to invite, inspire and transform people in their parishes and communities for a long time.

Over this time we have seen our parishes and communities change. I hedge my bets, though, that a lot of that change happened in the months, and now years, following the shutdown of March 2020. We have had to look at how we engage in all of our ministries through a lens we weren't sure we needed. Coming to grips with the realities of what an ongoing pandemic looked and felt like, meant shifting our view of Lifelong Christian Formation too. But shifting a view can be eye-opening, not mind-closing.

Here in East Carolina, while COVID-19 temporarily closed our buildings, it opened portals to online opportunities. Subsequently we've learned we can inform, form and transform in online and hybrid communities. We have seen that working together and creating ways to expand our connections across the diocese makes space for God to invite, inspire and transform in ways we never thought possible.

Some of the ways we did that as a diocese during COVID and now continue are amazing. Listening to people around the diocese we were able to create and implement a wide variety of opportunities for children, youth, young adults and adults to continue to create community.

The young people on the East Carolina Youth Council, ECYC for short, reached out to me in May of 2020 following the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. They were seeking support as well as a safe place to ask questions about race, racism and how to help. With the support of some excellent adult youth leaders and clergy Racial Healing: Becoming an Ally was created for high schoolers and facilitated in the summer months of 2020. We were incredibly fortunate to have The Rev'd Charles L. Howard, PhD who spoke kindly, but candidly, about what it was like to live as black father of 3 kids in this country. Chaz is the Chaplain and Vice President for Social Equity and Community at UPenn. Youth and adult leaders from 9 congregations, as well as from 4 other dioceses, participated in this transforming series.

Throughout these unprecedented times, the ECYC has prioritized the importance of providing mental health resources in a faith based context. They have hosted three 3-part series on Mental Health. Mental Wellness, Relationships 101, and Finding Balance. All of these three part series were facilitated by a licensed mental health professional with ties to the Episcopal Church. 16 parishes participated in the course, some with individual young people and some as parishes in a hybrid format on Sunday evenings.

This kind of formation hasn't just been for young people. At a Diocesan Formation Leader Gathering in early 2021, two parishes began a conversation about broader adult formation in the diocese. They worked together through the Spring and offered Embracing Change to the wider diocese in June. Embracing Change, grounded in the Acts story of Pentecost, was led by parishioners from each parish and finished with a keynote by Formation and Evangelism Faculty from Virginia Theological Seminary.

Reviews from Embracing Change led to the development of a second class, Holy Lent, a 5-week class facilitated by leaders from around the diocese and kicked off, by the Rev'd Jay Sidebotham, Founder & Senior Consultant for Renewal Works.

Connections for children have been made too! As the summer of 2021 loomed, I kept hearing how burnt out many of our formation leaders were having taken on additional roles during the height of the pandemic. Inviting several in an initial email, 11 congregations (from all of our deaneries) and their formation leaders worked to create a Collaborative VBS. Using Compassion Camp from Illustrated Ministry, video components of each part of the VBS program were made and posted, by day, on the Diocesan website. Any congregation in our diocese can use this as a VBS program for children ages 5-11. In 2020 our diocese was the first to publicly invite only children to participate in AdventWord, the online global Advent Calendar. 2nd through 5th graders from 15 congregations and all deaneries wrote reflections and chose images for the words assigned for each day.

Connection has been important for us all, but in particular those who are part of campus ministries. College students have experienced a lot of stress and strain shifting on and off campus during the pandemic. Using the Way of Love to teach how to use a Rule of Life, students from The Well in Greenville and ECCO in Wilmington were invited to participate together in zoom sessions over the course of the 2021-2022 year. The program was called Measure + Mean as was partially funded by a grant from the Episcopal Church. It culminated in a retreat in April. Facilitated by Easton Davis, Canon for Communications and Digital Evangelism in the Diocese of Atlanta, I can think of no better place to focus on the practice of REST than Trinity Center.

We as a diocese are becoming experts at joining each other from all corners and from all size parishes on zoom or in hybrid formats. The wonderful thing about these kinds of offerings is that just about anyone can participate. In fact, in January 2022, 5 clergy accepted the invitation to lead hybrid or completely Zoom weekly Bible Studies following Forward Movement's The Good Book Club. Over the course of those weeks, adults from 12 different parishes gathered in 4 studies on different days and times reading the first 20 chapters of Exodus together.

We have also been better able to connect by more effectively sharing resources. Our new website has made accessing curated formation resources easier for you! Whether it's time for All Saints or Advent, whether there has been a national or global tragedy or we are offering training or other events to share, I have Curated Christian Formation Resource Newsletters for quite a while. The new website houses all these resources for children, youth and adults as posts, which are easily searchable so you no longer have to save the email to refer back to.

All along the way, whether they are the programs we have always done or a new initiative, we have learned, tweaked, shared new ideas, and pushed ourselves to structure our programs so they inform, form and transform. Building on that structure, how are we as a Diocese continuing to make space for God to invite, inspire, and transform?

We have rebooted Formation Leader Gatherings this fall. We are offering training in areas leaders have asked for, including how to support LGBTQIA+ young people and tragedy and disaster mental health training for those who work with children and youth. We will also continue resource and idea share as we pick back up regular meetings, both on Zoom and some in-person.

In September 2022, we began our Diocesan Supported Confirmation for Young People. Confirmation has always been a topic I have received many questions about; however in the Spring of 2021 on the heels of a year of shut down, those questions really picked up. As a result, Bishop Skirving and I began talking: What would it look like for young people around the diocese to have Confirmation formation together? How could we best connect young people online and in person? How could we support parishes of all sizes with solid confirmation formation? And so, the idea for Diocesan Supported Confirmation for young people took off.

Grounded in current Episcopal theology, CREATE is a Confirmation curriculum developed by 4 veteran Christian Formation Professionals including The Rev'd Jenifer Gamber, author of My Faith, My Life. Many of you who have taught youth Confirmation classes have likely used it. It is excellent. CREATE is rooted in My Faith, My Life.

Taught by trained lay and ordained catechists, CREATE is primarily online with individual work between zoom gatherings. It is a 10-session curriculum spread over 20 weeks divided into fall and winter semesters. The first 5 sessions focus on 'Who We Are,' covering Welcome, Baptism, the Bible, History of the Church and What do we Believe?. The second 5 sessions take on 'What We Do,' focusing on worship, sacraments, spirituality, navigating the church and mission and ministry.

Both semesters end with an overnight in-person retreat. The opportunity does not leave parishes out, in fact parish support is key in making it work to its fullest. Each confirmand has a mentor in their home parish, and the local congregation regularly engages in prayer and celebration with their young people.

The Rev'd Lisa Erdeljon (St. Philip's, Southport), Ms. Hannah Hutchens (St. Paul's, Greenville), and Mr. Buddy Payne (St. Peter's By-the-Sea, Swansboro) are serving as catechists for this program with support from me. We are thrilled to offer this opportunity for young people and to provide an excellent Confirmation Resource for parishes.

As we know God is ALWAYS seeking spaces and ways to invite, inspire and transform in our own lives and in our world. While we have been doing so much of this work together and more collaboratively across our diocese, what ideas or initiatives are are you thinking of? Looking into the future, how can we use the simple structure of Informing, forming, and transforming to help us grow lifelong and lifewide Christian Formation opportunities for all in the Diocese of East Carolina?

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with me. I would love to hear from you! I want to hear your ideas and connect you with other parishes to share or engage in collaborative work as we all work to make space for God to invite, inspire, and transform all people for lifelong ministry in the church.

CAMPUS MINISTRIES

BY REV. DONNA KRAUS

See, I am about to do a new thing! – Isaiah 43:19

The above verse from Isaiah is the theme verse for the Well Campus Ministry in Greenville and ECCO Campus Ministry in Wilmington. God is always in the business of doing a new thing. And, as God grants us to do new things, we learn.

Just being together at least once per week has allowed us to get to know one another better, pray for one another, and learn that laughter is a wonderful gift from God.

Students have also indicated that they have learned the following as a result of participating in campus ministry:

- introspection can be found in the Eucharist,
- prayers can be read and shared rather than spur of the moment events,
- sharing time with elderly individuals is rewarding and meaningful,
- Scripture can be used in new ways and applied to our lives,
- a religious based community while away from home is essential,
- friendships don't have to end when someone graduates,
- cooking together is fun,
- the opposite of faith is not doubt but rather apathy, and
- people love Christian memes more than realized.

The campus ministries are excited about their Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend Retreat in New Bern. God will continue to teach us new things as we provide service for New Hope Volunteer Village.

We are grateful for all who help us learn new things as we encounter God within each one we meet.

Socials for our Campus Ministries

The Well:

ECCO:

St. Timothy's

ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Greenville

By Martha Whitesides

One of the first things I noticed at St. Timothy's was the genuine connection among attendees of all ages. Empty nesters sitting with friends' grandkids and showing how to find a hymn, a long-time chalice bearer affirming a young high schooler on how great they did in their first time as crucifer, the list can go on. We wanted to harness some of that relationship in our formation spaces, and introduced two new ways this fall.

Building on a monthly Families First worship service centered around children and youth in all worship leadership roles, we kicked off the year with a St. Francis workshop for Families First Formation.

Participants of all ages were invited to visit stations ranging from drawing their favorite animal, reading about St. Francis, baking dog treats, creating bird seed hangers, water coloring the Prayer Attributed to St. Francis, and more. Among the activities was time in fellowship with our whole church family. We're gearing up to write icons for All Saints Day and look forward to many more workshops!

Once a month through our Reach program we're inviting both inreach and outreach ministries close to the heart of St. Timothy's to share about their organization or group.

In October, we hosted Whykeshia White, the new Greenville Branch Director for the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina. All ages joined together to hear from her including a video and questions before having break out time for further discussion. Although every Reach meeting won't be multi-generational, creating space to learn from each other is at the heart of these gatherings.

COLLABORATIVE VBS

ROOTED IN CHRIST

By Xena Markine-Morrison

A highlight of summer for any church is usually Vacation Bible School. This year in Goldsboro we brought summer to a close with a wonderful collaborative VBS. Our original VBS, Rooted in Christ, was planned and supported by all three Episcopal churches in town. The week's activities were grounded in our guiding verse:

"So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught." Colossians 2:6-7.

A joyful summer program for children such as VBS might not seem to have any connection to a somber, reflective season like Lent, but for the Episcopal Churches of Goldsboro, they do. The seed for our VBS was, in fact, planted even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

In February of 2020 each of the three Episcopal churches of Goldsboro - St. Andrew's, St. Francis and St. Stephen's - were in various stages of transition so it was the perfect opportunity for us to come together – to worship, to eat, and to support one another. Rooted in our common faith. Deacon Rebecca Bean gathered a group of us from each church together to discuss the possibility of a collaborative Lenten program.

Since we wanted a lay-led worship, we decided to examine the spiritual practice of the Stations of the Cross. Each church has a unique set of the Stations of the Cross very different from the others, so we rotated our gatherings, planning to meet at each church twice. We would pray the stations together, enjoy a potluck meal, and have small group discussions related to various Stations of the Cross traditions and practices.

Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted our plans, and, sadly, St. Stephen's did not even have the chance to host once. So often in life, careful plans are unexpectedly upset, but we can find ourselves amazed by what can come out of such disruptions. Such is true for the collaboration between the three churches which continued in new, surprising ways including shared online worship services and our first VBS together in the summer of 2021.

Given health guidelines for camps that summer, we believed it best to hold VBS outside. Since St. Andrew's has a large grassy area which could accommodate this and is easily accessible for the surrounding community, they graciously agreed to host our first VBS together. The outside, evening program generated several unique expenses such as tent rental, and members of all three churches were generous with their support to fund the program.

Our 3 Saints Compassion Camp utilized curriculum from Illustrated Ministry. All week we explored what it means to have compassion for others, ourselves, and the world. Each evening included dinner, a Bible story, music, movement, and crafts. Seeing children, youth and adults from our different churches come together as a collective church family to know and share God's love was a beautiful experience. Thankfully we all agreed and decided to collaborate again.

Which brings us to this summer! We met and agreed without hesitation that we wanted to work together again to create a completely original, collective VBS. Thus, the seed planted in Lent grew into a beautiful children's program. Rooted in Christ used a garden theme to help our participants and volunteers grow in faith and follow in Christ's footsteps. In addition to studying some beloved Bible stories, there were all the trademarks of VBS - lots of crafts, games, and music. Who wouldn't love recalling the Parable of the Sower with their own bag of dirt dough or water balloons and games to remind them of the living water that Jesus provides?

New twists on traditional VBS fun included participants using Lego bricks to build and tell their favorite story of the week. Another of the daily stations of activities focused on outreach. Throughout the week, we assembled Blessing Bags for the homeless in our community, decorated and potted flowers for assisted living residents, and made seed paper to share with loved ones. Finally, all participants and volunteers had the opportunity to tie-dye t-shirts for a one-of-a-kind keepsake.

Nearly 60 people - with more than 2/3 being young people between the ages of 2 and 18 - from 7 different local churches gathered the first week of August for the Rooted in Christ VBS held at St. Stephen's. Beyond statistics though, in any significant way one can measure the success of a program such as VBS, we exceeded any goal we might have imagined when we first met all those months ago to prepare for Lent.

We are extremely grateful for all who participated and volunteered to make it such a special week! I also can't express enough praise and personal gratitude for my three fabulous collaborators – Deacon Rebecca Bean of St. Andrew's, Liz Meador of St. Francis, and Vanessa Stovall of St. Andrew's. Confident that our collaboration will continue to grow and flourish, we designed one banner for our three churches to use and look forward to future endeavors together – rooted in Christ.

yOUThREACH

By Meg Jones & Liz Hengst

Youth (6th-12th graders) of the Diocese of East Carolina gathered at St. Paul's Beaufort for yOUThREACH, a service learning project in September. This year's theme was Create:Renew and focused on Psalm 104. Sound to Sea, from Trinity Center, came in the morning to teach their Whales and Whalers class. They teach about where whales live, how whales are hunted, and what we can do to help reduce pollution in whale environments. The youth also got to see parts of a whale, including seeing the real size of a whale (It's about the size of a Parish Hall).

One way to better improve whale living environments is to reduce the amount of trash in waterways. In the afternoon, the youth and adults, 50 in total, spread out around Beaufort to pick up trash. Since there wasn't a lot of trash on that Saturday, they got to spend more time walking and talking about God.

God has created all things and gives us all the chance to renew and restore creation each time we pick up trash or make small changes that have a big effect on renewing and restoring creation. The youth closed with worship and headed back to churches all over our diocese. We're thankful for the Rev'd Ashley Simpson, St. Paul's Associate Rector, for her leadership and guidance through yOUThREACH.

Ways you can take yOUThREACH home with you is remembering often to see God in creation, pick up trash, and reduce the amount of single-use plastic you use. Diocesan-wide events are an important way for our youth to see that they are part of something bigger than just their home parish. Diocesan events like yOUThREACH encourage youth to be leaders, in and out of their community. The younger youth get to see peers lead up front. Youth also get to see that they share common goals, about changing the world with youth from around the diocese, the larger Church, and the world.

yOUThREACH is led by the East Carolina Youth Council (ECYC). This group is made up of 13 youth from the five deaneries. The ECYC created the theme and found the focus. The adults that support them pull the resources together and find how it relates to the rest of the diocese. The ECYC practices leadership by planning the weekends. They also get to lead small groups of peers and share their faith. ECYC members are also experts in large group games and energizers, favorite choreographed dances to build energy for the next part of the day.

Diocesan mission priorities guide the creation of youth events. These events help our youth stretch and grow their relationship with God and their understanding of their own faith. These experiences and lessons will carry youth through a lifetime walk with Christ. Sometimes that is as silly as seeing a lifesize whale, and sometimes that's as meaningful as going through confirmation classes.

For more information about Diocesan Youth Events, check out our website or contact Emily Gowdy Canady.

yOUThREACH

GALLERY

St. Andrew's by the Sea, Nags Head

A COMMUNITY OF CARE

A Diocesan-wide study created a close-knit group that has continued to faithfully study the Bible together

BY THE GOOD BOOK CLUB OF ST. ANDREW'S BY THE SEA

What began as a diocesan-wide engagement in Forward Movement's The Good Book Club (GBC) in Epiphany 2022 became the start of a new community at St. Andrew's by the Sea, Nags Head. Beginning in Exodus as the other GBC groups did, we found ourselves wanting to continue our study. As participant Bobbie Murray relates, "We quickly formed a bond and were looking forward to our Thursday morning meetings."

Our study of the Bible led us on to read Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and now Paul's first letter to the Romans. It's been a really rewarding journey, as we've learned more about the history, theology, liturgy, and politics of the Pentateuch. Meeting weekly, our GBC group has committed to our study of the Bible and to each other.

Group member Ann Woodley speaks to this commitment, saying, "This group is dedicated to continue through thick and thin, and the learning experience and friendship is inspirational. I can't imagine NOT meeting weekly. I feel a renewal in spirit when we meet, and I love the group. We are listeners, we are caring, we are wise, we are God's own."

We've formed a community of love and care: people from congregations of different sizes and resources, people from different social circles, people with very different backgrounds. And, we've been together long enough to get to really know each other. We've walked together as group members have lost loved ones, welcomed new family members through births and weddings, had surgeries both minor and serious, and navigated challenging relationships with friends and family.

We end each week with a "check-in" so we can update our group prayer list, and we've got our first in-person get-together later this month.

Our experience with the diocesan-wide Good Book Club has made us enthusiastic about this opportunity for everyone in the diocese. We think anyone who might want to join a group should do so. Find a convenient time slot for you and sign up. It's worth it! Through the GBC, we have been able to feel more connected to others in our Diocese, sharing prayer requests and prayer time to close each meeting, feeling a part of a group that really cared about reading and learning the Bible, and experiencing a group that cared about us as individuals.

The Good Book is back for Epiphany 2023! Click here to learn more.

SERVE

ENCOURAGE EVERY CONGREGATION TO STRENGTHEN OR BUILD LOCAL NETWORKS WITH ECUMENICAL, INTERFAITH, AND OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THEIR MIDST

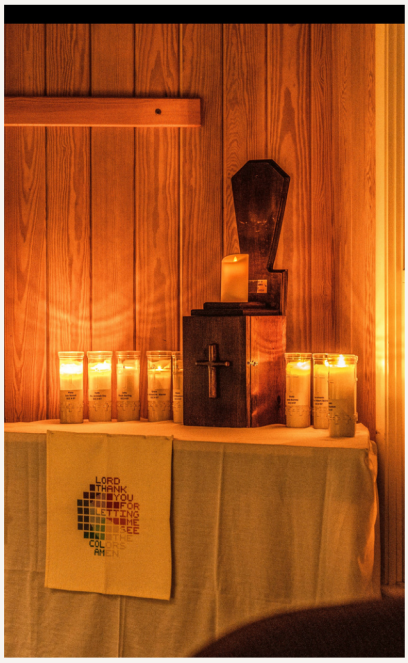
THE INNKEEPER: TRINITY CENTER

By John Koch

A recent devotional in Forward Day by Day focused on the parable of the good Samaritan. The parable is well known and a popular choice for countless sermons and bible studies. Even though I'd been exposed to the parable many times before, after reading the Forward Day by Day devotional something struck me that I hadn't considered before... the role of the Innkeeper. The Good Samaritan takes the injured man to an Inn and pays the Innkeeper to take care of the man. "Oh!", I thought to myself, "that's what the Trinity Center does... we are the Innkeeper, and our ministry is to serve and care for the 'least of these,'" those Individuals or marginalized groups who are often overlooked or who simply don't have a place to plan or meet in support of their ministry.

By partnering with churches, diocesan ministries, and community nonprofits, Trinity is able to serve the most vulnerable in our midst. Gabi's Grounds, Wings Camp for Kids, and Trinity's very own Adventurers Camp are just a few of our dozens of collaborative enterprises where Trinity serves as the Innkeeper. Trinity provides needed support for important ministries and nonprofits that might otherwise have no place to meet or work.

Consider the work of the above mentioned ministries and nonprofits on the next pages...



GABI'S GROUNDS

Gabi's Grounds mission is to empower the special abilities community to find their place in the world and enjoy fulfillment in everything they do. They promote equal access to persons with disabilities in our workplace. They create market value that includes everyone in an enriched community, while providing great coffee and a unique customer service experience.

"*We had a Wonderful retreat*! *The rooms, location, beach, pool, living room, food, fire pit, everything was amazing*! *We will be back next year*!" - Mary Angelini, Co-Founder of Gabi's Grounds

Discover More About Gabi's Grounds

WINGS CAMP

Because of their limited life experiences and lack of coping skills, children may find the grieving process very difficult as they struggle with their inability to express these overwhelming emotions in a healthy manner. In response to this need, 3HC founded its summer Wings Camp for Grieving Children in June 2000. Wings Camp is an opportunity for children to interact and gain support from peers who are also experiencing grief.

"The Trinity Center provided an incredible backdrop to host our annual Wings Camp. The setting provided an ideal and welcoming space to hold many of our activities. The peaceful and serene atmosphere allowed campers the opportunity to process grief. It also gave opportunities to our campers to have fun and enjoy themselves while bonding with other campers who had also experienced loss. Campers and workers alike loved being at the Trinity Center." – Edith Keesecker, MA, BSW, Bereavement Experience Coordinator at 3HC

Explore Wings Camp

ADVENTURERS CAMP

In 2019, 40 campers attended Adventurers at Camp Trinity. This camp is designed for persons of all ages with mental and/or physical disabilities. The activities for this special session will be based on our traditional camp programs and adapted when necessary. Anyone needing more detailed information should contact the Camp Director, Mary Beth Bradberry, at (888) 874-6287. As a special outreach opportunity for persons with mental and physical disabilities from this diocese, applications for the Adventurers camp session are available from local Episcopal parishes in the Diocese of East Carolina and Camp Trinity, (888) 874-6287.

2022 saw an abbreviated return of Adventurers with a single day in September with a smaller group. Adventurers hosts a high-risk population, and with the pandemic they are often still isolated and medically vulnerable, so extra precautions were taken to keep them safe and still serve. For this camp, volunteers are often former staffers who go through special training, and our medical team is expanded to support and advise.

""*If you're of the belief that Trinity is the heart of the diocese, I would say that Camp T is heart of Trinity, and Adventures Camp is heart of Camp Trinity for what it brings: joy.*"- Mary Beth Bradberry, Camp Trinity Director

Explore Camp Trinity

TRINITY CENTER

The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

BREAKING NEWS:

Trinity Center has launched a new website! Check it out here.

A SERVICE OF HEALING AND HOMECOMING

By Rev. Robert Alves

Over a decade ago, St. John's in Fayetteville held a service on a Wednesday night near Veterans Day. At the first service, lists were compiled of all members of the congregation who had served in combat during past conflicts. The service was titled "A Service of Healing and Homecoming." The laying on of hands for healing and Holy Eucharist were offered. At the conclusion of the service, several Vietnam Veterans said that this was the first time they felt appreciation expressed for their service.

The second year, the service became a yearly event hosted by the Episcopal churches of the Upper Cape Fear Deanery and the Episcopal congregation at Fort Bragg. All members of the community are welcome. A dinner is held following the service where veterans and those serving on active duty in the military eat for free. This service has been an annual event during an 11-year period when many on active duty experienced multiple deployments. 2020 marked the only year we did not gather as a deanery. We resumed dinner in 2022. Two parishioners were so thankful for the return of the dinner with the service that they fully sponsored the meal. Donations were invited to support outreach ministry to veterans in the community. The service was enriched by the return of the handbell choir following Covid-19 in 2022.

The opening collect and readings are those suggested by the office of the Bishop Suffragan of the Armed Forces. The Epistle appointed is 1 John 4:7-21, which begins, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." The Gospel appointed is John 15:9-17, which contains, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." The opening collect reads: "O judge of nations, we remember before you with grateful hearts the men and women of our country who in the day of decision ventured much for the liberties we now enjoy. Grant that we may not rest until all people of this land share the benefits of true freedom and gladly accept its disciplines. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

GALLERY

Veterans Day Service:
A Service of Healing and Homecoming

Over the years, the clergy of the deanery and our bishop have shared in the leadership of the service. Bishops Suffragan of the Armed Forces, clergy veterans, lay veterans and chaplains have offered the homily or reflection during the service. This year, Col. (Ret) Grant Steffan offered a homily where he named veterans who had been role models for him in his faith and in his career.

A litany for remembrance was led by Bishop Skirving, the celebrant for the service, with the older voice provided by Mr. David Harvey, a veteran from St. Joseph's and the younger voice offered by Bright Obeng, Active Army stationed at Fort Bragg, a soldier from Holy Trinity:

The presiding minister says: Let us remember before God, And commend to his sure keeping: Those who have died for their country in conflict; Those whom we know, and whose memory we treasure; And all who have lived and died in the service of humanity.

A second (older) voice says: They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

A third (younger) voice says: At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them.

All say: We will remember them.

A Litany of Remembrance from FSR 1968, adapted (*They Shall Not Grow Old: Liturgies for Remembrance*) Canterbury Press © Norwich 2013.

Fayetteville has long been a community with a strong active duty military presence, as Fort Bragg is in our immediate area. Fort Bragg has grown in recent years, and an increasing number of veterans have chosen to make Fayetteville their home in retirement. Fayetteville is a community that has a deep understanding of and offers support for service members and their families. The presence of veterans and military families strengthen our community. The annual Veterans Service provides a way to focus intentionally on the contribution of individuals and families who continue to give of themselves in support of our community and the world. Please consider joining us for the service next November.

ST. PAUL'S

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS WITH MISPLACED MUTTS

By Rev. Ashley Simpson

On October 9th, St. Paul',s Beaufort hosted Blessing of the Animals during the 10:45 service time. We connected with the local animal rescue "Misplaced Mutts" to collect donations and invited their animals to come as well. Contact Rev. Simpson for information if your parish would like to host a similar community partnership.

FEEDING THE MULTITUDES

Jesus said to them, "You give them something to eat." - Luke 9: 13

Feeding programs are perhaps the most universal outreach ministries churches perform, and East Carolina is no different. In the pages that follow, you will find a sampling of some of the feeding ministries parishes in our diocese provide and work with.

CHRIST CHURCH, ELIZABETH CITY

SOULS MINISTRY

By Hunter Michael & Rev. Daniel Cenci

SOULS began in the spring of 2008 as an ecumenical, unnamed, unorganized attempt to feed hungry individuals in the Elizabeth City community. Members from 4 or 5 churches, including Christ Episcopal Church, took the lead and the ministry quickly grew. The SOULS board began meeting monthly to tweak plans and work out guidelines that would help keep volunteers and guests safe while providing food and fellowship. Christ Church was very involved from the beginning and many of our ecumenical meetings took place in the Wright Room at the St. Philip's Chapel. That is when Christ Church member, Sharon Greene, came up with name for our group SOULS (Serving Others in Unity and Love).

Christ Church members: Helen Gibson, Rudge King, Sharon Greene, Cynthia Mastro, Mickey and Roy Golden, Nell Morrison, Everett and Dru Thompson, Harriett Hornthal, and Flora Robinson were among the first to get involved from Christ Church, but others were quick to step up and we have always had a list of about 25+/- volunteers. Helen Gibson was a wonderful reminder to "KISS" Keep It Simple, Servant! We felt that to sustain our volunteers we needed to keep our plans and menus simple.

In the beginning the ministry served bagged meals at Pool Street Park, but when local businesses complained, the county offered an overhang/porched area at the old Elizabeth City Middle School property. It allowed for the servers and food to be protected from the weather but not the guests. We later were offered the old band room at the middle school, and we began serving warm meals. For years Rudge King and Helen Gibson developed menus (and later Gail Payne, Karen Foreman and Hunter Michael). By the time the ministry began serving warm meals, Christ Church had reduced its serving schedule to every Thursday because so many churches began participating. In 2020 Covid stopped the ministry from serving warm meals inside, but volunteers continued to serve bagged meals.

In 2022 the old Elizabeth City Middle School was sold by the city, and the ministry needed to relate once again. SOULS now provides daily meals to the homeless and food-insecure in the Wright room of Christ Church's St. Philips Chapel. SOULS also offers opportunities for prayer and Bible study, a clothing ministry, and resources for finding shelter and employment. Teams of youth and adults from Christ Church continue to serve on a regular basis. This ministry has been an amazing blessing not only to our community, but also to Christ Church.

HOLY TRINITY, FAYETTEVILLE

FOOD PANTRY

By Stephanie Holliday

The Holy Trinity Food Pantry has been in place for almost 30 years. Originally this ministry was housed in a small closet and fed a dozen families. Over the years, this ministry has responded to significant economic shifts. Still, it has always been a ministry where families came to the church facility to receive a bag of staple canned food. Before the pandemic, over 250 families benefited from the pantry each month.

When COVID-19 hit, families who utilized our services were unable or unwilling to visit the church to get their food. As restrictions eased, the numbers did not rebound, so the chairperson and ministry members needed to get creative and find a way to bring food to our families in need. We began to imagine delivering food to hubs around the Fayetteville area; this is how our first partnership was born. The ministry quickly discovered that by bringing food to different regions through partnerships, we could provide for more families and make a more significant impact than ever imagined. As of November 2022, we have established seven new partnerships and deliver more than 175 bags monthly. While we continue to serve families who come to the church, we are committed to creating more partnerships throughout our community to continue God's mission.

ST. JAMES, WILMINGTON

RISE AGAINST HUNGER EVENT

Wilmington serves numerous outreach ministries but the single largest annual outreach event has been the Rise Against Hunger Meal Packing Event. Many years ago, the St. James Youth Group expressed a desire to be hands-on in the fight against hunger. They introduced the leadership of St. James to the Rise Against Hunger organization. The Outreach Commission along Vestry leadership took on the challenge. The RAH event aligns perfectly with the parish mission, "to grow in love of God and neighbor." Through Rise Against Hunger, the parish has found new space to engage with a broader community.

Our most recent event's partnership with RAH brought out community partners including St. Paul's Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian, Spiritual Soul Center, Warner Temple AME Church, Spiritual Educational Outreach Ministries, and NHRMC. Additionally the youth continue to play an important role in recruiting volunteers and promoting the event. On meal packing day, you are likely to find volunteers from 3 to 90+ years of age!

We are proud to share that this year's coalition of volunteers packaged an ambitious goal of over 50,000 meals. These boxes of packaged meals were prepped, packed and loaded back onto a moving truck and will be shipped to destinations such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. There, Rise Against Hunger and its partner organizations will distribute them to local persons experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

ACROSS THE DIOCESE

OTHER PROGRAMS

There are more feeding programs across our diocese than we can list, but here are some additional food ministries at work in East Carolina:

- **Mary's Kitchen**: Mary's Kitchen is a community ministry that grew out of St. Mary's, Kinston, and the kitchen provide a lunchtime meal 7 days a week, all year long. On average, approximately 130 meals are served each day.
- **Religious Community Services (RCS)**: This community kitchen began as a soup kitchen, founded through Christ Church, New Bern 40 years ago and is now an expansive ecumenical effort to provide food, clothing, and shelter to those in need.
- **Meat Giveaway**: Grace Church in Whiteville recently began a monthly "Meat Giveaway," giving approximately 20 lbs. of various meats to 25 families, which they plan to continue monthly.

Does your parish having a feeding ministry? Have you found creative ways to meet people where they are to provide food or other necessary items? We'd love to hear about it!

Healing of Body, Soul, and Wallet

By Rev. Kamila Blessing

Other ministers ask me, “How can you prepare taxes? Isn’t it just too unspiritual?” Tax work is my retirement job, and I do make some welcome money. But it is so much more about service and about healing. In fact, I minister to many people who would never have come through the church doors! When I am talking with the client, we have to address issues of money, medical needs, children, education, marriage and divorce, death of loved ones—much more deeply than they do with their pastor.

For example, I was working at a tax kiosk in a Walmart when a young woman with three preschool children asked if I could help. As we talked, I learned:

- She was recently divorced and had had no income for months; she and the kids were living with a relative.
- Her ex-husband was a CPA, which means he had specific knowledge of and legal obligation to tax and financial laws.
- He had been physically abusive and in fact, had pushed her down the stairs while she was pregnant. She had sole custody of the three children.
- He had neither seen nor financially supported the children at all in the previous year.
- She had a job interview (finally!) and had rented a car to get there; but she needed her “instant refund” to pay the car rental company, so she had to get her taxes done ASAP.

We prepared the taxes. The children were amazingly quiet the entire time. She was due a much larger refund than she had known, and she was eligible for the instant refund my company offered. The return just had to go through the electronic system and then I could load several thousand dollars onto a debit card instantly. Success (we thought)!

The next day she came back, clearly distraught. She had taken the debit card to pay for the car, but it had been denied. The rental company kept calling her to return the car. She had been to another tax company and talked with the IRS, but each one had said there was nothing that could be done. Finally, she had returned to me. I checked the electronic path of her return and found that her ex-husband had—illegally—claimed all three children! So her refund was denied, and her return had been rejected.

In minister mode now, I looked at the electronic codes and the return, and I found that even without the children, she was due a $1000 refund. This was easy: I refiled without the children, instantly giving her the $1000. I called the rental place and told them it wasn't her fault that the card hadn't worked and she would be back to pay. That stopped all the calls.

I told her that though it would take several months, she would get the rest of the refund. I would help her communicate the situation to the IRS. Her ex would be audited. As a CPA, he might even lose his license because he knew very well how illegal his actions were. Not that she wanted to cause him any harm! But I wanted her to know that there was a very clear legal and financial case in her favor. The look of relief on her face was enough to reward an entire ministry career.

A few days later, she and the kids returned. They presented me with a lovely, decorated bag containing heart shaped cookies that the kids had made! She had been offered the job. Her life and her children's lives had turned around completely in that moment in my office, and they wanted to say thank you—with love.

And this kind of work continues every tax season. Best of all, even in my company tax office, I get to pray for and even WITH the clients. What a blessing it is to me!

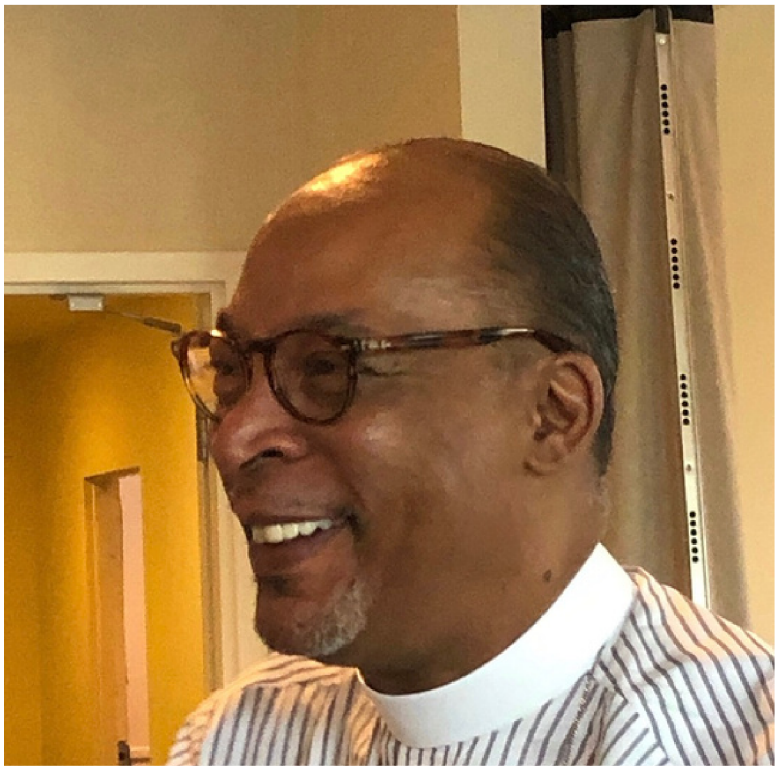
In my efforts to offer these services for free in the Wilmington area, it has proven a challenge to find a space to provide these services from. While AARP tax preparers offer a wonderful service, they are limited in the number of clients they can serve and in the complexity of the situation they can or will handle because of their charter with the IRS.

There is no competition in Wilmington, and there is a large contingent of people whose taxes should not cost $100-$300 to prepare that are just beyond the AARP's complexity and time constraints. If you know of a church or other institution in Wilmington that will allow me to use their space to offer free tax preparation services, please reach out to me: kamilablessing@gmail.com.

HEAL

ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN, WORKING TOGETHER TO REMOVE OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES, WHILE BUILDING BRIDGES THAT WORK TO RECONCILE AND HEAL THE DIVIDES BETWEEN US

African Descent Ministries and East Carolina



About African Descent Ministries (ADM) with The Episcopal Church

At the 80th General Convention this year, African Descent Ministries (ADM) announced their formal name change from "Black Ministries" to "African Descent Ministries" to better encapsulate and reflect the diaspora throughout The Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion. The Reverend Canon Ronald Byrd, Missioner for African Descent Ministries, speaks with passion about his role and the joyful dynamism of his work with ADM.

Part of the work of ADM is to support dioceses by identifying and helping to transition people of African descent into roles and to help these leaders know they are not alone; resource sharing, networking, and addressing the needs of black Episcopalians is all part and parcel of the role and vision of ADM. A signature program of ADM for those of African descent is Healing Internalized Oppression, a curriculum framed by "Who told you you were naked?" from Genesis and targeted at leading participants into a healing process from the many forms of oppression to empower their work in ministry. Canon Byrd is clear on the work of ADM as being "Not our work alone. It's the Church's work to lift up, encourage, and inspire the gifts God gave all of us."

Dioceses across The Episcopal Church have been progressive to address roles for people to African Descent positions, and here in East Carolina, we are hoping to do the same in our next budget year, seeking to strengthen and support African Descent ministry initiatives and revitalization within the churches and communities of our diocese.

East Carolina and African Descent Ministries

In our diocese, we have six Historically Black Congregations: St. Andrew's, Goldsboro; St. Augustine's, Kinston; St. Cyprian's, New Bern; St. Joseph's, Fayetteville; St. Mark's, Wilmington; and Chestnut Chapel, North Topsail Island. As the recipient of a 2018 Lehto Grant, leaders and members of these worshipping communities began meeting to support opportunities to renew community vision, share their experience of community, and engage in the renewal of relationships with historically black communities of faith in Eastern North Carolina.

Beginning in May 2019, African Descent Ministries worked with our diocese to support Historically Black Congregations to discuss shared challenges and vision for future opportunities through Zoom meetings with congregational leaders. Additionally, ADM was invited to facilitate three retreats for Historically Black Churches in the Diocese of East Carolina:

- Healing from Internalized Oppression: June 26-27, 2020
- The Basics of Collaborative Leadership and Ministry Retreat: November 15-16, 2019
- An in-person coaching and support workshop: August 23-24, 2019

After this initial launch, the impacts of hurricanes and then the COVID-19 pandemic stymied further work. Therefore, we have hopes to hire someone for the deeper work supporting these crucial parishes, congregants, and ministries.

Looking to the Future

In constructing a draft operating budget for 2023, our diocese has begun to reorganize our efforts around the Mission Priorities adopted at our June 2022 Convention. Once the current draft has been adopted by the Executive Council, it will be made public. The most obvious change from previous budgets is the inclusion of funding for a priest who will serve the whole diocese as Coordinator of Ministry with People of African Descent, while being based as priest-in-charge in one of our congregations. This proposal has been developed primarily in relation to our fourth Mission Priority, and we look forward to the possibilities of this position for our diocese.

CAMP HOPE

By Nell Hudson

Jane Merritt, a member of Christ Episcopal Church in New Bern, founded Camp Hope in 2006. Camp Hope is a free summer camp for children ages 8-13 who have a parent or stepparent in prison or released. The purpose of the ministry is to provide these children a chance to experience the joy of summer camp and the opportunity to deepen their religious faith. When the campers realize there are other kids in similar circumstances, they relax, make new friends, and have a lot of fun. The camp week provides a much-appreciated respite for the campers' caregivers.

A Note from a Camper's Parent:

My son was given the opportunity to participate in a [Camp Hope's] summer camp [at Y.M.C.A. Camp Harrison]. I wanted to follow up with both the camp and Angel Tree to extend my deepest thanks. My son's father signed him up for the program, as he is in federal custody and will not return to society until my now 10-year-old is 20. He has been inside since our son was 2. This was a truly touching and wonderful experience for my son. As a single mom, I could have NEVER afforded such an amazing experience. He is 10, but he has never been away from me overnight! On the way home, he cried. He missed his friends, his counselors, the whole camp, and staff! My 10-year-old told me he cried because he was happy in church, and due to my insane work schedule, we rarely even get a chance to attend church, as I work weekends! He was just truly moved by the love, the fun, the staff, the children, and by God. I wanted to shoot both parties an email to humbly say THANK YOU! Thank you for caring about all children, and thank you for giving unobtainable opportunities to such youth as my son, This was truly the highlight of his summer, and an experience he WILL NEVER forget! Thank you all for loving my son as much as I do. This is an experience he will never forget, and he is begging to go next year! Thanks to everyone involved for helping me mold my son into a functional member of society, showing him simplicity and just plain love from strangers. This will forever be one of his favorite life moments. Thank you so much!

Prior to Covid, Camp Hope partnered with Camp Bob at Kanuga. However, because Camp Bob was not available for 2022, this year we formed a partnership with Y.M.C.A. Camp Harrison. Y.M.C.A. Camp Harrison is located in the Brushy Mountains in Wilkes County, North Carolina. This past summer, we served fifty-three campers from across North Carolina. Twenty-three of our campers came from New Bern, Kinston, Greenville, and Leland. Our other campers came from the greater Charlotte and Winston-Salem areas. We also had three local teenagers attend Y.M.C.A. Camp Harrison's two-week teen camp. Our campers enjoyed the activities, including the mountain bounce, kayaking, paddle boarding, and archery. The theme of the camp session was Restore My Soul. Every evening closed with reflections on Psalm 23:1-3.

Camp Hope provides bus transportation for the campers, and Camp Hope volunteers chaperone the bus ride and assist the counselors during the session. Y.M.C.A. Camp Harrison has an adult cabin for volunteers. Camp Hope works with Angel Tree Camping (a division of Prison Fellowship Ministries). Angel Tree Camping provides camper referrals and covers part of the costs associated with the camp and transportation. Donations to Camp Hope help cover the remaining tuition, transportation, and other costs associated with hosting the summer camp and supporting camper activities throughout the year.

his outreach ministry can always use additional volunteers to pray, help with administrative tasks, make camper referrals, and attend camp. Camp Hope 2023 will be August 6th-10th. Please contact a member of our leadership team if you would like to volunteer, make a camper referral, or get more information: Terry Brubaker (252-514-9550), Jim Behl (650-740-3392), or Nell Hudson (252-771-5832) OR email: camphope1@christchurchnewbern.com

Donations can be made by mailing a check to Christ Church (PO Box 1246, New Bern, NC 28563) with "Camp Hope" in the memo line. Donations can also be made online: https://www.christchurchnewbern.com/give (check the Camp Hope box). Thank you. Because of this diocese's generosity, we have been able to serve hundreds of children from across North Carolina that have an incarcerated loved one.

LEARN MORE HERE

SACRED GROUND

Sacred Ground is a sensitive, prayerful resource from The Episcopal Church that creates space for difficult but respectful and transformative dialogue on race and racism. It invites participants to walk back through history in order to peel away the layers that brought us to today, reflecting on family histories and stories, as well as important narratives that shape the collective American story. It holds as a guiding star the vision of beloved community – where all people are honored and protected and nurtured as beloved children of God, where we weep at one another's pain and seek one another's flourishing.

In our diocese, many parishes have held Sacred Ground studies, and many continue to form new circles. Deacon Mary Mac Shields and Sybil Sasaki are running a circle now in Fayetteville, and St. Mary's, Kinston also has a study currently running. Coming up in January, St. Philip's, Southport and Grace, Whiteville are teaming up to offer a Zoom circle that all are invited to join; register by December 15th for this online Sacred Ground circle by contacting Linda Humphreys or Lisa Richey.

LATINOS AND MISSION

By Rev. Fred Clarkson

As the church looks to the new liturgical year and we engage with mission through the new priorities we adopted at the last Diocesan Convention, we have an opportunity to explore new possibilities with Latinos in our midst. Latinos make up one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in North Carolina. As the country changes and the landscape of the church with it, we may soon discover hidden gifts that can allow us to breathe new life into mission. One gift is one that Jesus mentions: the gift of taking nothing with us. Or, to put it another way, the gift of ridding ourselves of cultural baggage that keeps us from inviting others to church for fear of appearing to be proselytizing.

Given that Latinos come from different historical experiences, this is not a social apprehension they have. Latinos readily invite others to church, and many consider church attendance and the foundational sacraments essential. All of this enriches the church. But, there is more than just that: much of Latino culture resonates with the liturgical calendar in ways that enrich our community and worship life.

The first of these resonances comes from Mexico: the Feast Day of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. This celebration is rooted in the story of the Marian apparition to an indigenous man named Juan Diego on 9 December 1531 on Tepeyac Hill while he headed to church. The celebration reminds us that the Gospel belongs to no single group and is not limited to any single group. Instead, the Gospel is God's message for the world embodied in Jesus Christ, and it can be conveyed by any means that God sees fit to use.

Following the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and also Advent as we approach Christmas in Mexico and Central America, they celebrate nine nights of Las Posadas beginning on 16 December and ending on Christmas Eve. Las posadas are a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for a place to have Jesus.

In contrast, other countries in Latin America have nine nights of special pre-Christmas prayers known as the Novena de Aguinaldos or the Novena to Baby Jesus. In all cases, the nine-night represents the nine months Mary carried Jesus in her womb. The most important celebration of Christmas for Latinos takes place on Christmas Eve, and if they do exchange gifts at Christmas, it is most likely on Christmas Eve.

If not, gifts are often exchanged on Three Kings' Day and, for a few lucky children, on both days. Three Kings' Day is also a day on which, in Mexico, they make the Kings wreath of sweet bread into which a figurine of the baby Jesus is hidden to symbolize the hiding of Jesus from Herod. Whoever finds the figure hosts the following year's Kings' Day festivities.

The next substantial addition with which the Liturgical Calendar is enriched by various Latinos' cultures is All Souls' Day, which the Mexicans and some Central Americans celebrate as the Day of the Dead in which the commemoration for loved ones is richly done. On that day, the communion of Saints is heartily celebrated with pictures, candles, and special meals, as well as a parade in some places.

These are just the liturgical ways our Church life is enriched through our engagement culture, and it is not subject to any linguistic barriers. As we move into the new year, how will we seek to enhance our churches and communities with all that is at hand from these extensive Christian cultural traditions?

TO READ THIS STORY IN ENGLISH, CLICK HERE.

UNA HISTORIA EPISCOPAL

POR VICTORIA GACHUZ

Mi nombre es Victoria Gachuz Monter. Soy originaria de México. He vivido en los Estados Unidos desde hace 26 años. Tengo tres hijos, Brandon el mayor de 26 años, Gabriela mi hija de 22 años, y Christopher de 15 años.

Vengo de una familia de padres católicos. La mayoría de mi familia son católicos. Cuando estaba en México realmente era la única religión que yo conocía. Tengo vagos recuerdos de cuando era niña que mi papá hablaba con las personas mayores sobre los "hermanos cristianos" y por supuesto como todo un católico, mi papa no los aceptaba.

Llegué por primera vez a Estados Unidos a casa de uno de mis hermanos que ya vivía en Carolina del Norte. Una vez me invitaron a ir a misa con ellos. Esa fue la primera vez que fui a la Iglesia Episcopal de San Mateo en Yeatsville, North Carolina. Realmente yo pensaba que estaba hiendo a una iglesia católica. Claro que se me hacía extraño que el padre tuviera una esposa, y también se me hacía extraño que todos recibían la santa comunión. Yo pensé que aquí en Estados Unidos así era la iglesia católica. Así seguí asistiendo por mucho tiempo, con la idea equivocada de que estaba hiendo a una Iglesia católica, hasta que un día en una conversación con otras personas me enteré que era una iglesia Episcopal.

Tal vez llegué por accidente a la iglesia Episcopal, no lo sé, lo que si se es que no me quedé por accidente, más bien me quedé en la Iglesia Episcopal porque me sentí bienvenida, me sentí en familia, yo estaba feliz de ir a misa y convivir con mi comunidad Hispana, que en ese entonces éramos pocos.

Tuve la oportunidad de bautizar en San Mateo a mi primer hijo. San Mateo era una comunidad alegre y siempre cada domingo teníamos comida después de misa, realmente era bueno tener esa oportunidad de Convivencia.Fue San Mateo donde empecé a conocer a Janet Rodman que ahora es nuestra Diacona en Saint Peters. Janet, al igual que muchas otras personas de la iglesia tienen un corazón muy noble y dispuesto a ayudar al prójimo sin juzgar a nadie.

Para el año 2000 yo seguía asistiendo a San Mateo, para ese año la iglesia Episcopal de Saint Peter's hospedó a la primera organización sin fines de lucro "El Ministerio Episcopal Para Hispanos" para servir a la comunidad Hispana de Washington y sus alrededores. Tuve la bendición de trabajar para-EHM visitando trabajadores en los campos, transportando en interpretando personas en diferentes lugares donde lo necesitaban, organizado talleres informativos y educacionales para la comunidad; durante este tiempo por más o menos tres o cuatro años consecutivos trajimos la clínica dental que atendió a muchos pacientes en necesidad de servicio dental. La iglesia Episcopal de San Pedro fue siempre parte esencial de cada evento. También durante mi tiempo en EHM, en conjunto con otras organizaciones luchamos para poner servicio de agua potable y drenaje en una comunidad predominantemente Latina y Afroamericana. Considero que esa oportunidad que tuve de servir a mi comunidad y de ver como las personas de Saint Peter's siempre nos apoyaban sin importar la diferencia de idiomas y culturas o de religiones ,hizo que mi cariño y respeto por la iglesia Episcopal creciera.

Como todo lo que tiene un principio, también tiene un fin. En al año 2006 la organización tristemente cerró sus puertas, pero el lazo que la iglesia Episcopal había formado con la comunidad Latina ya era irrompible.

En un momento la Iglesia de San Mateo también cerró sus puertas. Después de un tiempo un grupo de personas de las que asistíamos a San Mateo, con un grupo de líderes de la iglesia de San Pedro empezamos gestiones para poder tener un servicio en Español en la Capilla de San Pedro. Después de un tiempo se hizo realidad, Finalmente en el año 2009 iniciamos una nueva jornada ahora en la capilla de San Pedro. Ellos no abrieron las puertas de su hogar por así decirlo, de lo cual estamos muy gradecidos.

Ya en San Pedro bauticé a mi hija en la misa que celebrábamos las dos congregaciones en la orilla del río, fue un día muy emotivo. Posteriormente bauticé a mi hijo el más pequeño y a la misma vez fui recibida oficialmente en la iglesia Episcopal por el Obispo Rob Skirving. Mis tres hijos se confirmaron ya en la iglesia Episcopal.

La Iglesia Episcopal es para mí como mi hogar spiritual. Es inclusiva, respeta nuestra cultura y nos invita a crecer espiritualmente y nos brinda la oportunidad de que nuestros hijos tengan experiencias en sus vidas, que tal vez muchos de nosotros no podemos cubrir porque son caros. La Iglesia Episcopal de San Pedro me dio la oportunidad de tener una beca para cada uno de mis tres hijos en el programa de Day School, los tres fueron participantes del programa de Camp Trinity que se lleva a cabo cada verano; ellos siempre estaban ansiosos y emocionados cuando el Verano estaba cerca, pues sabían que tendrían otra maravillosa experiencia. Se que la barrera del idioma ha sido una situación que nos previene de lograr las más optima comunicación con otras personas cuando no hablamos el mismo idioma, pero aún con esta limitación hemos pedido integrarnos a otras culturas, especialmente la cultura episcopal que nos abre su corazón y nos hace sentir como en casa. La iglesia Episcopal usa la comunicación del amor, la comprensión, la aceptación, sin juzgar a nadie. Las personas de la iglesia has hecho lo que está a su alcance para que haya una relación entre las dos culturas y muchos miembros hacen lo posible por unirse a nuestras celebraciones.

San Mateo y ahora San Pedro han sido nuestro espacio para reunirnos como comunidad y sentirnos como en casa. Hemos celebrado incontables quinceañeras, bautizos, festivales Latinos, talleres educativos y por supuesto hemos podido celebrar el día de la Virgen de Guadalupe, que como Mexicanos es importante para nosotros.

En la Iglesia de San Pedro hay servicios en Inglés y también servicios en Español en la capilla, y muchas veces en ocasiones especiales mesclamos los servicios para que sean bilingües y así todos nos sentimos incluidos, y participamos en el idioma que más nos haga sentir cómodos y después tal vez tenemos un almuerzo juntos. También las dos congregaciones hemos trabajado juntos en diferentes programas que no necesariamente requieren que hablemos, más bien se requiere manos a la obra como los programas de: Clínica Dental, Toys for Tots, Stop Hunger Now, entre otros.

He participado en el evento que las congregaciones Latinas organizan el Kanuga, las montañas de Carolina del Norte. Realmente una de la cosas que más me agradó de esta experiencia fue la energía, la alegría y el liderazgo que cada participante episcopal trae a este evento.

Ahora enfrentamos un reto que me imagino que nos está aislado de otras congregaciones. A partir del brote de COVID la asistencia a la Iglesia disminuido considerablemente, pensamos que una vez que las cosas regresaran a una cierta normalidad las personas regresarían a congregarse. No ha sucedido así, sabemos que esta situación a creado mucha ansiedad entre las comunidades y más entre las generaciones Jóvenes, pero no tenemos certeza de porque las personas no han regresado.

Estoy Segura de que hay mucha gente que quiere ser parte de algo que los haga crecer como personas espirituales, encontrar su propósito en esta vida, hay muchas madres y padres que están desesperados y quieren obtener un mejor entendimiento de como guiar a sus hijos. Sabemos que cada vez es más común ver jóvenes perdidos en malos hábitos que los llevan a la perdición. Hay muchas personas afuera en la comunidad que están en necesidad de una luz dentro de su oscuridad.

¿Podemos nosotros la Iglesia de Dios ser esa luz, esa esperanza, esa promesa de una vida mejor? ¿Y cómo la vamos a lograr? Mi deseo de saberlo alimenta mi alma misionera.

PARA LEER ESTE CUENTO OPRIMA AQUÍ.

AN EPISCOPAL STORY

BY VICTORIA GACHUZ

My name is Victoria Gachuz Monter. I am originally from Mexico. I have lived in the United States for 26 years. I have three children: Brandon the eldest who is 26 years old, Gabriela my daughter who is 22 years old, and Christopher who is 15 years old.

I come from a family of Catholic parents. Most of my family are Catholic. When I was in Mexico, it was really the only religion I knew. I have vague memories of when I was a child that my dad would talk to older people about "Christian brothers" and, of course, as a Catholic, my dad did not accept them.

I first came to the United States at the home of one of my brothers who already lived in North Carolina. Once they invited me to go to mass with them. That was the first time I went to St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Yeatsville, North Carolina. I really thought I was going to a Catholic church. Of course, it seemed strange to me that the father had a wife, and it also seemed strange to me that everyone received Holy Communion. I thought that here in the United States that was the Catholic Church. So, I continued to attend for a long time, with the mistaken idea that I was going to a Catholic Church, until one day in a conversation with other people I found out that it was an Episcopal church.

Maybe I came to the Episcopal Church by accident, I don't know; what I do know is that I didn't stay by accident, rather I stayed in the Episcopal Church because I felt welcomed, I felt like family, I was happy to go to Mass and live with my Hispanic community, which at that time were few.

I had the opportunity to baptize my first child in San Mateo. San Mateo was a happy community and every Sunday we always had food after mass, it was really good to have that opportunity to get together. It was in San Mateo that I first got to know Archdeacon Janet Rodman who is now our Deacon at Saint Peters. Janet, like many other people in the church, has a very noble heart and is willing to help others without judging anyone.

By the year 2000 I was still attending San Mateo, for that year the Episcopal Church of Saint Peter's hosted the first non-profit organization "El Ministerio Episcopal Para Hispanos" to serve the Hispanic community of Washington and its surroundings. I had the blessing of working for-EHM visiting workers in the fields, transporting interpreters to different places where they were needed, organizing informational and educational workshops for the community. During this time for more or less three or four consecutive years we brought the dental clinic that attended many patients in need of dental service. The Episcopal Church of San Pedro was always an essential part of each event.

Also, during my time at EHM, together with other organizations we fought to put potable water and sewage services in a predominantly Latino and African American community. I believe that the opportunity I had to serve my community and to see how the people of Saint Peter's always supported us regardless of the difference in languages and cultures or religions, made my love and respect for the Episcopal Church grow.

Like everything that has a beginning, it also has an end. In 2006 the organization sadly closed its doors, but the bond that the Episcopal Church had formed with the Latino community was already unbreakable. At one point the Church of San Mateo also closed its doors. After some time, a group of people who attended San Mateo, with a group of leaders from the church of San Pedro, began efforts to have a service in Spanish in the Chapel of San Pedro. After a while it became a reality. Finally in 2009 we started a new journey now in the chapel of San Pedro. They opened the doors of their home so to speak, for which we are very grateful.

Already in San Pedro I baptized my daughter in the mass that the two congregations celebrated on the riverbank, it was a very emotional day. Later I baptized my youngest son and at the same time I was officially received into the Episcopal Church by Bishop Rob Skirving. My three children have already been confirmed in the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church is for me like my spiritual home. It is inclusive, respects our culture and invites us to grow spiritually and gives us the opportunity for our children to have experiences in their lives that many of us may not be able to cover because they are expensive. The Episcopal Church of San Pedro gave me the opportunity to have a scholarship for each of my three children in the Day School program. All three were participants in the Camp Trinity program that takes place every summer; they were always anxious and excited when Summer was near, knowing that they would have another wonderful experience.

I know that the language barrier has been a situation that prevents us from achieving the most optimal communication with other people when we do not speak the same language, but even with this limitation we have asked to integrate ourselves into other cultures, especially the Episcopal culture that opens its heart to us and makes us feel at home. The Episcopal Church uses the communication of love, understanding, acceptance, without judging anyone. The people of the church have done everything in their power to bring about a relationship between the two cultures and many members do their best to join our celebrations.

San Mateo and now San Pedro have been our space to gather as a community and feel at home. We have celebrated countless Quinceañeras, baptisms, Latin festivals, educational workshops and of course we have been able to celebrate the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which as Mexicans is important to us.

In the Church of San Pedro there are services in English and also services in Spanish in the chapel, and many times on special occasions we mix the services so that they are bilingual so that we all feel included, and we participate in the language that makes us feel most comfortable. and then maybe we have lunch together. The two congregations have also worked together on different programs that do not necessarily require us to talk, rather it requires hands-on work, such as the programs of: Dental Clinic, Toys for Tots, Stop Hunger Now, among others.

I have participated in the event organized by Latino congregations in Kanuga, the mountains of North Carolina. Truly one of the things I liked most about this experience was the energy, joy and leadership that each Episcopalian participant brings to this event.

Now we face a challenge that I imagine is isolating us from other congregations. Since the COVID outbreak, church attendance has decreased considerably; we thought that once things returned to a certain normality, people would return to congregate. This has not happened, we know that this situation has created a lot of anxiety among the communities and even more so among the younger generations, but we are not sure why people have not returned.

I am sure that there are many people who want to be part of something that will make them grow as spiritual people, find their purpose in this life, there are many mothers and fathers who are desperate and want to gain a better understanding of how to guide their children. We know that it is increasingly common to see young people lost in bad habits that lead them to perdition. There are many people out in the community who are in need of a light within their darkness.

Can we, the Church of God, be that light, that hope, that promise of a better life? And how are we going to achieve it? My desire to know feeds my missionary soul.

CREATING SAFE SPACE AT KANUGA

By Jane Childress & Sara Tavela

At Kanuga, our vision is "To inspire a more mindful and compassionate world"

Here in North Carolina, we are blessed with geographical variety and beauty, spaces in which we can experience the wonders of God's creation. Kanuga is one of those spaces, open to all, where individuals and groups can take time with God and with one another.

The Diocese of East Carolina has contributed to supporting Kanuga for 40 consecutive years, supporting their mission of "inviting all people to connect with each other, nature, and the Creator." Kanuga was founded on a vision of inclusivity, first spearheaded by Bishop Kirkman Finlay of the Diocese of South Carolina almost 100 years ago.

Kanuga's Beginnings: A Gathering Place

Kanuga's 1,400 acres were originally Cherokee (Tsalagi) lands, before the Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from the region. The property changed hands several times over the decades, until in 1909, a businessman from Charlotte, NC purchased it as a rustic summer resort, and named it Kanuga Lake Club. He chose to name it "Kanuga" after a Cherokee word that he understood to mean, "a gathering place."

Kanuga Lake Club featured a rambling hotel with broad porches and 39 individual cottages. Each of the original buildings were outfitted with furniture made from Kanuga oak in a shop at the base of the old dam. The original lake was nearly three times its current size of 30 acres. Hurricane-swollen floods in 1916 devastated much of western North Carolina and washed out the Kanuga Lake dam, inflicting financial losses from which Kanuga Lake Club never recovered.

Kanuga and The Episcopal Church: Founded in Inclusivity

The Episcopal Church in North and South Carolina purchased the property in 1928, creating a summer camp and conference center as envisioned by Bishop Kirkman Finlay. The old hotel was replaced by Kanuga Lake Inn in 1968. Other original buildings were lost to the ravages of time; only the 39 green-shingled cottages survive from the original resort. These cottages are the basis of Kanuga's designation as a National Historic District. The dining rooms, cottages and other buildings continue to use pieces of the resort's original oak furniture.

CAMP
KANUGA

The Chapel of The Transfiguration, completed in 1938, was built as a memorial to Kanuga's founder, Bishop Kirkman Finlay. The chapel and its furniture are made entirely of wood cut from Kanuga trees that were toppled by the great St. Patrick's Day ice storm of 1936. Bishop Finlay was a rare proponent of inclusivity in his time, and Kanuga was founded in that vision as a place where all people are welcomed.

In 1972, The Episcopal Church designated Kanuga as a private, non-profit corporation, legally independent of The Episcopal Church, but still dedicated to its service. Today, Kanuga's management is accountable to a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees which includes the Episcopal bishops of the two Carolinas. Kanuga has three campuses, 150 buildings, and 22 miles of hiking trails. While Kanuga primarily serves people in the Southeast, it routinely welcomes guests of all backgrounds and faiths from all 50 states and many overseas locations.

Kanuga Today: Working Towards Greater Inclusion

Each year, Kanuga hosts dozens of conferences and programs; parish retreats; business, non-profit, and personal groups; and year-round personal retreats. Camp Kanuga offers a traditional Episcopal summer camp, with a leadership program for older teens. Bob Campbell Youth Campus hosts a variety of children's groups and programs, including Mountain Trail Outdoor School, which offers residential science instruction for middle-school students.

Kanuga means different things to different people, depending on when and why they visit. However, the common input received through guest surveys points to one main concept: radical hospitality. At Kanuga, we remember our guests' names. We recognize and appreciate that being here means so much more to them than just a getaway or a place to stay. Kanuga is a "thin place" where family, friends, colleagues, and groups feel deep and long-lasting connections with each other, nature, and the Creator. Our interactions with them are—genuinely and intentionally—supportive and loving.

Kanuga's community is known as a safe space that is ideal for all kinds of people to come together and connect. Part of the present and future work of racial healing has been a focus on messaging, representation, and institutional work. We routinely welcome people and groups of all different backgrounds for conferencing and camps. Camp Bob, for example, is an outreach space grounded in socioeconomic accessibility. Many programs through Camp Bob and Kanuga are built upon seeking greater inclusivity, such as our partnership with Camplify NC who seek to serve under-resourced communities in Western North Carolina.

Similarly, we have turned inward to examine our leadership at Kanuga, in terms of staff, board, and planning committees to do the intentional work of bringing more voices to the table. A lot of concentrated attention on the part of our Board of Trustees has been to gain a representation of different communities and voices, and in the past few years, our leadership has become really diverse, which we previously could not say.

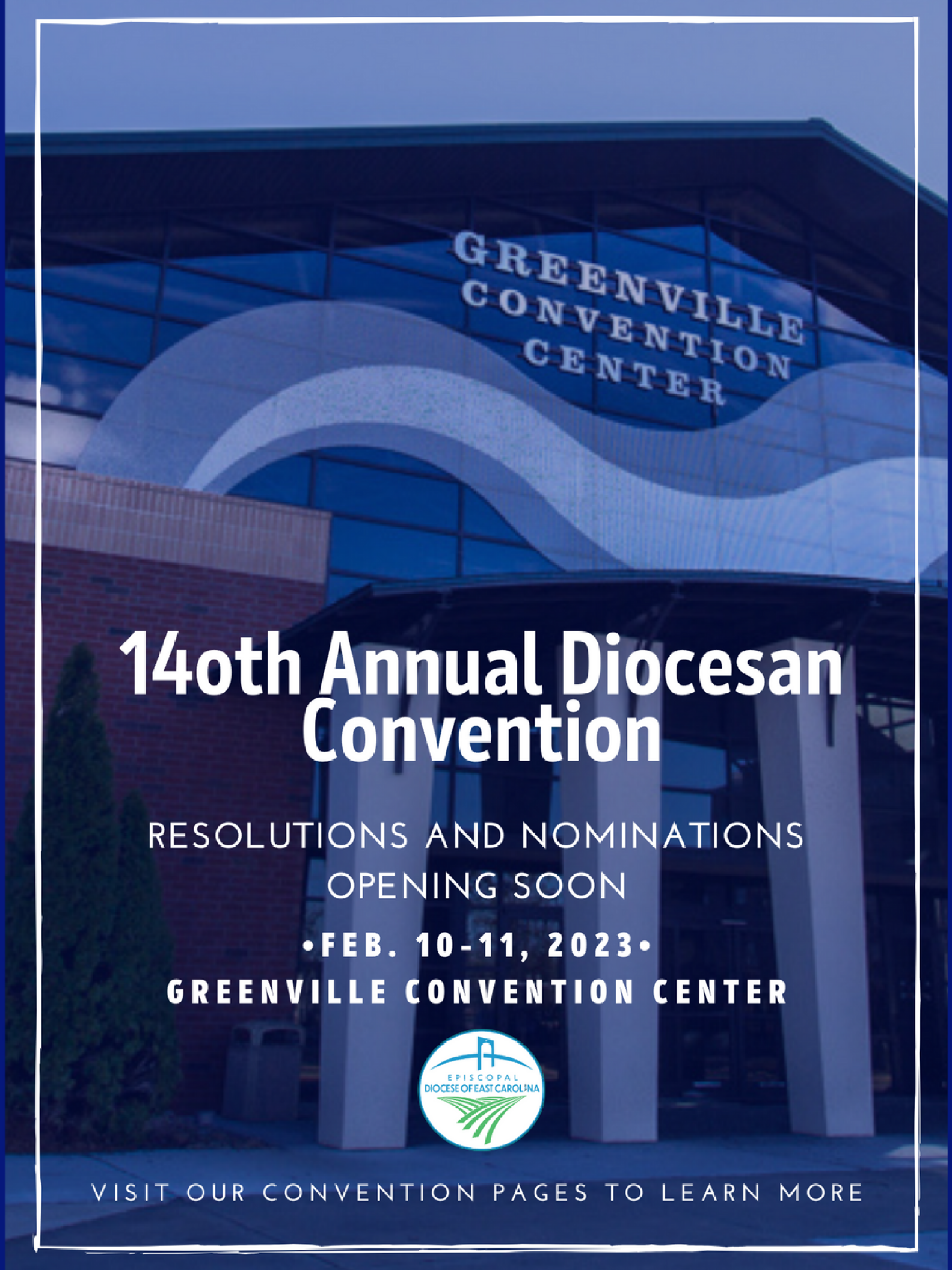
Our next area of focus will be our staff and seeking greater diversity and inclusivity. With planning committees, we have also worked to expand the planning term to have more voices at the table in program development, an initiative from which we have received good feedback about the direction we are heading, seen particularly with our Christian Formation Conference hosted each year in June.

Two books have been published about the history of Kanuga, and both are available from the human resources team or to guests in the Kanuga Library: *Kanuga: Story of a Gathering Place* by Jack Reak was published in 1993 and *Kanuga: Story of a Welcoming Place - A Beginning Made*, was written by Dr. Cecil Patterson as documentation of Kangua's history with race and inclusivity, and published in 1998.

Kanuga has made a lot of strides in racial reconciliation and healing, and there is more work to be done. Like everyone, we're trying to be more Christ-like every day and learning as we go. The last years in our country have been divisive, and our response has been to be the most loving, non-judging, safe space we can be, welcoming everyone and giving opportunities to connect to one another and to God. The Kanuga community is known as a place where you can come and be safe, and our work is to continue the legacy begun by Bishop Finlay at Kanuga's founding, pushing further to embody inclusion and radical hospitality.

UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

HTTPS://WWW.DIOCESE-EASTCAROLINA.ORG/EVENTS/



14oth Annual Diocesan Convention

RESOLUTIONS AND NOMINATIONS
OPENING SOON

•FEB. 10-11, 2023•

GREENVILLE CONVENTION CENTER

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VISIT OUR CONVENTION PAGES TO LEARN MORE

Join us for our 140th Convention workshops.

Four offerings to choose from!

Although the Convention Committee is still working out the details, we have confirmed that there will be four workshops on the following topics:

-Digital Ministry
-Spiritual Formation and Discipleship
-Creation Care by Sound to Sea
-Small Parish Leadership and Networking

All in the diocese are welcome to attend. There is no cost, but registration will be required.

Stay tuned for times, details, and registration information.

Save the Date:
The afternoon of
Friday, February 10th
at the Greenville Convention
Center, Greenville NC

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https://www.diocese-eastcarolina.org/140th-convention-of-the-diocese-of-east-carolina/

Winter Retreat 2023

January 13th -15th

8th - 12th Graders

Open to past Camp Trinity campers and young people in the Diocese of East Carolina

Registration is Open!

CAMP TRINITY
The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

THE GOOD BOOK CLUB

Epiphany 2023: Ruth & Esther
Online & Hybrid

4 Diocesan-Wide Studies

Mondays, 7 - 8 pm, Zoom
The Rev'd Michelle Bullock
St. Peter's By-the-Sea, Swansboro

Wednesdays, 11 am - 12 noon, Hybrid
The Rev'd Paul Canady
Christ Church, New Bern

Thursdays, 8 - 9 am, Zoom
The Rev'd Stephen Batten
Trinity, Chocowinity

Fridays, 9:30 - 10:30 am, Zoom
The Rev'd Farrell Graves, Jr.
St. James the Fisherman, Shallotte

Click here to learn more and register.

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