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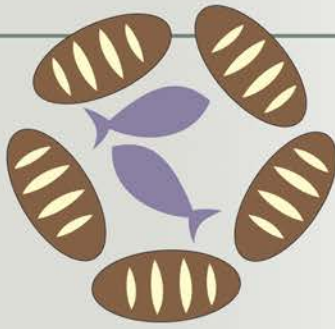
CHRISTMAS

BEGINS WITH

Christ

Highlighted this Issue:

- ✦ “Christmas, My Favorite Holiday”
– *Bishop Jeremiah Williamson*
- ✦ History of The Christmas Tree in America
– *The Editor*
- ✦ Parish Christmas photos of recent and long past
- ✦ Where Will You Pitch Your Tent?
– *The Rev Derik Roy*
- ✦ And more...



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Diocesan Updates

The Diocesan Update is the diocesan weekly e-mail newsletter, containing news and events from around the diocese. If you're interested in receiving the Diocesan Update, send an e-mail to: diocese@albanydiocese.org. Put "Subscribe" in the subject line, and include your name, address, phone number, and parish (or other diocesan affiliation) in the body of the message.

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“Christmas, My Favorite Holiday..”

By Bishop Jeremiah Williamson
Bishop of the Diocese of Albany



Growing up, my parents were, let's say, spontaneous. In my house there was no regular dinner time or established bedtime. Planning for the future or keeping a budget were not high on the list of their priorities. On more than one occasion, I arrived home from school to discover my dad packing up the car for a completely unexpected vacation. It kept a boy on his toes.

Now, as an Episcopalian, I love a good tradition. In my home, I am the keeper of rhythms and routines. But that is not how I was raised. I mean, we attended a church without a Church year. Even most of our holiday celebrations, those days on which traditions thrive, were unscripted and year-to-year.

But Christmas was different, very different. On Christmas we followed a very precise, unwritten, internalized script. With the exception of the particular toys hiding beneath the wrapping paper, our traditions were enshrined and consistent. We watched the same Christmas specials, year after year. We listened to the same music, by the same crooners. We always went to church on Christmas Eve. We were always sent to bed early that night... always with a stern warning to stay put. And I would lay there, in bed, awake with excitement, trying to decipher which red light in the night sky belonged to Rudolph. And then, as the frigid darkness grew deep, my eyes would slowly close for what really amounted to a long nap. It was always the same routine.

To be sure we didn't spoil the Christmas morning reveal, my parents would always tack blankets over the dining room doorways. The first child up would rouse the others and we would run past those veils to my parents' bedroom. There we would jump into bed to wake them up. Because no one, and I mean no one, dared enter the dining room without permission and guidance. My parents were always the chaperones. That was an unbreakable tradition.



We would line up facing the blankets. And then my dad would say, “close your eyes.” We could not enter the room without first closing our eyes. And you can be sure that those six eyes were carefully inspected to ensure maximum closure. And then, one by one, my dad would verbalize directions: a step to the right, a few forward, two to the left, half a step here, half a step there, maybe even a twist or



Bishop Jeremiah, his wife Jennifer, and their two sons, Oscar and Isaiah

a turn. Eyes still closed, we would stumble through the room, awaiting permission to open our eyes to our pile of presents. And there was always a pile. There were years, plenty of years, when money was scarce. But always there was a pile of presents. And always in the exact same location around the tree: mine on the left, my sister's on the right, my brother's in the middle. That was our tradition. It was the same every year. Everything was the same every year. Christmas has always been my favorite holiday. It feels magical; it feels pregnant with impossible hope. Those family traditions not only grounded our celebration, but they also gave me something to which to look forward. No matter how the year had gone, I knew Christmas was something I could count on; it was going to be cozy; it was going to be special; it always was.

The traditions I treasured as a child, I have passed on to my children. We watch the same movies and Christmas specials each year; we listen to the same timeless songs. We always go to church, and are then sent out into the darkness of Christmas Eve with the sweet melody and defiant beauty of Silent Night buzzing in our souls.

And then on Christmas morning, every Christmas morning, my boys close their eyes. And I lead them

down the stairs to the Christmas tree, where their gifts await them. No peeking. That's the tradition. And they stand still, awash in the glow of colored lights, vibrating with the expectation of Christmas, until I say, "OK. You can open your eyes."





The History of The Christmas Tree in America

Editor's note...

Curiosity about the origin of the Christmas tree in America led to researching answers to several questions—1) when and how did this custom begin in America, 2) how did it change over the years, and 3) why is it so prevalent in Christian homes today? Thanks go to the resources utilized in our search to help find answers to these questions. Special thanks also to the historians whose quotes are noted in this article for their help in bringing this story of [History of the Christmas Tree in America.](#)

The month of December is a wonderful time of the year. Christians throughout the world decorate their homes both inside and outside with lighted trees, wreaths, boughs of holly, poinsettias and various other ornaments. Churches by the thousands, along with office buildings, department stores, parks and city streets throughout the United States, share in this tradition in joyous celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful time of the year.

But alas, it wasn't always this way in America. For a better look into the history of the Christmas tree in America, we need to begin with events starting as early as 1747....

1747 - 1820

Historians have discovered that nearly one and a half centuries after the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts in 1620, in "...early 1747, Moravian Germans in Pennsylvania brought in a 'community tree' to honor the birth of Our Lord and Savior. They report that it was a wooden pyramid decorated with candles." It was later learned that the first records of Christmas trees being cut for display came more than seven decades later in the 1820's in Pennsylvania.

In the early 1800s, Americans' views on how to celebrate Christmas began to change. This was the period when "Washington Irving wrote fictitious stories of how Christmas had been celebrated in England before the Puritans took over, and some of these stories caught on in American practices.... Catholic immigrants brought the tradition started by Saint Francis of keeping small nativity scenes by 1820."

1830 - 1870

The German immigrants who brought the tradition of the Christmas tree to America were greatly influenced by a magazine, Godey's Lady's Book, the leading magazine of its time from 1830 – 1898. Considering the age of the country, it had a huge circulation of 150,000 and featured an article and picture of Queen Victoria and the Royal family with a decorated Christmas tree at Windsor Castle. That picture had been previously published in The Illustrated London News in December, 1848. "It was the first widely circulated picture of a decorated evergreen Christmas tree in America" and inspired the new America to do the same in their own homes. Art historian, Karl Ann Marting called the picture "the first influential American Christmas tree."



Folk-culture historian Alfred Shoemaker summed up that "in all of America there was no more important medium in spreading the Christmas tree in the decade 1850–60 than Godey's Lady's Book". The image of Queen Victoria and the Royal family with their Christmas tree was reprinted in Godey's book in 1860 and, by the 1870s, erecting a Christmas tree had become commonplace in the American home. In 1870 President Grant welcomed a Declaration that read, "President Grant and Congress declared Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, savior of the world, a national holiday." Once Christmas became a federal holiday in 1870, the American Christmas tradition evolved to include other customs, such as sending holiday cards and gift giving.

1882 - 1912

Twelve years after making Christmas a national holiday, 1882 was the beginning of something new with Christmas trees....electrically lighted trees. Edward Hibberd Johnson, a partner and friend of Thomas Edison, strung lights around



a Christmas tree in New York. "The invention of electric lighting brought about Christmas lighting that made it possible for Christmas trees to glow for days on end." Christmas trees began to appear outdoors in town squares, villages and cities across the country. "The first official recorded uses of Christmas lights on outdoor trees occurred in San Diego in 1904, then Appleton, Wisconsin, in 1909; and followed in New York City in 1912."

By the 1890s Christmas ornaments had already been arriving from Germany and the Christmas tree and its popularity was on the rise in America. *(It was discovered that Europeans preferred small trees about four feet in height, while Americans preferred to have their Christmas trees extend from floor to ceiling...Americans continue to prefer tall Christmas trees to this day where possible.)*

If that wasn't enough, Harvard professor George Ticknor's social influence helped spread the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree and exchanging gifts in American society.

The Church in America

One might ask, where were the churches all this time? It is reported that churches in America actually started to decorate for Christmas in the early 1800s, soon after German immigrants brought the tradition to this new country. We should also note that it was also discovered that "The tradition of decorating churches with luminarias dates back over 300 years in places like Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico."

There was not much more information available about when American churches actually started decorating for Christmas, however, after President Grant and Congress declared Christmas a national holiday in 1870, we do know that churches in the United States heartily joined in the celebration of the birth of Christ with their own creations. Churches have since enthusiastically brought out displays of their own; scenes of decorated wreaths and trees, boughs of holly and vibrantly colored poinsettias. All are designed to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, befitting the joyous Christmas season. Quoting one source on the subject, "Church Christmas decorations are



more than just a festive touch; they play a pivotal role in enhancing the worship experience and evoking a sense of reverence, awe, and community during one of the most important seasons in the Christian calendar.” “For many Americans, attending the Christmas Eucharist became a joyous part of the holiday. It is especially popular with young families, to then enjoy Christmas Day for gift-giving with family and friends.”

It is now 277 years since that first wooden tree came to America in 1747 to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Christ. Although the tree’s appearance has changed over the years, may the Christmas tree always be an expression of how all Christians love to celebrate our Lord’s anniversary of birth each Christmas season.



The 21st Century: The Diocese of Albany and The Albany Episcopalian

In 2021, The Albany Episcopalian Christmas issue began to feature photos from churches in the Diocese decorated in celebration of the birth of Christ. That first printing brought such an overwhelming response, that TAE is pleased to bring it back for a 4th consecutive year with even more congregations participating. Each photo, beautiful in nature, was taken of a parish during recent or long-past Christmas seasons, all with the purpose of creating a warm welcome to all who enter their doors to share in Our Lord’s annual birthday celebration. This year’s issue includes 47 congregations which are shown on the pages that immediately follow.

A special thank you goes to all the parishes that participated in this issue for allowing us to share their special scenes with our readers. Due to space limitations, every congregation represented was limited to a maximum two photos. Hopefully, your parish is represented.

This Christmas issue is being mailed to more than 11,000 homes to be read by more than 15,000 members and friends. Anyone not on the Diocesan mailing list can still view this issue by visiting the Diocesan website, www.albanydiocese.org, then clicking on the Media tab, and click on The Albany Episcopalian. Earlier issues may also be viewed at this same site. Unfortunately, requests for additional print copies of this publication or past issues cannot be accommodated.

May we now take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very blessed, joyous and healthy Christmas season.

The Editor



Bethesda, Saratoga Springs



The Cathedral of All Saints, Albany



The Choir at The Cathedral of All Saints, Albany



Christ Church, Cooperstown



St. Paul's, Bloomville



Christ Church, Gilbertsville



Christ Church, Ballston Spa



Christ Church, Hudson



Christ Church, Gilbertsville



St. Mark Malone's



St. James, Ausable Forks



St. Mark Malone's



St. John's, Ogdensburg ca 1940



St. John's, Cohoes



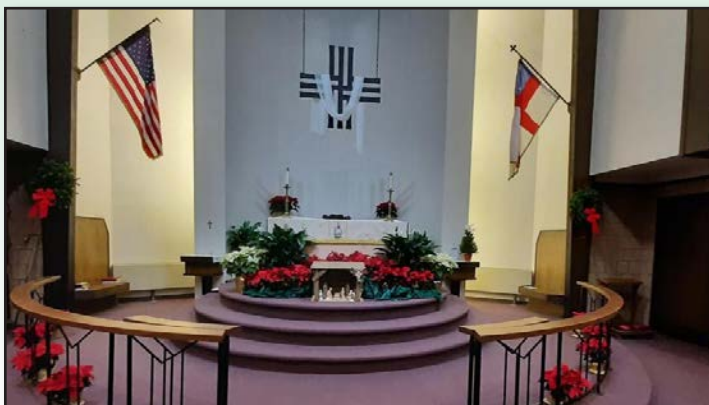
St. Paul's, Sidney



Church of the Cross, Ticonderoga



St. Eustace, Lake Placid



Church of the Redeemer, Rensselaer



St. Philip's, Norwood



St. George's, Clifton Park



Christ Church, Walton



Trinity Church, Potsdam



St. George's, Clifton Park



St. Paul's, Greenwich



St. Paul's, Greenwich



St. Paul's, Troy



St. Paul's, Sidney



St. George's, Schenectady



St. Peter's, Albany



St. Michael's, Colonie



St. Matthew's Latham



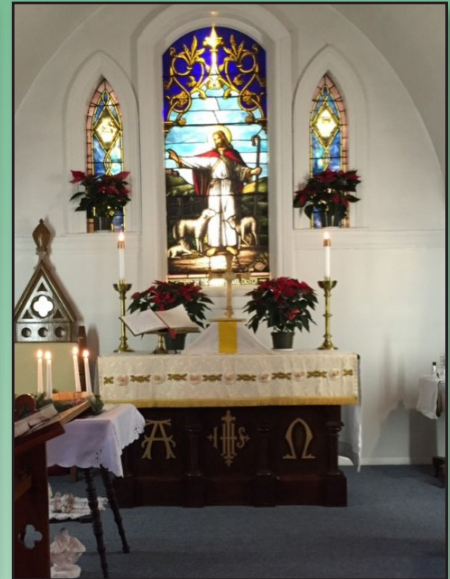
Trinity, Watervliet



Church of the Spirit, Schenevus



Zion, Hudson Falls



St. Paul's, Keesville



Trinity, Plattsburgh



St. John's, Cohoes



Zion, Colton ca 1870's



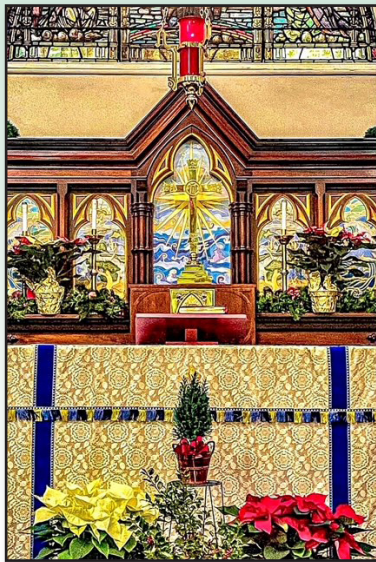
All Saints, Hoosick



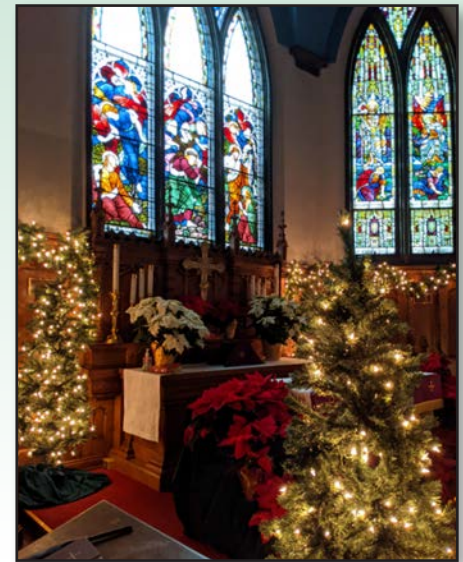
St. Francis Mission, Albany



Christ Church, Duaneburg



Grace Church, Waterford



St. John's, Johnstown



St. John's, Johnstown



St. John's, Massena



St. John's, Delhi



Church of the Holy Name, Boyntonville



St. John's, Troy 1934 "Look at the size of the choir!"



St. John's, Troy ca 1934



Church of Our Saviour, Lebanon Springs



St. Ann's, Amsterdam



St. John's, Delhi



St. Ann's, Amsterdam



Zion, Hudson Falls



Church of the Redeemer, Rensselaer



Christ & St. John's, Champlain



Trinity, Gouverneur



Church of Messiah, Glens Falls



St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls



Calvary, Burnt Hills



Editor's Note:

For your enjoyment, it is our pleasure to again print,
"The Twelve Days of Christmas".

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

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

My true love	God, and the gifts from God
The partridge	Jesus
Two turtledoves.....	The Old and New Testaments
Three French hens.....	Faith, Hope and Charity
Four calling birds.....	The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Five golden rings.....	The Torah (The first five books of the Bible): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
Six geese a-laying.....	The six days of Creation (Genesis)
Seven swans a-swimming	The Seven Sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and Anointing the Sick
Eight maids a-milking	The eight Beatitudes in Sermon on the Mount - Blessed are: the poor in spirit; those who mourn; the meek; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; the peace makers and the persecuted for the sake of righteousness. (Matthew 5:3-10)
Nine ladies dancing.....	Fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control (Galatians 5:22-23)
Ten Lords a-leaping.....	The Ten Commandments
Eleven pipers piping	The Apostles (not including Judas) who spread the Good News
Twelve drummers drumming	The Twelve Articles of Faith in the Apostles' Creed: "We believe... in God the Father; Creator; God the Son; Crucified, died, buried; raised from the dead; ascended into heaven; God the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; communion of saints; forgiveness of sins; resurrection of the body; and life everlasting."



Where Will You Pitch Your Tent?

I love Christmas for a number of different reasons. A time to decorate our homes, seeing the glow of our Christmas trees filled with ornaments, and the reminders of loved ones and places visited and experiences shared. I love Christmas music. I love Santa's egg salad sandwich. I love time spent with family and friends. I love the candlelight Christmas Eve Service. I love all the trappings and traditions. As the traditional Christmas tune goes, "it's the most wonderful time of the year."

Sadly, Christmas for many is not filled with joy. For many, it can be the darkest time of the year. For them, Christmas opens a wide sense of brokenness, pain and not-so-joyful things that seem to be magnified this time of year; especially grief for the loved ones missed and family dysfunction. Adding to the problem are heightened charge cards, empty savings and other financial struggles, overeating, excessive drinking, being over busy, worn-out, and exhaustion. I believe the worst would be a loss of Hope.

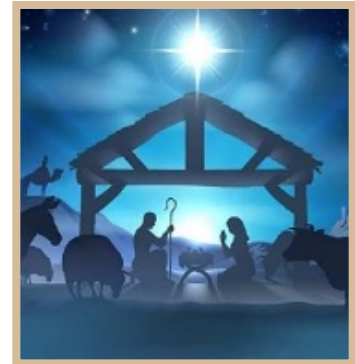
Despite all these negatives, I believe Christmas is "The most wonderful time of the year" because God came to us as one of us, a Savior, Emmanuel, God with us. He pitched His tent in our land, and because of that, we can face many things with a sense of Hope. On that first Christmas, it had to be so difficult for Mary and Joseph. I have a sense that Mary and Joseph were filled with a tremendous amount of fear, uncertainty, anxiety, and stress. They were forced to travel some 80 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem,



Joseph on foot, and Mary, nine months pregnant riding a donkey, both oppressed under Roman authority. When they finally arrived at Bethlehem there was no place to stay. But Hope

was about to be born. As Phillip Brooks put it, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight".

There are many things we might lose to make life difficult, but the absolute worst is hope. To live without hope keeps us in utter darkness. Perhaps like me you have pitched your tent at times in the land of fear, or guilt? Or you have pitched your tent in the land of negativity, bitterness or anger? Maybe you have pitched your tent in addictive behavior or something else that robs your joy. Fortunately, there is a better choice. Because of the gift of Jesus we have another land to pitch our tent. That land is the land of hope.



As I get older and have experienced my own loss, hurts and disappointments, what I love more than anything is God's gift to us at Christmas and His son, Jesus. In my mind the best seen is the Gift of Hope.

In the Book of Acts, chapter 2, verse 26 of the The Message Bible, it is written, "I have pitched my tent in the land of hope." That's what the gift of Jesus at Christmas is all about. The opportunity to pitch our tent in the land of hope is that with Jesus, there is nothing we cannot face.

In 1865 a pastor from Philadelphia named Phillip Brooks made a pilgrimage to Israel and was blessed to attend a Christmas Eve service at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. As he was there and looking out at the hillsides of Bethlehem and reflecting on the Holy night that Jesus was born he was inspired to write a poem. The words of that poem were later set to music, "O little town of Bethlehem..." "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."



Remember the story of Robinson Crusoe? He was shipwrecked, alone and stranded on an Island for days, weeks and months. But, one day he noticed footprints in the sand and the footprints were not his own. Immediately Robinson Crusoe knew that he was not alone. Someone else was on the Island with him. Christmas is the story of God putting His human footprints onto the Palestinian soil so that you and I will know that we are not alone on this Island called Earth.

A father tells about a time he and his family were on vacation and decided to go to church. At the end of the service, the pastor asked if anyone wanted to become a Christian. He then asked everyone to close their eyes and offered a prayer that could be said to accept Jesus. After the prayer was said, he asked everyone to keep their eyes shut and then told to raise their hand if they had said the prayer. He began to say, there is someone in the back that said yes, along with the young woman in the front. This went on while he called out many that had accepted Jesus. The only problem was that the father noticed that his son was peeking and that no one had raised their hand. The pastor was lying.

What bothered me most said the father was I thought my son would walk away from God, and the church and faith forever. I

thought he would never put his trust in Christ, never belong to Him and thus live a life without hope.

That is what this father feared for his son. Frankly, that's what any parent would fear for their children. Even more important is what our heavenly Father fears for us. God knew the loss of hope is a death more hideous than death itself. It's the death of the soul. It's when life doesn't turn out like we thought or wanted or believed and we feel immobilized, defeated and we have no clue how to move forward. Thus, in what might seem ludicrous and reckless, even unimaginable, on that first Christmas, He sent us the gift of hope in a baby named Jesus.

So, where will you pitch your tent? Receive the gift of Christmas! Receive Jesus! Receive Hope! Christmas is about the Hope that we find in Christ. He is the one who brings light into the darkness, no matter how difficult a place we find ourselves in.

Fr. Roy is Rector of Christ Church, Ballston Spa, and an occasional contributor to The Albany

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 or necessary related services.

Grants are limited to eye examinations, purchase of eyeglasses 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. Grants are awarded only to those residing within the 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.

*“Listening is Breathwork I
inhale your story
~ I exhale compassion.
I inhale your words
~I exhale understanding. I
inhale your suffering
~I exhale gentleness.
Empathy is the deliberate act
of breathing, for someone else
who can’t find their own air.”
~John Roedel*



Episcopal Charities of Albany

HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

In the spring 2024 issue of The Albany Episcopalian, Mtr Nancy Goff, hospital Chaplain, Spiritual Care, Glens Falls Hospital, wrote that people often ask her, “How can you spend so much time visiting sick people in the hospital? Her answer? “Hospitals are places where no one really wants to come, but rather where folks need to come, when a condition cannot be managed at home. An array of needs, from the joy of giving birth to new life, to those made “better in the moment” to those experiencing a longer but total recovery of health. There are also those whose time on this side of heaven draws to an unexpected, untimely chaotic death while others’ lives come to a well-cared for and peaceful close. There are good deaths and bad deaths. And each day brings new encounters, challenges, joys and sorrows with patients, families, and staff.” Chaplains called to the Emergency Room to respond to a crisis involving a mass casualty event...experience a well-oiled machine in full swing.....It is nothing short of amazing! To be a part of the multidisciplinary team responding is a high privilege.” Such is the life of a hospital chaplain today.

It wasn’t always that way for Episcopal clergy in the Diocese of Albany. Episcopal clerics were permitted to minister to their flock for prayer and comfort, but for patients of other denominations, only hospital staff clergy were permitted to minister to others... and only when requested. Sadly, during these early years, very few hospital staff clergy were Episcopalian or clergy connected with the Diocese.

Before the turn of the new millennium, shortly after 2003, records indicate that the Diocese of Albany could boast of only two full-time Episcopal Hospital Chaplains in the Capital District. One was The Rev. Walter Collins- (now deceased). He was a hospital Chaplain of long-standing at The Child’s Hospital, Albany, and Albany Medical Center, from the early 1980’s until his retirement in 2004. Fr Collins died four years

later in 2008. The Diocese is ever-so thankful for Fr Collins’ long-time ministry to the thousands of patients and other people in need in the Albany area.

The second Episcopal cleric was The Rev. Marty Wendell, Hospital Chaplain and Director of Spiritual Care at Samaritan Hospital, Troy He served in that capacity from the early 1990’s until his retirement in 2010. For more than two decades, Fr “Marty”, having a long-time relationship with hospital leaders at Samaritan Hospital, had full access to patients of all faiths. He was also Rector of Trinity Church, Watervliet, now retired. He continues as Vicar of Trinity Church to this day. We thank our Lord for his long-time ministry as a parish priest and many years as a hospital Chaplain in Troy, New York.

ECA was created in the fall of 1999, and now celebrating 25 years of its founding. Its primary mission was – and still is - “to provide healthcare services and health related works of charity related to the health care needs of individuals within the 19 counties of the Diocese of Albany regardless of faith or creed...”

With the retirements of Fr. Collins in 2004 and Fr Wendell in 2010, and with thanks to these earlier and faithful chaplains, opportunities arose for ECA to begin its own hospital chaplaincy program and expand its mission further.

Now, 25 years later, it is a time to celebrate the anniversary of ECA, along with the creation of the ECA Hospital Chaplaincy Program. ECA can now boast having six hospital chaplains serving in 7 seven area hospitals, several nursing homes and other institutions to minister to many hundreds of patients in need of comfort and prayer.

Following is a list of the 2024 ECA Chaplains

The ECA Chaplains 2024

Mtr Nancy, Goff:



Mtr Nancy began as a volunteer at Glens Falls Hospital, Glens Falls, in 2003. She was ordained to the Deaconate in 2003, then drafted by ECA to being a part time Chaplain in the ECA Chaplaincy program. In 2013, she rose to the position of Hospital Coordinator of Pastoral Care, then four years later, was ordained to the priesthood in 2017. In addition to her role as a Hospital Coordinator of Pastoral Care, she is also Priest-in-Charge, Zion Episcopal Church, Hudson Falls



Glens Falls Hospital

Fr. Greg Bailey:



Fr. Greg has been a part-time Chaplain in the ECA program at the Gouverneur Community Hospital and Rehabilitation Center since 2006. The rest of the time he is Priest-in-Charge at Trinity Church, Gouverneur.



Gouverneur Community Hospital and Rehabilitation Center

The Rev. Gil DeLauria:



Rev. Gil has been a part-time Chaplain at the ever-growing Saratoga Hospital, Saratoga, since 2011. The rest of the time he is Deacon on staff at Christ Church, Ballston Spa. When facing certain patient death, Dcn “Gil” says, *“The chaplain stands as a tender witness and companion to those actively dying as each day tells its tale. All we can do is offer the different languages of our individual hearts...and gentle, soothing hopefulness and mercy in the approaching eternal life to come”*



Saratoga Hospital

Fr. John Scott:



In 2016, “Fr John” entered the ECA Chaplaincy program as a full-time staff Chaplain at Albany Medical Center, also Chaplain at St. Peter’s Hospital, Albany, the VA Hospital, Albany, and various nursing homes. As a full-time Chaplain, he operates 24/7 to respond when ever needed.



Albany Medical Ctr



St. Peter's Hospital

Mtr. Karla Banach:



Mtr Karla entered the ECA program in April, 2024 as part-time Chaplain at Ellis Hospital, Schenectady. The rest of the week she is Rector of the St. Francis Mission, Albany.



Ellis Hospital

The Rev. Jennifer Williamson:



Rev. “Jennifer” is the newest member of ECA’s Chaplaincy Program, having begun in June 2024. She is now part-time Chaplain at Samaritan Hospital., Troy.



Samaritan Hospital

Clergy In Transition

Appointments

The Rev. Martha Hubbard has accepted the call to serve as Rector of St. Andrew's, Albany

The Rev. Paul Hamilton has accepted the call as interim priest in charge of St. James, Oneonta

The Rev. Gregory Hodgson has accepted the call as Rector of St. Sacrement, Bolton Landing

The Rev. Catherine Ballinger has accepted the call as Rector of St. John's, Essex

Departures

The Rev. Louis Midura has resigned as Rector of St. Mary's, Lake Luzerne

The Rev. Kathleen Killian has resigned as Co-Priest in Charge of Christ Church, Hudson

The Rev. John Allison has resigned as Co-Priest in Charge of Christ Church, Hudson

The Rev. Charles "Chuck" Smith has resigned as Rector of Grace Church, Canton

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Papazoglakis has accepted a call to serve in another diocese

The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Papazoglakis has accepted a call to serve in another diocese

The Rev. Andrew Cruz-Lillegard has accepted a call to serve in another diocese

Openings in the Diocese that are receiving names:

Full time:

- Zion, Morris
- St. Stephen's, Schenectady

Part time:

- St. James, Lake George
- Adirondack Mission
- Christ Church, Greenville
- St. Thomas, Tupper Lake
- St. Matthew's, Unadilla
- St. Luke's, Cambridge

United in Spirit: Joyful Partnerships in Faith

By Cindy Schmehl

Cindy Schmehl is a Parishioner and Representative to Madagascar for St. Luke's on The Hill, Mechanicville, and Director of To Love a Child, Inc

ZIMBABWE: At the top of a dusty and bumpy road in rural Zimbabwe, our truck was greeted by a group of joyful women with colorful sarongs wrapped around their waists. These women who represented the Women's Center that we built together sang and danced as they led our truck to the school where school children, waving handmade welcome signs, joined in with songs and many giggles. The joy in the air was infectious, making it impossible not to smile, clap and dance along with them.

This is Zimbabwe—a place where joy flourishes even in the face of hardship. In remote areas like this village, people primarily work as farmers, often earning just \$1 to \$2 a day. Our small team was made up of my husband, Tim, and me, both of us eager to return to this village we now call our second home. Over the past 20 years, this community has truly become family, sharing with us countless lessons about faith, resilience, and the love of God. We represent To Love a Child, Inc., a nonprofit from Ballston Lake, New York. From projects focused on agriculture, education, and livestock to empowering women through skills training at the Women's Center, our partnership has become a beacon of hope in a region facing severe challenges. We have many stories to tell and thousands of photos to share but in this article, we will share just a small portion of our experiences.

Our first stop was a meeting with the village leaders, representing 11 smaller communities that form the heart of this village. Their gratitude was overwhelming, as they spoke of the impact our partnership has made—the piggery project, the chicken project, men's workshop, and educational initiatives that included installing wi-fi which all brought a sense of progress. They proudly walked us through the village, pointing out each improvement they made since our last visit six months ago, with

villagers sharing stories of success despite the harsh reality of their everyday lives.

The drought in this area has taken a heavy toll year after year. Hunger was the village's most pressing concern, along with a lack of medical care and limited job opportunities. Although farming is the main livelihood here, the lack of steady rain has taken its toll, leading to a poor harvest and even emptier bellies.

Our days in Zimbabwe were filled with discussion of how we could work together to meet the urgent needs of the community, engaging in heartfelt prayer, and planning for the future. This time, the need was greater than ever. The usual emergency distribution of basic essentials for the sick and frail elderly doubled, growing from 35 to 70 people. Accompanied by a church leader, the District Counselor, and a few village elders and teachers, we loaded wooden carts drawn by donkeys with rice, oil, salt, sugar, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, mealie meal (their staple food), washcloths, and razors for the men. We made our way to the homes of those in need, delivering these essential items with a personal touch. Although our time at each home was brief, we were met with heartfelt hospitality and overwhelming joy. Most importantly, we were able to pray with each family—a simple yet profound act that brought them comfort and allowed God's presence to be felt by all.

Another vital part of our mission was the distribution of eyeglasses. Prior to each trip to Zimbabwe, we collect hundreds of prescription and reading glasses. On this trip, we distributed 200 pairs to those in need. People often ask how we manage to find the correct strength for each person, and our answer is simple: God's guidance.



We lay out the glasses on a table, and individuals try on pair after pair until their faces light up with joy—many smiling as they say, “I can read my Bible again!”

As our visit came to an end, we faced a difficult choice. For our final day, we traditionally purchase food from the local villagers to host a celebratory feast, which feeds over 500 people. This time, however, the village was faced with a problem: sell us their homegrown food, gaining much-needed income while sacrificing some of their own reserves, or ask us to buy from a distant town, preserving their limited supply for their families. Thoughtfully, they chose the latter, allowing us to see the strength and sacrifice of a community united by faith.

The final celebration was unforgettable and amazing! Hundreds gathered—school children, village elders, parents, grandparents, church leaders, and local dignitaries—filling the air with songs, dancing, and gratitude. Old speakers were set up so that every song and speech could be heard. Children danced with joy, while representatives from each program sang their own songs of thanks. We, in turn, presented gifts that would benefit the entire community: cement, fencing, and pig food for the piggery project; chairs and mats for preschoolers; whiteboards, textbooks, and notebooks for the students; sewing supplies for the Women’s Center; boots and gloves for the chicken project; rakes, picks, boots, and seeds for the school’s agricultural class; and tools for the Men’s Workshop. Each gift was met with cheering, applause, and deep gratitude. Our hearts overflowed, knowing that hundreds of people were being blessed through the work God entrusted to us. We thank the Albany Diocese Mission’s Committee for granting our application to assist in the funding of much needed food and basic essentials for nearly 600 people during our visit.

MADAGASCAR: Tim and I are proud parishioners of St. Luke’s on the Hill in Mechanicville. Since 2016, our church has shared a meaningful partnership with St. Luke’s in Tulear, Madagascar, though only two other parishioners have visited our sister parish before us. So, while we were already in the region, we knew we had to take the opportunity to visit.

Upon landing at the airport, we were warmly greeted by Father Victor Osoro, the devoted pastor of St. Luke’s in Tulear, along with his dedicated team of evangelists, catechists, and members of the Mother’s

Union. (The Mother’s Union is a remarkable group of women who offer spiritual guidance, financial aid to families facing severe hardships, as well as provide school supplies and other essentials to the orphans within the church. Their role in the church is profound.) With smiles and open arms, they presented us with traditional straw hats and sarongs, and after a group prayer of thanksgiving, they whisked us off to our hotel with much anticipation for the days ahead.



Tim led a class, showing the men how to use the new equipment as they built a large, lockable storage box for the church’s sound system. The men were eager to learn, and we hope this Tool Library will draw more men into the life of the church.

The mission projects focused on meeting the urgent needs of the church and its 13 satellite parishes. The first full day was a whirlwind of activity. I joined the women to purchase a new oven and supplies for a baking class, while Tim accompanied the men to buy tools and woodworking equipment to establish a Tool Library. This library would be a valuable resource, allowing parishioners to borrow tools for home repairs and also do church maintenance.

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Meanwhile, the women’s baking class was a tremendous success. Fifteen women gathered, ready to learn, as we baked crusty loaves of bread and beautiful focaccia, decorated with colorful vegetables to add both flavor and nutrients. The goal was to empower them with skills to generate income for the church and their families, and the joy they took in mastering each recipe was truly uplifting.





As in Zimbabwe, we also distributed eyeglasses—a small act with profound impact. Parishioners in the village churches were overjoyed to be able to see clearly again, and they expressed deep gratitude through prayer for the chance to read their Bibles.

One of the most moving moments of our visit was the trip to the little village of Befoly. We joined Bishop Samitiana Jhonson Razafindralambo (Bishop Samy), his wife, Holy, catechists, evangelists, and many parishioners to bless a newly constructed water tank—a crucial resource in a region devastated by the effects of climate change. Poor rainy seasons have left the community struggling to grow crops, and the villagers rely entirely on weekly water deliveries by truck. When we arrived, there was no water. The truck was delayed, and families faced 24 hours without a drop to drink, cook with, or bathe in. Witnessing this desperation—seeing children, elders, and animals go without such a basic necessity—was heartbreaking. Yet, the new water tank, funded by the Albany Diocese Mission Committee and St. Luke’s on the Hill, offered a glimmer of hope. While it will offer some relief, the need remains immense. It is “Living Waters” that gives hope and revives their spirit each day, sustaining these people until the physical water is delivered.

Father Victor guided us from village to village, introducing us to the faithful people who gather to worship in their “church”—be it a thatched hut, a simple tin roof held up by wooden poles, or even a shaded spot beneath a tree. In every place, no matter how humble, we found a deep and abiding faith expressed through prayer and joyful singing which

unifies them in the spirit of God’s love. Despite the simple surroundings, each gathering place felt like holy ground. Witnessing this, we were reminded of how God is present wherever hearts are open, and how worship transcends the walls of any building, uniting people.

Our time in Madagascar was a powerful reminder of the urgent need for spiritual and material support. We left with hearts both heavy with the weight of the challenges and uplifted by the joy and spirit of the people. We are determined to continue partnering with them in their journey of faith and hope. It is through the beautiful people of Madagascar that we are forever humbled by our experiences and inspired to include God more intentionally in our daily lives through prayer, thoughtful gratitude, Scripture, reflection and acts of kindness. We encourage you, too, to reach ‘to the ends of the earth’ to share God’s message, for His love is boundless and unites us all. For more information on the history of the Diocese of Toliara please go to: <https://dioceseoftoliara.org/en/who-we-are/history-of-the-diocese/>

The To Love a Child website - toloveachild.net



BEAVER CROSS MINISTRIES 2025 EVENTS

SONSHINE

February 14-17, 2025

JR PROGRAM: GRADES 3-7
SR PROGRAM: GRADES 8-12



Our Winter Retreat

All the fun of camp with a winter twist. We will be still enjoying the campfire, drinking hot cocoa, and take a tubing trip to Willard Mountain Ski Resort.

YOU & ME

March 15-16, 2025

FOR CAMPERS & AN ADULT



Our Family Camp

Campers now have the opportunity to share the camp experience they love with a special adult. It's also a great opportunity for children who have never been to camp to experience a taste of it for the night. This retreat gives the opportunity for parents and children to disconnect from distractions, and bond with each other.

SPRING BREAK CAMP

April 21-25, 2025

8:00-5:30
GRADES K-8



A Spring Day Camp

What better way to spend time off from school than at Beaver Cross Camp?! Spring Break Camp, structured similar to our Day Camp program, brings the excitement of summer to the school year. Campers will have the opportunity to do all of their favorite camp activities including: archery, sports, ropes, crafts, field games, campfire and more!

FALL EDITION

October 10-13, 2025

JR PROGRAM: GRADES 3-7
SR PROGRAM: GRADES 8-12



Our Fall Retreat

Sunrise hikes, polar dives, axes at apples, archery at pumpkins, pumpkin carving, fall baking, campfire, and so much more! Fall Edition feels like one last chance of camp for the year. Register early, Fall Edition 2024 was completely full with a wait list!

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN CHRIST



Merry Christmas

FROM
BEAVER CROSS MINISTRIES

SUMMER CAMP

Registration Opens
January 1, 2025



Don't miss out. Many weeks
had a wait list in 2024

Day Camp

Grades K-8 | Monday-Friday | 7 Weeks Beginning July 7th

Overnight Camp

Grades 3-5 | Discoverers | July 6-11

Grades 6-8 | Adventurers I | July 13-18

Grades 6-8 | Adventurers Stay Over Weekend | July 18-20

Grades 6-8 | Adventurers II | July 20-25

Grades 9-12 | Pioneers I | July 27- August 1

Grades 9-12 | Pioneers Stay Over Weekend | August 1-3

Grades 9-12 | Pioneers II | August 3-8

GIVE THE GIFT OF CAMP



Scholarship Fund

More than half of our campers come to camp with financial support. Please consider partnering with us in making camp possible for a child. Camp fosters faith, grows confidence, promotes independence, is a safe space to share with others, & is an experience many people could not have without the generosity of others.

STAY UP TO DATE



Join Our Email List

Make sure you are getting our monthly emails. This is where we share about new programs, special events, and other ministry updates.

CONTACT US

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Let us know how we can support your parish

575 Burton Road
Greenwich NY 12834



Website
BeaverCrossMinistries.org



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Instagram
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TO REGISTER OR FOR INFORMATION ON SCHEDULES, DATES, MENUS, AND MORE VISIT CTKCENTER.ORG!

Sacred Reading through *Advent*

A journey of preparation



Tuesdays at 1pm Dec 3, 10 & 17

Free Ministry Opportunity

For additional fellowship and a hearty meal join us for lunch at 12pm. Reservations for lunch can be made at CtKCenter.org, or visit this QR



TUESDAY LUNCH

TUESDAY'S 12PM

Every Tuesday Chef John serves a wonderful lunch. You can find the menu on the weekly diocesan email and our Facebook or Instagram. Reservations are required.



TUESDAY HEALING SERVICE

TUESDAY'S AT 10 AM

Includes inspirational music and praise, powerful testimonies about the healing power of Jesus Christ, and encouraging teaching and preaching. After Communion, prayer teams are available for ministry. Additional prayer ministry is offered by appointment.



MY SPIRIT REJOICES

DECEMBER 6 & 7

This Advent you are invited to meditate on a profound statement of humility - The Magnificat. The Song of Mary is found in the early verses of the Gospel of Luke and provides us with a picture of meekness and a posture for life.

During this retreat we will dive deeply into the beauty of Mary's song by meditating on the Word and spending time in quiet prayer and reflection. We will worship together and have fellowship in community as we discuss living in a posture of humility. Reflecting on the skills and gifts God has given us, we will discuss how our life can magnify the Lord.

Please consider partnering with us by donating using this QR code. Donations help make our free and subsidized ministry opportunities possible. Thank you to all of those that donate their time and keep these programs in prayer.



My spirit rejoices

2024 ADVENT RETREAT - DECEMBER 6 & 7

575 Burton Road • Greenwich, New York 12834 • 518.692.9550 • CTKCenter.org



UPCOMING EVENTS



Please join us for our upcoming events!



VETERANS PROGRAMS



WELCOME HOME INITIATIVE©

A free ministry for veterans. The Welcome Home Initiative© ministers healing for military veterans who have served their country in combat or any other service context that has caused suffering in varying degrees from post-traumatic stress or moral injury, and are in need of soul repair. Spouses too are welcome and encouraged to participate.

Women's Retreat | March 31-April 2, 2025
Alumni Retreat: | June 9-11, 2025
Fall Retreat | November 17-19, 2025



ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT MAY 2-3, 2025

Make sure you plan on attending our 10th annual retreat. We are so excited to welcome Sharon Garlough Brown as our lead speaker. As a spiritual director, Sharon is passionate about providing opportunities for people to encounter God and travel deeper into his heart. She has traveled internationally to lead both women's and co-ed events. Make sure you follow us online to stay up to date on the theme, agenda, registration, & more!

Sharon Brown authored the popular book series "Sensible Shoes"



BOOK YOUR SPECIAL EVENT TODAY!

We are the perfect place for your Christmas banquet. Start the new year with a team building retreat. Visit us online to see what we have to offer you and your community. We want to serve you!

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ONLINE



CTKCENTER.ORG 

Merry Christmas

Visit our gift shop for some holiday shopping!

Open Monday-Saturday | 9AM-4PM.

Times may vary

The Albany Episcopalian

*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

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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.



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