Highlighted this Issue:

- “You are the Salt of the Earth! You are the Light of the World!”
- “Cathedral in Bloom” • Neanderthal Theology
- Mission: “Ministry in the Dimension of Difference” • And more…
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

By the time you read this we will have just passed from Epiphany into Lent, however, the “manifestation” or pointing toward Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Son of God (as celebrated in Epiphany) is still very much on my heart and mind. Throughout the Season of Epiphany we heard of the various ways God the Father pointed toward Jesus as the Son of God and long awaited Messiah. First, God used a special star in the heavens as well as the prophesies of old, to lead the Wise Men or Magi from the East across hundreds of miles from their homelands to the small town of Bethlehem where they found Jesus with His mother Mary. We are told that upon finding Him, they worshiped Him and gave gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, manifesting or pointing toward Jesus’ royal kingship, divinity and pending sacrificial death as the Lamb of God.

We then celebrated Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (the one appointed by God to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah). When Jesus came up from the baptismal waters in the River Jordan, Heaven opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and God the Father spoke, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17). God spoke similarly when Jesus took Peter and James and John up on the mountain and was transfigured before their eyes, revealing His divine nature. A cloud overshadowed them and God the Father spoke, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” (Mark 9:7). That was the ultimate manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God. After His baptism, Jesus began manifesting or pointing to Himself as the Messiah and Son of God. He called the Disciples to come follow Him and then began teaching them about Himself and performed many miracles as a sign of who He is and why He came into the world. In the Gospel of Matthew we read, “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” (Matthew 4:23). Later in John’s Gospel, Jesus is challenged by the Jewish authorities and they demand that He tell them plainly if He is the Messiah. Jesus responds by saying, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in My Father’s name testify about Me…I and the Father are one…even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” (John 10:25,30,38). All of this has been recorded in Holy Scripture so that we and future generations may come to know and believe in Jesus just as His early followers and disciples did.

In the Gospel passage assigned for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, the focus shifts from Jesus to the disciples (to you and me). Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth…You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13-14). In making these statements, the Lord is saying there is a role for us to play in His manifestation as the Son of God, the Messiah and Savior of the world. In order to get a sense of what Jesus means when He says, “You are the salt of the earth,” it is important to think about the various qualities or characteristics of salt. As a quick aside, during my
You are the salt of the earth,” but He also said, “You are the light of the world.” He first pointed to Himself saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) He is the true light. As Christians, we are called to be a reflection of His light shining forth in us and through us, pointing others not to us, but to Him.... Light overcomes darkness. Even the smallest flame shines out in a darkened room.

When Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth,” He went on to say, “But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” (Matthew 5:13) The Lord is making it clear in this statement that He expects us to use our “saltiness” to help manifest or point others to Him. If we don’t, what good are we? As we enter into Lent, we might want to contemplate on the level of our saltiness? What are we doing to help point others toward Jesus? In the Diocese of Albany we believe the Lord is calling us to be “Disciples making Disciples.” Our “saltiness” is a key ingredient in caring out that mission.

As we go about as the “salt of the earth” and “Disciples making Disciples,” it’s important to remember one of the other aspects of salt. When using salt, it is important to use the right amount. While a little bit of salt can help enhance the flavor of our food, too much salt can make it unattractive. As Christians we are called to share our faith, NOT beat people up over the head with our faith, but will have the light of life. The service begins in darkness. A single spark ignites the fire which lights the Pascal Candle, signifying the “Light of Christ.” As the Pascal Candle passes down the aisle, individual candles on both sides of the aisle are lit from the Pascal Candle, sharing the “Light of Christ” with the surrounding candles until all the candles in the room are lit, filling the room with the “Light of Christ.” As the “light of the world,” Jesus is calling us to share His light with one another until the whole world is aglow in His light and glory.

Is the light of Christ shining forth in your life drawing and pointing others to Christ, or has it been hidden under a basket? Jesus said, a lamp is intended to be put on a lamp stand, not hidden away, in order that the whole room may be lit, driving away the darkness. Tragically many Christians today have hidden their lamp away in fear of being persecuted for their faith, or made fun of, or rejected by family and friends. The Lord calls us not to live in fear, but to trust and follow Him, sharing His light with others so that they may be set free from the darkness of sin and live in the light of Christ Jesus. May Christ give each of us the grace to let His light shine forth boldly in our lives in such a way that He is manifested and glorified.

What is meant is that each of us can do individually in response to the Lord’s call to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world,” this year we have the opportunity to come together as parish families and a diocesan family through the Alpha Ministry in an effort to manifest Christ to the world around us in a mighty and powerful way, helping believers and non-believers alike to come to know and experience the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ in truly life transforming ways.

This year’s Parish Leadership Conference will focus on reintroducing the Alpha Ministry to all the parishes of the Diocese of Albany in an effort to help us better share the Good News of Jesus Christ with friends and loved ones as well as the stranger on the street. Early in Bishop Herzog’s Episcopalate, Alpha came to the Diocese of Albany, where it was well received by many, helping to ignite a new sense of joy and excitement in sharing the Gospel and growing many of our churches, both physically and spiritually. Over the years for a variety of reasons it kind of faded out. We believe it is time to bring it back on a large scale.

“Alpha is an opportunity to explore life and the Christian faith in a friendly, open and informal environment. It is a 10-week course run in churches, coffee shops, prisons, and homes worldwide. Essentially, Alpha is a safe place to explore life’s biggest questions.” Its chief components include food, talk and discussion.

The three-fold goal of this year’s Parish Leadership Conference (PLC) is for all those attending to: 1) Leave with an exciting and vibrant understanding and experience of bringing people to Christ through Alpha 2020; 2) Leave refreshed by the Holy Spirit – empowered and inspired and ready for ministry; 3) Leave with tools and a plan to begin the process of running Alpha in your church, workplace, neighborhood, or wherever the Lord might lead you. Plans are being made and will be revealed at the PLC for a coordinated diocesan wide Alpha Program beginning in September 2020. The new and revised Alpha Ministry provides a wonderful and exciting opportunity for individuals, parishes and the wider diocese to truly be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world,” manifesting Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Lord and Savior of the world. I pray you will join me and other brothers and sisters in Christ from around the Diocese for this year’s Parish Leadership Conference.

Eucharistically and in response to the Lord’s call to be the “salt of the earth,” we are to live our lives in such a way that He is manifested and glorified. In the Diocese of Albany we believe the Lord is calling us to be “Disciples making Disciples.” Our “saltiness” is a key ingredient in caring out that mission.

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Faithfully Yours Brother in Christ,

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*Editor’s Note...
N or long ago, my family and I saw a fascinating exhibit on Neanderthals at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa. The basic emphasis was that Neanderthals, who went extinct between 30 and 40 thousand years ago, were not the primitive subhuman species that they have been traditionally portrayed. Genetic studies have shown that Neanderthal DNA is 99.5% identical with our own. In fact, due to interbreeding, the DNA of modern humans is anywhere from 1% to 4% derived from Neanderthals. Genetic and morphological evidence (the structure of the throat) shows that Neanderthals had the capacity to speak. They lived in nuclear families and they took special care of their sick. Archaeological remains reveal tool making, the use of fire, and a sophisticated capacity to utilize symbolic representation in cave art. They even seem to have had burial rituals, which suggests a religious perspective. One can’t help but wonder about the theological implications of all this.

Could we say that Neanderthals were made “in God’s image and likeness”? Did they have “souls”? Did the “Fall” and the subsequent separation from God - and the need for redemption - apply to them as to us?

Chronology - Young Earth/Old Earth

Unavoidably, the issue of chronology arises once again. The fact, as scientists tell us, that Neanderthals inhabited Europe for over 150,000 years, is difficult to harmonize with the traditional literalist dating of creation as having taken place 6,000 years ago. (The 17th Anglican Bishop James Usher famously dated creation at 4004 BC). There is a span of opinion among Christians on the question of creation, evolution and the dating of Genesis.

Young Earth Creationism: a strictly literal reading of Genesis 1, in which creation takes place over the course of six twenty-four hour days, and the age of the universe order is determined according Bishop Usher’s 6,000 year chronology.

Old Earth Creationism: accepts a longer timeline, taking the seven days of the creation narrative as entire ages, but still rejecting a naturalistic evolutionary process. This view asserts that divine intervention at distinct points in time produced new species - most notably, of course, humans.

Providentially Guided Evolutionary Process: this view accepts the notion of evolution taking place over time by natural means, but regards it as God’s providential plan, in which God is at work in the natural course of things. This view does not deny the inspired character of scripture as the Word of God, but recognizes that parts of the text were intended figuratively.

Classical Darwinian random mutation and natural selection: this differs from the previous outlook on a philosophical or theological level. It denies any sort of purpose, intention, or direction to the formation of nature. In other words, while Christians can accept the science, they cannot agree with the underlying philosophical presuppositions of classic Darwinism. As Pope Benedict said, “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”

Perhaps the difference between “theistic evolution” and the classic Darwinian emphasis on random mutation is ultimately a matter of perspective. If one admits the role of divine providence, that what seems to be entirely random may in fact be the outworking of divine purpose.

The Genetic Code as the Urim and Thummim of Creation

In the Book of Exodus, the LORD provides Moses with directions for fashioning the elaborate vestments of the High Priest. Included was the “Breastplate of Judgement,” which contained the Urim and Thummim. These seem to have been sacred stones that enabled the Priest inquire of the Lord, and determine his will. The LORD tells Moses, “In the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron’s heart, when he goes in before the Lord. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the Lord regularly.” (Exodus 28:30)

Urim and Thummim seem to have functioned as a sort of divine dice or lots. Apparently, the priest would throw the stones and derive an answer from the LORD as a result. Thus, in 1 Samuel, when King Saul seeks to determine who is responsible for God’s disfavor following a military defeat, he resors to Urim and Thummim.

“Saul said, ‘O Lord God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O Lord, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim.’” (1 Samuel 14:41)

What appears as the random fall of the sacred stones is actually providentially directed by God, and provides a way to discern His will. It seems that we could just as easily say that the apparent randomness of genetic mutation that allows for natural selection is the Urim and Thummim of the creation and the genetic code, through which a sovereign and providential God is at work in the natural order. Albert Einstein famously said, “God does not play dice with the universe,” but perhaps, at least as we have just suggested - He does.

Christianity and Paleontology

Christians have responded to the evidence of our Neanderthal cousins in a variety of ways. In 2015, The Atlantic Monthly (a secular magazine that thoughtfully addresses religious topics) published an article entitled “Did Neanderthals Have Souls?” that focused on Evangelical Christian interpretations of the paleontological record. Rather than deny this evidence, or argue that somehow the fossil remains of early hominids are a sort of “plant” to lead unbelievers astray, many creationists have sought to fit the evidence within the “young Earth” scenario. As the Atlantic puts it, “for them [Creationists], the most pressing problem each time scientists discover a new hominid is whether the species is ape or human,” because if they were human, they would have had souls.
and would have been included in the narrative of Fall and Redemption. Hence, for the Creationist organization, “Answers in Genesis,” the very early hominid, “Lucy,” was merely an ape, whereas Neanderthals were clearly human — as according to some, persisted during Noah’s Flood, and to others, were among those peoples dispersed at the Tower of Babel.

For Christians who are not committed to the constraints of Archbishop Usher’s chronology, or a “Young Earth” cosmology, these attempts to fit Neanderthals into what Bible scholars call the “Primordial Chronicle” of (Genesis, Chapters 1-11) seem awkward at best. While Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens did in fact overlap, interact, and even interbreed, Neanderthals thrived for over a hundred thousand years before the emergence Homo Sapiens, and went extinct tens of thousands of years before the rise of early human civilizations and the emergence of urban culture in the Middle East. One can heartily embrace the inspired character of Scripture as the Word of God without being compelled to force these passages from Genesis into the anachronistic role of objective not absolute?

Yet, the theological interests of the young earthers are not so far from the mark. It is reasonable to ask if Neanderthals were human — in so far as they seem to share so many of the characteristics that we regard as essential to our humanity. Did they have “souls”? The common understanding of “soul” owes more to the Greek philosopher Plato, than to the Bible. Nevertheless, there is a Biblical notion of soul — not so much a separable and immortal essence that seeks to be unencumbered from the physical body, as the core of our human nature from which we relate ourselves to God and our fellow human beings.

...he refreshes my soul, He guides me along the right paths.” (Psalm 23:3)

...“...my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation.” (Psalm 35:9)

...“...My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Psalm 42:2)

The signs are that Neanderthals may well have this essential human quality, and should perhaps be recognized as fully human. As the Apostle Paul spoke of the “dividing wall” (Ephesians 2:14) between Jew and Gentile which is overcome in Christ, might our distinction from our earlier Neanderthal cousins be a similar sort of “dividing wall” - significant, but not absolute?

Would Neanderthals have shared in the “Fall”? We need to ask what sort of thing the Fall is. G.K. Chesterton said that while the Fall and Original Sin may be unfashionable among “certain new theologians,” it is in fact “the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved.” I take this to mean that we see it all around us every day in the flawed moral character of ordinary humanity. While the Fall is described in (richly theological and symbolic terms) as a primal event - it is all about who we are now as a result.

I suppose if we felt compelled to fit the Neanderthals into a woodenly literal reading of the story of the Fall, we might conclude that Adam and Eve were themselves Neanderthals, since the origin of Neanderthals precedes modern humans by such an enormity of time. But the attempt to harmonise contemporary paleontology with the Biblical narrative is clearly futile - it flows from a category mistake, an inability to recognize that these are two different discourses that involve very different sorts of texts that were always intended to be read and interpreted differently.

But that does not preclude the attempt to ask theological questions about the evidence provided by paleontology. While the answers may never be conclusive prior to the consummation of the Kingdom when all is revealed, it seems reasonable to suggest not only that Neanderthals had souls, but also that they shared in the Fall and the Redemption of humanity.

The Rev. Dr. Brown is Rector of Trinity Church, Potsdam, and a regular contributor to The Albany Episcopalian

Once known as “New York in Bloom,” each February, for 25 years, this annual event brought thousands of people to the New York State Museum to witness the many wonderful flower displays from community florists and local floral artists. For a quarter of a century, the museum hosted the event until a number of circumstances brought it to an end. In 2019, a new location was needed, but where would this all-volunteer popular flower show be held? A key component was venue, i.e., Location! Location! Location! The answer was clear – The Cathedral of All Saints!

Thanks to Louis Bannister, a well-known local florist, and member of The Cathedral of All Saints, and with the assistance of another local florist, Michelle Peters, the Cathedral became the logical and most preferred location to continue the event. The cathedral was built in the later part of the 19th century and located near the State Capitol. Its Gothic design, along with magnificent stained glass throughout the edifice made it the perfect place to display the talents of area florists and floral artists. The project, not in its second year at the cathedral, has been warmly greeted by the cathedral’s Dean, The Very Reverend Leander Harding, who considers “Cathedral in Bloom” to be “supporting the cathedral’s mission to be a place that celebrates not only Christ, but also the arts.”

This year, approximately 30 florists and floral artists continued to bring the tradition to fruition on February 21 – 23. The 3-day event, beginning Friday, and ending Sunday afternoon, was comprised of an evening Champagne Gala, workshops, organ recital, special guided cathedral tours, and an afternoon tea among the many flower displays. By Sunday, the final day, more than 2,000 people had attended this second annual show.

Photos of this year’s “Cathedral in Bloom” celebration are shown both on the front cover and following pages of this issue of The Albany Episcopalian.

Most assuredly, there will be a third Annual “Cathedral in Bloom” in 2021 (dates are yet to be determined). Anyone interested in arranging a display, volunteering at the event, or helping to sponsor “Cathedral in Bloom,” may contact Louis Bannister at Louis@EnchantedFloristAlbany.com or phoning 518.813.4990.
At Christ Church, we want to be those people whose light shines brightly in the darkness to the glory of our Father. We aspire to be God’s “sacred agents” on a mission to change the world in Jesus’ name with the “weapons” of the Spirit in our arsenal.

The season of Lent is typically a time when people give something up as an attempt for some form of self-discipline and sacrifice. But Isaiah reminds us that there is so much more that is required:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.” (Isaiah 58:6-8)

Week after week, year after year, I have watched the people of Christ Church participate in this kind of “fast”, regardless of the season. Whether feeding people from the community in our monthly “Neighborhood Meal”, or opening our doors for emergency shelter, or praying for the people passing by our prayer table, or helping with clothing needs, the members of this congregation have given sacrificially of their time, treasure and talents again and again. The light shines in the darkness…

During one of our monthly Neighborhood Meals, one local woman, who found regular employment from prostitution, came in for a meal. While sitting at a table with one of our members, she began to weep because her shoes had been stolen and her feet were hurting. Without hesitation, the church member removed her Teva hiking sandals and gave them to the woman. The light shines in the darkness…

Throughout the week, many women come through our doors seeking assistance and counsel from Alpha Pregnancy Care Center, in regard to their pregnancy, whether planned or unplanned. Countless lives of unborn children have been saved and parents supported through this critical ministry. The light shines in the darkness…

The ministry here is often messy. People’s circumstances in this community are often messy. The solutions are rarely simple and the abundance of need can be overwhelming. The season of Lent reminds us that our sins make us messy and that the abundance of our need for forgiveness can be overwhelming. But we worship a Savior who stepped into our messy world and overwhelmed us with an abundance of mercy and grace to clean up our mess and forgive our sins through his own messy death on a cross.

Our church sign lights up at night to display the message of the week. But each of us, who have received the light of Jesus Christ can be a church sign proclaiming a message of hope and healing to all who pass our way, inspiring those who “read” our message to find the God who saves us from the darkness.

May the light of Jesus Christ shine brightly through each one of us throughout this holy season of Lent and through every season of our lives, to the glory of God the Father.

AMEN.

The Reverend N. Bradley Jones, Rector of Christ Church, Schenectady, is a new contributor to The Albany Episcopalian.
A Hospital Chaplain’s Journey
By The Reverend Nancy Goff

“We are each a whole life story that is greater than any given moment and much more than our illnesses, wounds, troubles or sorrows. Who we are, in turn, is part of a still larger story, the story of the world and human beings and eternity.”
(Craig Rennebohm, Souls in the Hands of a Tender God)

My journey as a hospital chaplain began 20+ years ago at INOWA Alexandria Hospital, just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC in Alexandria, VA, an extremely culturally and socio-economically diverse area.

The Pastoral Care Director assembled carefully vetted volunteers from every spiritual realm to provide pastoral and sacramental care to patients/families and staff. Under his direction, I began to learn the art of pastoral care; that is, how to be present to those suffering and in crisis.

It quickly became evident that God was kindling a flame within me to serve Him in this way; hospital ministry has been and continues to be transformative in terms of my own faith and spiritual growth through exposure to a rich variety of beliefs, but most especially traversing the sacred ground of peoples’ lives and stories; coming alongside them in their pain, suffering and tragic circumstances.

They’ve taught me so much about the human spirit and the faith upon which they draw strength in the most difficult of times.

On a light note… on each shift as chaplain it seemed someone I visited died, occurring so frequently my three teenaged sons began calling me “the chaplain of death” mimicking “Andrew,” a character from a television series, “Touched by an Angel.” Andrew was the angel of death. My sons would jokingly tell others, “don’t let my mother pray for you unless you want to die!” In truth, over the years, God has sent me to be present to many who are dying, to offer comfort and compassion to the them and their families.

September 11, 2001 was a typical workday in the greater Washington, DC area until terrorists attacked the Twin Towers in New York, and then the Pentagon in Virginia. I and fellow chaplains immediately headed to Alexandria Hospital to receive and minister to Pentagon casualties. Men and women, military and civilian, arrived stunned, frightened, covered in cuts; many badly burned and in severe pain.

One victim, blinded in the explosion, recounted going about their work until hearing about the Twin Towers attack; everyone turned to the closest television for information when suddenly there was an explosion that blew them to the ground; the next he knew he was in an ambulance en route to the hospital. Blinded, in pain, frightened and in shock, this soldier lamented over the unknown status of co-workers, family and friends. Touching his shoulder, assuring him he was in a safe place, I prayed with him for physical and emotional healing. My role as chaplain that day was to listen and say little, except to offer comfort and in some cases, to pray. Ultimately, the Pentagon attack claimed the lives of 184 people.

Ministry as an adjunct chaplain continued at Glens Falls Hospital following a move to New York in 2003; this move afforded me the opportunity for more intensive pastoral training via Albany Medical Center. As a teaching hospital and major trauma center, chaplains are exposed to the most challenging, traumatic and unusual circumstances of humanity, to wit…

A man was badly injured in a motorcycle accident; worse, it was witnessed by his wife and 2 young daughters. Devastated and overwhelmed, they awaited news of his condition. I was called to offer support. Having traveled to visit Lake George; in this moment of crisis, they were without support from family/friends. Though practicing Russian Jews, they were grateful for my presence, especially when told her husband/dad had died. As chaplain, support also meant advocating successfully with the Coroner to respect their religious beliefs in refusing the requirement of an autopsy.

On a happier note, as chaplain, I’ve met interesting people, including an elderly former Rockette who danced at Radio City Music Hall. Another patient regaled me with stories of her life as a country western singer/performer now in the New York State Country Western Hall of Fame.

In December 2018, I was asked to officiate the marriage of a patient who was unexpectedly hospitalized just before his wedding. Marriage license in hand, half rented, food prepared, and most important, distant family present who could stay only for the weekend. Alert and of sound mind, both he and his fiancé really wanted to proceed with the marriage even in the hospital so family could attend.

After asking appropriate pre-marital questions, it was my joy, along with the hospital staff, to join them together as husband and wife!

As chaplain, I regularly visit those in the mental health unit, where it’s not unusual to meet St. Michael the Archangel, more often it’s patients who’ve lost hope, feeling unworthy or underserving of any good in their lives. We forget that everyone has “mental health” measured on a continuum from excellent to poor; sometimes requiring hospitalization, no different than those needing cardiac, pulmonary or surgical care. My goal is to support them as they strive towards better mental health, restored hope and promise of a better life.

Spanning twenty years of ministry in several hospital settings, I’ve experienced a few rare but challenging moments. One winter night a high school had a car accident; sitting with the family, they spoke proudly of their daughter and prospects for a bright future. When the doc came to tell the family she died, her brother, shocked and angry, tried to grab the doc as though what he said couldn’t be true; security responded quickly and settled the young man down. The grandmother quietly shared that her grandson suffered from anger issues.

Anger stems from fear and guilt. A young woman, very much alive when her father left the previous evening, was found dead @ 5:00AM. I was called to be present when family arrived. Her father, a tall, imposing man blew into the room livid: “I shouldn’t have left last night! This is my fault!” he banged his fist on the wall. My training taught me to “let the heart have its day” – to remain silent, giving this man space. His rage ebbed and flowed; as I prayed silently his pastor arrived, took the father in his arms, walked him out of the room, calming him down. Now in his pastor’s care, my role as chaplain over, I departed quietly.
There was a patient who believed she possessed great power via demons from Satan. Initially seeking prayer, what she really wanted was for me to affirm her satanic power. Asking me to take her hand, sensing trouble, I declined; she accused me of being afraid of her power, claiming, “I’m bigger than you; I can take you; you can’t move.” Rising from my chair, I calmly assured her I had no fear of her or “her power,” offering God’s blessing as I carefully exited her room.

Digging Deep

There have been some extraordinarily profound times when I’ve had to dig deep and pray hard to remain present and compassionate, only to be deeply humbled by the courage and faith of others. A young couple’s baby was born with a condition incompatible with life; after 40 days of hope, struggle and pain, it was time to remove life support, allowing him to die in peace. Their baby had been baptized and named, but I was called to offer pastoral support in the heart wrenching moment when, for the first time since he was born and what would be the final time, mom held her son in her arms as staff tearfully removed the many wires and tubes.

Mom, Dad stepped back to me, saying quietly, “friends say how lousy that side.”

I stood several steps behind them.

“Dad,” I said, “he was born and what would be the final time, mom held her son in her arms as staff tearfully removed the many wires and tubes; Dad at her side.

“I wouldn’t wish this on anyone else; bad stuff happens.”

“Mom,” I replied, “I’m here, and I’m grateful to serve Him in this part of His Kingdom.”

Affirmation...As I traverse the hospital hallways, whether in the business of day, the quiet hush of evening or in the darkness of night to be present to the needs of others, my heart is touched when a staff member calls out “hey Rev – how’s it going? Or “hey Rev – would you visit…?” Or, more frequently, when a staff member asks, “Hey Rev – can I talk to you? Will you pray for me?” God is so very present in all times and in all places to His people and I’m grateful to serve Him in this part of His Kingdom.

The Reverend Nancy Goff is an Episcopal priest, and one of several chaplains sponsored by the Episcopal Chaplaincy Program, who is currently ministering to those in need at Glen Falls Hospital and nearby health facilities.

Mission: Ministry in the Dimension of Difference

From the Arctic to Zimbabwe, and the House Next Door

By The Rev. Patricia “Patti” Johnson

When you think about “Mission”, where does your imagination take you? To the beat of a refugee camp in Thailand or Uganda? To a school full of smiling children, or a “standing room only” medical clinic in the Dominican Republic? To a thatch-roof tukul in South Sudan or a praise-filled Church in Haiti? To a hurricane-ravaged roof top in Puerto Rico or an earthquake-damaged school in Peru? To a newly-built gathering place in Belize or to a beautiful cathedral in Madagascar? To the warmth of a home in the icy cold of the Arctic or to a school for children with special needs in Zimbabwe? To the busy streets of Belfast or to a tent revival worship service on the coast of Northern Ireland? Perhaps any of those places, and more. Wherever God is working, He calls us to join Him. This shared ministry takes place across both geographical and experiential boundaries.

Far too many Christians think “mission” is something “other people” do – brave or adventurous people who travel to far off lands to bring the light of the Gospel to people who are living in darkness. Truly, we don’t have to travel hundreds or thousands of miles to reach people living in darkness. They are in our community, sitting next to us in the church pew, living in the house next door, or maybe in our own homes. Some life experiences leave us feeling isolated and distant from the people around us, though physically close, they can seem a world away. The experience of homelessness, poverty, addiction, abusive relationships, or even cultural and language differences can create significant boundaries between us, often, those experiential boundaries can be more difficult, or frightening to cross than geographical boundaries. But perhaps the most difficult one to cross is the boundary of our own “comfort zone”.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Titus Presler defines Christian Mission as “… the activity of sending and being sent, by God and by communities, across significant boundaries of human social experience—to bear witness in word and deed to the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.” We do not have to travel thousands of miles to partner with God in His mission. We join Him in the mission field when we minister in what Rev. Presler calls “the dimension of difference”, to people who are in some way unlike us. The powerful ministries of prayer, worship, music, education, evangelism, preaching, service, counseling, justice, or reconciliation become “mission work” when we cross the boundary from sameness into difference.

We witness in word and deed to the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit by connecting with people whose life experiences are vastly different from ours; by building relationships and forming safe, edifying communities in which we pray together and learn from one another; when we encourage one another through difficult and frightening times, pointing to God’s presence and faithfulness; when we respect and uphold the other’s dignity as image-bearer of God, in a world where dignity is often crushed; when we yoke with another to labor by their side, and share the burden; when we are simply present. So yes, there are those who are called to travel across geographical boundaries, thousands of miles to foreign lands, to minister to the beloved of God, because that is where Jesus was called to follow Him. But
there are also those who are called to minister to the beloved of God in the foreign places of their home communities, on the streets, in the shelters, in the darkness of loneliness, grief, pain, or addiction because that is where Jesus was when He said to them “Come, follow me.”

Near or far, Mission is ministry in the dimension of difference. Presler explains, “What marks mission, therefore, is not necessarily any particular activity but who the activity is shared with. Bible study in the rectors office is ministry, but Bible study, taken to the housing project, is mission. Fellowship lunch at church after worship is ministry, but meals served to the homeless at a shelter, is mission. And when the homeless reach out to help your parish, that’s their mission…” (2016).

This year, consider adding a “ministry in the dimension of difference” as your Lenten devotion. Pray. Listen. God is calling you “to send” or “to be sent”. The only question is “where”? How will you cross the boundary of your comfort zone to serve another, in Jesus’ name?

Here are a few examples of what your EDOA (Episcopal Diocese of Albany) Mission Committee is supporting. Please join us in offering prayers and support.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Libros Para Los Niños completed its thirteenth mission trip to the Dominican Republic in 2019. Each year the Libros team continues its work to enhance the education in Episcopal schools in the poorest areas of the Dominican Republic. In 2019 Libros expanded its support of educational programs to Sintonce Radio Episcopal, a Spanish language station which broadcasts educational programs to children and adults in the Caribbean and northern parts of South America. The Libros Para Los Niños team will return to the Dominican Republic the end of October/first of November 2020.

RHINO REFUGEE CAMP, UGANDA: Meet Sunday Grace and Richard, two young adults that we met who were thrilled to receive laptops to help in their education. These young adults are attempting to remain faithful to our Lord and Savior, while living within the Rhino Refugee Camps in Uganda. They are striving to better their own lives, and those of their families. Please pray for Grace and Richard and their families. We have a team returning to the Rhino Refugee Camps this summer to assist with their many needs.

MBERENGWA, ZIMBABWE: To Love a Child, Inc. has been called to a new mission in Zimbabwe. In November 2019 we traveled to the rural village of Mberengwa to meet with village government, district government and families who had children with disabilities. Over 300 people attended the groundbreaking of a new school which will be designed and built to welcome children of all capabilities and also provide programs for adults with special needs. This photo was taken on the site of the new school where a cross was placed by the Village Chief to bless the property. In the photo are nurses from the clinic, the first teacher for the school, the Village Chief, district government officials, Pastor/Project Manager/Director of To Love a Child Zimbabwe Muno, and To Love a Child USA team members.

MARIDI, SOUTH SUDAN: The Diocese of Albany has a long-standing partnership with the Diocese of Maridi. Albany Diocese was able to help provide goats for a Women’s Empowerment Project. Income generated from the goats will help pay school fees for their children, and other necessities. Here Mama Rejoice (wife of Bishop Moses) and Mama Norma (with Mother Pam Johnson) show us some of the newest kids born to this successful project.

PUERTO RICO: Kathleen and Jim Blaisel have served the people of Puerto Rico by repairing homes affected by the Hurricane. Please pray for the people of Puerto Rico as they now recover from the recent earthquakes. If God is calling you to send or be sent to one of these Missions- or another in your community- please contact us at albanymissions@gmail.com. We want to encourage you and pray for the Mission partnership to which God is calling you.

UNITEDVILLE, BELIZE: The mission team to Mt Hope Bible Church and the people of Unitedville consisted of 11 people from 5 different churches including Christ Church, Ballston Spa, The Adirondack Mission Churches, Greenfield Center Baptist Church, Church of the Messiah, Glens Falls, and Trinity, Lansingburgh, on this mission trip, and everyone had a great time. We built a small 2 bedroom addition on a home. We also worked on several other homes. We painted, we wired, and we built 5 beds for children that had none. We handed out school supplies (mostly pencils (over 3,000 of them), erasers, pencil sharpeners, and crayons) to six schools. We handed out donated items to almost 30 families of the Church. We even had enough time to visit a Mayan Ruin and the Belize National Zoo.

HAITI: many churches in the Capital District are linked with parishes in Haiti and are continuing to support them through prayer, funds and mission trips. Please pray for safe travel, for good relations, health and stamina to do the work God has laid before the team headed to Haiti in February.
Appointments
The Rev. Charles Wallace has been called as Priest in Charge to Bethesda in Saratoga Springs. Fr. Wallace will begin August 1, 2020.

In Memoriam
The Rev. Michael Shank, retired priest in the Diocese of Albany, died on Sunday, January 5, 2020. Fr. Shank was serving as Vicar of St. Mary’s, Downsville and St. Margaret’s, Margaretville.
The Reverend Dr. Robert Heighton, Deacon, St. Stephen’s Church, Delmar died unexpectedly on Tuesday, February 4, 2020.

Episcopal Charities of Albany offers eye care grants
Episcopal Charities of Albany offers direct assistance in the form of grants to indigent persons regardless of faith, who are in need of eye care, or who otherwise suffer from eye disorders, and are unable to afford such eye care of necessary related services. Grants are limited to eye examinations, purchase of eye glasses and special equipment or medication needed by an individual by reason of his or her suffering from eye disease and surgical procedures to restore or maintain normal vision.

Grant awards are limited to a maximum $1,000 per grant and to those residing within 19 counties of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany (northeastern New York State.)

Those who feel they may qualify for an eye care grant can apply by contacting the Administrator at ECA@albanydiocese.org or writing to ECA, 580 Burton Road, Greenwich, NY 12834.

SAVE THE DATE!
Men’s Cursillo Weekend
A Men’s Cursillo weekend is scheduled for April 24-26 at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center, Greenwich. Leading the weekend event will be Mark Hibbard and Fr. Scott Garno. For information in knowing more about Cursillo and details regarding this event, go to the Diocesan website, www.albanyepiscopalcursillo.org or contact John Hyde at 518-376-9477.

152nd Diocesan Convention June 5 – 7, 2020
Camp of the Woods, Speculator
Information regarding this annual Diocesan event will be found on the Albany Diocese website: www.albanyepiscopaldiocese.org

Hope to see you all there!
Tea and School

"Beaver Cross has been working with the youth since 1964 and is dedicated to drawing campers closer to Jesus and to each other. Each camp day is exciting and fun, but more importantly they are intentionally planned and programmed to build community in Christ. We look forward to seeing you this summer!" -Daniel Hyde

(Beaver Cross Ministries Director)

Partner With Us

Community isn’t built alone. Here are a few ways you can help:
- Pray for us
- Send your kids to Beaver Cross!
- Volunteer
- Donate to Beaver Cross (You can donate to help our programs, or to scholarship a camper)

Contact Us

575 Burton Road, Greenwich NY, 12834
Phone: 518.692.9550, ext 114
Email: dhyde@ctkcenter.org

Overnight Camp

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>7/5-7/10</td>
<td>Discoverers</td>
<td>3rd-5th</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/8-7/10</td>
<td>Beaver Bound</td>
<td>K-2nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/12-7/17</td>
<td>Adventurers I</td>
<td>6th-8th</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/17-7/19</td>
<td>Adventurers Weekend</td>
<td>6th-8th</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/19-7/24</td>
<td>Adventurers II</td>
<td>6th-8th</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/26-7/31</td>
<td>Pioneers I</td>
<td>9th-12th</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/31/8/2</td>
<td>Pioneers Weekend</td>
<td>9th-12th</td>
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<td>8/2-8/7</td>
<td>Pioneers II</td>
<td>9th-12th</td>
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For K-8th graders | Operating for 7 weekly sessions | July 6th-August

Day Camp

For K-6th graders | Operating for 7 weekly sessions | July 6th-August

Level One

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 8-9 &amp; 15-16</td>
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Level Two

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Level Three

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<td>April 2-3 &amp; 9-16</td>
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Level Four

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<td>October 3-4 &amp; 10-11</td>
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For Registration & More Information go to www.Beveracrossministries.org
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

March
1  Christ Church, Herkimer
8  Grace Church, Mohawk
22  St. Mark’s Church, Philmont
29  Trinity Church, Whitehall

April
5  Trinity Church, Watervliet
26  St. Stephen’s Church, Delmar