Introvert that I am, I nonetheless enjoy experiencing the social side of parish life, seeing how what happens in the nave and sanctuary shows up in the room next door or downstairs … hopefully en route to showing up in the neighborhood (either literal or metaphorical) in which that Eucharistic Community is incarnate.

The coffee hour is sometimes referred to as the “eighth sacrament” … in jest, of course. Yet, there is an element of truth here, because, while it may not be a formally-recognized sacrament, it is at least an important sign, because it stands as a proxy for the entire communal life of that congregation, that community. And community is the nexus between liturgy and mission. The Eucharist resources community life, and community life resources mission.

While I generally enjoy my work, there are certainly aspects that are unpleasantly challenging. But making Sunday visitations is not one of them. Sunday is the highlight of my week, every week. The privilege of sharing in Word and Sacrament with the baptized faithful of the diocese is, of course, a singular joy in its own right. But what happens afterward in the parish hall is also an important part of the picture. Because the Bishop’s visit is always a special occasion in each place, there’s often a potluck, or at least a “fancy” coffee hour. (I’ve recently joked that I should write some sort of Yelp-like review after each one and incite some friendly competition … but they’re all so good, that I don’t think I’ll go down that road!)

You may know that I have a keen interest in what I believe to be a watershed transition that we are in the midst of as
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+ Rt. Rev. Daniel H. Martins, Bishop

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members of western civilization. After a millennium and a half of enjoying a privileged relationship with civil society, Christianity has been cut loose. The Christian narrative about the nature of reality and the meaning of life, which funded western culture for so long that the two seemed inseparable, has lost its franchise. That contract was put out to bid, and society chose not to renew it. We can debate about why and how this has happened, but we can’t escape that fact that it has, in fact, happened. The culture wars are over, and traditional Christianity has lost.

So … how shall we then live? The American Christian (Eastern Orthodox) writer and editor Rod Dreher (b. 1967) has put forward a notion—one that has gotten a good bit of traction over the last several months—that he calls the Benedict Option. This is named for St Benedict of Nursia, the early sixth century founder of the monastic movement that bears his name (and which, a thousand years later, was a primary shaper of the Anglican liturgical and spiritual ethos). When, in the couple of centuries following its legalization in the Roman Empire, Christianity evolved into something much wider but also much shallower, there was an impetus for those who desired to continue to take Christian discipleship with great seriousness to form intentional communities—monasteries, convents—where they could hold one another accountable to the radical demands of the gospel in a way that was virtually impossible to do “in the world.” They look for ways to be discernibly not of the world. But they all, in varying degrees and way, found a path to remaining in the world, engaged in the evangelical imperative of witness and service. By many accounts, the monastic movement is held responsible for holding European civilization together through some very trying times.

The later-day Benedict Option will, in most cases, not demand a re-flowering of monasticism in its traditional forms. But it does invite a very focused and certainly uncomfortable, if not painful, departure from business as usual for American Christians, for Episcopalians, for the faithful in Christ Jesus in the one church of the Diocese of Springfield. It involves adding some figurative steroids to the coffee we serve after Mass on Sundays. It calls us to lay hold aggressively of our baptismal identity, and to recognize that the font, at which we were sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever, has left a deeper mark on us than even the genes we inherited from our parents and which we share with our siblings and cousins. Water, in this case, actually is thicker than blood.

There are a number of ways this could turn out to “look.” I know of a parish in suburban Chicago that many years ago consciously declared itself to be a “Benedictine community.” They have a shared Rule of Life, and rather stricter-than-usual criteria for full membership. That’s one template; there are no doubt many others. What I’m suggesting is that there’s an additional element that we need to add into the mix as we engage the task of discerning and strategizing for mission in each Eucharistic Community and each geographic Parish. Baptized Christians cannot be sent on apostolic mission unless they are first well-formed disciples. But disciples are formed in community. (It is argued by some that, if our parish community life were all that it should be, we wouldn’t even need to worry about mission and evangelization, because the world would be beating a path to our door. But that’s another discussion.) It happens on many fronts: Bible studies, outreach projects, prayer groups, book studies, and many others. How is it happening in your Eucharistic Community? How is it happening for you?

+ Daniel
This is now my fifth address to Synod as the 11th Bishop of Springfield, and the sixth Synod I have attended. If I can hijack and repurpose some of the language from the blessing of the water in the baptismal liturgy, I do this as a matter of “joyful obedience.” It is a burden that I bear out of obedience, but it is a burden that I bear joyfully, with a song in my heart.

It’s good to be with you here in Jacksonville, home of the oldest continuously-extant Episcopal parish in the state of Illinois, in whose beautiful church we will celebrate the Eucharist later this afternoon. I’m sure we will in due course have a resolution of courtesy for Father Ashmore and the crew from Trinity Church for all they’re doing to make this Synod possible. And even though I do this every year, they, in fact, deserve it every year, so I express my heartfelt thanks to the staff of the diocesan office: Archdeacon Shawn Denney, Administrator Sue Spring, and Treasurer Jim Donkin … plus, even though he’s not a staff member per se, he’s still pretty much at my beck and call, Chancellor Kevin Babb.

One of the more important items we will be taking up at this Synod is a proposed revision to our diocesan constitution. This is the first step in a larger and longer effort, and really only gets us a few yards down the field. The really long-yardage carries will happen during the coming year, when the same task force that prepared the constitutional revisions will turn its attention to the canons. As you probably know, it takes a majority vote by orders at two consecutive annual Synods to amend the constitution, but the canons can be amended in one sitting. So, presuming we pass a revised constitution on first reading tomorrow—and I certainly hope and expect we will—when we meet in Edwardsville a year from now, we will both adopt the new constitution on second reading, and also amend our canons.

This process is driven by a need to have our structures of administration and polity conform to the imperatives of mission in a changing society and world. Over the last four years, we have been moving consistently, even if too slowly, in the direction of a quite revolutionary—at least in the context of Episcopalian standard operating procedure—a quite revolutionary approach to mission and ministry. The workshop we held last month on “moving into the neighborhood” is a sign of that new commitment. The clergy conference we will hold next month on the evangelization of adults and their formation for baptism through the ancient process of the catechumenate is another such sign. Last year at this time, I invited you all to consider funding a new staff person at a diocesan level who would give our efforts a steroid shot. That did not materialize, but God has nonetheless been faithful, and I am more encouraged now about our common life and our common future than I have been since the day I was elected to this office.

I will be candid with you, and say that, in my opinion, not everything in the proposed revised constitution is of equal importance. I personally have three “dogs in the hunt,” so to speak, and they are these:
1. The adoption of the term “Eucharistic Communities” as a universal expression to denote all of our organized and established congregations, whether currently known now as parishes or missions. The reason for this is in order to repurpose the word “parish” in a more traditional sense than it has come to be understood in the U.S. in recent decades—that is, as a piece of real estate, a geographical region with defined boundaries. A geographic parish may have one or more than one Eucharistic Community within its borders, but, whether alone or together, those Eucharistic Communities are charged with the responsibility of prosecuting the mission of the diocese within their Parish. They will be required to develop a Mission Plan, to which the rest of the “one church of the Diocese of Springfield” will both hold them accountable, and offer assistance according to the gifts that the Holy Spirit has distributed among us. Now, I am aware that there is some concern over the fact that, using the more familiar terminology, “parishes” and “missions” have distinctly different prerogatives and relationships with the Bishop, and that “parish” is a technical term in the context of Episcopal Church canons. I get that, and can assure this Synod that, to the extent I have any influence, these concerns will be taken into account as we work on revising the canons, such that no no Eucharistic Community will lose prerogatives or privileges that they currently enjoy, and if, by chance, it doesn’t, then you’ll have next year to reject both the constitution and canons.

2. Second, I think it’s vital that we apportion lay representation at Synod according to Average Sunday Attendance rather than number of communicants. Any statistic can be fudged, and, I’m sorry to say, clergy have been known to fudge on both counts. But ASA is generally both a more accurate number and a better metric of congregational vitality and health than the total number of members. I will say, however, that the precise thresholds for each number of delegates are plausibly the subject of conversation and amendment, if there is energy for that.

3. Third, I’m enthusiastic about the proposal to give every Eucharistic Community at least two delegates. I’ll be honest; my reason for this is mostly emotional! I get sad when I see someone who drove a good distance to come to Synod, and is here alone—within nobody to lean over and make snide comments to during the debate, or sit with at the banquet. Maybe I’m just looking out for my fellow introverts!

So, what is our call in this environment? As far as I’m concerned, our call is to double down on our mission strategy.

A few words now about mission and mission strategy, which, this year, is going to pretty much take the form of a state-of-the-diocese report. Numerically and financially, we collectively continue a long, slow slide, paralleling what most of your experience in your local situations. From 2013 going into 2014, our total Average Sunday Attendance was essentially flat, for which I give some measure of thanks, since it’s gone down every other year that I’ve been in the diocese, and growth is always preceded by the flattening out of decline. Of course, we’re still down about 30% from that historic benchmark year of 2003. But our collective stewardship—plate and pledge—was down about 5% from one year to the next. On the whole, there are fewer and fewer of us; our median age is rising. This is not a current emergency, but it’s a very serious long-term challenge that will potentially bring life-altering consequences for us.

As a general rule, and reflecting trends in the surrounding society, the parishes located in the four population clusters of the diocese—Springfield, Champaign-Urbana, Bloomington-Normal, and the Metro East—churches in these areas enjoy a healthier prognosis than those in county seat towns and smaller communities. This is consistent with trends across the Episcopal Church, which is becoming increasingly urban—especially in major metropolitan areas, of which we have none—well, as slice of one if you count the Darrow Deanery—and also increasingly educated. The Episcopal Church continues to be an “elite” church that wants to do “working class/blue collar” ministry, but doesn’t really know how. As one of the attendees
at our mission strategy workshop observed rather poignantly, what are you going to do when you visit a church and get persuaded to come to coffee hour and one person you talk to is a school teacher, and another a college administrator, and other a banker, and you spend your working hours behind the counter at Taco Bell? No matter how warmly you're welcomed, you're probably not going to come back. We don't want to be elitist; we literally don't know how not to be.

So, what is our call in this environment? As far as I'm concerned, our call is to double down on our mission strategy. Our call, at the level of each Eucharistic Community, each geographic Parish, is to incarnate ourselves in our neighborhoods (and I use that term at least as much figuratively as I do literally), build relationships with people who are unchurched, dechurched, and generally unevangelized, connect with them at the level of their perceived need, earn the privilege of introducing them to Jesus, trust the Holy Spirit to connect us with those who are ready to hear the Good News, begin to make disciples of them, and lead them eventually to the waters of baptism. As an afterthought, when all else is said and done, we will introduce them to the Eucharist. This is the grand vision. In the meantime, there are baby steps, there are points of light. I hesitate to name these points of light individually, because I might overlook one or two, but I'll take the risk. The Church of the Redeemer in Cairo has been the location of a minor miracle, and this should be a source of encouragement to the entire diocese. The clergy and lay leadership of McLean County Parish—aka St Matthew's, Bloomington and Christ the King, Normal—are endeavoring to lay aside old suspicions and rivalries and take collective responsibility for the mission of the diocese in their area. St Paul's Cathedral in Springfield is giving evidence of light and life of a sort I have not seen since coming to the diocese. Our two parishes in Champaign–Emmanuel and St John's Chapel–are simmering with vitality and spiritual growth. Our two Eucharistic Communities in St Clair County—St Michael's, O'Fallon and St George's, Belleville—which share joint missionary custody of Scott Air Force Base—are cooperating rather than competing, to the glory of God and the building up of his kingdom. The last couple of times I've gone to St Andrew's, Carbondale, there have been truckloads of baptisms and confirmations. Trinity, Mattoon actually has youth serving as acolytes now, something that had virtually disappeared from their collective memory. Have I missed anything? I would love nothing better than to be accosted at the banquet and severely scolded for overlooking a place where the Holy Spirit is doing something amazing.

These points of light will grow brighter and multiply to the extent that we are faithful in the work of making disciples who will engage in apostolic ministry—disciples who make disciples. To that end, I want to give a shout-out to something called Renewal Works, which is an instrument that assesses spiritual vitality among members of a congregation and then offers guidance on strategies for moving the needle when the same assessment instrument is used three or four years later. We have a cluster of four Eucharistic Communities in the northern part of the diocese that are working with Renewal Works this fall, and I hope to expand that number in the spring cycle. And let me make a brief plug for the St Michael's Youth Conference. This past June, we gathered fifteen teenagers from around the diocese, along with six clergy, including YFNB, at an Assemblies of God campground, for five days of rather intense instruction in the faith, rather intense worship, recreation and community-building activities. It was a grand success, and we intend on making it an annual event for many years to come. If you know any young people between the ages of 13 and 19, you will want to get this on their radar.
Wrapping up now: I continue to love my job, which I count an enormous blessing. I turned 64 years of age last month—and 64, of course, is the new 50! I can retire in four more years, at 68, and I must retire in eight more years, at 72. Most of the time, the vast majority of the time, I hope and plan on it being a lot closer to eight than to four. There are days when I might opt for four, but not very many! So, to the end of lengthening the time that I am with you, a three-month sabbatical was built into my Letter of Agreement at the time of my election in 2010, to be available after five years of service. The five year mark will arrive on March 19, 2016. So, combining sabbatical time with my regular period of vacation, I expect to be substantially out of action from mid-June until a week or so before the 2016 annual synod. You might anticipate, then, that this address may be a lot shorter next year! I will, of course, be delegating much of what I would ordinarily attend to personally, and simply deferring other things. My cycle of parish visitations seems to have been successfully squeezed into the remaining Sundays, with some extra lubricant.

My plan, if the various details come together, is to walk about 500 miles across northern Spain, as a pilgrim on the ancient Camino de Compostela. Go to Netflix and look for a movie called The Way, and you’ll get the general picture. I also hope to spend some time, along with Brenda, in Italy—particularly Rome, where there is a small but important Anglican Centre just outside the walls of the Vatican, and in Venice, where St Mark’s Cathedral has a musical tradition that stirred my heart while I was in college and continues to provide exemplary liturgy. I’ll give you more details as plans develop.

I recently read the text of an address by the Bishop of London—a quite remarkable leader who, over the course of twenty years, has breathed incredible new life into that gargantuan diocese—in which he has this to say about the ministry of bishops: “Some of the best bishops are no great loss to the parochial ministry, where many saints are to be found. Bishops are more like conductors of the orchestra, who may not be the most gifted instrumental players but who are charged to keep close to the score and to fashion a new interpretation of a symphony out of talented soloists.” Having been a mediocre ensemble musician in my youth, but always aspiring to be a conductor, this resonated with me. We have some very talented “soloists” among the clergy and faithful of this diocese. If, by being intimately familiar with the “score,” I can lead this orchestra in turning it into compelling music in central and southern Illinois, the obedience I aspire to offer will be made that much more joyful.

St. Thomas’, Salem and St. John’s, Centralia are pleased to announce that they are offering a three-part Teaching Mission in January to the wider community. Missioner will be Kevin D. Pittle, Ph.D. Dr. Pittle is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Studies at Biola University and Visiting Lecturer in Judaic Studies for the Netzer David International Yeshiva (a seminary for training Jesus-believing Jewish Rabbis). He resides in La Mirada, California with his wife Natasha and their five children (ages 7-17). While visiting with us, Dr. Pittle will share insights into the Scriptures drawing on the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek wording of Biblical texts and on a lifetime of familiarity with the Jewish cultural contexts of both the Old and New Testaments.

Dr. Pittle will preach at Evensong at St. John’s at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 16, with reception to follow, and will preach the following day at both St. Thomas’ and St. John’s. A third address will follow at St. Thomas’ on Wednesday, January 20. This address will take place after Mass at 5:30 p.m. and a dinner. All interested persons are welcome to any and all of these events. An offering will be taken to help defray expenses.

For more information, please contact Father David Baumann at starbrow730@gmail.com.
ORGAN RECITAL AT SAINT THOMAS CHURCH NYC

Linda Buzard, organist and choirmaster of the Chapel of Saint John the Divine in Champaign, Illinois, gave an organ recital at the Chapel on Sunday, November 8. Highlights of the recital included the Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 582, by Johann Sebastian Bach and the Grand Pièce Symphonique by César Franck. Ms. Buzard later performed this recital at the Saint Thomas Church in New York City following a performance of choral Evensong by the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys on November 22.

Linda Buzard became Organist at the Chapel in 1988 and Organist Choirmaster in 1990, succeeding her organ professor, Jerald Hamilton, who served the parish for over 25 years. Linda is a graduate of the University of Illinois with a Bachelor’s of Music degree in organ performance. She received her Master’s degree in Organ and Church Music at Northwestern University where she studied with Richard Enright. In her position, Linda oversees all of the Chapel’s choral music programs.

In 2005 Linda started the choristers training program at the Chapel and affiliated the Chapel with the Royal School of Church Music in America. Over the years Linda has attended 20 summer courses of the RSCMA with her choristers and has served on the staff as Housemaster, Organist and Proctor. Currently she is the national Exam Administrator of the RSCMA and is validated as an examiner at the Bronze, Silver and Gold levels. Locally she is active with the Tuesday Morning Musical Club, Mu Phi Epsilon and the chorus of the Baroque Artists of Champaign.

Her husband, John Paul, is an organ builder whose firm builds pipe organs all across America. Linda has two children, Stephen, who is Acting Director of Music at Saint Thomas Church in New York City and Katie who is in her final year of her master’s program in vocal performance and opera at the Royal College of Music in London, England.

EMMANUEL MEMORIAL PRESENTS CONCERT FOR ORGAN, CHOIR, AND ORCHESTRA

A packed house of music lovers enjoyed an evening of music for celebration and contemplation on November 13th at Emmanuel Memorial Episcopal Church in Champaign, featuring works of Barber, Faure, Bedard, and Schubert. Choirmaster Filippo
Ciabatti conducted the orchestra and Emmanuel’s 20-voice choir, and organist Michael Fisher was featured as soloist.

Filippo Ciabatti commented, “I think that it is unique to be able to work with a professional orchestra in a church context. At Emmanuel, the level of commitment to the music program on the part of the choir, the congregation and the parish leadership is remarkable.” This special concert was made possible by a gift from parishioners Marny and Dale Elliott.

The evening opened with Barber’s “Adagio for Strings,” first written as the second movement of his String Quartet, Op. 11 in 1936 and later transcribed for string orchestra. Since the concert took place the night of the terrorist attacks in Paris, the ensemble chose to dedicate this very popular work of great beauty and quiet intensity to the victims, an experience Ciabatti called “particularly meaningful and moving.”

French Canadian composer Denis Bedard (b. 1950) was also highlighted during the instrumental portion of the concert. His “Concerto for Organ and Strings” was written between 1999 – 2000; in five distinct movements, it is full of energy and good humor as well as introspection. Organist Mike Fisher had the pleasure of offering Central Illinois its first opportunity to discover this work. He commented, “It was a wonderful experience working with the orchestra and Filippo to put together a performance of this little-known organ concerto. It is unusual for a parish organist to have such an opportunity and I am very grateful.”

The “Cantique de Jean Racine” launched the choral section of the evening’s program. Fauré’s Op. 11, it was written between 1864-65 for a Paris composition competition; he was 19 years old at the time and won first prize. The text reflects meaningfully on Christ as the Word of God, and the Emmanuel Choir has sung it before as an anthem during Mass.

The climax of the concert was a heartfelt performance of Schubert’s “Mass in G,” composed in 1815. Emmanuel’s Choral Scholars, four University of Illinois students who assist in the congregation’s music program, presented solos in sections of the Mass. Pierre Tang, another student, had previously assisted in preparation of the choir. The concert also served as an informal farewell to Filippo Ciabatti, who has accepted an orchestral conducting position at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and will be leaving Emmanuel after Christmas.

At a reception afterwards put on by parish volunteers, a wide group of Champaign-Urbana neighbors mingled, many of whom had never been to Emmanuel before. “We offer these arts events free,” said the Rev. Beth Maynard, Rector, “because it makes such sense with the space God has given us, and because we are always looking for new ways to love our neighbors.”
AROUND THE DIOCESE

THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW’S

For many years, a vesper service had been sung at St. Andrew's Church in Carbondale to mark their patron's feast day. Somehow, the tradition fell by the wayside. This year, the parish revived the tradition—with a twist. Most of the music for the service was derived from the music originating at the ecumenical monastery in Taize, France.

Participants brought favorite icons to add to the church's icons of St. Andrew, Mary, and the Christ child. Dozens of candles of many shapes and sizes were also lent, filling the chancel area with white light, a symbol of Christ, the Light of the World, entering the world. The hour-long service was prayed in the semi-darkness of the soft candle light. A festive reception in the parish hall followed the liturgy.

Community response was enthusiastic, with many requests that the St. Andrew's Candelight Vespers become an annual event. Sales of the DVD have been brisk. "This was a spiritual happening!" exclaimed one worshiper. God willing, the parish will continue to honor their patron saint in this compelling way every Feast Day of St. Andrew's, in the years to come.

St. Andrew's Church

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CURRY INSTALLED AS 27TH PRESIDING BISHOP AND EPISCOPAL CHURCH PRIMATE

Evangelism, Racial Reconciliation Rooted in Love Will Anchor Work Ahead, He Says

By Mary Frances Schjonberg,

Episcopal News Service


After knocking on the west doors in the traditional manner at noon as the sun broke through the clouds and being admitted to the cathedral by the Very Rev. Gary Hall, the cathedral’s dean, and Diocese of Washington Bishop Mariann Budde, Curry was asked to “tell us who you are.”

“I am Michael Bruce Curry, a child of God, baptized in St. Simon of Cyrene Church, Maywood, Illinois, on May 3, 1953, and since that time I have sought to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ,” he replied.

“Michael, Bishop in the Church of God, we have anticipated your arrival with great joy,” 26th Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori told him.

“In the Name of Christ, we greet you,” she added, and the greeting was echoed by the more than 2,500 people in attendance.

Curry, the former bishop of North Carolina, promised to be a “faithful shepherd and pastor” and, when asked by Jefferts Schori if they would support Curry in his ministry, those attending roared in reply, “We will.”

With that and all the liturgical celebration that followed, The Episcopal Church made history as it welcomed its first person of color as presiding bishop and primate.

“God has not given up on God’s world,” Curry told the congregation and the thousands of people watching the service’s live webcast. “And God is not finished with The Episcopal Church yet. God has work for us to do.”

The presiding bishop continued his call for the church and its members to join the Jesus Movement, tracing the evidence of the movement through biblical and societal history. “What was true in the first century and true in the 19th century is equally and more profound in this new 21st century,” he said. Jesus himself continued a movement begun by John the Baptist and took it to a new level, Curry said. “John was part of the movement born out of prophets like Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah. And prophetic movement was rooted in Moses, who went up to the mountaintop,” he said. “Jesus crystalized and catalyzed the movement that was serving God’s mission in this world. God has a passionate dream for this world.”
The dream involves change, the presiding bishop said. “The Way of Jesus will always turn our worlds and the world upside down, which is really turning it right side up!”

“At home and in the church, do unto others as you would have them do to you. That will turn things upside down,” Curry said. “In the boardrooms of the corporate world, in the classrooms of the academic world, in the factories, on the streets, in the halls of legislatures and councils of government, in the courts of the land, in the councils of the nations, wherever human beings are, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Curry returned again and again in his sermon to evangelism and reconciliation, especially racial reconciliation, calling it “some of the most difficult work possible.”

“But don’t worry,” he said. “We can do it. The Holy Spirit has done this work before in The Episcopal Church. And it can be done again for a new day.”

He called for an evangelism that is “genuine and authentic to us as Episcopalians, not a way that imitates or judges anyone else” and that is “about helping others find their way to a relationship with God without our trying to control the outcome.” Such evangelism, he said, ought to involve both sharing the faith that is in us and listening to and learning from others’ experiences.

Curry said that racial reconciliation is “just the beginning for the hard and holy work of real reconciliation that realizes justice across all the borders and boundaries that divide the human family of God.”

The presiding bishop acknowledged that such work is “difficult work, but we can do it. It’s about listening and sharing. It’s about God.”

And, Curry said, “in this work of reconciliation we can join hands with others.”

“It is as the Jesus Movement, following Jesus’ way, that we join hands with brothers and sisters of different Christian communities, with brothers and sisters of other faith and religious traditions, and with brothers and sisters who may be atheist or agnostic or just on a journey, but who long for a better world where children do not starve and where there is, as the old spiritual says, ‘plenty good room for all of God’s children,’ ” Curry said.

PRESIDING BISHOP
MICHAEL CURRY’S
PAST MINISTRY

Born in Chicago, Illinois, on March 13, 1953, Curry attended public schools in Buffalo, New York, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1975 from Hobart and William Smith Colleges, in Geneva, New
York, and a Master of Divinity degree in 1978 from the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale. He has also studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, Wake Forest University, the Ecumenical Institute at St. Mary’s Seminary, and the Institute of Christian Jewish Studies.

He was ordained to the diaconate in June 1978 at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Buffalo, New York, and to the priesthood in December 1978 at St. Stephen’s, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He began his ministry as deacon-in-charge at St. Stephen’s, and was rector there 1979-1982. He next accepted a call to serve as the rector of St. Simon of Cyrene, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, where he served 1982-1988. In 1988, he became rector of St. James’, Baltimore, Maryland, where he served until his election as bishop.

In his three parish ministries, Curry was active in the founding of ecumenical summer day camps for children, the creation of networks of family day-care providers and educational centers, and the brokering of millions of dollars of investment in inner city neighborhoods. He also sat on the commission on ministry in each of the three dioceses in which he has served.

During his time as bishop of North Carolina, Curry instituted a network of canons, deacons and youth ministry professionals dedicated to supporting the ministry that already happens in local congregations and refocused the diocese on The Episcopal Church’s dedication to the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals through a $400,000 campaign to buy malaria nets that saved thousands of lives.

Throughout his ministry, Curry has also been active in issues of social justice, speaking out on immigration policy and marriage equality.

He serves on the boards of many organizations and has a national preaching and teaching ministry. He has been featured on The Protestant Hour and North Carolina Public Radio’s The State of Things, as well as on The Huffington Post website. In addition, Curry is a frequent speaker at conferences around the country.

He has received honorary degrees from Sewanee: The University of the South, Virginia Theological Seminary, Yale, and, most recently, Episcopal Divinity School. He served on the Taskforce for Re-imagining the Episcopal Church and recently was named chair of Episcopal Relief & Development’s board of directors.


Curry and his wife, Sharon, have two adult daughters, Rachel and Elizabeth.

— The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg is an editor and reporter for the Episcopal News Service.
As announced at General Convention in Utah this past summer, the United Thank Offering Board is pleased to announce that they are now accepting applications for Young Adult Grants for 2016. Due to increased response from the Young Adult community, the UTO Board has elected to expand the program. **In addition to awarding ten (10) grants of $2,500 (the amount has doubled from last year) to the top ten grant applications received from young adults the Board will also award ten (10) grants of $2,500 to ten seminarians regardless of their age.** The purpose of these grants is to provide start-up money for a new project that focuses on any of the Five Marks of Mission: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/five-marks-mission. There is a separate application for seminarians and young adults, but the deadlines, criteria and focus are the same. The grants will be awarded to the ten applications in each category that best fit the criteria and focus regardless of what province or seminary the applicants are from. Seminarian applications will be processed by the seminaries, but we hope you’ll encourage seminarians from your diocese to talk with their dean about applying. Both applications can be downloaded from www.episcopalchurch.org/uto or www.UnitedThankOffering.org. Since two grant processes are happening at the same time, the UTO hopes the following will help add clarity.

**Young Adult Grant Process**

- Young Adult grant applications must be written by and the subsequent project (if awarded) led by someone aged 21-30.
- Young Adults should submit their applications to their diocese by the deadline set by the diocese.
- The bishop will select one application per diocese. The diocesan office will submit its choice by Friday, January 29, 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, to utoapps@episcopalchurch.org.
- A bishop’s signature is required on the application. Applications without a bishop’s signature will not be accepted.
- Young Adult Grant applicants will be notified of the status of their application on March 1, 2015. Grants will be paid to the Diocese at that time, unless the diocese has outstanding grant reports.

**Seminarian Grant Process**

Seminarian grant applications must be written by and the subsequent project (if awarded) led by someone currently enrolled in one of the ten accredited seminaries of The Episcopal Church, http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/seminaries.

Seminarians should submit their applications to their dean by the deadline set by the dean of the seminary. The dean will select two applications per seminary. The dean’s office will submit its choice by Friday, January 29, 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, to utoapps@episcopalchurch.org.

The dean’s signature is required on the application. Applications without a dean’s signature will not be accepted. Seminarian Grant applicants will be notified of the status of their application on March 1, 2015. Grants will be paid to the seminary at that time.

UTO will offer two sets of webinars to answer questions. The first set is for those interested in applying who might have questions about the process or their specific project. Those will be held on December 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The second set is to help screening committees with their questions and will be held on January 13 and 14 at 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Please join us at https://zoom.us/j/8140408194 or call in: 415.762.9988, Meeting ID: 814 040 8194. The UTO Board looks forward to receiving your applications!
DECEMBER 2015

6 Bishop w/ Trinity, Mt. Vernon
20 Bishop w/ Christ Church, Springfield
25 CHRISTMAS DAY
27 Bishop w/ St. Thomas’, Glen Carbon

JANUARY 2016

03 EPIPHANY
10 Bishop w/ Trinity, Lincoln
17 Bishop w/ Christ the King, Normal
24 Bishop w/ Trinity, Jacksonville
31 Bishop w/ Chapel of St. John the Divine

FEBRUARY 2016

01-03 Clergy Pre-Lenten Retreat, King’s House, Belleville
07 Bishop w/ The Church of the Holy Trinity, Danville
10 ASH WEDNESDAY
11 Finance Department, Diocesan Center, Springfield (10 a.m.)
13 Diocesan Council, Diocesan Center, Springfield (10 a.m.)
14 Bishop w/ St. John’s, Decatur
21 Bishop w/ Christ Church, Springfield
28 Bishop w/ St. Thomas’, Glen Carbon
28 Bishop w/ St. Bartholomew’s, Granite City

MARCH 2016

03-04 ECW Annual Lenten Retreat, Toddhall, Columbia
06 Bishop w/ Trinity, Mt. Vernon
19 Mass of Chrism w/ lunch, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Springfield (11 a.m.)
20 PALM SUNDAY, Bishop w/ Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Springfield
25 GOOD FRIDAY
27 EASTER DAY, Bishop w/ Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Springfield

APRIL 2016

03 Bishop w/ Holy Communion, Charleston, SC
10 Bishop w/ Emmanuel Memorial, Champaign
17 Bishop w/ St. Christopher’s, Rantoul
23 ECW Annual Meeting, BroMenn Hospital
24 Bishop w/ Trinity, Yazoo City, MS (DEPO)

This calendar was correct at the time of printing, but is subject to change without notice.

For the most recent Diocesan Calendar and the full prayer cycle calendar, please visit www.episcopalspringfield.org.

CONTRIBUTE

For more information about contributing to The Springfield Current, please see the message from Bishop Daniel inside the front cover.

Contributors will be acknowledged in a future issue.

Thank you.

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