Hope for the times...

Take my hand we will get through this together

Highlighted this Issue:
❖ You Can Trust God, Eve When Your World is Turned Upside Down
❖ Life Begins Where Our Comfort Ends
❖ A Living Hope ❖ And more…
A Word to our readers...

As you may surmise after seeing the cover of this month’s The Albany Episcopalian, this issue highlights our nation’s current war against the “invisible enemy” - the pandemic coronavirus.

In just a few short months the COVID-19 virus has brought wide-spread death, illness, economic hardship and enormous changes in the way we have always lived. Some of the changes involve interaction and behavior with family, friends, neighbors and people in the workplace. It has changed the way we shop, frequent restaurants, attend sporting events and other gatherings… ...and the way we attend church each Sunday.

Our nation is not alone in the fight. At this writing, 184 countries are going through a difficult and trying time. A pandemic such as this has not been seen since 1917-18, more than one century ago. Then known as the Great Flu Epidemic, it infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide, killed more than 50 million and infected 675,000 in the United States.

With God’s help, we are confident that today’s “unseen enemy” will be defeated. In the meantime, it is our hope this issue brings a few words of support and comfort to its readers and provide a renewed faith in Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sincere thanks to the clergy who have submitted articles for this issue, as each article offers a personal perspective during the current struggle.

After reading this issue, be sure to pass the hope and “Good Word” on to others.

Thank you for “listening”.

- The Editor
You Can Trust God, Even When Your World Is Turned Upside Down!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The year 2020 will undoubtedly go down in history as the year the world was turned upside down by a microscopic enemy known as the Coronavirus (COVID-19). It is startling that something so small can have such a devastating impact on the entire world. While only history can tell the lasting impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic, the immediate impact is something most of us never would have envisioned — the government ordered shutdown of all “non-essential” businesses; the closing of churches, schools and universities; the cancelation of sporting events and other social and entertainment venues; unheard-of social distancing mandates; and the ensuing financial crisis, growing unemployment rates, and food and supply shortages. All of which are either directly or indirectly related to the Coronavirus and the world’s efforts to slow down and stop the spread of this highly contagious disease, which is now known to have infected over 3 million people worldwide resulting in the deaths of several hundred thousand thus far.

When we look at all that has happened and that which might still happen regarding the Coronavirus Pandemic and the world’s response to it, we could easily find ourselves overwhelmed with fear — fear of catching or spreading the disease to a loved one; fear of dying; fear of losing one’s job; fear of not being able to make ends meet or put food on the table; fear of being isolated from family and friends, or the opposite, fear of too much togetherness being stuck at home unable to get out; and perhaps most frightening of all, fear of the unknown. Tragically, if we are not careful, the growing level of fear and anxiety can easily rob us of all sense of joy, all sense of peace, all sense of hope. I have no idea how long this pandemic is going to last, or what other related hardships and struggles it may bring, but I do know God has not abandoned us, nor does He want us to live in a state of fear.

Over and over again, throughout the Old and New Testament, God repeatedly tells the people (tells us) — “do not fear,” “fear not,” “do not be afraid.” During the Exodus, the Israelites are told as they approach the Red Sea with Egyptians closing in fast, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.” (Exodus 14:13).

In Deuteronomy we read, “When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.” (Deuteronomy 20:1) Two verses later, God says, “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.” (Deuteronomy 20:1-2). In Deuteronomy we also read, “When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.” (Deuteronomy 20:1)

In the 147th Psalm, the Psalmist writes, “Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit.” (Psalm 147:5). In the 23rd Psalm, we read, “Even though I walk through the storms of life, I will not fear.” (Psalm 23:4). Like the Israelites, we too are at war with a deadly enemy that often seems overwhelming. Unlike them however, we can’t see the enemy coming. That is one of the most frightening and frustrating things about this enemy that has been unleashed on the world — we know it is here, but we don’t know exactly where, or who is a carrier often times until it is too late and the damage has been done. It is hard to fight that which you can’t see.

Fortunately, we worship a God who is all-seeing and all-knowing and never grows weary. Despite its microscopic size, the Coronavirus cannot escape the eyes of the Lord. In Hebrews we are told, “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13) In the 147th Psalm, the Psalmist writes, “Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit.” (Psalm 147:5). The Prophet Isaiah proclaims, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth and He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom.” (Isaiah 40:28).

That which the scientific community and world leaders are desperately trying to learn and understand regarding the Coronavirus and how to defeat it, God already knows. It is important that we turn to God during these difficult and uncertain times.

Recently when speaking about the lower number of new cases of the Coronavirus in New York, one of our state leaders declared the number of cases are down “because we brought the numbers down…God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that…A lot of pain and suffering did that…”

To think that somehow “we” can defeat COVID-19 on our own apart from God is a very dangerous thing. No doubt many of the social distancing mandates ordered by the government and other actions taken by the scientific and medical community have contributed to the declining numbers. Ultimately, however, God (as the Creator and source of all knowledge) is the One who will enable the scientific and medical community to discover the vaccine or cure for COVID-19. God (as the ultimate source of comfort, peace, and hope), is the one who can help us get through this time of sacrifice and suffering, if we turn to Him.

Jesus said, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take your yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29).

One of the main driving forces behind the government’s order to shut down all non-essential businesses and the various social distancing mandates is fear of all the lives that might be lost if such actions are not taken. The fear of death is a mighty force that can lead us to act in ways we might not otherwise.

I recently read an article in the HuffPost written by Amy Crumpton, entitled: “The Bible Says, ‘Fear Not,’ But I’m Scared Sh*tless Sometimes. Are You?” In the article, Amy talks about her struggle with many of her own fears and how that led her to turn to God in prayer. When Amy asked God for help in dealing with her fears, she heard Him respond, “Fear is a cause to pause. An invitation to stop and seek My way forward.”

What a wonderful way to look at and deal with our own fears — whether related to the current Coronavirus Pandemic, or something entirely different. There is nothing you and I are currently going through or will go through that is unknown to God or beyond His ability to help us with. He asks us to turn to Him and trust Him as we go through the storms of life.

King David knew the power and truth of God’s love and the strength and comfort He brings when we trust Him and invite Him into our struggles and fears. In the 23rd Psalm, we read, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4).

There is a beautiful song (based on the 23rd Psalm) written by Matt Redman, entitled “You Never Let Go.” I recently heard Fr. Gabriel Morrow sing the song and was richly blessed by it. The following lyrics of the song speak powerfully to God’s faithfulness and the love and comfort He brings to those who turn to Him: (see inset next page)
As Christians, we know the truth of that which King David speaks, and Matt Redman writes, but sometimes in the midst of the storm, we forget. When that happens, when our fears start getting the best of us, may God help us remember His answer to Amy, “Fear is a cause to pause. An invitation to stop and seek My way forward.” (HuffPost – Dec. 6, 2017).

When we turn to our Lord Jesus Christ, and open our hearts and souls to Him, He will bless us in ways that we could never have imagined, even when going through the storms of life – whether it be the Coronavirus Pandemic or some other storm, some other frightening and uncertain time. He will never let go of us, or abandon us. He has promised to be with us “always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20). He is with you now. Trust in Him. Our Lord will get us through this and any other storm that awaits us. It is in Christ that we find true hope and peace.

In Christ’s Love,

+ Bill Bishop of Albany

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Nature and the Glory of God

A friend recently told me that when she dies she wants to be buried underneath a tree – not in a manicured cemetery with a carved stone marker, but out in nature with her remains entwined in the roots of a tree as they return to their natural state. We have a tendency to think of nature as unspoiled – the way things ought to be, and would still be, but for human interference and exploitation.

I live just north of the Adirondacks where the slope flattens out into the St. Lawrence River valley. Nature thrives up here in the North Country, and can be stunningly beautiful. I have parishioners for whom the awe-inspiring vistas of the Adirondacks are their church, every bit as much as the gothic arches and Tiffany windows of the red sandstone edifice where, until Covid-19 social distancing, they came to worship. Nature, they say, is where they find God. As Psalm 19 asserts, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork,” and from Psalm 24: “The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it.”

“Red in Tooth and Claw”

Yet even as the Apostle Paul affirms that God’s “eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made,” (Romans 1:20) there is an aspect of nature that is not as reassuring. No one has expressed the darker side of nature more starkly than Alfred Lord Tennyson, in Canto 56 of his poem, In Memoriam A. H. H, where he speaks of man, “Who trusted God was love indeed, And love Creation’s final law Tho’ Nature, red in tooth and claw With ravine, shriek’d against his breast And love Creation’s final law”

One only needs to own cats in all their charm, to recognize the cruel ferocity of their nature as they stalk the chipmunks and robins in the grass outside the kitchen window. There is a harshness to nature that is, indeed, “red in tooth and claw.” Nature is a realm of predatory cruelty, as well as of random catastrophes and acts of destruction, from storm, flood, and mudslide to meteor strikes, like the one that consigned the dinosaurs to extinction sixty six million years ago.

We are now in social isolation to avoid infection from the Covid-19 virus. We New Yorkers are at the epicenter of a pandemic that has infected at least 2,700,000 people worldwide in the past few months.

Easter, the Fall and the End of Death and Disease: Resurrection faith in the time of Covid-19

By The Venerable Doctor Christopher A. Brown PhD.

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Paul speaks of the creation as “subjected to futility” and in “bondage to corruption.” It is as if something has taken place that has resulted in the natural order being thwarted from its created purpose.

We tend to think of the natural world as merely the backdrop of the human drama. Like the scenery in a play, it provides our setting and location but is essentially distinct from humanity. By contrast, contemporary science—especially genetics—insists that humanity is an integral part of the whole, inseparable from the genetic chain that encompasses all living organisms. Traditionally, many Christians have resisted this idea. Literal interpreters of the creation narrative have stressed the separate and distinct formation of living things according to their kinds. Those who are theologically inclined have emphasized the “image dei,” the uniqueness of humanity as made in the “image and likeness of God,” thereby separating human beings from the rest of the natural order.

The “imago dei” is crucial to our human identity and vocation, but it must not obscure the most basic distinction of all—between God and what is not God. The temptation narrative in Genesis 3 turns on an attempt to blur this distinction. “You will be like God,” promises the serpent, as it urges Eve to take the forbidden fruit. We must always be clear that we are NOT God—we are creatures. Though we bear “image and likeness” of God, we are in fundamental solidarity with the rest of creation.

The “futility” to which the creation is subject, and its “bondage to corruption” in Romans 8 are a direct consequence of this solidarity. “Cursed is the ground because of you,” says the Lord after Adam eats the fruit, “in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.” (Genesis 3:17)

We might ask, “Why? What did the ‘ground’ do? In what sense is the ‘ground’ a moral agent that deserves punishment?” It is because of Adam’s solidarity with the rest of creation, of which he remains an integral part, that he brings the creation down with him—and renders it “subject to futility”—that is, to death. As Paul says, “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin.” (Romans 5:12)

The Apostle Paul explicitly affirms this cosmic aspect of the fall in Romans 8. “Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God,” says Romans 8:22. “The creation isgroaning in期待for the revelation of the sons of God.” The created order itself, he says, will participate in the resurrection. No longer will nature—not only be understood in terms of the literal reality of resurrection as the resolution of the human problem of physical death and alienation from God—less than in providing an explicit explanation for how we got there. For Paul—and for Polkinghorne—the actuality of the resurrection is the thing he is absolutely sure of. His purpose is to provide a way to understand its consequence—our share in this new human possibility, initiated in the resurrection of Jesus as the “first fruits” of our future resurrection.

Bible’s creation narrative with the scientific consensus on human origins can be tricky business. I think of a fundamentalist homeschool textbook I once perused with illustrations of human beings dressed in fur running away from dinosaurs! Some have proposed that the scientific narrative deals in objective facts, whereas the Christian narrative has to do with “meanings.” This seems a valid and useful distinction up to a point. But what about, say, the resurrection? The Gospel hinges not just on what the resurrection means, what it says about God’s grace and the openness of our future, but even more on the fact that something actually happened.

What, then, about the Fall? In the realm of meaning, it points to our alienation from God, our inclination to sin, and to the aspect of nature that Tennity speaks of a “red in tooth and claw.” But what, if anything, actually happened? How can we say that death entered the world with sin, when it is quite evident that creatures lived and died for millions of years before the advent of humanity? John Polkinghorne argues that death is a moral act, the result of a moral failure. And yet, says Polkinghorne, “the lion will lie down with the lamb.” (Isaiah 1:6) No more claw. No more “subject to futility,” creation will “turn on itself” no longer—there will be no cancer, no Covid-19.

A Scientific-Theological Postscript

Doesn’t this all hinge on a literal reading of the Genesis narrative? Harmonizing a literal reading of the

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As we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, creation, but we ourselves, who have the childbirth until now. And not only the we know that the whole creation has itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:18-23)

As John Updike put it, “the cells’ dissolution...reverse[s], the molecules rekindle...” Resurrection does not just apply to the soul or spirit, it necessarily includes the “stuff” of our physical nature—which is precisely what connects us to the rest of the natural order. This fact suggests that resurrection must involve the creation itself: that there will be, as Isaiah promises, “a new heaven and a new earth.” (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22)

The episode that theologians call the fall can then be understood as turning away from God into the human self, by which our ancestors became curved in upon themselves and alienated from the divine reality. This was not the cause of physical death but it gave that experience the spiritual dimension of mortality. Self-conscious beings could anticipate their future death, but at the same time they had become divorced from the God who is the only ground for hope of a destiny beyond that death.

This, says Polkinghorne, “does the theological work” that Paul intends by attributing the origin of death to the Fall of Adam, and the overcoming of death to the resurrection of Jesus as the New Adam. I think he takes this to mean that Paul’s central interest is in the literal reality of resurrection as the resolution of the human problem of physical death and alienation from God—less than in providing an explicit explanation for how we got there. For Paul—and for Polkinghorne—the actuality of the resurrection is the thing he is absolutely sure of. His purpose is to provide a way to understand its consequence—our share in this new human possibility, initiated in the resurrection of Jesus as the “first fruits” of our future resurrection.

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

Alister McGrath is another Anglican theologian who was trained as a scientist. He too stresses that the doctrine of the Fall ultimately draws its importance and meaning from its future overcoming—in the resurrection to come. He writes:

“The natural order should be observed in light of its goal, not merely in light of its origination. Paul’s statement [about the ‘groaning of creation’ in Romans 8] can thus not only be understood in terms of the fall of creation from its original state but also as an extension of the Old Testament prophetic theme of the hope for the future renewal and restoration of the creation.

That is, in the New Heaven and New Earth there will be no cancer, no Covid-19.
We’re isolated. We’re puzzled. We’re scared. And right now, it’s snowing. Snowing like it’s the middle of winter instead of spring. Snowing like: “Hey, where did that traffic light disappear to? It used to be right there!” Lent is going to be long. Longest. Longest. And this is only the first week of our new normal.

This time last week, I was sitting with Fr. Neal, discussing whether or not we were cancelling services. We were talking about what we thought might happen. Well, it’s happening. Church services are on hold. The coffee shop we were sitting in is only doing take-out, like every other restaurant in town. You know the rest, so I won’t bore you. Or try to scare you more.

But in the midst of this, I want to write about hope, because I believe from the center of my being that God provides hope even in the midst of this chaotic and impossible storm.

Last Wednesday, I stood at the St. John’s Prayer Table with my mask and gloves on, praying at a socially appropriate distance for four different people over the usual things the program needs to continue. Her enthusiasm and joy give me so much hope. The enthusiasm and joy that a challenge of this magnitude will foster a spirit of determination that we, the people of God, will not stop serving, loving or being his people in a world where the news, the internet and the conversations we have are cultivating desperation and hopelessness. We can embody the hope that someone desperately needs. So make that phone call. Send that belated birthday card. Make another mask. Give away that extra jar of peanut butter to a local food pantry. But stay safe. Wash your hands, say your prayers, and remember that Deuteronomy 31:8:

Reverend Garramone is Rector of St. John’s, Johnston

[Image -1x-1 to 1225x793]
Neutral thinking, as I applied the concept to my Christian faith while reading the book, was what Paul in Philippians 3 termed “pressing on,” i.e. forgetting what is behind us and turning and focusing forward.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Philippians 3:8

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that is of faith—

10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is to die, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For those who live according to the flesh cannot do this without God’s help. For those who live according to the Spirit, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Pressing on gives the image of great effort, of moving forward when one is exhausted or believing they cannot move another step. We cannot do this without God’s help and in fellowship with another! God has given us his Spirit, the same enabling power by which he raised his Son from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
The image, of course, is of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before the Cross. From Mark 14:

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right (the authority) to become children of God.

When aware of being at the end of our comfort zone, turn to Jesus. Again, a simple act. Turn. That’s essentially what repentance means: turning from our own ways and abilities and toward Jesus and his ways. The Church offers numerous opportunities for us to do this, but it is also a mindset, as Paul notes, that we must practice in accordance with God’s grace once we have chosen to receive Jesus. I do not believe this is a one-time decision, but is a present continual process of choosing to receive Jesus. He alone is the one who is able to help and heal us. I am reminded of Matthew 5:3, where Jesus gently proclaims: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Literally, this means “Blessed are those who have the heart of a beggar…”. Blessed are those who recognize their need. Blessed are those who understand who can help. Turn. Even this we cannot do without God’s grace. Second, admit that pain and suffering are a part of life. We do not seek it, but it comes. Paul mentors the Corinthians in his second letter to that church in this way of Life, chapter 4:

11 For we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right (the authority) to become children of God.

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One last statement from the motivational book: “Life begins where our comfort ends.” We have been through and as of your reading these words may still be experiencing an extraordinarily unusual time, an intense kind of Lent where we have had much taken away from us, and have had to give up much. But as Lent reminds us, and as Jesus reminds us by his life, death, and resurrection, this is where we should live as Christians, where our comfort ends. This is the point or engine of decision. This is where we choose. For example, what goes through your mind in a normal day? How about in these times? What decisions have you been making? How aware of God’s presence have you been? In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul tells us to “take captive every thought.” Why? He does not say to extinguish them, but to take them captive, for they should be under our control. Is not self-control a fruit of God’s Spirit? I like what Thomas Oden says about grace, that it is “a new will being offered for the old life trapped in sin.” Again, Hebrews 12:

1 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or disheartened. 2 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

We desire that his life, eternal life, may be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Faith means we have come to a place where we know Jesus, truly know him, and are persuaded that he is who he said he is. By God’s grace we have this awareness on a moment by moment basis. We are persuaded in any particular moment, of necessity, to be fit for ministry and to walk in the abundant life he promised. May God bless you as you walk where true life begins and never ends, in newness of life by God’s grace, beyond your comfort zone.

Ephesians 1

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 1 Then I no cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 2 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 3 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 4 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 5 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 6 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. Let’s press on!

Fr. Mark and grandchildren, Lucca
Some clergy who have gifts for using technology (or parishioners who can do it for them) made lovely videos and made them available for people to watch and pray with. Since I do not have those gifts, some of the people of St. Christopher’s, along with many others, watched Bishop Bill’s Holy Week videos and felt comforted and uplifted. Fr. Mike also made some videos that were put on Face Book, and which were very much appreciated. There was even a sermon by Rev. Franklin Graham with music and songs and uplifting discussions by priests, rabbis and the Roman Catholic Cardinal of New York on television yesterday morning. We had electronic resources. I am sure that many people received Grace in this way and felt like they were not alone. Good.

However, I cannot help but wonder if there is a deeper dynamic at work here. Most of us were feeling rather disappointed yesterday. Something crucial was missing. Or, was it? Well, yes and no.

We are exhorted in Holy Scripture that we “should not stay away from the Assembly.” We need our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ in order to live and grow into the full stature of Christ as His Body in the world. No Christian should ever try to be a “Lonely Ranger” who freelances his way through life in a “just me and Jesus” kind of way. We are all built together as living stones into the true Temple of the worship of the Living God. St. Catherine of Siena once pointed out that sparks that are scattered in a hearth quickly die out and grow cold while those which are gathered close together grow hotter and brighter. It is only right that we should keenly feel the pain of the absence of one another especially on the most important of all Holy Days. Electronic connections can help. We can video or Zoom or use social media to keep in touch, but the tangible touch of a hand, and a real smile on a real face cannot be replaced by mere pixels. Neither can real Sacraments. In an electronic age, we can be tempted to be satisfied by the electronic image of worship, but sacraments celebrated and shared together in the Community of Faith cannot be replaced. Perhaps one of the take-away lessons to be learned from the Easter Grunch is valuable to us. As we had often sung at Diocesan Convention a few years ago, “We are the Body of Christ.” Being deprived of that real experience keenly reminds us of the deep truth of these words.

In many parts of the world, our Christian sisters and brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their brothers are never free to gather openly, but only in secret and in fear. Many years ago I met a woman who had lived in East Germany under post World War II communist rule. She told me that Christians would silently walk into one of their homes on Sundays, sit down together without speaking while praying in their hearts. After an hour or so, they would all leave in silence without ever having said a word so that when the Secret Police would ask if anyone talked about God, they could honestly say, “No.” This gathering in silence not only kept their Faith alive, their
A Living Hope

By The Rev’d N. Bradley Jones

Could any of us have imagined at the beginning of 2020 what our world would soon undergo as a result of a global pandemic? Sudden increase of unemployment, social distancing, sanitizer and disinfectant shortages, stay-at-home orders, livestream church services; these and so many other adaptive challenges have been thrust upon our daily lives with no certainty of the outcome. It would not be surprising if a new phobia (a fear of watching news) is identified with a recent phenomenon known as “Headline Stress Disorder.” How much more bad news can we take before losing all hope? A young, disheveled, and often inebriated man, comes to our church every week seeking some canned goods in order to eat for the week. A woman whose body has aged beyond her years from living on the street for so long, passes by every day asking for change from any passerby she encounters. An old man pushes his shopping cart in front of our church day after day, collecting bottles and cans for deposit funds. Social distancing is nothing new beyond her years from living on the street for so long, an old man pushes his shopping cart in front of our church day after day, collecting bottles and cans for deposit funds. Social distancing is nothing new to them. People have pushed them away for much of their lives. They don’t have to watch a TV or computer screen for bad news. Their lives have been bad news long before a pandemic came along. And still they wander and search and beg and survive another day. To paraphrase an old song title, they are looking for life in all the wrong places. If we’re paying attention, we see people all around us just trying to survive the day, struggling to make ends meet, desperate for a scrap of compassion or a sip of mercy. Sometimes it is the person on the other side of the checkout counter at the grocery. Sometimes it’s the recluse neighbor. Perhaps it’s someone who sat across the aisle from you the last time you were able to be in church. They are people without hope. That’s where the church jumps in. We are the bearers of good news! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the reason the church exists. We have one job! When we administer the sacraments, it is a means by which we proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we provide pastoral support to another person or people, we do so because the risen Christ lives in us! When the church gathers together in worship (even virtual worship), we do so to build up one another in the faith that is founded in the message of the gospel. When we feed the hungry, when we visit those in prison, when we pray for the sick, we do so because Christ’s love compels us, and that love is made known to us through the gospel. The church has never existed to perpetuate the bad news of a fallen world. We exist to witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. “This Jesus God raised up, and that is what we call all witnesses.” (Acts 2:32)

As we look out of our home windows, longing for the day when we can go anywhere we want without masks or sanitizing wipes, longing for an end to this dreadful virus, we do well to remind ourselves that no matter what we face, we are not without hope. The conditions we face are truly daunting at many levels, and most of us have never experienced anything like this before. But we are not without hope. Things may get worse before they get better, but we are not without hope!

In this Eastertide of the Year of our Lord 2020, followers of the risen Lord Jesus, we have a living hope! As a part of the great communion of saints, including those very first disciples who witnessed the first Easter morning, we share the very same living hope that they had. All of Scripture and the entirety of church history attest to the perfect plan and will of God to renew his creation through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ…

The hope of the Christian is not simply a naive hope that everything will turn out okay in the end. It is not a vain and self-focused hope that we’ll be free of trouble and pain and maybe win the lottery while we’re at it. Living hope is not based on fantasy or a distortion of facts. The living hope that Peter knew firsthand was based upon the fact that our sins are forgiven because of the finished work of Jesus at the cross and beyond! The living hope available to every believer is based on the fact that God’s promises will be fulfilled. Our living hope is based upon the fact that Jesus conquered death forever! Our living hope is the reason we have faith — “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

And this brings us back to our job as the church: If we are to be the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church for which Jesus lived and died, the Church propelled into action by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, then we are to live as those with eternal, living hope! By our baptismal vows, we are to proclaim this message of hope to a world in desperate need of it. By the power invested in us, we are to reach out to the hopeless with the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And maybe, just maybe, we’ll come out of the other side of this pandemic induced isolation with a stronger and more determined conviction to be such a church – a church of living hope! In Christ,

Brad Jones

The Rev’d N. Bradley Jones is Rector of Christ Church, Schenectady

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ…

1 Peter 1:3
Meaninglessness in the Time of COVID-19

By The Rev. Landon Moore

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a terrible toll on the world’s economy, relationships, mental health, and overall, our lives. In this crisis, you may have been laid off from work, or, know someone who was forced to close their business and liquidate financial assets. With job loss and economic collapse, one can wrestle with the demon of “meaninglessness.” This oppressive force is not a physical demon, but rather that cruel voice in our heads that tells us we will never measure up, that we are not good enough.

We live in a country where one’s career and his or her productivity can be at the core of one’s identity. America is a capitalist country, and producing has intrinsic value. However, how much value do we place on our careers? How much meaning have we assigned to our jobs? What is our response to job loss or financial loss?

When I meet new people, one of the most common icebreaker questions is: “What do you do for a living?” I respond, “I am a priest in the Episcopal church.” I won’t go into detail about the responses I have received, but they certainly run the gamut. I often wish to change my go into detail about the responses I have received, but they certainly run the gamut. I often wish to change my

In this time of economic uncertainty and the millions of jobs lost, we will have to focus some of our attention on recovering from economic collapse and doing all in our power to regain what was lost. This pursuit will be necessary and (eventually) fruitful, but we must be prudent not to allow this restorative work to be tarnished by avarice and overzealous materialism. The inability to provide for one’s family is demoralizing, and I would wish it upon no one. But I also must raise a few important questions: how much meaning do you place on our career or title? If they have been lost, do you still have meaning in your life? Does your career define our identity?

When our earthly possessions have been taken away, how do we handle this anxiety? If one’s identity is rooted in their belongings or productivity, and those things are reduced, they may begin to feel hopeless. To be without “work” can mean that we are deprived of life – food, shelter, health care, the list goes on. But here in the fourth week of quarantine, we must remind ourselves that our faith is the bedrock upon which we must build our lives, and it the faith that will sustain us during this unprecedented episode. Before you had that Job, Christ knew you. Before you were a senior accountant, a homeowner, a parent, God formed you – and your identity is in His image.

Do we truly believe that? Can we really believe in the promises of Christ amid this profound hardship? Can we believe in the promises of God if a loved one passes away from COVID-19? Can we believe in the promises of the living God when we cannot provide for our family? You may recall that there was once a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright; one who feared God and turned away from evil. Job had a great career, a loving family, and was financially stable. But as we know, Job faced many adversities in life: his livestock, servants, sons, and daughters were killed. His body was covered in sores, and his friends continued to claim that Job was at fault. Nevertheless, as things continued to get worse for Job, he kept his trust in the Lord.

Even after Job was downtrodden and left with almost nothing, he still said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised (Job 1:21).”

Job trusted God implicitly and confidently professed his faith and steadfast love of the Lord. Despite the impossible circumstances he faced, he gave thanks – not lamenting his situation or cursing God for what had occurred.

I write to you not knowing your situation, not knowing the state of your well-being, but I write to you and tell you this: If calamity comes, may the Lord give you the grace to affirm your identity in Christ. For our God chooses you. Our God chose you to pour His love upon. In John, Jesus says, “you did not choose me, but I chose you.” In Jeremiah, He says, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were even born, I consecrated you.” God desires an intimate relationship with you. He calls you by name, saying, “I choose you to love, to redeem, to uplift, to set apart. I will never leave nor forsake you.”

And so, may we remember that our lives have always had meaning before any worldly things. May we remember to have hope in the living God. May we remember to have faith in the risen Lord. May we remember always to root ourselves in Christ and His plan for us – and that we are Christ’s own forever.

The Rev. Landon Moore is Priest Associate, St. Mark’s Church, Brooklyn, New York

With job loss and economic collapse, one can wrestle with the demon of “meaninglessness.” This oppressive force is not a physical demon, but rather that cruel voice in our heads that tells us we will never measure up, that we are not good enough.
first met our project manager, Munorwei (Muno) Chirovamavi, in 2008. Every time we were together, he spoke passionately about his family and the remote village in Zimbabwe, Africa where he was born and raised. Year after year he invited us to visit Mberengwa, but we never seemed to have the time because our hands were already full of projects in two other villages. Yet somehow in 2018, a small program for children with special needs at an established project site expanded into the largest undertaking in our organization’s history in Mberengwa.

In November 2019, a three-person team from To Love a Child set foot in Mberengwa for the first time. The riverbed was bone dry. Low lying brush was withered. The earth was parched from the worst drought the nation had seen in 40 years. The one well, which would have been the job of the men and boys to fill a 5-gallon bucket. It was the job of the men and boys to find water from underground seeps. Imagine spending half a day to get enough water for your family to drink, cook and bathe.

We witnessed children of every age dressed in school uniforms walking the dusty roads. Come to find out, many of these kids walk up to 6 miles a day one way to get to the nearest school. Some children take short-cuts through the brush to shorten the distance but face the danger of encountering poisonous snakes or scorpions along the way.

Muno invited families with children having special needs to attend a meeting on the first full day at our new project site. Local government officials and village heads were also invited. Before we knew it, over 300 people gathered to meet us and hear about the plans for the Mberengwa School and Relief Center. This school is unlike any other school in the area as it will welcome children of all abilities and provide specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Further, the school will have the ability to host adults with disabilities for educational sessions to give them an opportunity to develop their skills and to provide their caregivers much needed respite.

At the meeting, village heads stood one-by-one offering their approval and support. Residents asked questions and our replies were acknowledged with appreciation in the form of traditional singing and dancing. Villagers further acknowledged their endorsement of the project by announcing they had already cleared the land of brush and had begun delivering handmade bricks for the school’s construction. The local government, who was also present, announced it was going to gift the project with a small health clinic and nurses.

To Love a Child made a significant presentation to the community at this gathering which included educational toys, handmade quilts for children to take naps on, battery operated power tools and books to start the very first library in the area. We announced we would be distributing eyeglasses, interviewing all the families with children of special needs, distributing solar lanterns and making a wheelchair accessible desk.

Everyone was invited to share in a hot and nutritious meal of sadza, goat, pig, vegetables and sauce. What began as a meeting ended as a grand celebration of many partners promising to work together to build not only a school with all its components but to give an entire community the opportunity for a brighter future. That promise was sealed with the blessing of the land and the hanging of a cross by the Village Chief on the site of the school.

Ever since that day I keep the promise close to my heart and am determined to chip away at the list of items needed to complete the entire project one-by-one.

We have already drilled a well which will withstand the severe drought that continues to plague the country. This well, its storage tank and the water that flows from it gives life to all future phases of this project. It gives the gift of time so men and women can spend more time in their gardens, with their families or making a living instead of trying to find water. It provides water to keep animals healthy and strong, so they have the endurance to plow fields and pull heavy carts. Water is also crucial for the “piggery” which we expect to build this year. Our objective is to purchase breeding pigs and sell the offspring of the original stock. Pig farming is a lucrative and profitable business in Zimbabwe. In its infancy the income from the piggery will be used to help purchase building materials for school construction. Once the
school is built, the income from the project will be used to sustain the day-to-day services of the school to include food for the students, books, school supplies, and teachers’ salaries.

And, this piggery will be run by women! By encouraging women to enter this usually male-dominated sector we are providing them an opportunity to learn and develop their business skills.

As more and more people gather to construct the school, we will need to ensure proper services are in place for their comfort. Proper latrines and a bathhouse are next on the list! As for those toys and books we presented at the meeting, they are being put to very good use already. A young woman is volunteering her time to teach children in her home until the school is built, so we have our first teacher!

There is no electricity in Mberengwa so the school will be powered by solar panels. In the meantime, solar lanterns have been distributed to many of the families to make life a bit more comfortable. The nurses even have a solar lantern so that they don’t have to deliver babies in the dark.

There is a long road ahead to include a garden to grow food for the students, a vehicle to transport the children with disabilities, teacher education, and of course the school building itself, but we hope with God’s blessings this project will become a reality for:

- 6,700 residents of Mberengwa,
- 300 children that can’t wait to begin school,
- 51 children with special needs who are anxious to start a new chapter in their lives,
- 111 adults with disabilities ready for a new experience, and
dozens of caregivers who are looking forward to time they can devote to a new business opportunity or personal growth.

To Love a Child, Muno, the residents of Mberengwa and I have all made a promise that together we would do everything within our power to make this project, this dream, a reality. I should also tell you that the management and oversight of this project is in the capable hands of Muno who is a pastor, holds an MBA from the University of Zimbabwe, and is a professor of theology, religion, interfaith dialogue and other subjects at several academic institutions in Zimbabwe. He has also attended the Summer Institute of Theology and Disability at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina in preparation of this project.

Please follow our journey at www.toloveachild.net. We appreciate your continued prayers for this project and the people of Zimbabwe.

**CLERGY IN TRANSITION**

**Appointments**

- The Rev. Jane Brady-Close has been called as Interim Rector to St. Andrew’s, Albany. She begins serving on May 1, 2020.
- The Rev. Meaghan Keegan was ordained as Transitional Deacon on Saturday, March 21, 2020. She serves as Deacon Vicar at St. Paul’s, Greenwich.
- The Rev. Dale Van Wormer was ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests on Sunday, March 22, 2020. He serves as Rector at St. Matthew’s, Unadilla and St. Paul’s, Sidney.
- The Rev. Randolph Lukas was ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests on Sunday, March 22, 2020. He serves as Priest in Charge at St. Mark’s, Philmont.
- The Rev. William A. Lytle was ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests on Thursday, April 9, 2020. He serves as Director for Christian Formation at St. George’s, Clifton Park.

**Departures**

- The Rev. Donna Steckline has resigned as Priest in Charge at Christ Church, Gilbertsville. She and her husband are moving to Virginia effective May 2020.

**In Memoriam**

- The Rev. James R. Bocchino died on February 15, 2020. He was a retired priest of the Diocese of Rhode Island who was licensed and serving parishes in the Adirondack Mountain region.
- The Rev. Dr. Federico Serra-Lima died on March 22, 2020. He was a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany.
- The Rev. James H. B. Kenyon died on April 19, 2020. He was a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany.

**Openings in the Diocese:**

**Full time:**
- St. Eustace, Lake Placid
- Church of St. Luke the Beloved Physician, Saranac Lake
- St. John’s, Delhi/St. Peter’s, Hobart

**Part time:**
- St. Mark’s, Malone
- St. John’s, Richfield Springs
- Christ Church, Herkimer
- Grace Church, Mohawk
- St. Stephen’s, Schuylerville
- St. Mary’s, Downsville
- St. Margaret’s, Margaretville
- Christ Church, Gilbertsville
Summer 2020 Update

At Beaver Cross we are planning for an amazing summer, but we are aware that due to current restrictions camp may look different this year.

While it is our hope that summer 2020 continues without restrictions there is a possibility that in order to protect public health Beaver Cross may need to change dates, duration of sessions, programming, group sizes, or move to an online format.

We will continue to do all things possible to build community in Christ!

Please join us at 1 PM every Friday in praying for summer camps, those involved with camps, and for financial provisions so that God can continue ministering through camps.

Yours In Christ,
Daniel & Kaitlyn Hyde

Contact Us

Would you attend a virtual camp?

Please reach out to us. Your response will greatly help our summer plannings.

Email: dhyde@ctkcenter.org
Phone: 518.692.9550, ext 114

Overnight Camp

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<th>Session</th>
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Day Camp

For K-8th graders | Operating for 7 weekly sessions | July 6th-August 8th

We're Now Hiring For Summer Camp

For Registration & More Information go to www.Beavercrossministries.org

OUTCOMING EVENTS

Please join us for our upcoming events!

HEALING MINISTRY

PHYSICAL GATHERINGS PAUSED, BUT PRAYER & HEALING CONTINUES!

Spiritual Formation Seminars:

Independance Vs. Intimacy
SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2020
9:00 am - 12:30 pm | The second in a four-part seminar series with Dr. Brain Fast, CCAHope. This will be available online due to CDC restrictions. Please go to our website for more information.

Learning to Trust Emptiness, Thirst, & Unmet Longing
SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2020
9:00 am - 12:30 pm | The third in a four-part seminar series with Dr. Brain Fast, CCAHope. God willing this event will be held at Christ the King Center. Please go to our website for more information & to register.

Four Uncommon Sources of Energy for the Spiritual Marathon
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2020
9:30 am - 12:30 pm | The fourth in a four-part seminar series with Dr. Brain Fast, CCAHope. Go to our website for more information & to register.

Mother's Day Brunch
SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2020
11:00 am - 2:00 pm | God willing, we would love to serve you and your mother. Every year we host a beautiful brunch, but if we are able to gather in May, mother’s will need this lavish treat more than ever! Go to our website to view updates on menu, and other information. Attendees must have an RSVP. Please call 518.692.9550 to reserve pending CDC restrictions being lifted.

IN Other News

Follow Us

You can find us on Instagram and Facebook under the handle ChristtheKingCenter. Not only do we post updates on events and resource videos, but we share uplifting scripture to share with your friends and brighten your day.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 1 John 5:4

For More Information & To Register go to www.Beavercrossministries.org

575 Burton Road • Greenwich, New York 12834 • 518.692.9550 • CTKCenter.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
Due to the Coronavirus situation, the Bishop’s Visitation Schedule is still to be determined.