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This month’s cover photo is... 
Christmas at St. Peter’s, Albany
Photographer Unknown
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As Christmas and the end of the year approaches, I wanted to take this time to wish each of you a very blessed and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I continually give thanks to God for the Diocese of Albany and for you—my brothers and sisters in Christ. The more I travel and experience the Church throughout the United States and the rest of the world, the more I come to love and appreciate the clergy and people of this Diocese. February 1, 2017 will mark my Ten Year Anniversary as Bishop of Albany and consider myself very fortunate and blessed to serve in one of the finest dioceses in the Church today. It has been, and continues to be, a true honor and privilege to serve our Lord and His Church alongside you.

This Fall has been incredibly busy with a great deal of travel, both within the Diocese as well as outside the Diocese, to include two trips overseas. I feel like I have been living out of a suitcase for the past two months, home just long enough to wash clothes, repack and take off again. As a result, I have not been able to keep in touch with all of you as much as I would have liked. With that said, I would like to bring you up to date on some of the things I have been involved in.

Before I share all the Church related travel, I would ask you to please indulge me as I share the highlight of all my travels. In August, Karen and I were blessed to go to Virginia to visit our son (Chris) and daughter-in-law (Lauren) and our two grandsons (Peter –3 and Caleb –2) and to welcome the arrival of our beautiful new granddaughter, Nora. Nora was born on August 14th, my 59th birthday.

Exactly one month later, on September 14th, my official travels outside the Diocese began with a trip to Detroit, Michigan, for the Fall House of Bishop’s Meeting (Sept. 15-21). That was my first trip to Detroit, other than just passing through. After decades of decline, parts of Detroit are showing signs of new growth and vitality. One of the reasons the Bishops met in Detroit was to encourage them in their efforts. Besides, for the time of fellowship with the other Bishops and their spouses, probably the most significant thing that occurred at the HOB’s meeting was the election of the new Bishop Suffragan of the Armed Forces and Federal Ministries, The Rt. Rev. Carl Wright. He served in the Air Force as a chaplain, retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and then went on to serve as the rector of St. Andrew’s Church in Pasadena, Maryland, until the time of his election. Please keep Bishop
Wright in your prayers as he takes on this new ministry. The Bishop of the Armed Forces and Federal Ministries travels all over the United States and around the world ministering to those in the Military and Federal prisons and hospitals.

A few days after returning from the HOB's Meeting, I flew down to Virginia to officiate at my uncle’s funeral. While there, I was blessed to visit Fr. Nigel and Lynn Mumford at their home in Virginia Beach. It was great to see them. They asked that I pass on their regards to everyone in the Diocese. Please keep Fr. Nigel in your prayers. He continues to struggle with significant health issues.

On October 2-8, I was in Cairo, Egypt attending the 6th Trumpet Global South Conference. Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis (Archbishop of the Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa and Primate of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East), invited me to attend the Conference as a guest to represent the Communion Partner Bishops and Dioceses of The Episcopal Church. It was a tremendous honor and privilege to be invited to the Conference and meet Anglican leaders from around the world. All together approximately 100 people attended the Conference including: 13 Anglican Primates, 27 Bishops, as well as numerous other lay and ordained Anglican Leaders representing 16 Anglican Provinces, plus Bangladesh, United States, Canada, England, and Australia. I was the only bishop from The Episcopal Church present at the Conference. There was one “Gracious Restraint” Bishop from Canada (Canada’s version of Communion Partners) and a few theologically conservative bishops from England and Australia. Most everyone else was from one of the Global South Provinces, which makes up the vast majority of the Worldwide Anglican Communion.

The theme of the Conference was “…found faithful” based on 1 Corinthians 4:2 “…it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” In his letter of invitation, ++Archbishop Mouneer stated, “This meeting will be a historic and strategic one. The reason for this is that we meet at a time when the church as a whole and the Anglican Communion in particular, are at a cross roads. We are all aware that we are facing challenges both from within and without the church. It is important, therefore, to find out ways to face together these challenges and also to strengthen the church, its mission, and its structure for future generations. The need to be united as we face these challenges is an absolute necessity.”

During the course of the Conference there was daily worship and prayer time in addition to a daily Bible Study and five Plenary Addresses. They included: 1) “The Church of Carthage” by The Rt. Rev. Bill Musk; 2/3) “How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind (Part 1 & 2) by Dr. Michael Glerup; 4/5) “How Africa Shaped Anglicanism” (Part 1 & 2) by Dr. Ashley Null.

Each of the Plenary Sessions was outstanding. Tragically in recent years, the African Church has been looked down upon by some in the West, forgetting the rich heritage and many contributions the Church in Africa has passed on to the wider Church through some of the great Christian theologians of the early
Church to include Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage), Cyril of Alexandria, and Augustine of Hippo. God is continuing to use the Church in Africa to help shape and mold the wider Body of Christ, especially within the Anglican Communion.

The Communique from the 6th Global South Conference, Cairo 2016, was issued at the conclusion of the Conference. While touching on a wide variety of subjects, the Communique acknowledged the ongoing division within the Church over issues of human sexuality and same-sex marriage. Tragically, much of the Global South considers itself out of communion with most of The Episcopal Church and the Church of Canada over these issues. The Diocese of Albany and the other Communion Partner Dioceses in TEC and the Gracious Restraint Dioceses in Canada are the exception.

The Communique states, “…we will continue to extend our support and fellowship to orthodox Anglican dioceses and parishes in those Provinces which have departed from the biblical and historic teaching on human sexuality and marriage.”

By upholding the authority of Holy Scripture and remaining faithful to the traditional orthodox teaching on human sexuality and marriage, the Diocese of Albany remains in communion with all the Global South Provinces and the rest of the Anglican Communion. By the grace of God we will continue to as the Church works through these issues.

At the conclusion of The 6th Trumpet Global South Conference, I flew directly to Belfast (by way of Amsterdam) to attend our sister Diocese of Down and Dromore Clergy Conference (October 9 – 13) returning to New York on the 14th. As always, it was a very blessed and rewarding time. Unfortunately, my first few days in Northern Ireland were plagued by an intestinal bug I picked up in Cairo.

The Very Reverend Dr. Steven Peay was one of the principle speakers at the Conference. Fr. Peay is Dean of Nashotah House Episcopal Seminary and is a canonically resident priest of Albany. (Also a regular contributor to The Albany Episcopalian.) He did an outstanding job and was very well received. Relations between Albany and Down and Dromore continue to grow stronger. I am so thankful for the friendship and faith we share with Bishop Harold Miller and all the clergy and people of Down and Dromore.

Three days after returning home from Ireland, I was on a plane flying to Nashotah House in Wisconsin to attend a Board of Directors Meeting. The Diocese of Albany has been richly blessed by the outstanding seminary education and priestly formation many of our clergy have received at Nashotah House. I am very honored to have graduated from Nashotah House and to serve on its Board of Directors. For anyone who is able, Nashotah House is worthy of your financial support. One of the main contributing factors to a strong Church is well trained clergy. That is Nashotah’s specialty.

After returning to Albany from Nashotah on October 20th, it has been a very busy time here in the Diocese with the Discovery Bible Study Training Day at CTK (Oct. 22); the Institution of Fr. Matt Baker as Rector of St. Luke’s, Cambridge.
(Oct. 23); Regional Confirmation Service, St. Luke’s, Mechanicville (Oct. 25); Rededication of the newly renovated Parish Hall, Kitchen and Offices at Trinity Church, Watervliet (Oct. 27); Institution of Fr. Matt Stromberg as Rector of St. George’s, Schenectady (Oct. 28th); the Acolyte Festival at the Cathedral of All Saints on Oct. 29th; Visitation St. John’s, Massena (Oct. 30); Welcome Home Initiative at CTK (Nov. 2); Funeral of Fr. Brewster Hastings in Abington PA (Nov. 3rd); Annual Deacons’ Retreat (Nov. 4-6); Annual Priests’ Retreat (Nov. 8–11); Visitation to Trinity Church, Potsdam (Nov. 13); Confirmation Service Christ Church, Greenville (Nov. 16); Guest Retreat Leader in San Antonio, TX (Nov. 17–21).

In addition to the above, I have been working with the Great Chapter of the Cathedral of All Saints as we move forward in the search process for the next Dean of the Cathedral. By the grace of God, we hope to be able to complete the search and announce the name of the new Dean by the end of December. I want to thank the Search Committee and the Great Chapter for all their hard work during this process. I also want to thank Canon Robert Haskell+ for his dedicated leadership at the Cathedral during this interim period.

Similarly, I want to thank Archdeacon Harvey Huth, Mr. Randy Demler, and the Christ the King Advisory Commission for their outstanding leadership during this interim period at CTK. I am also appreciative of all the CTK staff for their continued hard work. We are making positive strides forward as we work to see how we can build upon and improve current ministries at CTK and plan for the future. The newly revised CTK Mission Statement will be used to evaluate the appropriateness of all current and future ministries at Christ the King Center. Each ministry will need to reflect in one way or another the CTK Mission Statement: “Christ the King Center equips disciples to make disciples for God’s Kingdom, by ministering to the heart, mind, body and soul of people of all ages through Christ-centered prayer, biblical teaching, and genuine hospitality, sharing Jesus’ love and healing grace in a beautiful Holy Spirit-filled setting.”

We hope to call the next Director of Christ the King Center by late Spring. Please continue to hold Christ the King Spiritual Life Center up in your prayers. It is truly a beautiful and holy place where God is working mightily. If you have never been to Christ the King Spiritual Life Center, I invite you to come. You won’t be disappointed.

One final thing I would like to update you on is the new addition to the Diocesan Administration Building located across the street from Christ the King. After working in the old admin building for the past three years, we decided in September to move forward with adding an addition to the existing building in order to provide adequate file storage, a conference room, and office space for the Diocesan Business Office and Bishop’s staff. The contractor is doing an outstanding job. God willing, the new addition will be ready by the first of the year. I think that brings you up to date for the moment.

Once again, I wish you and your loved ones a blessed and Merry Christmas. I pray that in all we do this Christmas, individually and as the Church, the love and Good News of Jesus Christ will be shared and received. For there is no greater gift we can give or receive than the gift of God’s love as so perfectly revealed in and through His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Merry Christmas!

In Christ’s Love,
+ Bill
Bishop of Albany
How Do We Become “Children of God”? 

By The Venerable Christopher A. Brown, Ph.D.

“All God’s Chillun’ God Rhythm”

One of the iconic comedy films from my childhood – though it obviously predates my childhood – was the Marx Brothers’ “A Day at the Races,” of 1937. Towards the end, the Marx brothers wander through the local African American shantytown when Harpo Marx hears a jazz group playing and is entranced. He begins to play a small flute, and attracts a group of black children. Before long he is leading a crowd of children, animals, musicians and local residents through the neighborhood. They end up in a barn or large shed, where a local woman (played by Ellington Band singer, Ivie Anderson) sings the old jazz standard, “All God’s Chillun’ God Rhythm,” joined by the crowd and local musicians.

The portrait of black people in the scene is patronizing at best. It reflects the racism of the time, especially when Groucho, Chico and Harper smear tar on their faces to blend in with the crowd. The film presents black people as childlike – but also as vibrant and expressive. Their attraction to the enigmatic Harpo – and his evident affinity with them – is an expression of the innocence and creative primitivism of his character.

Despite racist overtones, the scene has an exuberant and celebratory quality, and the singing of “All God’s Chillun’ Got Rhythm” at its climax is a good-natured affirmation of all humanity that offsets the portrait of fools and swindlers that populate the rest of the film. The message is that all people – perhaps even all creatures – are God’s children.

But are all people really God’s children? Certainly, God made us all – and he takes delight in his workmanship. But when the Bible speaks of “children of God,” it means something quite specific that is not merely an all-embracing affirmation of humanity.

**Beginning with Jesus**

To grasp the New Testament notion of “children of God” we start with Jesus Christ. The opening verse of the Gospel of Mark proclaims, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This identification of Jesus as God’s son takes on a narrative concreteness in the opening scene in which Jesus is baptized, and a voice from heaven declares, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Properly speaking, there is one actual child of God – Jesus, his beloved son, whom the Bible refers to as the “only begotten.” (John 1:18, 3:16, 18, Hebrews 11:17). Through all four gospels, Jesus scandalously claims the Holy God of Israel as his father. He speaks to God with the intimate familiarity of a first century Jewish child calling on his father – as “Abba, Father.” (Mark 14).

The sonship of Jesus does not begin at his baptism, nor is it limited to the period of his historical incarnation. It is rooted in what theologians call the “pre-existence” of Christ. Jesus alludes to his preexistence in a confrontation with his opponents, when they chide him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” and he responds, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:57-58)

As the eternal Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us,” his sonship is eternal. When Jesus speaks
of his unique intimacy with the Father – “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom the Father, he has made him known” (John 1:18 RSV) – he alludes to an eternal embrace of Father and Son, in the bond of the Spirit.

The baptism of Jesus, in which the Spirit comes upon the Son, and Father claims him as his own, initiates Jesus’ messianic vocation. Perhaps it was even a turning point within Jesus’ own self-understanding. But it did not inaugurate a new state of affairs; it was merely an outward demonstration, within time and space, of the eternal Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Spirit.

The baptism that Jesus receives is the baptism that he bestows

John the Baptist speaks of the superiority of the one who is to come: “I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Neither John, nor the narrator, Mark, explains what it means to be “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” In Acts 1:5, Jesus uses the phrase to speak of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. But Mark points to another aspect of Spirit baptism in the fact that Jesus’ own baptism, with its conspicuous descent of the Spirit, immediately follows John’s announcement. The point is clear: Jesus’ baptism is the paradigm – it is “example A” – of “Baptism with the Spirit.” This leads to a startling and axiomatic conclusion, THE BAPTISM THAT JESUS RECEIVES IS THE BAPTISM THAT JESUS BESTOWS.

Baptism is not merely a “washing away of sins” (Acts 22:15). The Apostle Paul says, “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). By baptism we are joined to Jesus so that we share in a key aspect of his identity. At baptism, we too receive the Spirit, and the Father claims us as his own. He says to each of us “you are my beloved son – my beloved daughter,” which for us is very much the inauguration of new state of affairs, since none of us were “in the beginning with God” as his eternal Word. Nevertheless, we are invited into the same quality of intimacy, and the same status, as God’s eternal Son – we become His children.

“Adoption as Sons”

In the ancient world there was a legal procedure by which a person born of one set of parents came to be the child of other parents – adoption. Julius Caesar adopted his nephew, Octavian, who became the great emperor, Augustus. In my own parish, families have adopted children. These children do not share the same DNA as their adoptive parents, but they have the same legal status, and are cherished with same quality of intimacy and belonging as any other child.

In the same way we have been adopted into the same status and the same degree of intimacy with the Father that the Son has enjoyed through all eternity. The key Biblical passage is Galatians 4:4. “God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (RSV)

English editions of the New Testament typically capitalize “Son” as the one whom God has sent. In the reference to “adoption as sons,” however, “sons” is not capitalized. This seems to imply that the sense in which we become sons by adoption has little to do with the sonship of Jesus. Paul’s point is just the reverse. After all, Paul (or his scribe) wrote entirely in capital letters. (Lower case letters had yet to be invented.) The message is that God has sent his Son that he might gather in more sons – those who share in the sonship of Jesus.

Paul reinforces this point when he says, “because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Galatians 4:6) To say that the
Spirit of Jesus is sent into our hearts means that we actually share in the inner reality of his relationship with the Father.

**Begotten Not Made**

Weekly we affirm in the Creed that Jesus was “begotten not made.” In this respect, I often think of a well-established artist I once knew in New York named Paul Wesselmann. Paul made a name for himself in the “Pop Art” era of the 1960’s for a series of over-sized tableaus made up of cast metal shapes and bright enamel covers called the “The Great American Nude.” Paul poured himself into his work, which reflects something of who he was as a person. He was protective of his fruits of his creative work and was entangled in legal proceedings with a former partner over the ownership of his paintings. Paul had a deep connection to his art – to that which he had “made.”

Paul Wesselmann also had three children. They were intensely creative like their father. They displayed his physical features, and echoed his physical movements and vocal quirks. Just like Paul’s art, his children reflected something of who he is. As with his art, Paul was deeply invested in his children. And yet Paul’s relationship with his children – whom he has “begotten” – was infinitely more significant that his relationship with his art – which he had “made.”

The Son of God has been “begotten” from the Father, he is the “exact imprint of his nature” (Hebrews 1:3). By contrast, we have been “made.” We are God’s workmanship, we bear God’s image, and God is deeply invested in us. It is no small thing to be God’s workmanship, but to be “begotten” is something else entirely. But those who are baptized and adopted into Christ undergo a change in status from that which is “made” to that of the only begotten Son!

**Born From Above**

The Gospel of John also speaks about how we become Children of God, but there is not a word about adoption. Instead, John speaks of the new birth that is given to those who receive Jesus Christ. “To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

This verse relates to Jesus’ admonition to Nicodemus in chapter 3, that “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Greek term for “born again” also means “born from above.” It refers to the source of this new birth – “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Moreover, this is a birth “of water and the Spirit” – takes place in baptism.

John uses the language of new birth to say what Paul says when he speaks of adoption – that baptism makes us Children of God, and allows us to share in Jesus’ intimacy with the Father. We are Children of God, not through birth, but rebirth; not in our creation, through our re-creation when we are incorporated into Christ. Apostle Paul says, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

So no, each human being on the planet is not a “child of God” as the Bible understands it. We become children of God through Grace. Inherent in every human being, however, is the potential to become a child of God, and to share in the divine movement of love and intimacy at the heart of the Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Spirit. This is why Jesus has commissioned us to “go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15).

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‘...If I could work my will,’ said Scrooge indignantly, ‘every idiot who goes about with “Merry Christmas” on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!’

‘Uncle!’ pleaded the nephew.

‘Nephew!’ returned the uncle, sternly, ‘keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.’

‘Keep it!’ repeated Scrooge’s nephew. ‘But you don’t keep it.’

‘Let me leave it alone, then,’ said Scrooge. ‘Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!’

Y ou’re probably wondering why my reflection begins with this section of ‘A Christmas Carol’? I think it’s one of the most telling parts of the story and sets the whole stage for Scrooge’s conversion from one who ignored Christmas to one who embodied its true spirit. Dickens said it best; “It was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.” For me, it’s ‘A Christmas Carol,’ for you it might be ‘A Visit from Saint Nicholas’ (‘Twas the night before Christmas – whether Clement Moore or Henry Livingstone wrote it, it’s still wonderful), the Grinch, Charlie Brown, or “It’s a Wonderful Life” or even an old Waltons rerun, but these stories help us to keep Christmas.

They help us because these stories remind us of why we observe, why we keep, the holiday – it’s more than gifts and shopping, you see.

Christmas is the time when we tell stories. Whether we read them to the children, watch them on television, or tell them around the dinner table, stories tell us who we are and what matters to us. Stories make a difference to us. Elie Wiesel tells this story drawn from the Hasidic Jewish tradition that, I think, illustrates very nicely how important stories are.

When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tove saw misfortune threatening the Jews it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and misfortune averted.

Later, when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion, for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place and say: “Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayers.” And again the miracle would be accomplished.

Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say: “I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient.” It was sufficient and the miracle was accomplished.
Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: “I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and that must be sufficient.” And it was sufficient. God made humankind because God loves stories.

Perhaps that’s why we love stories so, because we are made in God’s image and God loves stories. The stories that surround Christmas all derive from the story that we’ve heard told in the lessons from the Scriptures we hear during Advent and Christmastide. As we listen, and sing, the story of God’s love for His creation and our wandering away has been told. Over and over, God sought to have us understand His story, to have humanity’s story and His converge. Finally, God wrote Himself into our story when He spoke His Word, His true Story, into flesh in a little village on a quiet night a long time ago.

In that moment of story telling, God’s story and our human story have become one. As one of the church’s great teachers Irenaeus put it, “God’s glory: human beings fully alive!” When the story of our lives is lived out in God’s love, God’s glory streams out for all to see. We have new dignity, new purpose, and new worth beyond all comprehension. All this comes because God’s story and ours are told together in this “infant holy, infant lowly” whose story we recall during this season of expectant waiting and joyous fulfillment.

Could it be that’s why the stories of Scrooge, the Grinch and George Bailey all mean so much to us? In each one there is a message of hope and transformation. Scrooge tells the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, “I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.” When he awakes and discovers that he does, indeed have a chance to change: he does.

Perhaps that’s why the stories we hear in Scripture and in song during Advent and Christmas have such a powerful effect? They tell us that we can begin again, that we can be made new, that the image of God within us can be renewed and deepened. The message of the Advent and the Christmas story is of a loving God and of humanity’s hope. God loves stories and that’s why He wrote himself into our human story in Jesus Christ, so it would have a happy ending.

Keeping Christmas well involves telling the story, listening to it, and allowing it to make a difference in us. How does the story end? Well, the story we’ve told over the years has many endings and involves may different characters. It will end as we choose to keep Christmas and allow God to make a difference in our lives and in our world – it’s really a never-ending story, thank God! But, we need an ending, don’t we? How does ‘A Christmas Carol’ end? Like this:

Scrooge was better than his word. He did It all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed”; and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!

Truly may it be said of all of us as we go through Advent and that we keep Christmas well living its story: God bless us everyone!
The year was 1906. Theodore H. Roosevelt was in the middle of his second term as President of the United States and the Dow on Wall Street reached an all-time high of 100 points. That same year, another event took place. A parcel of land in Bloomville, New York, that had been donated earlier to the Episcopal Diocese of Albany by Hiram Every, became the site where St. Paul's Episcopal Church was built. Today, 110 years later, in true family tradition, Hiram's son, John Every, now 84 years “young”, is not only a member of St. Paul’s, but the church’s Senior Warden.

The church has weathered many decades of “ups and downs”. Bloomville joins many communities in northern New York State currently experiencing a depressed economy and an area population of less than 700 people. There is no traffic light, library or supermarket. They have only one convenient store, a small restaurant and an equally small U.S. Post Office. Nowhere to be seen are the familiar golden arches of McDonald’s or Burger King and the nearest big “city”, Delhi, is 8 miles away with a population 8,000. For a time, 4 clergy provided pastoral care to St. Paul’s on a rotating basis to bring the Eucharist to its members on Saturdays – not Sundays. These clerics, although extremely supportive of St. Paul’s, were needed in their own parishes each Sunday.

So, one may ask, “Why is The Albany Episcopalian doing a story on such a small parish?” Readers may find the answer surprising.

In 2012, The Reverend Laura Miller became the parish’s new Deacon Vicar. Shortly after her arrival, Deacon Vicar Laura noted, “...there were needs in the community not being met [and] we would gather for prayer as one body of Christ to discern what we could do to meet those needs.” Thus erupted a vision. Though a small parish, just a mere handful of people, it was decided to adopt aggressive goals to carry out God’s will to serve His people in need in a number of ways. A few years ago, St. Paul’s was a 4 member congregation, but now numbers almost 20. The parish began by creating a youth ministry. St. Paul’s was made a bus stop so children could safely arrive to attend St. Paul’s After School Program. The Spring Vacation Bible School (VBS) was then created for children in grades K-5. The existence of VBS meant that working parents did not need to take time off from work during the school’s spring breaks.

The parish also took on an area food pantry ministry, a free clothing ministry, and now has a vision to assist veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), host a Nar-Anon blood group (the nearest group of its kind is 75 miles away), plan to do blood drives for the American Red Cross and become a disaster relief center to residents of Bloomville and the nearby towns of Stamford, Hobart and South Kortright. According to Deacon Vicar Laura, “This spoke to the women in our parish, since 98% of them are or were in the health care industry.” Today, the men are almost all veterans of the U.S. Marines and U.S. Army.

The congregation soon realized that, with the creation of all these efforts, they could not succeed long-term with their current, small facility. The answer was to build another structure – a two story building connecting the church. In order to begin, the following had to be achieved: 1) maintain their deep and growing faith in the Lord, 2) receive the blessing of The Rt. Rev. William Love, Bishop of the Diocese of Albany, and 3) create a fund raising plan to ensure completion. A simple plan? Yes, but difficult to accomplish for even the largest parishes.

Regarding the first, 1) It is apparent that St. Paul’s membership possesses a strong faith, 2) Bishop Love gave his blessing of the project, and 3) people are already responding with meaningful giving. Estimated cost of the project is $140,000, however, with help of volunteers to do some of the carpentry, painting and other tasks, it is hoped that eventually a somewhat lower cost will be realized. To-date, major contributions include a $20,000 grant from the O’Connor Foundation of Stamford, while two other grant requests in the amounts of $5,000 and $4,700 are awaiting decisions from the Foundation. Another $25,000 bequest has been received and another $25,000 pledged anonymously. The goal is to commence with an official ground breaking in time for Bishop Love’s parish visitation on May 6th, 2017.
The parish is filled with excitement and confidence that this goal will be reached. Deacon Vicar Laura summarized the effort with these words told to TAE, “We are looking to build a Community Center that will be a safe, comfortable and welcoming place for anyone to come. ...Since the area is overrun with drugs, the Community Center would be a great place for them to begin finding answers. ...Our fund raising efforts will continue since we know this is exactly what our Lord is calling us to [do].... Even if this project does not bring more members to the parish, we feel it is vital to building up the kingdom of God.”

Any and all contributions to this project are welcome. Those interested in contributing to this important effort may do so by sending their tax-deductible donations to St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 742, Bloomville, NY 13739.
Acolytes Honored at the Cathedral

On Saturday, October 26th, the Cathedral of All Saints was once again host for the highly celebrated Albany Diocesan Acolyte Festival. Nearly 150 acolytes and leaders from 20 parishes were honored this day for their service to the church. The event began with all acolytes processing throughout the Cathedral in the Grand Eucharist Procession; each robed in white vestments, and many carrying church banners, torches and thuribles. First-time visitors, as well as those who have often participated in the event, always describe it as “a sight to behold”.

A highlight of the day was the Presentation of Acolytes when the acolytes reaffirmed their dedication to the service of God. Those being honored for the first time received a newly minted brass pendant, designed with the Historic All Saints Bishop’s Cathedra Emblem and the Albany Diocese Shield, as a gift from Bishop Love. To those who have already received their pendant at previous Festivals, a special pin was given in recognition of their continued service. As each received their pendant or pin, one could sense the deep, spiritual moment as expressed on their faces. After the awards presentation came the Holy Eucharist, with Bishop Love, the Celebrant and Preacher.

[The word acolyte is derived from the Greek word, acolytos, meaning companion, attendant, or helper. Its roots can be found in the Old Testament where the prophet Samuel is found assisting Eli, the Levite priest, and Elisha is seen assisting Elijah the Prophet. In the early Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches, the acolyte was the altar server; even given the rank of minor clergy called the taper-bearer, responsible for bearing lights during processions and liturgical entrances... The Editor]

For those privileged to witness or participate in this year’s Diocese of Albany’s Acolyte Festival, the ride home at the end of the day was certain to be an opportunity for much reflection on being an acolyte in the service of the church and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
On Saturday, September 24, the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany hosted the 2016 Bible Symposium, titled, “Finding Christ in the Scriptures”. The event was led by The Very Rev. Dr. John Behr, Dean and Professor of patristics at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the Bronx.

Fr. Behr gave several talks on how to search the scriptures to encounter Christ and come to realize that we were created for this encounter. He also spoke on how Christ is born in those who are born again in the Church so that they become truly human, after the stature of Christ, and continue by glorifying God in their bodies. Refreshments and lunch for the event were provided for a modest fee.

Following the Bible Symposium that ended mid-afternoon, an ecumenical service of prayer and healing was held in celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham. The Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in England is known to draw pilgrims from many different Christian traditions and a place of healing, both physical and spiritual. Fr. John Behr was also the preacher at this service.

Begun in 2014 at St. Luke’s Church, Catskill, NY, the Ecumenical Festival in the Diocese of Albany was inspired by the Shrine’s ministry of healing and ecumenism. Christians of all traditions were welcome to come together and celebrate the unity we share in Christ Jesus, and to experience healing of our own wounds, as well as wounds of division in the Body of Christ.

The author of “The Mystery of Christ - Life in Death” and “The Cross Stands While the World Turns – Homilies for the Cycles of the Year”, Fr. Behr holds a Ph.D. in Eastern Christian Studies at Oxford University and teaches patristics, dogmatics and scriptural exegesis at the Seminary and Fordham University and also Distinguished Lecturer in Patristics at Fordham.
The Albany Episcopalian wishes to thank all the parishes that submitted photos of their churches at Christmas from years past. Congratulations go to St. Peter’s, Albany, for their Christmas Eve Eucharist photo, featured on the cover of this TAE issue. Sincere thanks and appreciation go to all the parishes that sent in photos, seven of which, are featured here - St. Paul’s, Greenwich, Christ Church, Cooperstown, Trinity Church, Potsdam, St. Peter’s, Christ Church, Duanesburg, Bloomville, St. Philip’s, Norwood and Christ Church, Gilbertsville.

St. Paul’s, Greenwich – Photographer unknown

Christ Church, Cooperstown – Photo by Ted Spencer
Trinity Church, Potsdam
Photo by Dr. Ellen Burkett

St. Paul's, Bloomville – Photo by The Rev. Laura Miller

Christ Church, Duanesburg – Photo by Andrea Salisbury

St. Philip's, Norwood – Photographer unknown

Christ Church, Gilbertsville – Photo by Gordon Brannick
An Update from the Episcopal Diocese of Albany Mission Board

The Missions Committee

The Mission Committee of the EDOA is a team of prayerful clergy and laity from approximately eight parishes throughout the Diocese, committed to restoring people to God and each other by encouraging, equipping and empowering disciples to move beyond their comfort zones in Christian service and witness to the Gospel, both locally and abroad.

The Missions Committee Prayer

“Lord Jesus, we humbly pray for an outpouring of your Holy Spirit to strengthen our commitment to restoring people to You, God and each other. Equip and empower Your disciples to move beyond comfort zones in Christian service and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ wherever You send us, locally regionally or abroad. Let Your Mission be our mission. In the Power of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN”

An update from the team:

Buenas dias, everyone,

This is being written in the van on the way to Jarabacoa, in the Dominican Republic.
We have spent the past three days in Santiago with the most inspiring priests, teachers and students. All of the frustrations of arranging the trip fade immediately after seeing the children.

On Monday we took Father Hipolito on “our annual” grocery shopping for the albergue Cristo Salvador. We then filled the pantry and freezer and delivered all of the school supplies that we brought with us.

Yesterday, we drove to San Francisco de Macoris to visit a new school and an albergue. The science students gave us a presentation of the work they were doing... making soap, shampoo, perfume and lipstick. The albergue had a total of 95 students. These students come from similar backgrounds as those from Cristo Salvador. We can see that our work is cut out for us for next year.

I shall sign off for now. The Libros de los Ninos Mission Team

Jennifer Dean

Left to right: Padre Hipolito, Jan Bedoukian, Sue Armstrong, Bobbie Perez, Sandy Trombley, Julie Wever and an unidentified teacher from the albergue Cristo Salvador
In Memoriam
On September 16, 2016 the Rev. Oscar Sodergren, retired priest of the diocese, died at the age of 93. Fr. Sodergren served at All Saints, Round Lake as a Deacon and as a Priest, at Bethesda, Saratoga Springs and at Calvary, Burnt Hills as a Priest. He was also Assistant Treasurer of the Diocese and served as a Trustee for many years.

Lessons and Carols this Christmas Season

Sunday, December 4
3:00 p.m.: St. John’s, 10 Church St, Essex, NY 12936: Festival of Lessons and Carols

Saturday, December 10
4:00 p.m.: Church of the Messiah, 296 Glen St # 1, Glens Falls, NY 12801: Lessons and Carols. A reception will follow the service.

Saturday, December 10
4:00 p.m.: St. George’s Church, 30 N Ferry St, Schenectady, NY 12305: Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 18
3:00 p.m.: Cathedral of All Saints, 62 South Swan St, Albany NY 12210: Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 18
5:00 p.m.: St. John’s-in-the-Wilderness, NY Rt. 86, Paul Smiths, NY 12970: 2nd Annual Festival of Lessons and Carols. A free will offering to benefit the Salvation Army and Hospice of Saranac Lake will be taken. A reception will follow the service at the Paul Smiths-Gabriels VFD, across the street from the church.

Sunday, December 18
7:00 p.m.: Christ Church, 132 Duanesburg Churches Rd, Duanesburg, NY 12056: Lessons and Carols. A reception will follow immediately after the service.

SAVE THE DATE! The 149th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany

Shine!

Friday, June 9th through
Sunday, June 11, 2017
#shineyourlight #shineAlbany #shineedoa
UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS – 2016 - 2017

January
7 Parish Leadership Conference (PLC) – N. Adirondack & St. Lawrence Deaneries, Malone
9 Standing Committee Meeting – CTK
14 Commission on Ministry Meeting– CTK
21 Parish Leadership Conference (PLC) – Susquehanna & W. Mohawk Deaneries, Oneonta
28 Title IV Training for Ecclesiastical for Trial Court Members – Christ the King SLC

February
4 Parish Leadership Conference (PLC) – Hudson, Metro, S. Adirondack, & Upper Hudson Deaneries – CTK
6 Standing Committee Meeting – CTK
11 Commission on Ministry Meeting– CTK
14 Trustees Meeting – CTK

March
4 Ash Wednesday
6 Standing Committee Meeting – CTK
9-15 House of Bishops Spring Meeting – Kanuga Camp & Conference Center, Henderson, NC
11 Commission on Ministry Meeting– CTK
17 Dedication St. Patrick’s Chapel, Oaks of Righteous, Troy

April
2 Visitation – Christ Church, Herkimer
3 Standing Committee Meeting – CTK
8 Commission on Ministry Meeting – CTK
9 Palm Sunday
10 Chrism Mass – Cathedral of All Saints, Albany
11 Chrism Mass – St. James’ Church, Oneonta
12 Chrism Mass – St. Thomas’ Church, Tupper Lake
16 Easter Day
25-26 CPG Clergy Finance & Wellness Conference – Christ the King Spiritual Life Center

May
1 Standing Committee Meeting– CTK
   Pre-convention Information Meeting – Church of the Messiah, Glens Falls
2 Pre-convention Information Meeting – St. Mark’s Church, Malone
8 Pre-convention Information Meeting – Christ Church, Cooperstown
9 Trustees Meeting– CTK
   Pre-convention Information Meeting – Cathedral of All Saints, Albany
13 Commission on Ministry Meeting – CTK
20 Regional Confirmation – Cathedral of All Saints, Albany
25 Ascension Day
THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

“The Twelve Days of Christmas,” has several interpretations of its lyrics. Here is one favorite...

My true love... God, and the gifts from God

The partridge... Jesus

Two turtledoves... The Old and New Testaments

Three French hens... Faith, Hope and Charity

Four calling birds... The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

Five golden rings... The Torah (The first five books of the Bible): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

Six geese a-laying... The six days of Creation (Genesis)

Seven swans a-swimming... The Seven Sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and Anointing the Sick

Eight maids a-milking... The eight Beatitudes in Sermon on the Mount - Blessed are: the poor in spirit; those who mourn; the meek; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; the peace makers and the persecuted for the sake of righteousness. (Matthew 5:3-10)

Nine ladies dancing... Fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control (Galatians 5:22-23)

Ten Lords a-leaping... The Ten Commandments

Eleven pipers piping... The Apostles (not including Judas) who spread the Good News

Twelve drummers drumming... The Twelve Articles of Faith in the Apostles’ Creed: “We believe... in God the Father; Creator; God the Son: Crucified, died, buried; raised from the dead; ascended into heaven; God the Holy Spirit;the holy catholic Church; communion of saints; forgiveness of sins; resurrection of the body; and life everlasting.”

SAVE THE DATE!

- Winter Break Camp: Day Camp (K-8th) - February 20-24
- Spring Break Camp: Day Camp (K-8th) - April 17-21
- Youth for Christ: Excel (9th-12th) - January 13-15
- JR. Sonshine (6th-8th) - February 19-22
- SR. Sonshine (9th-12th) - February 22-25
- Youth for Christ: Breakout (6th-8th) - March 17-19
- DMD: Disciples making Disciples (9th-12th) - April 28-30
- Convention: Youth Rally (6th-12th) - June 9-11

jisenan@ctkcenter.org / dhyde@ctkcenter.org / www.beavercrossministries.org / 518.692.9550
Planned Giving

All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. 1 Chronicles 29:14 (KJV)

A Bequest in a Will: Perhaps the easiest and most common way of making a planned gift is through your will. Yet over 50% of Americans do not have one. If you die without a will, the state will divide your assets among your spouse and children (regardless of their age); appoint an administrator that may cost the estate large fees; and appoint guardians, who may or may not have been your choice, for your dependents. The state makes no charitable contributions, and it will ensure that your estate pays as much tax as possible. By making a will, you appoint your own administrator; you name the guardian of your dependents; you control applicable taxes; you can create a family or charitable trust; and you can share your resources with your family, church, or other institutions as you choose.

A bequest in a will can take the form of a set amount of money, a percentage of an estate, a specific asset, a trust, or the naming of a church-related organization as a contingent beneficiary.

Sample language for including the church in your will might be:
“[I give, devise, and bequeath (state amount, asset, or percentage of the estate) to (name and address of your church) to be used (describe use) or as the church’s governing board or vestry deems appropriate.]”

You should always make your estate plan with the assistance of an attorney. The money spent is minimal compared to the savings in taxes and the reduction in complications and confusion.

Your bequest to support your church, diocese or other charitable organizations is a living tribute to your intention to support the church’s work by giving away assets after you no longer need them.

(Excerpt from ECF: Stewards of God’s bounty—used with permission)

2016 Bishop’s Appeal

You should receive the 2016 Bishop’s Appeal letter soon, if you haven’t already.

Partner with others from the Diocese of Albany in sponsoring the Bishop’s many Mission initiatives.
Upcoming Events at Christ the King

School of Healing Prayer (SHP)

575 Burton Rd.
Greenwich, NY 12834
Phone: 518-692-9550
Fax: 518-692-8777
www.ctkcenter.org

Committed to carrying out Christ’s mission of salvation and healing, the School of Healing Prayer is an opportunity for participants to experience His healing power in their lives while also learning how to minister to others in their churches and communities.

Each ‘level’ must be completed in order, with all prior levels taken first.

Tuesday Healing Services
Every Tuesday—year-round 10:00 AM

By the grace of God the Father, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ heals through divine action, through the faithful intercessions of His people, through His Word in Scripture, and through the Sacraments He gifted to His Church.

Weekly Healing Service, every Tuesday at 10am, led by Bishop Daniel Herzog.

Come for a time of inspirational praise music, testimonies about the healing power of Jesus Christ, hearing the Word, teaching and preaching and intercession.

Prayer Teams are available after Eucharist, throughout the Chapel.

A buffet lunch ($11 inc. tax) can be purchased at the Welcome Center beginning at 11:30.

SHP Level I - January 13-16, 2017
And March 2-5, 2017
4-Day Intensive
(SHP 1 requires pastor’s recommendation)

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during the Healing Service in the St. Matthew room in the Healing Center.

Personal Prayer Ministry is a confidential ministry offered by appointment for those who desire more intensive prayer ministry.

Individuals, couples and families may be seen for a time of personal prayer with members of our trained and experienced prayer ministry teams.

We listen, we love in Christ’s love, and pray for your emotional, spiritual, and physical needs.

Call 518.692.9550 x 201 to schedule an appointment or for more information.
The Diocese of Albany is One Church fulfilling the Great Commandment and Great Commission, moving from membership to discipleship; equipping, emboldening and sending disciples to make disciples.

- Diocesan Vision

The Albany Episcopalian is printed four times a year. Publication is scheduled the months of March, May, September and December.

Submissions for consideration must be received prior to the first Monday of the month before publication. News items of diocesan interest are welcome, and should be sent to the Business Office at 580 Burton Road, Greenwich, NY 12834, in care of Editor or transmitted via e-mail to: TAEeditor@albanydiocese.org.

Diocesan Website
For the most up-to-date information about events in the diocese, parish and clergy directories, mission news, parish resources, and more, visit the diocesan website at www.albanyepiscopaldiocese.org. You can also visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/albanydiocese.

BISHOP LOVE’S VISITATION SCHEDULE

January
8 Christ & St. John Church, Champlain
22 St. Matthew’s Church, Unadilla
29 Trinity Church, Plattsburgh

February
5 St. Stephen’s Church, Schuylerville
12 Church of the Messiah, Glens Falls
19 St. Michael’s Church, Colonie

March
5 St. Paul’s Church, Salem
19 Church of the Redeemer, Rensselaer
26 St. Paul’s Church, Schenectady

April
2 Christ Church, Herkimer
9 Palm Sunday, St. John’s Church, Johnstown
16 Easter Sunday, Cathedral of All Saints
30 Christ Church, Gilbertsville

May
6 St. Paul’s Church, Bloomville
7 St. John’s Church, Delhi
St. Peter’s Church, Hobart
14 St. James’ Church, Au Sable Forks
21 Church of the Holy Name, Boyntonville

June
4 Pentecost: Trinity Church, Watervliet
18 Trinity Church, Whitehall
25 St. Luke the Beloved Physician Church, Saranac Lake