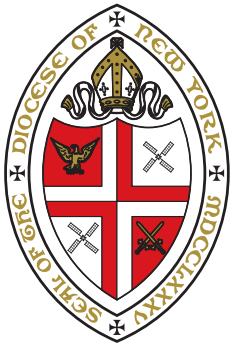


# Redemption, Reconciliation & Forgiveness Issue

# THE EPISCOPAL NEW YORKER

THE OFFICIAL NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NEW YORK

FALL 2014



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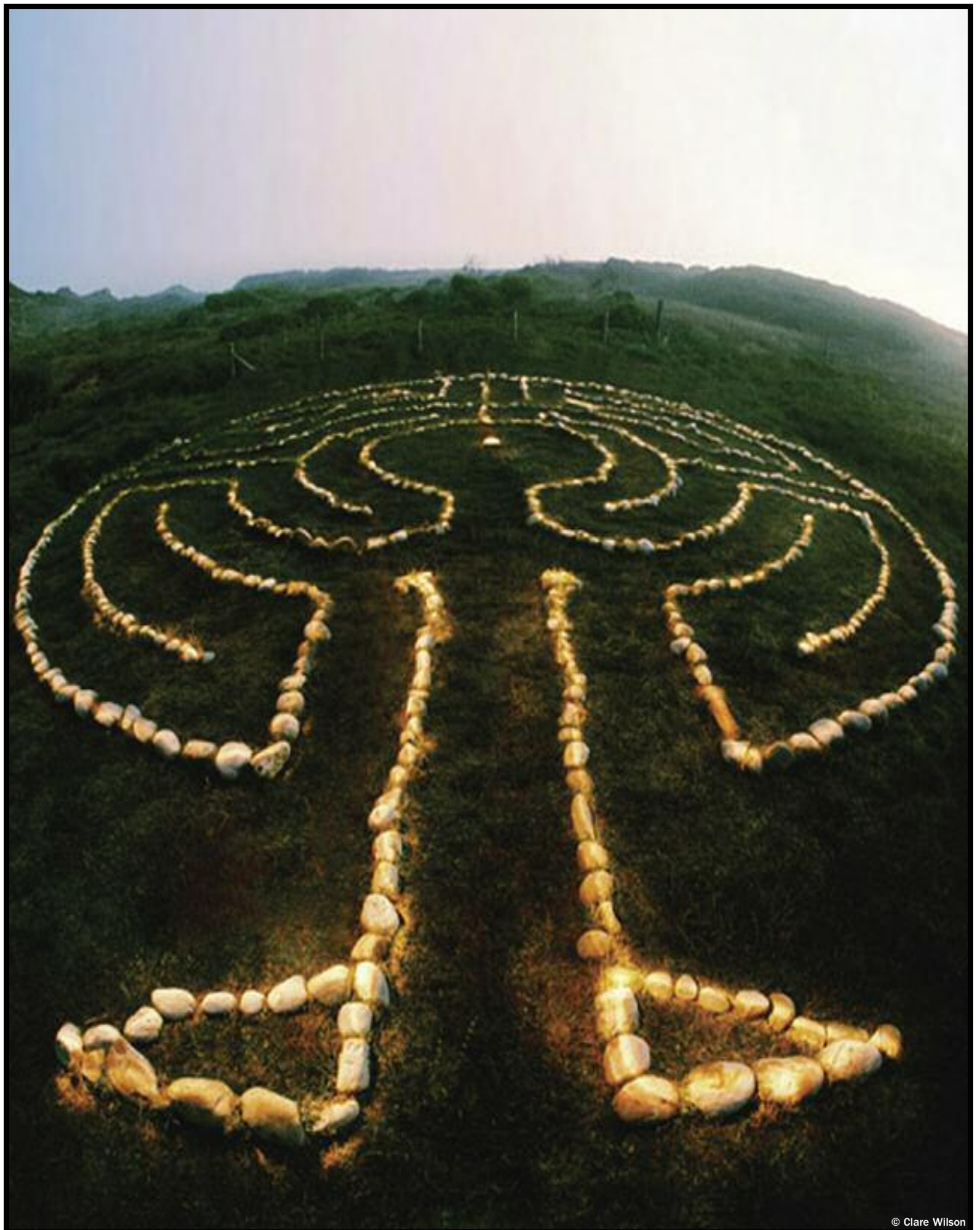
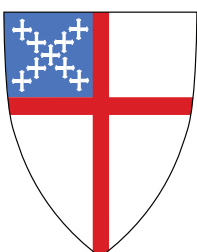
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### Ordinations at the Cathedral, Saturday September 27

Front row left to right: The Rev. Dr. Euan Kerr Cameron, The Rev. Joanne Izzo, The Rev. Christine Ann Jones, The Rev. Richard St. John Pike, The Rev. Jennie Talley, and The Rev. Jacob Philip Nanthicattu. Back row left to right: The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin, The Rev. Deacon Kenton J. Curtis, The Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche, The Rev. Deacon Denise LaVetty, and The Rev. Canon Charles W. Simmons. Photo: Alito Orsini

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# God's Gifts and Graces Are Meant to be Given Away

By the Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche



The Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche

**B**ishop Shin and I have just returned from Taiwan, where we joined the House of Bishops for its 2014 fall meeting. The Episcopal Church in Taiwan is very much a minority church in a culture which is predominantly Buddhist and Taoist, and it is a small diocese. But the witness the Episcopalians make to the love of God in Christ is inspiring and heroic in a place where the decision to join a Christian church can divide families, and the choice to follow Christ is very much counter-cultural.

As this was a business gathering, and with General Convention coming up next year, a fair amount of our time was spent in meetings. But we also had the opportunity to hear from the primates of the Anglican churches in Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, as well as Taiwan, about the opportunities and challenges for Christians in Asia. That story varied from country to country. In Japan, for example, fewer than one percent of the population is Christian, while in Korea, it is a full 35 percent.

Some of the most interesting times were our visits to Episcopal parishes and missions outside Taipei. I visited Saint James Church in Taichung. We went to see the parish school, which educates a range of children far beyond the Christian community, and it was of great interest to see how the church functions so effectively despite its profoundly minority status without sacrificing its core principles. For those of us visiting from a country where being a Christian is also increasingly counter-cultural, this was enlightening.

But perhaps the most inspiring part of the visit was the story of the parish itself. In 1971 this congregation was just being founded. A parish in South Carolina learned that they had no means to build a church, so they raised \$30,000—which, when matched by funds raised locally, was enough to construct a simple but more than functional structure. Soon, though, the Taiwanese priest read about a congregation in the Philippines praying under a mango tree because they had no building, so the people of this small Taichung mission reached into their own pockets to build a church for the Philippine congregation. That was fair, as they had themselves been graced by others, but the story doesn't end. They kept on building, and as of 2010, they have built twelve different church buildings in the Philippines and helped establish twelve congregations.

They have demonstrated their conviction that the gifts and graces of God, however they come, are not given to us solely for our own use and pleasure, but are meant to be given away, passed on, planted elsewhere. Those twelve Philippine churches are the daughter parishes of a small group of extraordinarily faithful Taiwanese Episcopalians, but they are also the granddaughter churches of a congregation in South Carolina that once, long ago, reached out to touch the need of others. In Jesus, no act of kindness is wasted, and as I look upon these churches, scattered across continents, languages and cultures, but united in a common love of Christ, I think I see the healing of the world.

*+Andy*

# Los Dones y La Gracia de Dios son para Darlos

Por el Revdmo. Obispo Andrew M. L. Dietsche

**E**l Obispo Shin y yo acabamos de regresar de Taiwán, donde participamos en la reunión otoño 2014 de la Cámara de Obispos. La Iglesia Episcopal de Taiwán es una iglesia minoritaria en una cultura predominantemente budista y taoísta, y es una diócesis pequeña. Pero el testimonio del amor de Dios en Cristo que dan los episcopales es inspirador y heroico en un lugar donde la decisión de pertenecer a una iglesia cristiana puede dividir las familias, y la elección de seguir a Cristo es bastante contra-cultural.

Gran parte de nuestro tiempo lo pasamos en reuniones por ser este un encuentro oficial y por la Convención General venidera el próximo año. Pero, también tuvimos la oportunidad de oír a los primados de las iglesias anglicanas de Hong Kong, Japón, Corea, y las Filipinas, y también de Taiwán, hablar acerca de las oportunidades y desafíos para los cristianos en Asia. Esa historia varía de país a país. Por ejemplo, en Japón menos del uno por ciento de la población es cristiana, mientras que en Corea un total del 35 por ciento lo es.

Unos de los momentos más interesantes fueron nuestras visitas a las parroquias y a las misiones episcopales fuera de Taipéi. Visité la Iglesia de San Santiago en Taichung. Fuimos a ver la escuela parroquial, la cual educa una diversidad de niños que va más allá de la comunidad cristiana y fue muy interesante ver cómo la iglesia funciona tan eficientemente sin sacrificar los valores fundamentales a pesar de su difícil condición de ser una minoría. Esta fue una experiencia ilustrativa para algunos de nosotros, visitantes procedentes de un país donde ser cristiano también ha llegado a ser paulatinamente contra-cultural.

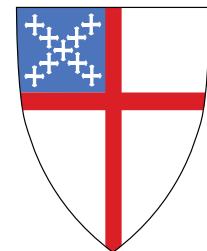
Pero tal vez, la parte más inspiradora de nuestra visita fue la historia de la parroquia misma. Esta congregación se acababa de fundar en 1971 cuando una parroquia de Carolina del Sur se enteró que carecían de los medios para construir una iglesia, así es que reunieron \$30.000 dólares—cantidad que cuando fue igualada por fondos reunidos localmente, fue suficiente para

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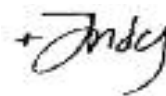
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construir una estructura simple, sin embargo más que funcional. Casi inmediatamente después, el sacerdote Taiwanés leyó acerca de una congregación que oraba debajo de un árbol de mango en las Filipinas, porque no tenían un edificio. Así fue como esta pequeña misión de Taichung sacó dinero de sus bolsillos para construir una iglesia para la congregación filipina. Era justo hacerlo, porque ellos habían sido agraciados por los demás. Pero, la historia no termina aquí; ellos siguieron edificando, y para el 2010, habían construido doce edificios de iglesia en las Filipinas y ayudaron a crear doce congregaciones.

Ellos reafirmaron su convicción de que los dones y las gracias de Dios, de cualquier modo que surjan, no se nos dan exclusivamente para nuestro propio uso

y placer, sino para darlos, transmitirlos, plantarlos en otro lugar. Esas doce iglesias filipinas son las iglesias hijas de un grupo pequeño de episcopales Taiwaneses extraordinariamente fieles, pero también ellas son las iglesias nietas de una congregación en Carolina del Sur, que una vez, hace mucho tiempo atrás, llegaron muy lejos para resolver las necesidades de los demás. En Jesús, ningún acto de caridad es desperdiciado. Cuando veo esas iglesias repartidas a través de continentes, idiomas y culturas, y sin embargo, unidas en el amor mancomunado de Cristo, creo que veo la sanación del mundo.

Traducido por Sara Saavedra



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## Experiencing Salvation One Day at a Time

*By the Rev. Robert D. Flanagan*

**W**hen we think of the word salvation, our thoughts naturally turn to church doctrine—of which, after all, salvation is a central tenet. In my case I feel comfortable defining salvation as the redeeming act that occurred on the cross and was completed on Easter morning. Alternatively, we could look to a scriptural basis, defining salvation as found, for example, in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” We might also sing of salvation in the words of such beloved hymns as *Amazing Grace!* in which John Newton exclaims, “I once was lost, but now I’m found.”

These definitions are helpful, but only begin to scratch the surface. Don’t misunderstand me: Salvation is key to our faith lives; but for Episcopalians it is the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist that bring us into salvation and return us to relationship with God, respectively. Once we are baptized, we are saved, and when we receive the body and blood of Christ, we are reconciled to God once again. For us as Christians centered on these two sacraments, the act of Christ’s salvation becomes the starting point for our spiritual lives.

For me, the far more interesting question is “how do we experience salvation as an ongoing event that affects us spiritually?” I asked this question of four Episcopalians, with diverse roles in the Church. Their responses are compelling—fascinating, really—and speak volumes to how we, as Episcopalians from the Diocese of New York, express ourselves spiritually.

Common themes jumped out. First, each of my respondents holds to a traditional, normative version of salvation, which starts at the cross with Jesus’ sacrifice, generated by God’s love and goodness, bringing us into relationship with God. One said, “The literal definition as taught to me in Church School is what I believe in my bones to be the end.” Another said, “Salvation, for me, was an answer from God when I was at my lowest point of despair. It was as though I turned to God and within my soul I asked Him to help me, and He really did.” Salvation, then, may come to us through teachings as given to us in Church School, or it may meet us at the nadir of our soul’s existence with God saying, “I’m here and I love you.” In any event, salvation is, as another exclaimed, “the very essence of God as ‘free gift.’”

If we were to leave our understanding of salvation here we’d have gained much, but there is more to it than just a definition: It is a spiritual experience, too.

Several of those I interviewed expressed the idea of salvation as place. Our churches may be the locus of spiritual salvation experiences. One woman wrote that her church is the definition of salvation “for a time in my deepest despair.” For her, it was “my rock of comfort and love.” Another said, “my ‘salvation’ is being able to be in God’s house to worship and reflect and receive his word. There is a calmness and peace that comes over me and without it, I’d have a dreary experience.” Another respondent, a deacon, experiences God’s presence at the altar and in particular, when she reads the Gospel. She thanks God for saving her and letting her serve Him. It is clear that the spiritual experience of salvation in the lovely churches of the diocese lifts the lives of the faithful Episcopalians who worship each Sunday morning.

My respondents also perceive salvation as a *continuing* encounter, seen and experienced through people. One, who is ordained, said that salvation’s “effectiveness in me depends not only on my acceptance of it, but also [on] my faithfulness in seeking others with whom I may share that salvation.” So how do we share it? “I have experienced some glimpses of ‘salvation,’” one respondent noted, “when I have been able to help someone truly in need, provide food or clothing—the warmth and feeling derived from such actions make me feel ‘whole’ and in sync with God’s intentions for us on earth.” And the deacon wrote, “When I visit the sick or dying I know God is there.” They all rightly note that salvation is not something that can be kept inside of us—as if it is an internal, mystical experience. Salvation’s experience becomes the catalyst that moves us to care for those in need and share the Good News with those who are lost.

Salvation is so much more than a doctrine or definition. As a religious seeker concluded, it is an experience of “a greater, higher force that will prevail for the good and love of all.”

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*Flanagan is a priest in the diocese, and an author and educator. His latest book is Growing a Sustainable Soul published by St. Mark’s Press, available in October 2014.*

## Forgiveness and Reconciliation

By *The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin*

**A**s I write this article, we just commemorated the thirteenth anniversary of 9/11. The day is still vivid in my memory. From just a few blocks away from the World Trade Center on that beautiful morning, my eyes witnessed things I never expected to see and never want to see again. How could such a beautiful morning turn into evil darkness in an instant? Thirteen years on, I still find it difficult to remember and reflect upon 9/11. Moreover, this past summer saw an unsettling amount of violence and conflict around the world and in our nation. What we need most urgently is healing and reconciliation, which can only come from forgiveness. But, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation all seem to be in short supply today. Where do we even begin? What does forgiveness mean in the midst of such violence and chaos? Can we really just leave healing to time?

Some wounds, it seems, even time cannot heal. The fallen humanity is the broken humanity: In that deep place of brokenness there is a pilot flame of anger, ready to ignite and burst into an all-consuming, blazing fire. We have seen it over and over again in history, and of recent in Gaza and Ferguson. Out of brokenness, we hurt others.

But it is also out of brokenness that we can enter into a place of sympathy and compassion for the brokenness of others. We are all broken, each in his or her own way. That is what Jesus on the cross reveals to us; brokenness is what we all share in our common humanity. Jesus on the cross also gives us the amazing gift of healing grace, by which we are forgiven and reconciled to God. “There is nothing that cannot be forgiven, and there is no one undeserving of forgiveness,” writes Archbishop Desmond Tutu in *The Book of Forgiving*, which he co-authored with his daughter Mpho Tutu (reviewed on page 29 of this issue of the ENY).

Salvation in the Bible is, foremost, forgiveness of sins through the redemptive grace of God. The psalmist reminds us, “He forgives all your sins, and heals all your infirmities” (Psalm 103:3). When John the Baptist is born, the old priest Zechariah sings, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins” (Luke 1:76-77). Forgiveness is thus essential in order truly to celebrate life without constraint and without shame. The centrality of forgiveness in the Eucharistic celebration touches us at the core of our being. We need to forgive because we are forgiven. Forgiveness is a gracious gift of God and the ultimate gift that we can receive and give. Forgiveness is at the heart of Communion and, thus, of all human communions and communities.

In the story of Joseph that we read on the second Sunday of September, for instance, the greatness of Joseph is neither in his dreams and visions nor in his rise to a high place of power in the pharaoh’s kingdom. His greatness resides in

his deep wisdom and faith in God’s grace when he says to his brothers, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today” (Genesis 50:20). He recognizes God’s redemptive grace at work in his life, and sees the big picture and God’s purpose beyond the violence and pain he suffered at the hands of his own brothers. This gives Joseph the emotional and spiritual courage to enter the space of healing grace, and the generosity to forgive and reconcile with his brothers.

This summary statement of Joseph at the end of Genesis is the guiding light and principle under which the rest of the Bible should be read.

The Old Testament has several Hebrew words for “forgive.” *Nasha* means “to lift up” and is often used in conjunction with God’s covenant: For only God can “lift up” the burden of the people’s breach of God’s Covenant. *Salach*, meaning “to pardon,” is a legal term which indicates the pardoning of debts. *Kaphar*, which means “to cover,” “to appease” or “to atone,” is often used in connection with the prophets or the priestly sacrifice of atonement for the sins of their people. These words are, however, also interchangeably used throughout the Hebrew Scripture.

In the New Testament, the Greek word most often used for “forgive” is *aphiēmi*, which has a wide range of meaning—“to send away,” “to depart,” “to let go” or “to give up.” It is most often used in the passive form. Thus, Jesus in healing miracles almost always says, “Your sins are forgiven,” or “You are forgiven your sins” rather than “I forgive you your sins.” *Charizomai*, meaning “to do a favor,” “to be gracious” or “to restore one to another,” is sometimes used in the sense of forgiveness. *Apolyō* which means “to send away,” “to put away,” or “to set free” and is often used as a legal term for divorce, is also on rare occasions employed for forgiveness.

The sense of sin and forgiveness in both Hebrew and Greek conjures up concrete images. Sin is a burden or weight one carries around; forgiveness is lifting up or letting go of that burden, being liberated from the yoke that weighs one down with all sorts of emotional, spiritual and even physical manifestations of the burden. Sometimes forgiveness in these words draws on the images of wiping out or covering over. But is it true forgiveness when the wrong is simply wiped away or covered over? Is forgiveness simply forgetting the wrong done? Is forgiveness just letting go? If so, how?

Some wrongs are difficult to forget and let go, and still others impossible to forgive by human efforts alone. The wounds are too great and too deep to be healed by the mere words “I am sorry” or “I forgive you.” A spiritual cleansing is necessary to lead people to forgiveness and reconciliation. This means learning to let go of the anger and pain, the deep-seated emotional weight. God yearns to touch and heal our deep wounds and to embrace and ease the pains.

But we must meet God there in that place of brokenness. It is in these situations that prayer is most helpful. In prayer we can be honest with ourselves and be truthful and vulnerable before God, who searches us out in our true naked self. It is then that we can be healed of our wounds, eased of our pains, and liberated from the burdens that weigh us down.

Forgiveness is an important part of prayer, Jesus taught his disciples. Prayer, then, is an essential spiritual discipline for forgiveness. Prayer invites us to come before God “with open hands,” as Henri Nouwen has described. Genuine forgiveness, just as in true prayer, requires the same openness and vulnerability. To be truly forgiven, we must take the risk of being vulnerable and trust the mercy of the other. To truly forgive, we must accept the other’s honesty and vulnerability and reciprocate the same in being merciful.

In the recent couple of Sundays in September, we were challenged by Jesus’ difficult teachings on forgiveness in Matthew 18. Jesus here is pointing out something much deeper than our usual notion of forgiveness. He is not advocating letting the perpetrators go free. They must be brought to accountability and pay the price for the crime committed. But, even if justice is served by the law, the work of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation still remains. That it is more than justice served is what Jesus is pointing out in his teaching; forgiveness is not same as just retribution. This is also why Paul says that we are justified by faith and not by law, for it is through faith and grace alone that we are able to forgive and be forgiven, heal and be healed, and be truly reconciled. Law may serve justice and settle the accounts. But, law cannot bring about true reconciliation, because true reconciliation cannot be imposed or coerced.

Archbishop Michael Ramsey said, “It is the mark of a Christian that he has the power for himself to accept suffering and to see it transformed and made creative by sympathy and love and sacrifice.” The sympathy, the love and the sacrifice of fire fighters, police officers, the First Aid squad and many ordinary citizens who selflessly volunteered to rescue those who were buried under the rubble, to help those who were hurt, to console those who lost their loved ones,

to save lives and to rebuild a human community in the midst of chaos and violence—that to me is God’s redemptive grace at work. That gives me hope of the triumph of goodness over every evil caused by human sinfulness. It is in these acts of sympathy, love and sacrifice that the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation is possible at all.

We as Christians have work to do. The church’s mission in the midst of so much violence and tragedies around us is the prophetic witness to justice and the labor of healing and reconciliation. It’s easy to be reactive and pronounce quick judgments. But, I believe that people in the end are looking to church for healing and reconciliation. The creative sympathy, the selfless love and the life-giving sacrifice in the midst of pain and suffering make up the shared experiences of humanity. The image of God in which we are created and the dignity and sacredness of every human being is the shared memory of humanity. Building a community of peace and reconciliation is the common cause of humanity. “We can’t create a world without pain or loss or conflict or hurt feelings,” the Tutus write, “but we can create a world of forgiveness. We can create a world of forgiveness that allows us to heal from those losses and pain and repair our relationships.”

Forgiveness can change and transform our lives because it is the work of grace. Yet, “all human nature resists grace,” Flannery O’Connor once said, “because grace changes us and change is painful.” Perhaps this is why forgiveness is difficult. But, with courage of faith, the faith in the self-giving love of Christ, we must try and try our best to build peace and reconciliation in our individual lives and in our communities. Forgiveness and reconciliation in the ordinary daily life is difficult enough. To forgive those who committed vicious acts of terrorism or racial violence is going to take more than the best human efforts. It is going to take God’s grace and lots of it. With God nothing is impossible, because grace, God’s grace, always changes us.

*Shin is the Bishop Suffragan of the diocese.*

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## A Community of Redemption

By Pamela Wright

Every Tuesday I go to the Dutchess County Jail to facilitate a group for male inmates on creative writing and critical thinking. Doing this work has become such an essential part of my spiritual life that I often conflate “jail” and “church,” mistakenly naming one for the other. Somehow my brain has understood that when I go to the jail, I have entered a holy place. Others I’ve known who have been similarly affected by work with these men struggle to describe why it is so meaningful. I have come to believe it is because once a week I am given the opportunity to participate in a community of redemption.

Redemption is difficult to talk about because of our tendency to treat it as if it were a fixed experience, rather than a living metaphor. As with all true metaphor, redemption is rife with paradox, sometimes even irony. What could be more ironic than that, in a room with those whom we have isolated and expelled from the wider community, I find myself most fully engaged and connected?

The men volunteer to be in the group. During the week they write on whatever topic they choose and are invited to read what they have written in the session. The model is reflective writing—write until you find what you need to say. The format is that there is a moment after the author reads in which no one speaks so that the impact of what has been shared isn’t rushed away; so that the writer can cover over after exposure; so that honoring is the first thing that happens. Then group members respond, most often with the ways they can relate to what has been read. We ask for lines, or the whole piece, to be read again, men throughout the room often repeating to themselves what they have just heard. There is wide range of writing experience, education and talent, but it is the willingness to risk being seen and heard that creates a vitality that makes those differences irrelevant. In this space, there is what our rector calls “promiscuous generosity.” For a short time the boundaries of age, race, class and gender are suspended, and we are all writers.

We talk about issues brought up by the writing: the role of men, death, drugs, abuse, and over and over again, questions of faith. I am regularly astounded and humbled. In a discussion about forgiveness, one of the men commented, “Forgiveness is being willing to let go of grief.” In another slightly murky conversation about the difference between hope and faith, a group member asked, “What if we think about it as a state of being hopeful and a state of being faithful? Does that change the conversation?” Indeed. Many use Biblical metaphors to illustrate their struggles. “I am synonymous with Joseph, being imprisoned in a cell, nurturing a seed, so it can grow into a beautiful tree.”

Often the underlying question is how one can have internal freedom in a setting that would overwhelm the steadiest among us; in the face of addiction that dates from childhood; in a culture which pulls us willy-nilly to the next stimulus. What is it about this unlikely situation that allows this issue to surface?

I think it is that we have entered into a place of shared brokenness in the presence of a community that is both historical and outside of history—historical in that certain events brought us all into this room, outside of history because in this room we are all different than our individual personal narratives. We are all wounded, and we are all longing for freedom from what binds us. In every group, the men talk equally about who they are capable of being and of how they got here.

There is an important way that a promised, and possible, future pulls on the present in any holy space. Redemption has the complicated taste of a world already here but not yet. It is experienced, surprising, ineffable. The men know this and speak of it often and lyrically. “I am the gift my children are waiting for,” one says quietly.

While it may be experienced individually, redemption requires the action and



Rembrandt van Rijn, *St. Peter in Prison*, Oil on Panel, 1627. Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.

presence of others. The promise of the kingdom, after all, is a communal one. If redemption is solely a personal event, it devolves into the ordinary language use of “I felt redeemed,” meaning I was validated in my own opinion of myself. It is only as we are challenged in the distortions of our self-valuation, both positive and negative, that we can change.

This is not therapy, though it may be therapeutic. There are real and justified restrictions on our relationship. We live with the awareness of how great the men’s risk is for relapse and continuing violence. But in the listening; in the attention to his pain each man receives; in the celebration of his courage in revealing it; and in the support for an internal and external world different than the one that brought him here, there is something holy.

Each week I remember for a moment how often Jesus told us that the last will be first. I remember that we don’t earn God’s love, but that it is always available. My sense of self-righteousness is challenged by the men’s honesty. I experience presence and deep gratitude. I live in a present moment and a promised future. This is all I can know of redemption.

*Wright is a member of the Church of the Messiah, Rhinebeck.*



# Rehabilitation, Not Punishment

How one community center in Harlem helps reduce rates of recidivism through love, compassion and support.

By *Shaini Kothari*

“I was on parole four times in four states,” Mr. Rodriguez tells me while we wait in the narrow corridor outside the courtroom at the Harlem Community Justice Center (HCJC), “but this is unlike any other parole court.” I had to fumble with my recorder to make sure I got his answer loud and clear. “They serve me breakfast here, I get to talk to the priests, they refer me to places if I need documents and they pay for it,” he said. “And the judge also helps out, you know? And she asks how you are doing, and if you need a further push down the line, she would talk to the right people and get you further down the road. It is inspiring and I look forward to it.” He was as incredulous as I was—this court was unlike any other that I had seen.

The HCJC is located on a quiet street in East Harlem. It is a handsome brownstone—quaint yet stately. However, as archaic as the façade of the building may appear, the work that goes on in here is anything but. Among other community court services, such as youth crime and landlord-tenant disputes, it also runs one of the few community based parole re-entry courts in the state. This 9-month program is unique because it is supported by a faith-based program, Reentry Family and Faith Circles of Support (RFFCOS), which is a joint collaboration between several Harlem Episcopal congregations, the Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY) and the HCJC. RFFCOS was established in 2001, with the goal of easing the parolees’ transition into society, and thus preventing recidivism. I was there that day on behalf of Episcopal Charities, which has only this year began providing funding to the RFFCOS.

Over the years, this program has proven invaluable to the community. The seven-block stretch along Lexington Avenue between 119th Street and 126th Street, which is served by the HCJC, is often nicknamed the “Re-entry Corridor” or even “Convict Alley.” One in twenty men here have been incarcerated and, of these, 2,200 parolees return back home every year. Given the high rates of poverty, unemployment, stigma and lack of opportunities, it is not surprising that many of these parolees are tempted back into a life of crime. And thus, recidivism continues to be a huge problem here. “The folks who come back through the justice system are often viewed as huge liabilities in the community,” says the Rev. Chloe Breyer, the director of the ICNY, “but our goal, as part of this program, by just providing somebody with hospitality, and dignity in the

system that doesn’t treat them with dignity, is to remind people that they are assets, and that they have assets.”

The crux of the RFFCOS program is to provide congregation-based support to parolees as they attend their mandatory parole meetings every Thursday. As part of the program, parolees receive breakfast through the Thursday Hospitality service, and are invited to attend congregation-based support groups where they are provided social service support with respect to employment and housing, as well as counseling to work on family relationships, faith connections, skill development etc., in addition to their minimum parole requirements. “The last thing we want is for anyone to go back,” says Theo Harris, the outreach coordinator for RFFCOS. The Thursday volunteers who come from the St. Phillip’s and St. Mary’s Episcopal churches, as well as other faith communities, help parolees feel welcomed by engaging them in conversation as well as serving them breakfast.

However, as upbeat as all the volunteers and staff seem about the program, there is no doubt that working within the justice system comes with its own set of challenges. “The hardest part is that there are so many obstacles,” says Breyer. “It’s difficult to remind yourself that you are making a difference in people’s lives.” She illustrates this point by introducing me to a parolee who had been in prison for 40 years. When he was arrested, he gave his Muslim name, but the officers refused to accept it, and gave him another name. For the next 40 years, he was identified with the wrong name, and now that he has been released, he cannot get any identification or benefits. Breyer said these stories boggled and disheartened her, yet in the same breath she managed to be thankful at least to have the chance to be able to be there for him at that moment.

My visit finally came around full circle when I had a chance to watch Mr. Rodriguez’s parole hearing. Flanked by his counselor and parole officer, he appeared confident, happy and ready to talk to the judge. The hearing was quick—a few updates on his housing and work situation were discussed, and then he was given a chance to speak. All he did was proudly to show us his one-month-sober chip. He was called up to the judge and told that she was very proud of him and hoped that he would continue on this path to becoming a law-abiding citizen again. “Where else can you go up to the judge at a hearing?” Mr. Harris proudly whispered in my ear.

In general, parolees within this reentry program are convicted at a rate 19% lower than comparison groups on standard parole. And the RFFCOS does not let that feat go unnoticed. Twice a year it holds a graduation ceremony for participants who have completed 9 months in the Reentry Court, where they receive a certificate, and are asked to speak a few words—a truly fitting tribute for all the hard work involved.

As I got ready to pack up and get back to the office, I asked the Rev. Keith Johnson, the rector of St. Phillip’s and a regular volunteer for RFFCOS, how he would summarize what this place was really trying to do, and how that tied in with his personal philosophy on justice. He simply quoted Robert Kennedy, “Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.”



Hospitality at the Harlem Community Justice Center.

Photo: RFFCOS

*Kothari is an Episcopal Service Corps intern with Episcopal Charities and at the Food Pantry at St. Mary’s Church, Manhattanville.*

## Via Love to Self-Worth *By Elise O'Shaughnessy*

**C**onfession: I was not a dog person when I got involved with Puppies Behind Bars (PBB). I had never been inside a prison. All I knew was that Gloria Gilbert Stoga (the program's founder and executive director) was someone who Did Good Things, and she seemed to think I could help. Her plan was to train prison inmates to raise service dogs.

*So, sure, why not? I'll join the board.*

Almost two decades later, PBB has succeeded beyond anything I'd imagined. It has unleashed the healing Power of Dog (no need to remark on reverse spelling here) in so many ways and for so many people that I remain in awe. The pups have wiggled and wagged their way around some of the toughest places in the world: prisons, veterans' hospitals, domestic violence agencies, war zones, and the homes of elderly shut-ins. Always, despair has lifted in their presence.

These dogs have literally saved lives, by sniffing out bombs and cuddling up next to soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder. They have helped amputees become independent. The stories I could tell (and often do tell, writing for the biannual PBB newsletter) still knock my socks off. Gloria starts choking up sometimes when she talks about the work these dogs do, and we tease her about that. But I don't believe there's a single volunteer or staff member who hasn't come close to tears on more than one occasion.

The program launched in the Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility in 1997, and the PBB board soon got a look at life in prison. The inmates who were raising our first puppies were young and old, black and white, plain and pretty. Most had committed serious crimes, for which they'd received lengthy sentences. All were fiercely devoted to the pups, and it was obvious how grate-



From left to right: Staff Sergeant Christopher Johnson, Dog Tags service dog Colton, Gary Aurigemma.

Photo: Peggy Vance

ful they were for the love they were getting from their canine charges.

It took longer for me to see the more profound effect of the program: the chance it gave the inmates to be of service. As one told me, some years later, "Every other prison program is about something being done for us. With PBB we get to do something for someone else."

PBB is now operating in six prisons in three states, and while a part of its mission has changed with the times—raising guide dogs gave way to raising explosives-detection canines and service dogs for veterans of two hideous wars—one core element remains the same: the miracles that take place behind those bars. In the men's prisons, the effect is even more startling to witness, as even the toughest-looking inmates give their whole hearts to the pups they are raising and training.

God's forgiveness, as Episcopalians are told, is freely given. The world's forgiveness? Not so much. PBB does what it can to help inmate puppy-raisers when they leave prison; several have joined the staff in our New York City office, and two have become instructors, returning to teach inmates at the correctional system where they served their time. The transition to "normal life" is never easy.

But if an inmate is ever to succeed in a life after incarceration, the forgiveness they really need is their own: the sense of self-worth that comes from loving, being loved, and doing something for someone else. This has been the consistent gift of Puppies Behind Bars, and why, as a practicing Christian, I feel greatly privileged to play a small part in its mission.

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*O'Shaughnessy, a contributing editor to Vanity Fair, has written or edited countless articles and books.*

## A Chance to Come Back *By Gary Aurigemma*

**I** joined Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) in March, 2004. It was right after my first parole board appearance. I had gone to the parole board after serving the minimum time for my 15-to-life sentence for murder. I grew up in a good home, but for most of my childhood we moved often and I was never able to make close connections with people outside my family. I missed school often because I had a deep fear of being around people. I could never seem to understand how to make connections with others. I could not understand why someone I did not know would smile at me or try to talk to me, and it would frighten and confuse me. My inability to talk and interact with others often left me angry and frustrated. When I was 18 years old I had an argument with a family friend, lost my temper, and made a horrible decision that cost that person their life.

I spent my first few years in prison feeling lost, and not really moving in any direction either emotionally or spiritually. I knew deep down inside that I had to change myself if I ever wanted a chance someday to get out of prison and, even more importantly, stay out. I finally started participating in programs that would force me to talk and interact with others. I also felt strongly that I was obligated

to do all that I could to help others. Many of these programs helped me do all of this. Nevertheless, it often bothered me that I did not really enjoy what I was doing. I didn't *want* to do these things, I did them because I felt I *had* to, both for myself and as a way to try to repay, in some small measure, for the life I had taken.

Not long after I arrived at the Mid Orange prison I saw the puppies in the yard one day. I had not seen a dog in almost 15 years and spent the afternoon talking with a couple of the puppy raisers and playing with the dogs. A bit later I took a job in which I worked in the same office with one of the raisers and his puppy, Maggie. Over the next few months I fell in love with Maggie and was amazed at the dedication of her raiser to the training that was required. I was also consumed with the idea of having a friend that I could finally relate to without fear—namely, a puppy. Although I badly wanted to join PBB, I was not able to do so for almost a year.

I waited anxiously for the next nine months to pass in order to go to my first parole board—at which I had no expectation of being released. In fact, I was totally consumed with applying for, and being accepted to be in, Puppies Behind

Bars. The day that I received my first denial for parole I dropped my puppy program application in the mailbox. The following week I was interviewed and accepted into the program. I worked hard for the next few months learning all that the PBB instructor had to teach me, and after several months I was finally rewarded with the greatest gift I have ever received, my first puppy, Shadow.

Over the next ten years, I remained in the puppy program. I helped to train numerous puppies to be explosive detection canines for law enforcement and service dogs for disabled veterans and even children with autism. In those ten years these dogs and through them, the Puppies program, helped me become the person I am today. These dogs taught me how to be patient, not only with them but with people. In order to help these pups succeed I needed to not only learn how to work, communicate and interact with others, I had to *want* to do these things. The dogs gave me the confidence to overcome my fear of interacting with others. They showed me how to not take myself so seriously and actually to enjoy working with others. The program's staff gave me the opportunity to grow and become a leader to other men. I was given the opportunity to help others to learn the same lessons I had learned and to grow to become better men themselves. I was given the gift of knowing that my second dog, Jordan, changed the life of the young autistic boy he went to as well as the lives of the boy's family. I was given the gift of having the opportunity to help train a couple of dozen disabled veterans and seeing some of these veterans come back to speak about how the dogs are giving them back their lives. I was given the gift of knowing that, through this program, I have been able to positively touch the lives of possibly thousands of people.

Over the next ten years I was also denied parole four more times. There were times I felt that I would never get out. Often in my mind I would equate parole with a sort of final forgiveness for what I had done—and therefore would also equate the denial of parole as a refusal of forgiveness. Thankfully these feelings did not come often or last long. Deep down I already knew that forgiveness had already come. The sign was this wonderful program, both its puppies and peo-



A prisoner and her new puppy.

Photo: Peggy Vance

ple, which has allowed me to grow and become the person I should have been 26 years ago.

This past February I was given the gift of parole. I was also given the gift of being able to continue doing what I have come to enjoy so much, which is working with Puppies Behind Bars. I am now an administrative assistant for PBB and I also often get the chance to work with some of our pups when they are brought into New York City. Every day is an opportunity to help others and enjoy myself as I am doing it.

*Aurigemma is an administrative assistant with Puppies Behind Bars.*



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## Fold Them Like They Are Yours *By Yolanda*

**M**y experience with forgiveness and redemption began on one unforgettable night about twelve years ago in a Riker's Island cell. In my brokenness and pain and despair I cried out to God in complete surrender. Just as He has promised, He sent His Holy Spirit into my heart. This spirit is still teaching me.

I can say today I am a better person because I not only welcome the Holy

Spirit's guidance in my life, but I also try to submit to its authority. Being obedient to God is what really matters to me, even when it is uncomfortable or inconvenient. There is a cost to doing God's will and not my own.

One recent hot summer morning I awoke to a quiet housing unit at the Correctional Facility. I decided to do my laundry. It was good timing because there were only three other loads of wet laundry ahead of me to put in the dryer. As my load washed in the machine, I did my overdue Bible Study homework. By the time the washer cycle ended, I was now one load closer to putting my clothes in the dryer.

I realized I needed something from my cell and as I left the laundry room, a fellow inmate, Carol, entered to use the washer. She and I had a history of not getting along. She often tries to provoke me to come out of character and not be my best self around her. It is our ongoing struggle.

By the time I returned to the laundry room, Carol had taken her wet clothing from the washer and installed them in the dryer ahead of me! I felt her disrespect and now I was behind schedule for chapel. My anger bubbled up!

My instinct was to take the load out of the dryer and put them in their proper location behind my load on the table. But I realized I would be playing into Carol's trap and further conflict.

Behind me the dryer buzzed and it was time for my load of wet clothing. A sly smile crept on my face as I realized I could remove Carol's now dry clothing and throw them in a crumpled heap on the table, to allow my turn. I also remembered the iron was broken, so her clothing would be full of wrinkles, yes! I thought.

I threw them in a heap on the table and saw to my own clothing. God had other plans, "Get up and fold Carol's clothes!"

I stared at the ceiling and challenged God's voice, "Are you serious?"

"Get up and fold Carol's clothes." Ok I thought; obedience. I am learning. I roughly folded them into piles. I returned to my homework as the dryer spun.

"Get back up and fold those clothes like they were your own!"

Reluctantly I got back up and began to fold her clothes again, this time as if they were mine. I began to feel better about the whole situation and I whispered to my God, "You are something else!"

As my clothes spun in the dryer Carol came in looking for her clothing. They were in a neatly folded and stacked pile, perfectly prepared for her. She looked confused and surprised. I was the only one in the laundry room who could have folded her clothes. After a few seconds she scooped up her beautiful load of folded clothing and left without a word of thanks. But she knew.

And I knew I had listened and done the right thing.

*Yolanda is an inmate at a correctional facility in the State of New York.*



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# What I Lost

By Susan

A year ago when the judge sentenced me, he said he could not imagine what could have brought an intelligent woman like me into this situation. I felt he had not listened to me during my defense and did not know my circumstances—my life choices, my decisions.

I became angry with everything and everyone. I felt abandoned by the God I had known as a child, and my faith was slipping away. I was lost. Some say there are miracles and answered prayer; but that was not my experience. A war waged in my soul about the truth of God in our lives.

Nevertheless, I started attending Chapel and religious counseling at the Correctional Facility, and was given the chance to find the time to grow with all my fears and doubts—to grow to understand that God was present.

One night I dreamt of Jesus holding me. I had never dreamt of Jesus before, and the dream felt so real, so peaceful, so right. I was a child of God and my life would be better if I could say I was sorry.

And, though I did not believe in miracles, they seemed to be all around me. How could I not believe?

Facing foreclosure on my house and the inability to deal with the issue long distance from prison, I called my neighbor who had supported me through my whole nightmare. Maybe they could help me save the house somehow, I thought. “Not to worry Susie, the house is all packed up, all the pictures and everything. It’s all in our garage waiting for you.” Really?

My counselor, meanwhile, has enabled me to reconnect with my son and daughter; events in their lives took them from me, but we are reunited, and I pray for them daily. Even my diagnosis of stage 3 liver disease has been declared a mistake.

I am being given chance after chance at rebirth.

Redemption can also be called being rescued. My Heavenly Father saw I was in need of rescue and brought me home. I am thankful and full of life. God feels fully present to me every day.

I have heard it said by some that you go to prison to find God. They could not be more wrong. He found me, because how could I have found what I was not seeking?

I love the person I am now, His creation. He will guide my future and my calling.

Here I am Lord. Do I believe in redemption? Yes because I am living proof. God is in the world to save.

He truly is a God of love and forgiveness.

Susan is an inmate at a correctional facility in the State of New York.

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**You WILL Take It with You** Humans have always believed some kind of ethereal companion resides in or with each person. Join October Priest-in-Residence, The Rev'd. Cn. John F. Rice, D. Min., to consider this special entity involved in our lives today. **Free of Charge. Wednesday October 15, 6:30 pm**

**Steinbeck and the Land** Broadway actor, Anthony Newfield, will present this reading as a celebration of John Steinbeck and his work. *Steinbeck and the Land*, uses excerpts from his letters, essays, novels, short stories and biographical details to tell the story of Steinbeck's life. **Tickets: \$20. Monday October 20, 7:00 pm**

**Fabrizi Chamber Concert** has rescheduled last winter's concert featuring Naomi O'Connell, mezzo-soprano; Brent Funderburk, pianist; Andrew Janss, cello and Emi Ferguson, flute. A reception with the artists will follow. **Tickets are \$40 at the door. Advance tickets are \$35 (\$20 for students). Please call for tickets and series subscriptions. Wednesday October 29, 7:30 pm**

**Annual Benefit Dinner** Our Annual Benefit Dinner raises much-needed funds for the restoration and preservation of our landmark building. Please save the date and join us. **Wednesday November 5 Reception: 6:30 pm Dinner: 7:30 pm**

**Mission Through Different Eyes** The Rev'd. Cn. Sandra McCann, MD, and her husband, Martin McCann, MD, have spent the last 11 years in Africa as mission partners of the Episcopal Church. She is commonly asked: "Why go to Africa when there are so many poor people here in the US?" In this program she will attempt to answer that question. **Free of charge. Thursday November 13, 6:30 pm**

**Evensong** Anyone wishing to memorialize a family member or friend is invited to notify the House office. This service will be offered in lieu of Evening Prayer. **Tuesday November 18, 5:30 pm**

**Annual Holiday Party** Anthony Newfield, artistic director of the I Fabbristi Players, will continue the House tradition of a holiday reading followed by caroling and a festive reception. **Suggested donation: \$20. Monday December 8, 6:30 pm**

**Annual Advent Retreat** will be led by Matthew T. Leaycraft. Lunch provided. Reservations required, as space is limited. **Fee: \$25. Saturday December 13, 10:00 am-4:00 pm**

**"Change" is my Muse...An Artist's Journey** Jane Smithers' will guide participants through art journals and explore the depths of inspiration and richly rewarding adventures rendered through "Change!" Feel free to bring a journal/sketch book and a micron pen/pencil or simply observe. **Suggested donation: \$15. Wednesday January 21, 6:30 pm**

### ONGOING PROGRAMS

**Morning and Evening Prayer Monday-Friday 8:00 am and 5:30 pm.**  
**Eucharist Tuesday evening and Thursday morning (September-June)**

**Wednesday Bible Study, 3:30-5:00 pm**

**Thursday Meditation Group, noon**

For more information about these events or about the House, please visit us at [www.houseoftheredeemer.org](http://www.houseoftheredeemer.org) or call (212) 289-0399

2014

## Reluctantly “Redeemed” and “Saved”

By Shelley Yeates Crook



Stodgy pudding, which the author was force-fed, along with Christianity, at her English elementary school.

Once experienced something so singular, so profound, that my life was forever divided into a before and an after—and I can’t talk about it. It’s not that I don’t have the language: Technically, I do. The problem is I’m uncomfortable, for various reasons, using it.

I’m now a committed Episcopalian, so I could say I was saved on that day. Or, more expansively, I could say that in one single, desperate moment I prayed and got an immediate response, and by virtue of that response I understood, in an instant, the eternal oneness of God, and the truth that God suffers with us out of love and that we are redeemed by it. By aligning my life with this new version of reality I am now, in some ways, a different person entirely. (And as an aside, I also know God has a wicked sense of humor).

Part of the reason I have an issues with labeling all this in church terms is because I was unchurched until fairly recently. Despite being force-fed Christianity at elementary school in England (along with mystery-meat dinners and stodgy puddings) I never once set foot in an actual church on a Sunday as a child, or knew anybody who did, and as a result my spiritual growth stalled sometime around 1985, with God as a concept limited to the idea of a bearded man sitting on a cloud. I’m typical of my generation. The British don’t really do God, and if we DO do God, we certainly don’t do Jesus, and we most definitely do NOT do bible-talk, so the reason church language sticks in my craw is, to a degree, cultural.

But it’s more than that. The gift of arriving late to the church party was that I came with very little baggage. But, knowing the US to be a nation of enthusiastic church-goers, I had one expectation: That everybody in church on the day

I arrived and parked my bum on a pew for the first time understood the collective beliefs, and would helpfully fill me in on things I wasn’t clear about. Straightaway, though, I got the feeling that much of what goes on in church—and why—was as mysterious to many long-time church-goers as it was to me. That feeling has only intensified over the past few years. Why do we say what we say, and what do we mean when we say it? The language—the beautiful, rich, language of faith—seems to have been reduced, in our culture, to jargon. Church language means less-than-nothing out there (I know that for sure, having spent thirty-three years on the other side of the churchyard gate) but also, I would venture, nowhere near enough *in here*. And that’s the bottom line: I am uncomfortable talking about what happened to me using *those* words because I think others will reflexively roll their eyes. The words themselves will be a *barrier* to people understanding what I’m talking about. Yes, even at church.

Jargon is specialized language, and by its very nature, it excludes. It divides the world into those who are in the know, and those who are not. I came up against the language problem from another angle recently when I volunteered to teach a confirmation class. I’ve been pondering how to sell the complicated package called Christianity to skeptical middle-schoolers who, I guessed, were only in church because their parents made them attend (an assumption borne out by an almost-unanimous show of hands). How I do I reach them? How do I sell the literal crux of our faith to a group of kids who are just *daring* me to bore them half to death? Can I speak to them of grace, sin, the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist, death, resurrection, ascension, and yes, redemption and salvation? And the answer is no, I can’t. Not directly. If I start right in with the jargon, I’ll lose their attention in a heartbeat. I may as well speak to them in Mandarin.

Our church language has centuries of meaning, and centuries of baggage. Our words have been translated, retranslated, mistranslated, parsed and debated. They have been illuminated, bejeweled and, in more recent history, hidden away to be heard only by a few in big, pointy buildings on Sunday mornings. We may be listening attentively in the pews, but, precisely because they are so familiar and “special,” I’m not sure we hear our own words. I sometimes suspect we are afraid of them. So what I plan to do with my confirmation class is this: talk in plain English. No mystification. No jargon. No Churchese, or Biblesch. And yes, when the timing is right, I will tell them what happened to me in plain English: One day, I prayed and I got an answer. It was wonderful, it scared the shit out of me, and now I’m different. Slate wiped clean. New start.

Maybe redemption and salvation are purely experiential. Maybe you have to feel those things, and they can never be adequately put into words. But, we should at least try. I’m not special; what I experienced, or something like it, has happened to many, if not all, of us. It’s why we’re all in here, doing church. And what I’d really like is for us to reclaim our language so we can talk about it. We should be able to call ourselves “redeemed” and “saved” without embarrassment, and fully understanding what it means.

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*Crook serves on the vestry of St. Thomas, Mamaroneck, and is an MA Student at Union Theological Seminary.*

## Saved for Sure?

By the Rev. Ruth Anne Garcia

Growing up in a small Montana town, far from the lights and crowds of Broadway, our “large” entertainment options were somewhat limited: the Central Montana Fair and Rodeo; the Western Invitational Basketball Tournament; the Community Concert Series; and, for several years in my childhood, the Larry Longshore\* Ministry Tour.

Each year, Larry and his family travelled to my hometown of Lewistown

and performed a kind of Christian Lawrence Welk variety show with singing, dancing, an inspiring sermon, and an altar call to the front of the high school auditorium. And while I had been baptized as an infant and attended weekly services (even serving as a wee acolyte many Sundays) at St. James’ Episcopal Church, I and the other children, most of whom also hailed from our city’s congregations, were inspired by the uplifting entertainment and the nice folks

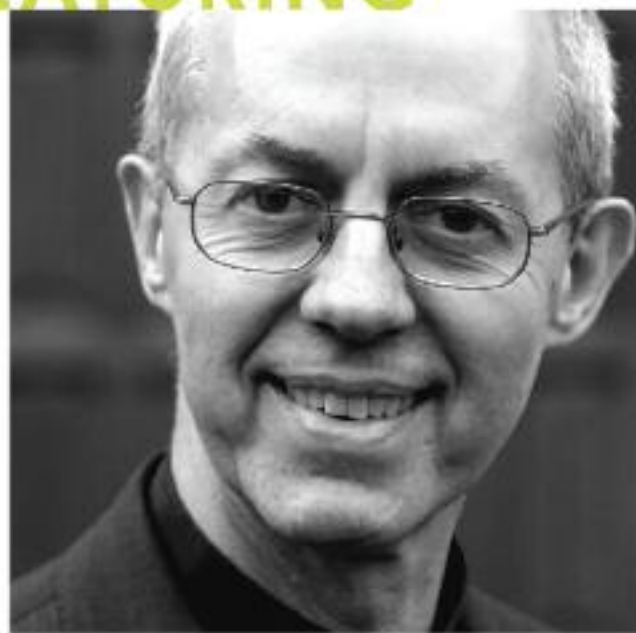


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at the front of the stage to rush forward year after year to be “saved.” Perhaps partially because it served as an excuse to get out of our seats and run, but certainly because we wanted to be numbered among Jesus’ friends and followers, we went forward. But, I also wasn’t sure about the question the Longshores posed each year: “How do you know if you are saved for sure?” So, just to be sure, I wanted to turn my life over publicly to Christ and be born again, and again, and again.

While I look back with great fondness at the little girl logic, I think most Christian adults struggle with the same uncertainty about being “saved for sure.” What does salvation really mean? Even though we might quickly give a succinct definition of salvation as the fruit of God’s redemptive work which “... sets us free from the power of evil, sin and death (BCP),” we might not be too far off if we were to answer, “salvation is everything,” in the sense that salvation is the major theme underlying all of scripture; the major accomplishment of Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection; and the beginning, middle and end of a Christian’s life in faith.

The importance of our redemption and salvation to our daily life cannot be overstated. When we truly recognize what has been done for us, our lives are made forever new. In Hebrews 10: 10ff we are reminded that “... by God’s will... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” and that the Holy Spirit tells us “... ‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. “ And what else lies at the heart of the Good News except this—that as William Countryman put it his book *The Good News of Jesus Christ*, “you are loved and you are forgiven”?

And we are loved. Jesus often talked about a life of freedom, and reminds us that he is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14.6). He reassures his frightened disciples whom he seeks to prepare for his imminent death, saying “...I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also (14.3).” The freedom that Jesus is promising is the freedom from fear of death and separation from God.

Even with so much biblical “proof,” it often saddens me that we can get such a jaundiced view of this incredible life that God has given us—that we can be blind to all its gifts of grace and unaware of the possibility of each moment. As the heirs, the very sons and daughters of God, it always seems to be more about a lack of faith than a lack of something else. What more could we want? We are loved and we are forgiven, and through our baptism we are “sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever.” (BCP 308)

I sometimes like to think of a world where Christians grow into this realization—that death no longer has dominion and that we are justified through Christ’s great love and the grace of God. Without being plagued by the human fear of death which siphons off the joy of the spirit, what are we capable of? Without feeling the need to justify our existence to those around us, what could we manifest in our living?

As way leads to way, I find myself sixteen years into my ordained ministry and I sometimes wonder about all that led me here. It certainly started with my baptism and the eagerness of the little girl who publicly turned her life over to Christ again and again. But now it has given way to the priest who daily picks up her baptismal vows, her ordination vows and her wedding vows again and again. And she approaches the altar in hope, faith and belief. Because by faith she is certain that despite our ever-changing emotions or doubts, through Christ, we are saved—we are saved for sure.

\*name changed

*Garcia is priest-in-charge at Grace Church, City Island.*

## It's at the Heart of Our Religion

By *Sheba Ross Delaney*

**C**hristianity has gotten many things tragically wrong but one thing it has gotten exactly, irrevocably and eternally right is redemption. Redemption is the living mechanism at the heart of our religion in the same way it is the living mechanism at the heart of life.

But what is redemption, how does it work? Associations jumble together—green stamps, empty bottles, lives gone wrong, a dead man on a cross! If religious redemption is hard to sort out, it's because religion becomes muddled and over-complicated with ideas that are not useful.

Redemption means to compensate for a negative, or to recover something by means of payment. To put that in a clearer framework, let's think about five different aspects of redemption which dovetail neatly one into another: universal redemption, organic redemption, experiential redemption, transcendental redemption and theological redemption. All of these incorporate the general principle that everything is made from something else and nothing is wasted.

Universal redemption is the way in which the universe as we know it sustains and regenerates itself. Planets, stars, and galaxies take shape, sustain themselves for a time, then collapse and degenerate into raw materials that are redeemed or become something new.

If we look at the universe under a microscope and find the tiny speck that is Earth, we see that the same materials that play in the vast halls of space have organized themselves into what we call organic matter, or life. Whether it's a rose, a fruit, a cat, a whale, an ant or a human being, organic matter is first raw material, then is nascent, then takes shape and lives according to its nature as long as its vitality lasts, then dies. If nature is allowed to take its course, the raw materials that made up that particular life form will be redeemed, or broken down and made into something new. Everything is made from something else and nothing is wasted.

Experiential redemption is another way of saying that we learn from experience. We pay for mistakes with our pain and that negative—pain—becomes a positive: an increase in knowledge, skill or wisdom which helps us to avoid pain in the future. This way of learning is inherent, and life is impossible without it. When we see someone who is unable to learn from experience, who repeats the same mistakes, with the same resultant pain, over and over again, we feel that something is wrong with them, that they are broken in some way.

We are communal creatures. Individual and collective memory, language, and the written word all enable us to profit not only from our own experience, but from that of anyone in the past or present who has suffered and learned and managed to leave a record of it. The profit value of suffering transcends the individual and is multiplied endlessly through succeeding generations, as long as the suffering is remembered and the lesson that should be learned from it is understood and acted upon. One person has suffered or paid the price, but many have benefitted.

This idea is instinctive to us. This is why we build endless monuments to suffering—in the hope that someday, we will actually learn our lesson and the cry “never again” will actually be true. Every tragic death, it seems, is followed by an

attempt to make some good come out of it, so that the suffered is not wasted. This is as it should be.

All these kinds of redemption are dependent on a system being in place to receive and make use of whatever needs to be redeemed. A corpse is dispersed into the ongoing life of the world because there is an ecosystem in place to receive and make use of it. A dead star is knit into the fabric of whatever is going on out there by a universe that knows exactly what to do with it. Little stories become parts of big stories.

While transcendental redemption is based on an individual's sense of community in the ongoing life of mankind, theological redemption is about an individual's sense of community with the ongoing life of God. Here also, we see a small story being absorbed into a much larger, ongoing story. Our own stories of pain and suffering, which have become too heavy for us, are absorbed into the single story of the suffering of God, in the person of Jesus. Our misery is lifted from us and in return we get regeneration and new life. This is Christian redemption, which we also call conversion. It has worked for me and for countless others.

How it works is truly a subject for study. My understanding of my own experience, in a very small nutshell, is that by engaging deeply with the Christian story, I caused a few things to happen psychologically. First, by allowing myself to feel profound compassion for the suffering of Jesus, I also learned to feel compassion for myself. Then compassion for myself led to true compassion for other people. By trying to live according to the teachings of Jesus, I came to recognize the damage and brokenness in myself that made it so difficult to do so. And finally, by projecting all of my own suffering, brokenness and rage on Jesus, I became free of them, and was able to experience a new sense of peace, wholeness and energy that was so profound it was like being born again.

To offer oneself up for Christian redemption is often called a leap of faith, and in retrospect it does seem like it was, for me, a leap into the unknown. In real time, however, it was more like a creeping shuffle of faith: Bit by bit, inch by inch I let go of parts of myself. Each small letting go gave me the courage to go a little further. I became increasingly aware that there was something deep in my consciousness that was not only guiding my progress, but giving me strength to go on. I learned to trust it. And when it came time to really let go I could do it with the faith and hope that that something would bring me safely to the other side of whatever I had to go through.

I've never believed that God picked out one poor sucker to suffer for the rest of us. That would be a pretty nasty God. I do believe that, Jesus having suffered, God is okay with us using that horrible story of man's inhumanity to man to find a way out of our own suffering. I believe this because in God's world everything is made of something else and nothing is wasted. Another way of saying this is that all things work for good for those that love God.

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*Delaney is a member of the Church of the Heavenly Rest in Manhattan.*



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# Redemption and Projection in Eight Hours or Less

By Will McDavid

**D**uring my third year of college, I remember driving back to Georgia from Virginia after a troubling semester. My relationship with my then-girlfriend was showing the early signs of unraveling. It was a first relationship for both of us. She, like me, had grown up in youth group, and we did Bible studies and occasional prayers together. During the drive, I reflected on why the apparent lynchpin of God's plan for my life was getting shakier. The eight-hour drive was consumed with worry and doubt, but Handel's brilliant "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" gave me succor, the opening violin freighting sorrow with strange sweetness, my affection for her blending seamlessly into an ineffable feeling of faith and assurance. Everything would be all right.

Abstract ideas were what my early-life faith thrived on, and I was using the Christian notion of redemption as a vague placeholder for my own emotional needs. The poet Allen Tate once wrote that "abstraction is the death of religion." But in the short term, it can feel like life; abstract theological ideas allow us to project our emotions onto them, remaking God's promises into our own aspirations.

I've learned that I haven't been alone in using the word redemption egocentrically. It has served as a blank canvas for so many things for so many people, taking on, as it does so, a lofty, aspirational sort of feel. For example, sometimes people muse on whether things like competition, or imagination, or atheism can be "redeemed"—meaning, simply, "vaguely turned to good." For others, it's more personal: *Is God doing something redemptive with my long period of unemployment?* Again, the implicit meaning seems to be that of God's providence taking something personal that is bad, and using it for good. So numerous are the points of impasse or failure in our lives that we wish could be part of some ultimate scheme for good, that in many of our uses of the word redemption—like my personal appropriation of Handel in the car—we are simply projecting our own wishes onto God.

In trying to flesh out the word's original meaning, perhaps the book of Ruth can help. When Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, loses her husband and is forced to sell her inherited property, Boaz, their second-closest cousin, buys it. He saves the family inheritance and marries Ruth, though she has nothing to give him in return. In doing so, he prevents Ruth and Naomi from being disestablished, or cut off from family and possession.

There are four elements at work here: loss, of either freedom or inheritance; a willing kinsman; a regaining of what was lost; and a price. The final part about the price may seem foreign to us. In a world in which self-determination and hard work are so prized, the idea of progress coming from someone else, at her expense, is both counterintuitive and unfashionable. Fast-forward to the New Testament: God continues to pay the price of "love to the loveless shown" for freeing the Church, today. To quote Bob Dylan, "I'll pay in blood, but not my own."

Looking back on that drive and the circumstances surrounding it, I wonder if my own hopes for redemption often amount to little more than self-improvement. With so many of my hopes and aspirations, I was trying to buy my way out of pain with effort, which is certainly an indignity to the one who has already paid the price. Redemption, if it applied in that case, was not redemption from mere relationship struggles (things ended, and badly), but redemption from my own sense of control, from my conflation of God's plans with my own. I'm still in thrall to that anthropomorphic pride, and perhaps that's why redemption seems more like the birth pangs of death to one's aspirations than linear progress toward our desires. My efforts, in any event, left me dead in the water, clutching only the hope that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last, he'll stand upon the earth.

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*McDavid is an author and writer for Mockingbird ministries.*

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## "A View of Redemption"

By the Rev. Jacob A. Smith

**I** believe redemption is at the heart of Christianity. It runs as a major theme throughout both the Old and New Testaments: God redeems his people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt; God redeems his people from exile in Babylon; and God ultimately redeems his people, through his son Jesus Christ, from the immovable forces of life, which manifest themselves in sin and death. One of the most beautiful illustrations that I know of the meaning of redemption occurs in the movie "All Hope is Lost," in which Robert Redford plays a resourceful sailor who, after a collision with a shipping container and when all of his nautical skills have failed him, comes to the realization that on his own he is helpless. At the end of the movie, in defeat, he plunges himself into the ocean to die—what a powerful metaphor for baptism!—yet at the point of his death, a light appears and a hand plunges into the water to rescue-redeem him.

The theme of redemption was sown deep into the soil of the Parish of Calvary-St. George by the Rev. Dr. Samuel M. Shoemaker, rector from 1925 to 1952. He was the cofounder and spiritual director of Alcoholics Anonymous, and helped develop the 12 steps with Bill Wilson. In an essay entitled *What the Church Can Learn from Alcoholics Anonymous*, Shoemaker wrote, "People do not come to AA to get made a little better. They do not come because the best people are doing it. They come because they are desperate. They are not ladies and gentlemen looking for religion, they are utterly desperate men and women in search of redemption. Without what AA gives, death stares them in the face. With what AA gives them, there is life and hope. There are not a dozen ways, there are not two ways, there is one way; and they find it or perish."

In this essay, Shoemaker articulates that redemption is not just for the visibly addicted and destitute, but for everyone. The message of redemption is most penetrating, he says, when "with God's help" everyone puts down the pretense of being basically good and instead stares his or her mortality in the face. This powerful insight into the nature of redemption puts us all in the same place, and assures us that no matter what (and sometimes despite all evidence to the contrary) God is still and always for us—that God is still at work when life and its circumstances have defeated us and we have run out of other options.

Many people who come through our church doors have, metaphorically speaking, been lost at sea. They are in a relationship that seems hopeless, they are at an impasse with their children, or they have been rejected—whatever it is, they are desperate. What they need is redemption. It is this heartfelt need that the Church meets in both Word and Sacrament. These gifts—word, water, bread, and wine—deliver the message of redemption, and become the hand by which God grabs a wounded heart and says to desperate people, including ourselves, "do not fear, for I have redeemed you" (Is. 43:1). And it is this message of redemption that has the power to captivate all people—because all people are desperate—and allows them to face their lives one day at a time, knowing that while, as U2 has it, "they still haven't found what they're looking for," God has found them and is working all things out for the good; to redeem them, you, me, and the whole world.

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*Smith is priest-in-charge at the Parish of Calvary-St. George's, Manhattan.*

## Healing, Reconciliation and Barrier Free Living: The Ministry of the Rev. Paul Feuerstein

By the Rev. Robert Fitzpatrick

*“The healing stories in the Gospel are about a person with a disability. Much of the one to one work by Jesus was with people with disabilities.”*  
—the Rev. Paul Feuerstein

**W**alking across the uneven ground of a construction site in the South Bronx, the Rev. Paul Feuerstein describes what soon will be 120 new housing units for people with disabilities and survivors of domestic violence.

Dressed in a hard hat, blue shirt and neck tie, he narrates the tour of emerging apartment shells, hallways and rooftops. Each construction detail sets loose another thought of the people who will make homes here, and the relationships that made the project possible.

“Community, not just institutions” Feuerstein says, opens all kinds of opportunities to build a project like Barrier Free Living Apartments and for those who will live here.

“The healing stories in the Gospel are about a person with a disability. Much of the one-to-one work by Jesus was with people with disabilities.” This involves not just curing, but honoring dignity in identity and relationship. For Feuerstein, healing includes removing the stigma attached to special needs. It’s about reconciliation, restoring people to community.

For 40 years, this commitment to relationship has shaped the non-profit agency he leads, New York City-based Barrier Free Living (BFL), and his approach to being a priest.

As CEO of BFL, Feuerstein, 66, runs a domestic violence shelter, counseling, and advocacy services. Now he and his partners are about to open two new housing developments in the South Bronx for people with special needs.

The first is 50 family apartments for people with one or more special needs—disabled head of household, domestic violence survivor, wounded veteran, and those who need a viable alternative to nursing home care.

The apartments will be the result of almost two years construction and five prior years dreaming, planning and alliance building. A tour during construction showed them to be bright, airy and comfortable.

The opportunity to add a further 70 studios arose during the planning phase for the first development. When a project on the adjacent lot fell through, BFL was asked if it would submit a second proposal to replace it. BFL quickly did, realizing that these additional apartments could help abused women answer the critical “And then what?” question that they face when deciding whether or not to enter a shelter in the first place.

BFL and its partners expect to open the 70 new studios around the New Year, and the 50 family apartments in early 2015.

Both projects are overseen by a series of partnerships: Barrier Free Living as the sponsor and operator; a developer for construction; financial advisers who helped the team find the necessary money through things like Low Income Housing Tax Credits, government grants; support from local politicians and from neighbors; and even temporary use of a parking lot that came with the informal blessing of the local Roman Catholic priest, who’d been a fixture in the neighborhood for years.

The complexity of BFL’s work can be daunting. Feuerstein says that on a daily basis, it depends on people at 30-40 organizations. “Informally,” he adds, “it’s more than 100, linking people with the services they need.”

This “interdependent living” is not just red tape—it’s intentional. “We don’t want to be everybody’s everything,” Feuerstein says. “That undermines what we

do.” Domestic violence is about control and forced dependency, he explains. Interdependent living, on the other hand, requires a healthy awareness that we are all mutually dependent on many others. Feuerstein sees modeling this as part of walking with people to a better way of life.

His own story includes early years as a parish priest, after which, in 1976—in his mid-20s and a priest for three years—he found himself re-examining assumptions about the relationships between parish and home life, between priesthood and congregational life, and between congregational life and making a living to support himself and his family. His father had been a pastor, and his mother had had the equally immersive calling of pastor’s wife. In his parents’ day, when a congregation called a married priest, “it was a two-for-one deal,” Feuerstein says. Reflecting on his own experience, he adds, “I did not do a good job with it.”

Feuerstein was learning to hear a call to a different balance of home and ministry. He pursued this evolving understanding of his calling into the border territory between institutions and community. The journey began with field research and a demonstration project under a grant from the old US Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He cut his teeth in social services at a Lower Manhattan settlement house, where one-to-one contact and the benefits of community were parts of daily life. This eventually led him and others to found, in 1978, what would become Barrier Free Living.

From its earliest days, BFL focused on services to people with disabilities. Each project taught something new about the gaps left when people’s needs exceed their power or status in this world—and about the power of community to meet some of those very same needs.

One early lesson was the relationship between disability and domestic violence. “Who is more vulnerable” to abusers of power and control, Feuerstein asks, than people with disabilities?

In response, BFL opened Secret Garden, a domestic violence shelter for people with disabilities; in 1987 it went outdoors with a mobile team to serve disabled homeless people on the streets and in shelters; and in 1990 it opened America’s first homeless shelter for people with severe disabilities, which the State Department recognized as an international model.

By 2006, BFL was ready to open Freedom House, a fully handicapped-accessible 44-apartment emergency shelter for disabled victims of domestic violence.

At Freedom House, a feeling of light, air and hope prevails in an atmosphere of quiet competence. Children’s artwork celebrating healing and home decorates the gathering spaces. Hallways are lined with candid portraits of former residents, shared as witnesses not just to violence, but to transformation.

The organizational chart at Barrier Free Living is an upside-down pyramid. At the top are front-line service providers who work directly with residents. Near the bottom is Feuerstein as servant-leader. As CEO, his job is to help members of the team name and achieve their values. He serves as a bearer of their standards and sees himself as facilitator-in-chief. He, in turn, is supported by BFL’s board as “stewards” and “ambassadors” for the mission.

In addition to his role as a social services CEO, Feuerstein remains active as a priest in the diocese, serving as Dean of Multi-Vocational Priests, participating in the annual priests’ conference, and celebrating the Eucharist at St. Mark’s in the Bowery, Manhattan.

Recently, Feuerstein accepted an invitation to attend Credo, the Church Pension Group’s retreat for priests. There, he reflected (*continued on page 44*)



Feuerstein on the Barrier Free Living construction site in the South Bronx.

Photo: Robert Fitzpatrick

## The Eucharistic Table of Ferguson *By the Very Rev. Michael Kinman*

*“What we need is not just diplomats. We need psychologists and theologians.”*  
—Yossi Halevi

In May, when I was with a group studying the conflict in Israel and Palestine, I spent a morning in Jerusalem with Yossi Halevi, a Jewish author who has spent decades immersed in the conflict in that land, and who wrote the words at the top of this article.

I have come back to those words often as Ferguson, just 15 minutes from our cathedral, has become the epicenter of America’s latest seismic encounter with race and class, power and privilege.

Yossi could have been speaking of Ferguson and of the national wound that has been revealed by it. And that has led me to believe that, as the Church, our primary gift in this moment is indeed to be theologians: to provide a theological framework and language for us to engage in this work.

As Episcopalians, our theology is intensely sacramental. Our sacraments and rites are not just ritual, but a pattern for our entire lives. And so we must, I believe, engage what is happening in Ferguson in the way we engage everything: sacramentally and, specifically, Eucharistically.

*The Eucharist begins with gathering.* We gather around the presence of Christ and focus our attention on it. We drink Christ’s presence in with eyes and ears. This is where divinity meets humanity—where we as human beings allow ourselves to be vulnerable enough to speak our deep truth—and the experience is often raw, usually messy, and always, always real.

This summer, the presence of Christ burst forth in the cries coming from Ferguson. But they were not and are not cries just of Ferguson—or even just of north St. Louis City County—but cries from throughout this land. They are cries of mothers, of children, and of everyone else who has been treated as less than a full image of God because of race. They are cries of frustration from police, cries of loss from residents, and cries of exasperation and sorrow from teachers prevented from teaching their children. They are voices not of a “them” but of part of the “we.”

Our first task in Ferguson is simply to pay attention: to look at the faces; to listen to the voices; to see Mike Brown’s body lying on the street for four and a half hours with his own mother unable to go to him, and to superimpose on it our own child’s or niece’s or nephew’s or precious one’s face; to do this with “inquiring and discerning hearts,” asking God to reveal the presence of Christ in these voices crying out in our midst.

*Eucharist continues with offering:* “presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” We lay our lives—our whole selves, holding nothing back—on the table with Christ’s life. We don’t just listen to the voices of Christ, but we let those voices become part of us; we let them interact with us; we let God change us through them.

When we do this, the offering of our lives becomes intermingled with the life and presence of Christ, and something new is created that is both each of us *and* Christ.

This is the new life that happens when we meet in that place where divinity touches humanity—where our vulnerability touches each other’s in the model of the cross, and together we become something we never could be on our own.

That is the moment of blessing when we ask God to say “this is good”; the moment when all our vulnerability, joy and pain come together into a whole with the highest integrity.

For us, that means listening deeply to the voices that were given a megaphone by the events of Ferguson—letting those voices come among us, into the everydayness of the entire body, and into everyone’s stories, and *letting all of us be changed.*

If we are among those for whom these voices are challenging, our task is to guard against defensiveness and shame, which shut us down to the converting power of the other. We must continually ask God to bless, and continually believe that God means us for one another, and that our destiny is to be reconciled to God and to one another in Christ (2 Cor. 5).

Then we receive. And what we receive is a little piece of each of us and a lot of Jesus. We came to the table as individuals, but we leave as one. Changed by one another, and bound as one in Christ, we become new—together.

*Finally, we are sent into the world* “to love and serve God with gladness and single-



Police using tear gas against protestors, Ferguson, Mo, August 16, 2014. Photo: Loavesofbread, Wikimedia Commons

ness of heart.” We are sent because, like Jesus, our life is not to be lived for ourselves, but given for the love of the whole world.

In the wake of Ferguson, living Eucharistically means that our role as Christians is continually to be asking these questions:

- Where is the presence of Christ? From whom are we hearing Christ’s voice?
- How is God calling us to lay our lives on the table with that presence of Christ?
- How can we be open to the new life that emerges—a new life that removes all the “us and them” and creates a new and glorious “we”?
- How can we let this new life become our new identity—who Jesus says that WE are?
- How can we, as a new people in Christ, be sent into the world to love and serve with gladness and singleness of heart?

Like the Eucharist, these things do not happen all at once. We come back to the table time and time again—because we do it so imperfectly (thankfully God is even more graceful than we are imperfect!); and because while it is so difficult, it is also so rewarding. No one-time ritual, the Eucharist is the gathering-offering-blessing-receiving-sending motion of our lives.

We engage reconciliation both as individuals and as the communion of saints: local, national, global and cosmic. And as with the Eucharist, our call as followers of Christ is not only to live Eucharistically, but to lead the world into that life as well. It is our call to help train the eyes of the world on the presence of Christ, and to invite the people of the world to lay their lives on the table with His presence—and it is our call to lead the process of all of us becoming something new and life-giving together.

As we watch the events from Ferguson yesterday, today and in days to come, either from across town, across the country, or around the world, we are called to consider what it means to encounter those events as Eucharistic people. It is an incredibly imperfect and messy process. It is not a single act, but a pattern of life lived in community that will be repeated over and over and over again. We will have to hold each other in love and grace because, more often than not, we will not get it right. But it is in the holding of one another in love and grace that the power of Christ is set loose.

This is the gift that we as the church bring to Ferguson, and to New York, and to the gaping wound of our nation’s original sin of race as a whole. It is not our first priority to be social scientists or aid workers, community organizers or even crusaders for reform. Instead, it is for us first to be theologians, offering the life-giving gifts that, if not offered by us, may not be offered at all: the gift of Eucharist; the gift of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection that does not detour around the agony of the cross; and the gift of a Christ who gave himself for the whole world—no exceptions—and who promises that, as we do the same, he will be with us always, even to the end of the age.

*Kinman is Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, Missouri.*

## The Staten Island March for Eric Garner

By the Rev. Deacon Novella Lawrence



Protesters at the Aug 23 Staten Island “We Will Not Go Back” march and rally to demand justice for the family of Eric Garner who died July 17 while being arrested by police.

Photo: Thomas Altfather Good, Wikimedia Commons.

**O**n Staten Island, the weeks leading up to the August 23 march and rally for Eric Garner, the African-American killed by a police officer’s choke hold, were filled with anxiety. From the day the march was announced, the local newspaper printed something daily about it. As tension mounted in Ferguson, Missouri following the death there of Michael Brown,

so it mounted in Staten Island as the date for the march approached. The images we saw from Ferguson, as a few protesters turned violent, only added to the angst. The sight of the heavily armed Ferguson police force surprised and alarmed many, who learned for the first time of the extent of police militarization.

On August 21, headlines on the front page of the *Staten Island Advance* read “Fingers Crossed for Peace” above a picture of Mayor de Blasio, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Police Commissioner Bratton and Cardinal Dolan, all looking worried. Another headline read “Several Businesses to Close During Garner Rally.” For days prior, Sharpton was all over the media, asking potential protesters to “behave” at the event. The news that people would be coming from the other boroughs and New Jersey added to the nervousness.

In the end, after all the predictions of trouble, only those 2,500-3,000 people who felt most strongly about Garner’s death eventually had the courage to march. Even I had been skeptical, and went with my adult sons early in the morning to stake out the area. But as an African American mother and grandmother, marching was a matter of principle: I myself had lived the fear that so many others had experienced when each one of my three sons turned teenager long ago and again, most recently, with my grandson.

In fact, the entire march and rally was very peaceful, emotional and moving. The speakers called for justice for the Garner family. The mothers of others killed in NYPD incidents, including the mother of Amadou Diallo, also spoke. Each made it a point to say that this was not a rally against the police in general, but just against the few “bad cops.”

As I witnessed all this, I thought of how protests in New York City have often turned violent in the past. The Civil War Draft Riots of 1863, for example—which there is no permanent memorial—were the most tumultuous event in the city’s history between the Revolution and Sept. 11, 2001. For almost five days, the angered and the desperate rampaged through the streets.

But African Americans were not the rioters then; in fact they were the victims of the mobs, who killed many of them, mutilating their bodies and dumping them in the river, or hanging them on lamp posts, in the belief that they were being drafted to fight to free slaves who would subsequently come to New York and take away their meager jobs.

Lack of knowledge and a shortage of the truth are often at the root of viewing “the other” with fear and mistrust. Yet even in this information age, when access to our history and the truth is but a click away, many people cling to the belief that “rioting and looting” began with African-American protestors. But in order for us to heal as a nation, in order for us to achieve reconciliation, we must have truth above all else—and the truth is that nobody has a monopoly on violence—since the beginning of time, there have always been people who have indulged in it, regardless of race, color or creed.

*Lawrence is deacon on staff at Christ Church, Staten Island.*

**“I THINK THE MARCH WENT VERY WELL.** Both the marchers and the police were on their best behavior. Most of the speeches were positive and focused on working together to improve things for the future.

“One point I felt was not emphasized enough is the negative effect aggressive and violent police behavior can have on our young people. The police justify this “tough” approach as part of the “broken windows” strategy to crack down on minor criminal behavior, thus supposedly creating a more law-abiding situation. But the way in which this policy is being implemented, particularly in minority and low income communities, too often causes too many young people to grow up hating the police, seeing them as the enemy, and seeing our supposed “criminal justice system” as a system of injustice. This obviously has a negative effect on law enforcement—the exact opposite of what the “broken windows” policy is supposed to produce.

“A lot of hope was expressed at the march that these two recent cases of police violence might bring about changes not only in police policies and behavior, but in other aspects of American society that still deny opportunity to too many Americans and create social situations that confront our police with almost impossible challenges.” ...*David Seeley, who was Assistant U.S. Commissioner of Education in charge of school desegregation in the Johnson Administration in the 1960s, and has been working on educational reform ever since.*

## After Sins of the Fathers, Steps toward Reconciliation

By Lynn Goswick

**M**y best friend in eighth grade was DJ, a smart, funny Catholic who had lived abroad while her parents were stationed in Germany. To a Southern Baptist who hadn't yet ventured far from her small North Carolina town, DJ was worldly and fascinating.

When I asked my parents if DJ could spend the night one Friday, the answer was no. I was surprised—usually having friends over wasn't a problem. My parents had met DJ and liked her, but she wasn't allowed to stay because DJ was black. Having her stay overnight might invite trouble from certain people in town.

It made no sense to me, on many levels. My education began years after schools were integrated, so in my mind, there was no difference between us, and the prejudices were silly. How could someone like DJ, who was so much smarter, even wiser, than I was, be considered inferior? Also, why did my parents care what others thought? Was it possible we could be in danger?

That year, as I became more aware of how my family, friends, and acquaintances in town spoke about race, I realized how important it was, even in the small moments, to refute the idea that color determined worth. It was my way of encouraging others to be more open to those who were different, and, in a small way, make it right to folks who were treated badly because of their skin.

In September, I attended a symposium organized by Trinity Wall Street parishioner J. Chester Johnson in which Johnson demonstrated that reconciliation—making it right—begins with the simple act of apology.

Over the last six years, Johnson has walked an uncomfortable path of learning how his own beloved grandfather, Lonnie, was once involved in an event that led to the deaths of more than 100 people.

In 2008, Johnson wrote the litany of offense and apology for the Service of Repentance, part of a two-day observance in which the Episcopal Church formally apologized for its role in the sin of transatlantic slavery. Although he grew up in the Deep South before the Civil Rights Movement, Johnson didn't share the often-prevalent racism that characterized the region.

While drafting the litany, he poured over the writings of W.E.B. Dubois, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and other African-American writers. Johnson was startled to discover a small book by Ida B. Wells-Barnett about the Elaine Race Massacre, an event in September 1919 in which scores of African-American sharecroppers were hunted down and killed by local whites and federal soldiers.

Elaine, Johnson realized, was only 60 miles from where he had grown up in Arkansas, but he had never heard of the event. Former high school classmates had never heard of it, either. But after thinking through more of his mother's stories about her father and reading *On the Laps of Gods*, an account of the event by Robert Whitaker, Johnson concluded that his beloved grandfather, Lonnie, indeed had been involved.

Although "Elaine" occurred decades before Johnson was born, he has not been able to reconcile for himself the loving grandfather who picked him up when he fell and acted as playmate and confidant.

But through the symposium, and private meetings beforehand, Johnson has been able to acknowledge his family's involvement in the event, and apologize to the descendants of those arrested and convicted unjustly.

Sheila Walker, a grandniece of two African-American sharecroppers shot during the massacre but arrested afterwards, one of whom was sentenced to death but whose execution was denied by a U.S. Supreme Court decision, was present at the symposium, along with Whitaker, and David Solomon, a native of the Elaine area who is working to place a monument in the county seat so the nearly 100-year-old



Chester Johnson and Sheila Walter at the Trinity Wall Street symposium. Photo: Leah Reddy



Chester Johnson and his grandfather.

Photo Courtesy of Chester Johnson.

event is not forgotten.

Walker remembered her first meeting with Johnson, and how his willingness to admit his grandfather had been part of the massacre encouraged her to be open to the meeting and to conversation.

"Here's a person trying to reconcile the bad in their history," she said.

And Walker, who didn't know Johnson's grandfather, is more forgiving of Lonnie than even Johnson.

"People aren't bad," she said. "Circumstances make people do bad things."

In the years since I've moved away from home, I've grown to understand my parents' decisions better. They came from a different time, and they knew things about our town that I didn't.

I don't know if I would make their choice, but I don't know that I wouldn't.

Johnson referred to philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's view that each generation has to experience and learn its most human essence for itself.

Toward the end of his remarks at the symposium, Johnson said, "we alone open up ourselves to the genuinely human—that is what we can do, that is our grace, as humans; otherwise, we are continually plagued by that eternal 'no'...which we sometimes call 'evil' or 'sin,' ...of which racism is an elemental part."

Goswick is Project Manager and Associate Editor at Trinity Wall Street.

## From Violence to Peace— With the Forgiving Stranger

By the Rev. Stephen C. Holton

**W**e live in a world of violence. We hope we can find a way out, a way forward. We especially hope we can find this way within and through the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions; for it is these traditions that are in conflict in so many places today, and within these that we ourselves live.

Just in the last 6 months we've had Gaza and Israel and Syria and Iraq, and Ferguson, Missouri and Staten Island in this city. Before then we had Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis in Florida.

If we want to move from violence to peace, we have to name the violence. If we are to separate ourselves from it, we need to name our complicity in it; or we will simply remain subject to it.

Fortunately, all of our religions address violence and death, and offer life. All of our religions deal with the very real problems of a very real world. Jesus came into a very real world: He did not say that to make peace we can all just hold hands and skip through fields of daisies. He was too realistic for that; and there are not too many daisies left on the battlefields and crime scenes.

After his particularly awful crucifixion, his two disciples on the road to Emmaus were walking along, blinded by grief. They were so blinded that they did not recognize the One whom they loved walking up to them and talking to them. They thought he was a particularly naïve visitor to Jerusalem. Don't all people of peace look like naïve visitors, to those overwhelmed by the sadness of violence?

Yet they welcomed this stranger; and he talked, and he made them comfortable enough that they remembered their manners and invited him to din-

ner. Remembering your manners is a good thing in terrible times such as these. So he came, and they ate, and he disappeared; and they realized that God had been with them—in the breaking of the bread and in the conversation before that on the highway.

Love came again, Jesus came again, into this situation of pain, to those who had abandoned him when he needed them, to those who had already given up on love and were headed the other way, out of Jerusalem, without even the courage to gather with the other disciples. Then he spoke of the larger scripture story into which this particular story fell. By not mentioning the way they abandoned him in his death, he forgave them. By giving them the larger story, he offered them a different reality.

They went back to the other disciples and shared their story; and realized that God had been in all their conversations. They did not even have to agree that one conversation was better than the others. They just had to share them. In doing this they opened to God again, and felt his presence right there. They were no longer overwhelmed by violence or separated by sadness; but went out to preach peace, with the same repentance from violence, and deliverance from sadness that they had just experienced.

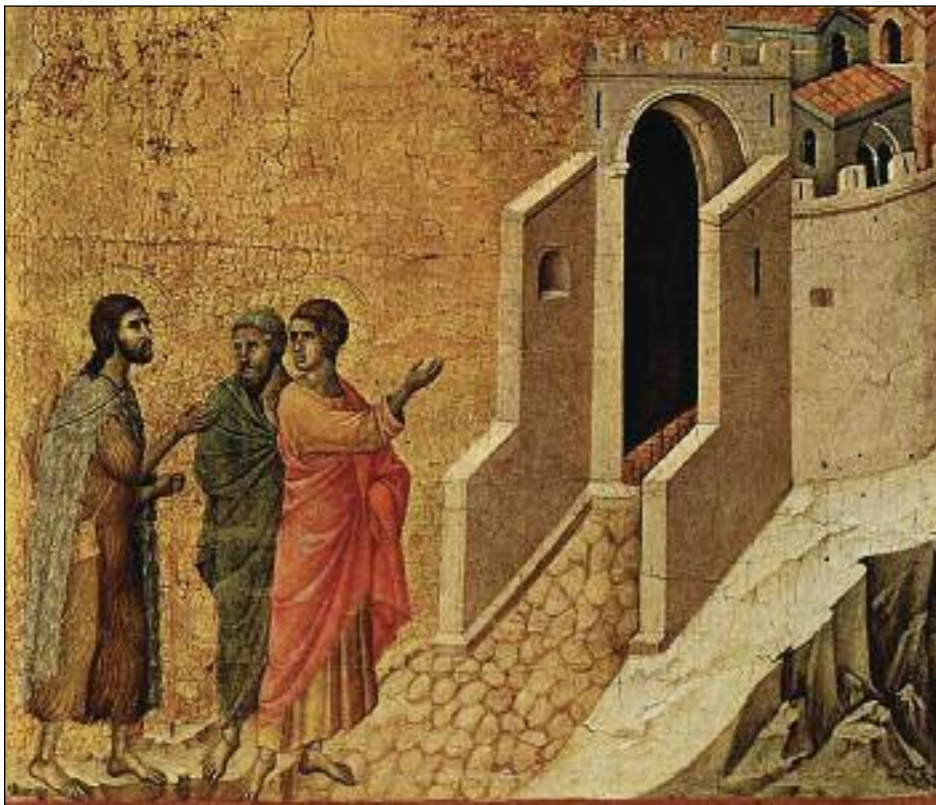
So this is what we do today. As those disciples did, we take our sins to our scriptures—those done by us and to us. We share conversation. We experience peace; and we take that peace to others.

I say this because I have personal experience of this. It was last May. I have an interracial, intercultural program in Harlem. The day before, Jordan Davis—a young man in Florida—had been killed for playing his music too loud. I walked into the meeting, knowing that I would have to deal with it if I wanted to risk true peace. The alternative was not to mention it at all, and have the kind of peace that involves holding hands and skipping through daisies. But there aren't so many daisies left.

So I walked into my group. This story of Emmaus was fresh in my mind, for I had preached on it that day. I said that someone who looked just like me had killed someone who looked just like them. I said that this was the violence in Jerusalem that we were all surrounded by. So we spoke briefly of all the crucifixions we had experienced. Then we talked of all the resurrections we had experienced in our own lives, as the disciples had; and like the disciples, we did not try to agree that one resurrection experience was more important than another. So, like them, we experienced the love of God together.

That event became the beginning of a beautiful time, for it began a peace that was not dependent on the conditions of the world outside, or the violence on which we had no impact. This was a peace that started with God and was invited by us—through our invitation to each other—into the midst of the sin and violence where he first came, and rose, and blessed us with his infinite mercy.

We simply “pass the Peace”—as we say in the Episcopal Church—to other sinners gathered here; and then we go in peace, to all nations and traditions, to love and serve the Lord.



Duccio, *Christ on the Road to Emmaus*, Tempera on panel, 1308. Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Florence.

*Holton is director of the “Warriors of the Dream” program in Harlem and assistant for Christian Formation at the Church of St. Barnabas, Irvington.*

## Forgiveness—The First Step to Reconciliation

By Terry Waite

There will be few who have not been deeply shocked by recent events in the Middle East. The whole region has been riven with conflict and thousands of nationals and foreigners have been maimed or killed. Much attention has been focused on those who have been taken hostage, and in particular those who have suffered a brutal death at the hands of their captors.

Twenty years ago, when I was deeply involved in negotiating for the release of hostages in the Middle East, I was captured in Beirut. The story of the events leading to my incarceration is complicated, but in essence I fell foul of political duplicity. I was promised safe conduct by my captors to visit hostages whom I was told were ill and one was about to die. I decided to take a chance and visit the dying man. Instead I was thrown into an underground dungeon and for almost five years was chained by the hands and the feet to the wall, and blindfolded when anyone came into the room. I had no books or papers for well over three years; no contact whatsoever with the outside world, and was left in total and complete solitary confinement.

One night the door of my cell opened and I quickly pulled the blindfold over my eyes. The chains around my hands and feet were unlocked and I was told to stand. Someone took my arm and I was guided out of the cell and into another room. I was told to lie down, which I did. Then the questioning began. My captors mistakenly believed that I was an agent of Government and threw questions at me, about which I knew absolutely nothing. The questioning stopped and someone placed a pillow over my face and sat on it. Then I felt a searing pain across the soles of my feet as they were repeatedly struck with cable. The questions were repeated and once again I said that I had nothing to say. Mercifully the beating stopped and I was told to stand. As I could not walk, I was assisted back to my cell, the chains were once again secured, and I was left alone. As I sat in the dark, strangely enough, I do not remember feeling anger against my tormentors. Rather I felt pity. Pity that anyone could be so cowardly as to treat a helpless individual in the way I had been treated.

Alas, the torment was not over. Far from it. One night, some weeks after the beating, one of the leaders of the group entered my cell. “You have five hours to live,” he whispered. “Think hard. You have five hours.” He then stood and left the room.

It now seemed that I was approaching the end of my life on this earth. For weeks I had been questioned and beaten, and frankly was exhausted. At that time I remembered something I had read, I think in the writings of the late Carl Jung, the Swiss psychotherapist. He said that when you face the extremities of life, allow your body to come to your aid and it will. Now, at this critical point, I understood what he meant, for I lay down on the floor and fell asleep.

After what must have been five hours, I was woken by a key turning in the lock. I tightened the blindfold and my chains were released. Again I was led into an adjoining room and told to stand still. “Do you want anything?” a voice asked me. For the first time in my life my throat had gone dry with fear. I was not afraid of death itself, for that will happen to all of us sooner or later. Rather I was afraid of pain. Will it hurt when the bullet goes through my body? I asked for tea and it was brought to me. I then asked to write a letter to my wife and family and another to my friends. I was allowed to write one letter which I did looking beneath my blindfold. Finally I was asked if there was anything further I wanted and I said I would like to say a prayer. They said I could and I recited out loud the Lord’s Prayer. Then I was told to turn around and when I had done so I felt cold metal against my

temple. It stayed there for several moments and finally it was removed and I was told, “Another Time.” Following this event I was to remain in captivity for almost another four years, but the beatings and interrogations stopped as my captors told me they believed that I was a humanitarian, not a secret agent.

Hostage taking is a grim, cowardly and miserable business. However, I have enough faith in human nature to believe that suffering, whilst always difficult, need not destroy. Out of the most dreadful of circumstances it is possible for unexpected creativity to emerge.

Shortly after the death by beheading of a British hostage, Ken Bigley, I went to

see his aged mother in Liverpool, England. She was not too well and confined to bed. I sat by her side as she spoke of the death of her son. “Nothing,” she said, “nothing can describe what I feel at this time. To lose a son in such a way is terrible.” Then she said something quite remarkable. “But my suffering is little different from the suffering of a mother in Iraq who has lost her child as a result of warfare.”

For me those few words uttered by a lady experiencing the very depths of suffering expressed so much. We are all members of the human race, regardless of our nationality, creed or color.

Since my release from Beirut, many years ago, I have returned to Lebanon twice. The last time was to visit the Syrian border to meet some of the refugees who were pouring into Lebanon to escape from the bloody conflict in their own country. Time and time again I have asked myself how peace can ever come to people who need it so badly.

Without question there is no easy answer, but I am sure that there can be no political solution unless there is a measure of trust and understanding between ordinary people on opposing sides, and the past is put firmly in the past. I then said to myself that it is useless for me to mouth such sentiments without doing something about it. On my return, I made contact with my former captors. Over twenty years earlier, I had gone at night to their secret headquarters hoping to visit hostages who were on the point of death. Now, years later, I drove at night to see the same people at their secret bunker in Beirut.

Understandably they were suspicious at first, and greeted me cautiously. I then said that it was right for me to put the past in the past and I was prepared to do that. Frankly they were amazed, and for the first time responded to me as a fellow human being. I then said that I would like them to do something for me and that was to provide heating oil for the refugees on the border. They agreed to do this.

Now, let me be quite clear. I am not saying that my one simple act of forgiveness will bring about massive change in that situation. However, if ten thousand people from Israel and ten thousand from the occupied territories were to make similar gestures we would begin to have a basis for a political solution.

There is a lot of anger around at the moment and it is being channeled negatively. Anger can be like a cancer that enters the soul. It does more harm to those who hold it than to those against whom it is held. Forgiveness is an essential first step to reconciliation. It is essential for our own health and for us to grow unto our true humanity.

*Waite was for 12 years a member of the private staff of Archbishop Robert Runcie, being responsible for the release of hostages in Iran and Libya until his capture in Lebanon in 1987. He remains active in the hostage world and is a joint founder and President of Hostage UK.*



Terry Waite in 2009.

Photo: Martin Tod, Flickr.

# The Task Force on Israel and Palestine

By Rebecca Fadil

Some people's special interest lies in the environment, while for others it's food justice; for me it has always been the Middle East. Growing up unchurched, I gravitated early on toward the beauty of Martin Buber's Judaism, studied with two different rabbis, took a conversion class or two, and then studied Middle East history at Tel Aviv University. The birth place of the three faiths became my special interest, and with it came, inevitably, awareness of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Eventually, I became a parishioner of St. Michael's Church in Manhattan, where I wanted for some time to raise the issue of Israel/Palestine, but in the end always paused because of the backlash I anticipated. Reading the Kairos Palestine document (see sidebar), however, gave me the courage to explore the issue with the St. Michael's Social Justice Committee. Its contents had severely rattled me: What would it mean for me to attend church, enjoy a comfortable life on the Upper West Side, and avoid the discomfort of raising a thorny issue like Israel/Palestine, all the while knowing that one desperate Christian community on the other side of the globe was begging for help from our Christian community here? What did the absence of this conversation mean for a Christian community committed to peace and social justice?

Even more disturbing was the prospect of having one day to explain my cowardly behavior to my teenage daughter, when she stumbled upon the Kairos document and came to me asking, with the finely honed skill of an adolescent sniffing out her parents' hypocrisy: "why did the church we attended every week for years do nothing to respond to this call for help? How could you do nothing?" My daughter's Palestinian grandfather was forced to leave his childhood home in 1948 when the state of Israel was created; she is growing up with a certain awareness of Israel/Palestine, so such an eventuality seemed entirely plausible. Looking ahead into the future I wondered how she might interpret our silence on what is arguably one of the most critical human rights issues of our generation. As Martin Luther King said, "in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends."

Furthermore, what was the meaning of being a Christian to me? Wasn't part of our duty as Christians (as human beings really), to call out oppression and injustice, and stand by the weak and dispossessed, even if it is unpopular to do so and no matter who they are? Wasn't it more than attending services, volunteering for children's services, and enjoying the benefits of a renowned Episcopal music education?

As my fellow members of the St. Michael's Social Justice Committee and I examined the Kairos document, our desire to know more about the Israel/Palestine conflict increased, and the Task Force on Israel and Palestine was born.

The urgency of this was, of course, underscored this past summer by the devastation in Gaza, when during 51 days of Israeli bombardment, over 2,100 Palestinians were killed—including over 500 children. Surely it's not lost on us to imagine how the American Christian community would respond if over 500 Jewish Israeli children were killed.

Whatever the question, when we start something like this in a parish, we must, of course, prepare ourselves for what happens when the silence is finally pierced. Inevitably—and certainly on this particular issue—the members of the congregation will hold a wide range of views, and some may even completely oppose the Church's involvement in the conversation. This has certainly been



**Kairos:** The Greek word *kairos* refers to a moment in time, a moment when God is present in opportunity, when the world's axis is the word of God. The moment to speak truth is now!

**KAIROS PALESTINE** was written by an ecumenical group of Palestinian Christians (13 Palestinian clergy) in Bethlehem in 2009 under similar circumstances to the Kairos South Africa document of 1985: conditions of oppression, injustice and denial of equality and human rights. The Kairos document is an "ecumenical confession of faith and call to action." It is the "word to the world about what is happening in Palestine." It tells the story of the Christian Church's effort to communicate the suffering imposed by successive Israeli governments on Palestinians from a Christian perspective, and calls on churches and civil society throughout the world to acknowledge the oppressive conduct taking place there. In short, it is a cry for help ([www.kairopalestine.ps](http://www.kairopalestine.ps)).

true for St. Michael's. An important challenge, therefore, is to encourage a genuine and informed dialogue within our congregations without shutting anyone down. Not everyone will see the issues in the same light—and the Task Force's work has inevitably met with differing levels of engagement from members of the St. Michael's community. Indeed, the Task Force represents the work of a group of people within St. Michael's, and not St. Michael's itself.

It has stretched us to exercise how a congregation can, as a priest once told me, "learn to disagree in love." Instead of viewing the Israel/Palestine conflict as something to be feared that could divide us, we are striving to see it as an occasion to immerse ourselves in a difficult issue, and to grapple with the hard work of understanding and forgiveness. We do this through a willingness to be uncomfortable, and an insistence on staying in community with one another. How can we, in good faith, shrink from addressing head-on the questions and fears that emerge when Israel/Palestine is discussed, instead of using those questions and fears as a reason to avoid dialogue? An inspiration in this is the example of brave Israeli and Palestinian members of the Parents Circle-Families Forum (<http://www.theparentscircle.com>) who have lost children and other family to both suicide bombers and the Israeli Defense Force, but have nonetheless come together to practice forgiveness through dialogue, tolerance, peace and reconciliation.

I hope Episcopalians have the courage to continue the conversation when the going gets tough and ask ourselves how we'd like the Episcopal Church to be remembered 50 or even 20 years from now.

*Fadil is a member of St. Michael's Church in Manhattan.*



# Change Needs Truth

By Yebuda Shaul

The current round of violence in Gaza has come to an official close. In Israel we have begun to summarize the events of those weeks and question the future. As summaries reenter the public discourse, I am reminded of past rounds of summarization. I try to grasp what has changed from one summary to the next. From Operation “Defensive Shield” (2002) in the West Bank, to “Summer Rains” (2006) in the Gaza Strip—from “Cast Lead” (2009) to “Pillar of Defense” (2012) to the most recent operation in Gaza.

In 2002, a fighter jet dropped a one-ton bomb on the home of Salah Shehade, the former head of Hamas’ military wing, in a residential neighborhood.

The bomb killed him in addition to 14 other innocent people, 11 of whom were children. The incident didn’t blow over quietly. Reservist pilots heavily criticized the operational activity in an open letter. The Supreme Court encouraged an independent inquiry and the government appointed a committee to investigate the episode. Throughout the last month we bombed dozens of homes inhabited by Palestinians—some targeted by the Air Force and others using artillery and mortar fire. These bombs killed hundreds of men, women and children. The bombing of the homes of Hamas members, who do not pose an immediate security threat to Israel, has become an explicit Israeli policy—even when it is known that innocent civilians are inside.

When Shahade’s home was bombed, there were people who questioned the morality of the action. Throughout the last month, over a decade after the aforementioned bomb, hardly anyone in Israel and among its allies around the world criticizes the policy of bombing the homes of Hamas members. The lone voices that are heard speaking out against it are hastily silenced. After a month of fighting, 2,100 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. According to the U.N. at least 1,400 of the deceased were civilian casualties, 518 of which were children. Israeli society remains silent.

What has changed? My reply begins with a memory from the year 2004, two months after I was released from my service as a soldier and commander in the Occupied Territories. During that period, my friends and I reflected back on our years of service and understood that as soldiers in the Territories we had each gradually erased our moral red line. We understood that in order to carry out our routine activities as soldiers, whose role is to control the territories and the civilian Palestinian population, we needed to erase the humanity of Palestinians along with our own humanity. And that’s what we did. This understanding led us to produce an exhibition of photographs and video testimonies of soldiers from Hebron, the city in which we served for a year. Our goal was to share with the Israeli public the things that we did there daily, in their name. This exhibition marked the founding of the organization Breaking the Silence, of which I am a member to this day.

One of the many attendees of the exhibition was Lieutenant Colonel Chen Livni, the Deputy Commander of the Nahal Brigade. We were all veterans of the Nahal Brigade and he had come to see what all the fuss was about. After a tour of the gallery, Livni said that he agreed with the facts that we displayed regarding the process combatants undergo in the Territories. However, he noted that he disagreed with us on one point. “You call this process moral corruption, insensitivity, or intoxication of power” he said, “I call it growing up.” In response to Livni’s statement, one of my friends replied, “You’re right. That’s how people grow up in Israel. Which is the reason why we created this exhibition and are breaking our silence.” My friend was right. Adolescents in Israel grow up when they learn to impose military control over another nation.

Livni might have been right in this sense, as I would be obliged to say that 47 years as an occupying power have taught Israeli society a similar lesson to the one learned by every soldier who serves in the Territories. We have learned to glorify power, and have lost our ability to see Palestinians as people whose lives are no less valuable than ours. We have learned to avert our gaze from the tears of *(continued on page 45)*



The Breaking the Silence Logo.

## THE TASK FORCE ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The St. Michael’s Task Force was formed in 2011 at St. Michael’s Church as a way to begin the conversation about the Israel/Palestine conflict both within the congregation and in the larger community, so that more people would feel comfortable to speak freely and ask questions.

The Task Force is an attempt to respond to our Baptismal Covenant to “strive for justice and peace among all people,” to answer the cry for help by Palestinian Christian clergy (including clergy in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, which operates in both the occupied West Bank and Gaza) in the Kairos Palestine document, and to fulfill the Episcopal mandate set forth in Resolution B019 from General Convention 2012 to “engage actively in the discipline of advocacy, education, and prayer for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.” It may come as a surprise to many that there have been no fewer than 27 [similar] Episcopal mandates on the conflict set forth in General Conventions since 1979.

The Task Force attempts to respond to our covenant, those calls for help, and those Convention resolutions. We do this in part by sharing the less-told story of those Israelis and Palestinians—Jews, Christians and Muslims—who are working together for a just resolution to the conflict; and by offering a broader perspective on the conflict, including a heightened awareness of the U.S. role in it; and by bringing these nuances into open and informed conversation.

The traditional Israeli Zionist narrative of the conflict tends to be well known here in the U.S., where Zionism, the state of Israel and even the Israeli government have too often erroneously become equated with Judaism so that any criticism of Israeli government policy is interpreted as an attack on the Jewish people. Conflating Zionism with Judaism, however, obscures the fact that Judaism is a religion and Zionism is a political ideology. Many Jews, even many Israeli Jews, are strongly critical of the Israeli government, and some also do not support Zionism.

The Task Force grew out of a 2011 study group within the Social Justice Committee at St. Michael’s and led to the Church hosting the Interfaith Tree of Life Conference on Israel and Palestine in 2012 and 2013. This conference brings Israeli and Palestinian speakers from the region to give us a first-hand perspective on many of the challenges to peacemaking in the Holy Land, and to discuss what can be done in the US faith community to help realize a just peace. In 2013, approximately 150 people attended the Conference with 17 church co-sponsors (10 of them were Episcopal!) in addition to 19 other organizational and institutional co-sponsors. The Task Force has developed ongoing relationships with similar groups in other Episcopal parishes in the diocese.

The Task Force has also helped bring to St. Michael’s guest preachers and speakers such as: Executive Director of Kairos USA, Mark Braverman; co-Founder of Rabbis for Human Rights, Rabbi Brian Walt; and head of the Israeli Committee Against Housing Demolitions (ICAHD) Jeff Halper. It has developed collaborative relationships with similarly concerned local Jewish organizations, hosting potlucks dinners with Jews Say No, and standing side by side with them in monthly demonstrations to raise awareness about justice issues in Israel and Palestine. Other Task Force activities have included: co-sponsoring Israel-Palestine film festivals and book clubs with other Upper West Side churches; hosting concerts; and hosting speaking engagements by former Israeli soldiers and Israeli academics.

## A Week in Morocco

By the Rev. Thomas Faulkner

**T**his past July, I participated in a weeklong program entitled Morocco: *Spirituality and Giving in Ramadan*. It was arranged by the Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation under the direction of Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat, the same imam who delivered the eloquent address at New York's 2010 Diocesan Convention. The trip was co-sponsored by Roots and Branches for Spiritual Growth, a program under the leadership of the Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah, a priest of our diocese long experienced in spiritual direction, retreats and pilgrimages. There were 11 of us in total, including, from our diocese, Archdeacon Bill Parnell, Deacon Beverly Neuhaus and Deacon Geraldine Swanson.

The program was designed as an interfaith study tour to provide participants with understanding of Islamic theology and spirituality and their roles in the daily lives of Muslims. Because of the high regard in which Imam Bashar is held within the interfaith community, and his many contacts within the Muslim communities in the Middle East, we were accorded remarkable access to secular and religious leaders, cultural institutions, and holy sites. But while these events were certainly memorable, the most powerful experiences for me were the moments spent in people's homes as recipients of their hospitality, and other, less formal interactions with Moroccans. My journal is rich with such experiences. Allow me to share just a few.

On our flight over on Royal Air Maroc, we were served dinner at 9:30 p.m., dozed off, and then were awakened at 1 a.m. for breakfast, because the sun was about to rise in the East and the day's fast was about to start. This was good preparation for something entirely different: religious practice during Ramadan.

On another occasion, after being taken on a tour of the interior of the great Kairaouine Mosque in Fez by the vibrant, progressive young imam—an honor rarely bestowed on non-Muslims—I stepped into a shop offering the famed blue and white ceramics for which Fez is known. I entered into a long bargaining session with the proprietor for a small bowl I wanted. We finally agreed on a price, but when I left with my heavily wrapped bundle, my companions had all continued on without me. Here I was, in the middle of the Fes el-Bali souk, lost in its labyrinthine alleyways, with a Nikon around my neck and a large package under my left arm. As I turned down one promising looking alley, a teenage boy called out “no outside, no outside!” and motioned for me to follow him back to the main passageway. He called out “groupo, groupo,” leading me to a group of German tourists. When I indicated that this wasn't *my* “groupo,” an older man appeared, who expressed great concern and directed the boy to lead me away by



The Rev. Deacon Beverly Neuhaus, the Rev. Deacon Geraldine Swanson, the Rev. Thomas Faulkner, the Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah, Dr. Abdallah Guedira, and the Ven. William Parnell at an interfaith conference with the Supreme Religious Council of Rabat.

calling “outside, outside.” I followed him from one alley to the next, eventually finding myself “outside” the historic center of the old city, and nearly back to our hotel. Later, I realized that the man and boy were extending to this lost traveler the concern and compassion warranted by their faith, especially during Ramadan.

On our last evening in Morocco, spent in Rabat, we were guests of a charming and cultured woman for the evening Iftar, the meal that breaks the daily fast during Ramadan. It was a gala affair in her garden, attended primarily by women, volunteers in her program for orphans that we had visited earlier. This was my first social experience with women wearing head coverings and full length dresses—traditional attire for Muslim women. After a while, though, the dress was not nearly as interesting as their intelligent and sophisticated conversation. As entertainment after dinner, children from their program—one of them a Christian orphan for whom they were caring—performed songs and dances for us. We all left that evening thankful for such warm and caring hospitality.

At a recent gathering at Diocesan House, a woman from our diocese was sitting next to a Muslim woman who was on an official visit from Egypt. Both were wearing elegant silk scarves, one as decoration to her blouse, the other as a head covering. I noted that it is not the dress (or customs) which is important, but the people. The great value of this study tour for me, and for interfaith work, is that it broke down some of the barriers of ignorance that separate us from Muslims and reminded us that we are all of the great Abrahamic faith, beloved of God and called to love each other.

*Faulkner is vicar of Christ Church, Sparkill.*

## From Revenge to Memoir

By Ann Votaw

**W**hen Kenan Trebincevic, a physical therapist, met his client Susan Shapiro, the popular journalism teacher seemed more interested in his past than in her own aching back. Their connection resulted in *The Bosnia List* (Penguin), his memoir chronicling his escape from the former Yugoslavia to assimilation in the United States.

Trebincevic, 33, is a Bosnian Muslim whose family escaped genocide in 1993 and settled on the East Coast, with the help of Connecticut Interfaith Council. Shapiro is a Jewish author who encourages her students to write about their most humiliating secrets. At a recent book talk, Trebincevic explained how they became a team.

“Physical therapy was really boring for her,” he said about Shapiro. “When I’d walk way, she was always grading stacks of papers. I asked her if the assignment

she gave was ‘What I Did on My Summer Vacation?’ She said ‘No. It’s write about your most humiliating secret.’ I laughed and said, ‘You Americans! Why would anyone reveal that?’ She said, ‘Because it’s healing and editors want unusual voices.’”

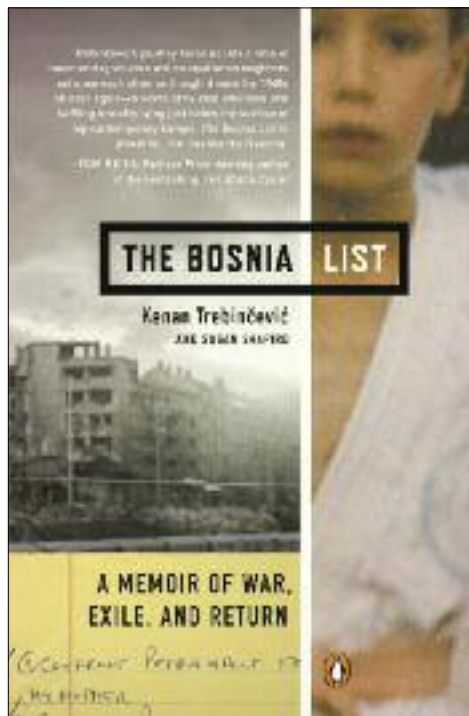
At their next session, Trebincevic handed Shapiro his three pages about his Yugoslavian neighbors and friends turning on him when he was 12, during the Balkan War—when Orthodox Christian Serbs conducted ethnic cleansing campaigns against Catholics and Muslims. His father and brother were put in a concentration camp. His family barely survived.

Shapiro was shocked by his story, calling him “the male Muslim Anne Frank who lived to tell the story.” She helped him write and publish a series of essays that appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Salon.com*.

"I got obsessed," Trevincevic said. "When she suggested I write a memoir, I told her I couldn't do it without her. English wasn't my first language and I'd never written before or told anyone the whole story. She became my Jewish mother and my personal Freud."

Two years after they met, Penguin Books published *The Bosnia List*. They held a book *mitzvah*, where Shapiro declared Trevincevic an honorary Jew.

"She truly cared," Trevincevic said. "She never intruded. But she asked me



lots of questions. Because she was Jewish, and she lost relatives to the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, I trusted her. She was the first person I told the whole story of my past."

Trevincevic, who lives in "Yugo Row" in Astoria, Queens, started his memoir in Marshall's, a Yugoslavian-themed bar. In 2009, he and his older brother were comfortable at this local establishment, where they ordered food from their homeland and conversed in Bosnian. In later months, though, Marshall's became a hotbed of nationalistic resentment between patrons. What was unresolved in Bosnia, remained broken in the U.S.

But Trevincevic's now-deceased mother, whose favorite movie was *Schindler's List*, did not want her chil-

dren to be hateful. "I'll never forget those who did us harm," she said. "But not all were bad. You have to remember the good people too."

To deal with rage, Trevincevic developed his own list, a compilation of those whom he planned to confront on his first trip to his homeland in 20 years. His first priority was his Serb neighbor, who had stolen from his mother. Number two on his list was to stand at the grave of Pero, his karate teacher, who took his brother and father to the concentration camp.

In 2011, at the age of 30, he returned to Bosnia. Each time he checked an item off his list, he gained insight. He realized there were good Serbs who had quietly helped save his family, just as his mother said.

In a pivotal scene, Trevincevic ate lunch at the home of two Serbian former neighbors, Milos and Zorica, who had tried to protect his family during the war. Trevincevic said, "It really confused me how you could fill our propane tank and stomachs one day, then shoot Muslims the next." Uncomfortable, Milos admitted to being a victim of politics; he prayed his bullets wouldn't hurt anyone. He said: "If I didn't pick up the rifle, I was afraid they'd kill me and my family."

At the end of the book, Trevincevic developed a new list, this one filled with hope. Since publication, he and Shapiro have gone on a promotional tour around the country, receiving excellent reviews in America and Bosnia. "I am much more calm and thankful now," Trevincevic said. "I felt like I left part of myself there at 12 and now I feel like a complete person. I have more grace and understanding. I realized I was more lucky than bitter."

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*The Bosnia List: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return* by Kenan Trevincevic and Susan Shapiro is published by Penguin Books.

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*Votaw is a member of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Inwood.*

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# Before Reconciliation, There Must Be Justice

By the Rev. Canon Brian J. Grieves

To engage in a process of reconciliation while the injustices it addresses are still being imposed would defy all logic. In South Africa, for example, it was only after apartheid was dismantled that Africans, who bore the scars of that racist system, could finally face the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation—a process that our own Anglican icon, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, moved forward when he chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which allowed so many wronged people to tell their harrowing experiences.

For those living under oppression, for those who currently suffer at the hands of a brutal regime, the whole concept of reconciliation inevitably seems remote—almost incomprehensible. The oppressors and their allies can, perhaps, make gestures towards a future when forgiveness and reconciliation can flourish; but this must surely be at best dimly discernible by those whom they oppress.

Bishop James Ottley, one-time bishop of Panama and Anglican Observer at the United Nations, visited Rwanda some years ago to learn about the reconciliation process that was underway there after the genocide that shocked the world in the 1990s. He found that even though the killing had ended and calm had been restored, the prospects for reconciliation were nevertheless still dim—and that the reason that the challenge was so daunting was that so many of those who had committed heinous crimes against humanity had never been brought to justice.

Bishop Ottley returned from Rwanda with a clear message: Justice precedes reconciliation. When the injured parties see that many of the violators of their human rights have not had to bear any responsibility for their actions, talk of reconciliation is impeded.

The mission of the Church—actually God's mission in which we are called to be participants—is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (BCP, page 855). This work, in which we are to be engaged at all times, requires an understanding of justice.

"Righteousness" is a common word in Biblical translations. It refers to the balancing of relationships—to a world in which dignity, respect, freedom and equal-

ty undergird all human interactions. This applies to individual relationships as well as to relationships among nations. For such right relationships to exist, however, there must be a system of justice that guarantees these basic principles. Right relationships are a product of a just society.

To be sure, there are saints who went to their death, forgave their oppressors and embraced them at the very moment of their suffering. The love of Jesus Christ was their incredible ally, but reconciliation was not achieved. Those who can forgive their oppressors without requiring justice are very rare, and much to be admired. They are the true believers who know God's justice is with them. But even their faithful witness does not fulfill the mission of restoring right relationships.

Today, our church is debating how best to address the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Should we maintain a position of neutrality, and call for dialogue so that we can better understand the "complex" issues that are at stake in the debate? For Palestinians trying to live normal lives under the Occupation with all its attending humiliation and brutality, and where dignity and respect from the oppressor are nonexistent, such dialogue becomes a means to perpetuate the injustice. Over the years, the Episcopal Church has usually come down on the side of justice, and been willing to challenge the powers and principalities. This has mostly been the case in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, too; but recently the voices of advocacy for justice seem almost to have been muffled. The road to forgiveness and reconciliation looks a long way off—and as long as there are those who prefer neutrality and balance above all else, it is the oppressed who will suffer.

There can and should be a roadmap to eventual reconciliation in this and other conflicts. But that roadmap must first lay out the route through justice and the restoration of right relationships; only then will it be possible to arrive at reconciliation.

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*Grieves serves on the steering committee of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Israel Network.*

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## A Labyrinth for Reconciliation *By Clare Wilson*

In September 2001, I was at a committee meeting of a social action group in South Africa called the Home to All Campaign, which was considering what we might “do”—something symbolic, perhaps—that December 16 to mark National Reconciliation Day. I tentatively suggested a labyrinth walk: A symbolic walk, I said—a journey in which, while walkers would be starting apart from each other, they might share experiences as they all walked together, and if they kept walking they might eventually find common ground and, in time, each other.

The committee jumped at the idea and asked to see the design.

I said I hadn’t yet drawn it, but that my mind was full of it.

They said, “Draw it and we’ll do it.”

At the time, I was re-emerging into the world from three rough years deep in the dark places within myself, following my traumatic withdrawal in 1997—as a result of irreconcilable differences with my supervisor—from a Master’s program which I had hoped and trusted would be my own link to a larger world—my way of reaching at last beyond my limited experience as an ordinary middle-aged white woman, of meeting and finding common interests with more of my fellow South Africans, and of living more into that whole, as-yet un-lived, life out there—the life that we hadn’t previously shared because of apartheid. There I was, twelve years into our new South African democracy, living in a suburb that remained—and today still is—overwhelmingly “white,” surrounded by other suburbs that are still to all intents and purposes segregated. Where and how, I asked myself, does someone like me get to meet those “other” people, whose lives we always saw across the divide, but whom we never really got to meet on common ground? Where, indeed, *is* the common ground?

While labyrinths traditionally have only one path for both inward and outward travel, and there are no right or wrong decisions to be made, I felt that there would be something symbolically wrong about a labyrinth that was meant to integrate differences, but had only one way in and out—as if there is only one right way. Two paths were needed and, if possible, a “third” way out, as per my Jungian leanings.

I began that November by sketching the mirror images of the Reflection Labyrinth designed by Marti and Debbi Kermeen, which I had just seen at a labyrinth conference in Sacramento. I stared at my drawing, trying to make the concentric circles come alive so that, rather than being a mere exercise in geometry, they would reflect that walking this labyrinth would be a journey about people

and relationships. Gradually, I teased out the shapes, and found that by highlighting some of the curves, the image of a person emerged, standing in the labyrinth with arms up, wide, inviting and “holding” the walkers. Then, with the feet sticking out of the bottom, the symbol emerged of the journey starting where one’s feet are, wherever that may be at the time. And lastly, by moving the two entrances apart I was able to create a body for the person—a body that, if chosen, became an exit, a rebirth back into the bigger life, following the inner journey.

And so the Reconciliation Labyrinth emerged—a journey in which one starts on one’s own side and walks through its twists and turns, seeing others across the divide (or one’s own un-lived life), sometimes turning towards each other, sometimes turning away. By the time one reaches the edge of one’s known world at the side farthest from the entrance, one has almost lost hope of meeting the other. Then, almost despairing, one finds that the paths meet, and one crosses to the other side and walks the walk that has shaped the other, learning of the experiences they’ve had in their past that have brought them to where they are today—and they do likewise in your past footsteps.

When at last one comes back to the “heartspace,” where the two up-reached arms intersect, there is a moment of pause, a choice. At this place, though not lost, walkers must decide if they are ready to enter the center, a place of common ground—or, perhaps, that this is far enough for now and entering the center is the work of another day. Walkers can decide to walk out the way they came in, or the other ways—down the center path, or on the other side.

As I sat with this design I wondered what this image meant to me in terms of reconciliation. In close up, personal terms, who would be on the other side that I would struggle to reconcile with? In a flash it came to me: my supervisor. I had another flash—but probably she would not even be there for me to engage with. Would she regard what happened between us as having anything to do with her? Perhaps she would think it was not her problem but entirely mine? What then?

And before I could go down that dead-end alley yet again I had another thought: What is it that I am not pitching up for?

I don’t have to think my way through this. I don’t have to know where I’m going or what the solutions might be. I must start by showing up—and listening.

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*Wilson, who lives in South Africa, created the design for the Reconciliation Labyrinth, which has been implemented all around the world, including here in the United States. For more information, visit <http://reconciliationlabyrinth.withtank.com/>.*

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## As We Walk *By Sinenblanbla Allie*

Life is often likened to a journey. As we go through it, we do not walk alone. And although our walks are uniquely different, they are also surprisingly similar—each with a beginning and an end. I was introduced to the Reconciliation Labyrinth in 2006 when a permanent Reconciliation Labyrinth was erected on our chapel lawn at my then high school, St John’s Diocesan School for Girls in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

2014 marks the twentieth year of South Africa’s democracy, and upon reflection of where my country has come from and where it is now, I felt a heavy weight on my heart and a desire for reconciliation in our beautiful land—which brought back memories of the labyrinth and of Clare Wilson, its original designer.

Unlike many of my peers, I have had the opportunity to interact with people from all races as well as those from different economic backgrounds. The exposure and



From left: Sinenhlanhla Allie, Ashleigh Jacobs, Sonalia Ramnarain, Clare Wilson, Allison Gunning, Zamahlasela Gabela, Sumesha Durais and Cristine Naidoo. Photo: Clare Wilson.

This photo was taken in 2007 at the official opening of the Reconciliation Labyrinth at St John's Diocesan School for Girls in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

context of my world made me project my experiences onto those around me. I had a very enlightening conversation during my first year at university when one of my newly-made Afrikaans (white South African of Dutch origin) friends honestly confessed that she never thought she would have a black friend. Before I responded out of impulse with something like “how could you say that?” something in me reorgan-

ized itself and clicked. “But of course,” I thought, “where was she going to get a black friend from?” Living in an Afrikaans neighbourhood and attending Afrikaans schools by default meant she would have Afrikaans friends. Having a black friend naturally could not be a possibility.

For me, the power of the labyrinth lies in walking it. The Reconciliation Labyrinth is unlike most labyrinths, in that it has two entrances and one exit. The design of the Labyrinth forms the image of a person. The entrances are at the feet. Our feet are what we use to walk with and where our journeys begin.

When I walk the labyrinth, I like to do so with someone else. As I enter at the feet, I find myself on my own path, with my own experiences, views and perspectives. I walk along my own path, and get confronted by unexpected turns. As I walk, I reach a point where my path seems to end and the other person's begins. At this stage, I can choose. I can turn around and go back the way I came, or I can take a step in boldness and walk the other person's path. I choose the latter. As I walk the path of the other, I have an opportunity to experience a bit of their journey, their views, and their perspectives. I get an opportunity to understand. Walking the path of the other shows me that although our paths are different, they are surprisingly similar.

Then, as the path of the other ends, a third path seems to emerge. Now, face to face with the other walker, a choice can be made. Do I exit alone at the feet or do I exit with the other? Again I choose to take a step in boldness as we walk hand in hand into the centre and exit between the feet, bound together with chords of understanding that cannot easily be broken.

So as we walk, let's choose to understand each other's journeys.

Allie is a Marketing Management Honours graduate from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

## THE BOOK OF FORGIVING: THE FOURFOLD PATH FOR HEALING OURSELVES AND OUR WORLD BY DESMOND TUTU AND MPHOTO TUTU, HARPER COLLINS, 245 PAGES.

Reviewed by the Rev.  
Barbara C. Crafton

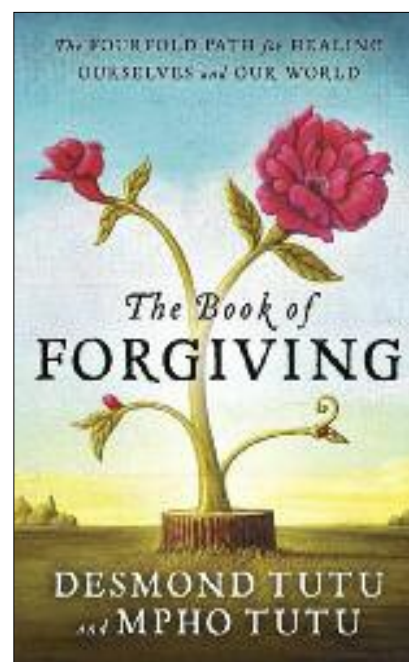
This excellent second book by Archbishop Tutu and his daughter, also a priest, is a clear, practical and honest walk through a spiritual challenge everyone encounters: How can I forgive? Why would I want to forgive? How can I be forgiven? How can I forgive myself? It steadfastly refuses the easy assumption that forgiving is the superhuman act of an extraordinarily saintly person: The Tutus believe everyone can walk the path that leads there, though they acknowledge at every turn how hard it is to do so.

The Truth and Reconciliation process through which Bishop Tutu and others led post-Apartheid South Africa is well known as the principal means by which that country avoided the bloodbath that might well have followed liberation. Millions were set free in that process, but each of them was an individual with a story to tell. The patience required to tell and to hear the story of injury, pain and grief forms the backdrop for the process of this book, which is a handbook designed to take

anyone who wishes to go on the journey in a direction away from the dead sterility of revenge.

Using stories from their own experience or that of people they have known, the Tutus offer a fourfold path: Telling the Story; Naming the Hurt; Granting Forgiveness (which they define as recognizing shared humanity); and Renewing or Releasing the Relationship. Along the way, they suggest ways of reframing ideas we may have held about forgiving that have prevented us from experiencing its healing power. This takes time, and the authors are willing to wait while we absorb something other than what we have always believed. Patiently but steadily, they call us to understand forgiveness not as a Get-Out-Of-Jail card, but as a recognition of both victim and perpetrator as—no matter what has happened—members of the human family.

“A human life is a great mixture of goodness, beauty, cruelty, heartbreak, indifference, love and so much more. All of us share the core qualities of our human nature and so sometimes we are generous and some-



times selfish. Sometimes we are thoughtful and other times thoughtless; sometimes we are kind and sometimes cruel. This is not a belief. This is a fact....when I am particularly affronted, injured, or angered, it helps to remember our shared humanity.”

Simple but thoughtful exercises at the end of each chapter use meditation, art, journal writing and ritual to provide ways of receiving into our lives the wisdom we have just read. These make the book especially rich: choose one or two of these practices to use as an individual or, if you are reading the book with others, share the experience an exercise has given you. A

stone appears in each set of exercises: find a stone and keep it with you. It becomes by turns a pen, a weapon, a confidant, a burden, a hurt, a victim, a template. At the end, you decide whether to keep the stone or return it to nature. I think it would be hard for me to surrender an object that had become such a trusted companion on a difficult journey.

Crafton, who is a priest in the diocese, runs The Geranium Farm, an online institute for the promotion of spiritual growth and practice, and is the author of many books.

## A World Made Whole *By the Rev. Daniel Simons*

**S**t. Paul's Chapel has long been a landmark in New York City. It is the oldest public building in the city in continuous use, George Washington's church, a survivor of the Great Fire. When it stood on the lip of Ground Zero on 9/11 and emerged undamaged—not a pane of glass broken—it came to new national prominence. It became the hub of a grassroots movement of 24/7 care and healing for the site workers, and in time it has become a spontaneous shrine of hope-against-all-odds for well over a million people who visit it annually.

This sliver of recent history has written a new piece of DNA into St. Paul's life. Coventry Cathedral in England bestowed on St. Paul's a "cross of nails," connecting it to a network of over 150 centers devoted to the ongoing global work of forgiveness and reconciliation ([www.crossofnails.org](http://www.crossofnails.org)). That cross has often found a place in our liturgy, and the topic of reconciliation is increasingly finding a place in our conversation.

Since I have been associated with Coventry's Community of the Cross of Nails, I have been marinating in their understanding of reconciliation's work. It's a simple formula, but I find it rich for reflection and I eagerly share it. The work of reconciliation is three-fold:

**1. Healing the wounds of history.** Time alone does not heal human conflict, it usually deepens it. Healing wounds is not about deciding who is "right" and "wrong," but about acknowledging the wound itself: opening it, cleansing it, dressing it.

**2. Learning to live with difference and celebrating diversity.** I like the honesty and grittiness of this step. Acknowledging the real differences that remain between us is a generous step that can add to truth and richness of the relationship.

**3. Building a culture of peace.** Again, I find the choice of words and the honesty of this step so helpful: Peace doesn't just happen, and it isn't an event. It is laid down in paper-thin layers; actions that become habits, habits that become culture. Only in that care-full, often arduous way can peace become a way of life.

Bringing those basic steps to our own context is the great work ahead of us. Reconciliation is a hard topic to discuss on American soil. We don't have clearly positioned and opposed parties to bring to the table as did South Africa or Northern Ireland or Rwanda. In the case of 9/11, whom do we reconcile with?

Terrorists? Certainly not a category as broad as "Muslims." And yet we have plenty of places that need reconciliation. In the case of our deepest unhealed collective wound, the legacy of slavery, we push to move past it without facing into it, and so it persists, as the unrest in Ferguson, MO so clearly demonstrates.

But to get traction in places where trust is broken, reconciliation has to start closer to home. A wise friend of mine recently said that the situations that need healing in the world are all just symptoms; the root wound is within the human heart. Indeed, I become increasingly aware of what a knot of inner contradiction I am—between what I aspire to be, what I say I believe and what I do. When I pay deep attention, I can hear a chorus of often unreconciled voices within myself. I have heard something similar from the many others I've listened to in spiritual direction over the years. It is easy to project that inner conflict outward and face off against the "other," rather than deal with it at the source.

The great pillars of Christian practice—Confession (not so God can hear the truth of our betrayals but so that WE can) and Forgiveness (again more for our own soul-hygiene than anyone else's)—are essential places to start. We do not need to find a sworn enemy to begin or deepen these practices. Starting at home, within ourselves, is both the first step and the final frontier—the work of a lifetime.

The chapel's namesake, the apostle Paul, made reconciliation the central pillar of his theology and mission. He saw Jesus as "breaking down the dividing wall" and "creating in himself one new humanity, thus making peace... [that he] might reconcile both groups to God." (Ephesians 2:14-18). He further believed that God "has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Paul could never have imagined our new global connectedness, but I think he would say it just makes our mission more crucial. The challenges our world will face in the next half-century are mind-boggling, and will require strong forces to bring us together. People who understand, from their daily practice, the power and the process and the fruit of reconciliation will be key to our survival.

I'm committed to that work. I'm also a beginner, as you may feel you are, but I look forward to discovering how we follow Jesus into this next chapter of life; how we make the world whole, together.

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*Simons is Director of Liturgy, Hospitality & Pilgrimage at Trinity Wall Street.*

## The Cathedral: Room for the Spirit to Work

*By Margaret Diehl*

*Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,  
That the bands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again,  
and ever again, this soil'd world;  
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,  
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.*

**Walt Whitman** (1819-1892) was inducted into The American Poets Corner in 1984.

**W**hitman's words "a man as divine as myself" touch the essence of what we are all discussing here, the recognition that no matter how furious and violent the conflict, there comes a time when we are left with demands of everyday life, of which perhaps the foremost is getting along with others. Religions and cultures set rules and develop customs for cooperation and negotiation, but the meta rule, the one from which all others flow, is to treat your neighbor as yourself, because he is "as divine."

Forgiveness can come in an instant of blinding grace or be approached slowly, with continuous spiritual work, but however it is achieved, it is the foundation for what we most want—to survive and thrive in a world always shared with others. It is not a gift, not an act of charity. Forgiveness is a recognition of relation, of the

kinship of the human heart, and the universality of wrongdoing. If we all had to be perfect to have friends, family, and success in the world, it would be a very small world indeed. Making mistakes—committing crimes—causing terrible harm—is human. None of us is exempt.

What a cathedral brings to this is a celebration of community. The crowd on a Sunday, an extraordinary service like the annual Feast of St. Francis, a musical performance, an edgy "political" conversation, are all composed of individuals who by themselves withstand all the ordinary human challenges. Coming together in a place of grandeur and joy—making the choice and taking the time to do that—lifts us out of our internal boxes, allowing room for spirit to work. Reconciliation is not an erasure of conflict, but the fruit of conflict; it is what happens after we express anger, opposition, the refusal to accept wrongs; after we come to understand how things look from the other side. Because it requires that we let in opposing perspectives, it enlarges the soul and teaches us to see and feel in new ways. The Cathedral has never shied away from such conversations and such tasks. As individuals, we fall short, but as a community and congregations, we persevere.

A cathedral is a real physical space where we meet our friends for a conversation or prayer; it is also the image of what we become inside when we make space for the ideas of others, for their hurt, their striving, their voices. To be like a cathedral is to know there is always room for one more—and to have faith that differences can be talked out, if not to the satisfaction of all parties, at least to the greater wis-

dom of those who listen. In his Meditation in the summer 2011 issue of the Cathedral Newsletter, Dean Kowalski wrote, "...to discuss great human concerns is not to debate as if someone wins and another loses the argument, but rather to induce profound psychological change by exposing the depth of our ignorance. This awareness of our limits allows the choice of compassion."

This idea of change rather than polarity is key. Listening to others is how we learn. Having the courage to say honestly what we mean, to let our thoughts and opinions out into the public space where they can be challenged and perhaps

refuted—perhaps even mocked or angrily denounced—is how we grow. The realization of our ignorance or at best our partial knowledge leads to greater respect for others, and compassion for both ourselves and others. Reconciliation is about putting something back together, but not as it was. Never only as it was. It is a return that initiates a new pattern, incorporating both agreement and disagreement.

*Diehl is the editor of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine's Newsletter.*

## Restored to a Loving God *By Jimmy Lee*

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city...The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. (Revelations 22)*

In the last chapter of the Bible (see above), we are given a picture of the restoration of our earth. I admit that when I first read this passage, I didn't understand what the deal was with the name on the forehead—I'm a follower of Christ, but even so, I'm not sure how I feel about having His name etched on my shiny brow! My wife, however, who is much more of a Bible scholar than I, told me that "his name will be on their foreheads" signifies ownership and likeness—that they belong to Him and reflect Him. It means that we are owned by God; that our identity is as His daughter or son, and we are to reflect who our owner is.

Unfortunately, there are others in this world—very far from God—who somehow believe that they are entitled to own another human being. In my work fighting human trafficking, perhaps the thing that gets me most angry is hearing stories of how traffickers think that way—and how they sometimes show that they do by tattooing their names, usually very big, on the women they control. There have even been instances of women being forced to get a tattoo of a bar code, to signify that they are nothing but commodities to be sold.

Recently my colleague Stella, our talented Director of Aftercare Services, sent me this message:

Last night, one of our residents showed me the tattoo of her trafficker's name on her stomach, which is in the process of being removed (two more procedures left). We sat in silence for a while and I started to think, how foolish this evil man was. No matter how hard he tried to make her his, he couldn't, because every single part of her being—blood, bone and flesh—

was already engraved with the words "GOD'S—fearfully and wonderfully made," which can never be removed. Nothing in this world could enslave us, because we are His. As I shared this thought with her, we sat and cried... oh yeah, and then we prayed and laughed and said "stupid" about the stupid tattoo that will be completely gone in two more weeks!

Stella writes such a simple and profound truth. This trafficker decided to tattoo his name on a young woman's stomach to remind her that he owned her—and to remind those who paid for her body that she was his property. But he did not know that she was first and foremost a child of God, owned by a loving Father, made to reflect His goodness and love.

This brings to mind an amazing wildflower called the "Pink Elephant," which I encountered recently on a vacation in Colorado. These plants, which bloom for a short time each year in wet Rocky Mountain meadows, became lodged in my head (and heart); and as I pondered why, I realized that the reason I was so drawn to them had something to do with the importance of knowing one's true identity: For a few weeks each year the Pink Elephant blooms, and does nothing except reflect the glory, creativity and pleasure of its creator—which is that each of us should bloom and reflect the goodness of our God. If a Pink Elephant were a person, we might say that "she lives life knowing her truest identity as beloved daughter, free to be who she was made to be."

So it is in the work that we do with trafficked women, where my deepest joy is to witness restoration—a restoration in which a young woman who has been so abused in our city becomes a blessing to the city; a restoration in which this young woman chooses to accept her true identity, not owned by a trafficker but by a loving God.

*Lee is executive director of Restore NYC, which works to end sex trafficking in New York and restore the well-being and independence of foreign national survivors ([www.restorenyc.org](http://www.restorenyc.org)).*

### REDEEMING THE PAST

BY MICHAEL LAPSLEY WITH STEPHEN KARAKASHIAN  
ORBIS BOOKS, 272 PAGES

*Reviewed by Shay O'Reilly*

National and collective memory are not comprised of neutral narratives. What is storied and claimed publicly—in the media, by public figures, in houses of worship—is a product of cultural norms and ideology; some memories are recited publicly and some are not, some stories are deemed worthy of exalting and some are not. American womanist ethicist and theologian Emilie Townes describes part of her project as reviving a "countermemory," lifting up stories that tell differently of historical events and cultural experiences.

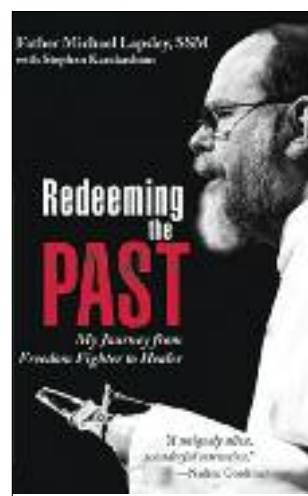
Fr. Michael Lapsley does not describe why he chose to call his ministry's post-apartheid trauma workshops "Healing of Memory" sessions, but the fundamental need to tell untold stories echoes

throughout his autobiography, *Redeeming the Past*. Lapsley uses his own story as a seamless segue into the work of pursuing justice and healing after traumatic political events. In doing so, he reveals the nature of Christian vocation and the hope of redemption for an unjust world.

Lapsley, a brother in the Society of the Sacred Mission, is perhaps best known for an attempt on his life. In 1990, as apartheid was entering its death throes, a mail bomb sent by the South African government exploded at his home in exile in Zimbabwe, critically injuring him, and ultimately taking his hands and one eye. As Lapsley is quick to mention, his own journey parallels that of his adopted homeland. Before the bombing, he was compelled by a foundational conflict between his faith and the norms of apartheid to serve as a chaplain to the liberationist movement, and was converted to the

cause of armed liberation struggle; after, he devoted himself to the long hard work of healing as he returned to South Africa and began to "reclaim gentleness" that he had left behind.

"The thing that struck me on my return to South Africa," Lapsley writes, "was that we were a damaged nation—damaged by what we had done to one another, damaged by what was done to us, and damaged by what we failed to do—and everyone had a story to tell about the experience of the apartheid years." And so he began a work of healing through story-telling workshops, workshops that, long before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, allowed victims to name what had really happened to them that the dominant society refused to acknowledge. As he left the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture to found the Institute for the (continued on page 45)



## Where Was God in the Gas Chambers?

By the Rev. Canon Donna L. Dambrot

Sometimes life takes a turn—an unexpected turn that winds up turning your sense of self on its head and your convictions upside down.

So it was a year or so ago, when I learned from a relative whom I'd never met that we had cousins on my father's side of the family who had perished in the Holocaust.

Growing up in a Jewish family, I first felt called to Christian life in the fifth grade after a visit with a friend to a Christmas Eve service. I began to read the New Testament, and in high school I sought to convert—which led my exasperated mother to send me off on a Jewish teen tour of Israel, where I was overwhelmingly taken with all the Christian holy sites, and from which I came home with a heart full of wonder. After baptism in my first year of law school, my journey towards ordination was a long one—decades long—filled with uncertainty, doubt, and questioning. I was priested in 2003, and after that first celebration of the Eucharist my heart rested in delight. The sacraments of our liturgical life that I was privileged to offer, woven through the continuum of lives lived in the faith community, were so beautiful, such a gift, and ones that I was so blessed to receive.

And so life went on. My concepts of salvation and redemption were defined in the everyday moments; it was in fully embracing, encountering, serving and loving the Christ in the other that I found the grace of a life redeemed—salvation on earth leading in turn to the promise of the life beyond with its own salvific identity.

Gospel life was, and is, my roadmap, my true north, even in my fragile and often failing attempts to follow its simple yet so often seemingly impossible charge: so simple—love God, love your neighbor, love yourself; so difficult—love God, love your neighbor, love yourself. How many times in prayer and reflection have I fought with God, appeared before God with fear and trembling, with thanksgiving, with joy, with despair, with unknowing. How many times have I shied away from loving another, instead finding my heart filled with anger, fear, resentment or unwillingness to encounter. But redemption was God's gift. Salvation was ever-present. All was well.

And so life went on.

Then I remembered something my mother had told me many years earlier. She is older now, and does not remember, but she mentioned that my father's family had received letters from Europe from cousins asking for U.S. sponsorship to escape Nazi Europe. These were my grandfather's cousins. But far from responding to these pleas for help, they threw the letters out. I still remember as a child my father's father and his mother sitting in their small apartment in Inwood, Manhattan. Surely they knew the cousins left behind?

My new-found cousin had told me that contrary to all I had been told by my nuclear family, we were of German origin. Our name was always "Dambrot": It was not some shortened version imposed on Ellis Island when family members arrived in the United States. We were likely bakers, he said, as "dam brot" meant "hard bread." How funny, I thought, no wonder I was such a carbohydrate addict!

But it was really not so humorous. Something in my heart wanted to learn more. How could it be possible for a family to ignore the pleas of its own? I went to the Israeli Holocaust museum's Yad VaShem database and there they were, listed over and over again, Dambrot, Dambrot, Dambrot, Dambrot. Some were murdered while living in the Lodz ghetto, or taken from there to the Chelmno or Auschwitz extermination camps—who knows? Some were part of the Paris deportations to Auschwitz. Dambrot, Dambrot, Dambrot. My heart sank. More than that, it broke in two.

How could I not have known this? How could my family have ignored their pleas for help? Not told me? Where was I in all of this? *I had to do something, somehow.*

So last May, right after Easter, I went on a March of the

Living pilgrimage with a group from the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center based in Glen Cove, Long Island. Our group was part of an international journey that 11,000 others made to visit the concentration and extermination camps in Poland, the mass grave sites there, the villages that Hitler succeeded in making "Judenrein," free of Jews. We visited the site of the Warsaw Ghetto, marched, all of us, on Holocaust Memorial Day—Yom HaShoah—from Auschwitz to Birkenau, site of the crematoria about a mile and a half away where men, women and children entered the "showers" with soap and a towel only to find Zyclon B gas steaming out of the vents. In Auschwitz, we saw the galleries of shoes from floor to ceiling behind glass walls, those who walked in them long gassed; suitcases with their names on them, from which their earthly belongings were gleefully stolen after they stepped out of the cattle cars; and hair—hair up to the ceiling, used by the Nazis to make blankets for their troops. In Maidanek camp, we entered the small gas chambers where the blue residue of the gas remains, the walls still scratched from those fighting to take their last breaths. Treblinka extermination camp rests in beautiful wooded countryside. Destroyed by the Nazis before the war's end, all that remains are sculptures representing where the trains arrived, stones with the names of the many villages and towns whose Jewish populations met their deaths there, and a memorial in the center of the wide open grassy plain. From arrival to death in less than two hours—so very efficient.

I wanted to stand on that hallowed ground, smell the air, touch the dirt, and say, "I'm sorry. Sorry for my own family's actions. Sorry for the world's lack of care. Sorry for the evil of the human heart that created an organized mechanism of mass extermination of a people because of their religion. I know that many millions of others died also, and I honor them as well. Today I write about my own journey, and my own heart that lost itself to family members who died for being Jewish, and for only that reason."

And then I was left with a heart that questioned my so certain sense of salvation and redemption. Where was God in the gas chambers? What is the redemptive value of millions dying? What of their lives, what of the futures that had been snatched from them in ways that were bereft of any compassion. What of those who saw the smoke rising from the crematoria, smelt its burning flesh?

I am still processing my journey, but have decided to return again next April, on another march. I have not finished paying my respects, offering my apologies, praying for understanding. This trip will take me to my cousins' town of Lodz where they resided during the Nazi era. Perhaps visiting that place will bring me closer to them.

For now, I ask myself, where is the redemptive value of suffering? Where is the salvific nature of humanity's evil heart that forces down its weight on those who cannot fight? I have not yet resolved these questions in my heart, but I do know this: redemption and salvation must come from not forgetting what happened. If my cousins and millions died for no reason but for the bigotry and lunacy of a people gone mad, what can I do to offer hope in the face of that dread? I can remember. I can be the voice of those who died. I can tell their story and with it, the story of the human heart that has the ability to drift horribly from God's face and will. Perhaps that is the salvation and redemption story: People have died, but others have survived, and new generations live to tell the tale. Perhaps that in itself is the biblical narrative in a nutshell. That is what I am praying upon today.

I wrote about my journey daily while in Poland in a blog titled *A Journey of Remembrance and Hope*. If you'd like, you can read it at [ddambrot.wordpress.com](http://ddambrot.wordpress.com). Blessings.



"Staten Island: Crematorium oven, Maidanek Concentration Camp.

Photo: MesserWoland, Wikimedia Commons.

*Dambrot is president and executive director of Episcopal Charities of Southeast Florida and Canon for Social Outreach for the Diocese of Southeast Florida.*



# A Meditation on Simon Wiesenthal's "The Sunflower"

By the Rev. Rhonda J. Rubinson

**THE SUNFLOWER: ON THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF FORGIVENESS BY SIMON WIESENTHAL  
SCHOCKEN BOOKS, NEW YORK, 1997**

Lately, I've been seeing sunflowers.  
Everywhere.

Last week, I stood next to a deliveryman who had three huge bundles of giant sunflowers in his arms. In a New Jersey suburb, I drove past a garden store that had large pots—vats, really—of giant sunflowers next to hay bales by the screen door. The florist shop on Broadway near the Cathedral had vases of sunflowers punctuating the display of bouquets under the awning. I even saw a movie last night whose opening credits included a slow pan across a sea of sunflowers in a field.

Now sunflowers are normally a cheery thing—big, bright, colorful, harbingers of harvest. But like all things bright and beautiful, they can sometimes signify an opposing force: darkness instead of light. Vincent Van Gogh's paintings of vases filled with sunflowers are both masterpieces of technique and disquieting in their odd, boiling quality, indicative of the restless spirit beneath the hardened paint. And I've been rereading Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower*—an activity that can forever discolor one's view of sunflowers, because in this book they are markers planted on the graves of those who died as "heroes" fighting for the Nazi Third Reich, splashes of living color honoring those who died in the service of evil.

The book's plot line is simple, yet endlessly provocative: a mortally wounded German soldier wishes to confess his crime of setting fire to a building full of trapped Jews who perished horribly in the blaze. Now near death and repentant of his part in that atrocity, he asks to talk to a Jew—any Jew—so that he can unburden his conscience, receive forgiveness, and die in peace. Wiesenthal, a concentration camp prisoner at the time, is summoned to hear the Nazi soldier's confession. Having seen and been the object of incomprehensible brutalities by the Nazis, it takes all of his strength even to remain at the soldier's bedside. He does stay, however, and shoos flies away from the dying man's wounds, listens quietly but resentfully, even hands him a glass of water at one point; but he remains silent when pressed for forgiveness by the soldier. After Wiesenthal leaves, the soldier dies. Back in the concentration camp, Wiesenthal finds himself troubled by his own actions, particularly by whether he had done the right thing by withholding forgiveness. After the war, he seeks out the soldier's mother, who idolizes her son; he refrains from telling her about the crimes her son had committed, preferring to leave her with the undisturbed belief that her son was "a very good boy."

Wiesenthal ends the book with a question for the reader: what would you have done? Then he asks that question of dozens of prominent religious leaders, politicians, human rights activists, authors, and artists, including Desmond Tutu, Albert Speer, the Dalai Lama, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Harry Wu. These "responses" form the heart of the book, and raise a host of deep, complex, multivalent questions. Here are just a few:

- What right does someone have to forgive harm done to someone else?
- Can a victimized people (as a group) forgive their brutalizers (as a group)—and if so, what of individuals within the victimized community who do not wish to forgive?—does the forgiveness offered in their name deny their dignity at a person?
- Must someone be truly repentant in order to receive—or even to be offered—forgiveness?
- Does forgiving atrocities give "permission" for others to commit atrocities knowing that forgiveness is possible?
- What right do those in a group that has not been victimized have to tell those who have suffered irreparable harm to "get over it" and forgive?
- Is a future possible for a person or a people who have been deeply sinned against but who refuse to forgive?
- Is there a kind of continuum of forgiveness, a "tipping point" beyond which forgiveness is not possible?
- Is forgiveness possible without belief in a God who will provide ultimate judgment and justice?
- Is forgiveness always a necessary prelude to reconciliation?

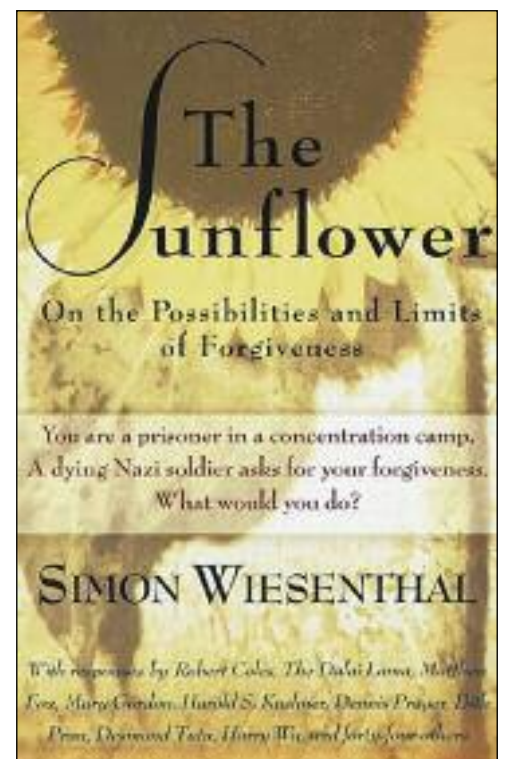
Here's my confession: I do not know how I would have reacted in Wiesenthal's situation. I am an Episcopal priest, yes, and I live in the painful yet awesome knowledge that I cannot survive without God's constant stream of forgiveness and healing love. But I also know that I am quick to condemn and slow to forgive, and I burn with anger when I read of atrocities—whether committed in the name of God or not—both in Wiesenthal's book and in our daily news reports. This anger does not transmute easily to forgiveness, especially since I, like many of us, feel called to fight injustice wherever we find it. How does forgiveness jibe with our need to hold people accountable for their actions that harm others?

The subtitle of Wiesenthal's book is "On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness." We Christians know that in the gospels, Jesus tells us to forgive wrongs "seven times seventy" times; which is to say, always. We know that Jesus forgave his own murderers from the cross, asking God to "forgive them, for they know not what they do." We know that other followers of Jesus, like St. Stephen, followed suit and forgave their killers as well. And we have seen remarkable examples of forgiveness even in our own society, clear and shining examples of God's grace, like the Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, who forgave the man who slaughtered their children in their schoolhouse, and showed kindness and compassion to the gunman's family back in 2006.

But they are rare human beings who have only possibilities, but no limits, on their capacity to forgive. Most of us regularly withhold forgiveness, sometimes unconsciously, in the belief that it confers power upon us. Often, we can feel that unforgiveness is toxic to our health spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically, yet it is as hard to give up as the most addictive drug. And we don't only harbor unforgiveness as individuals. Across our world nations fight war after war over grudges, slights, and disputes, both current and long past—violence born of the desire for revenge and the lust for power. This world of grief, death, and horror coexists daily with a world filled with astonishing beauty and shining spirits, abundant signs of light and life, healing and joy.

Have you been seeing sunflowers lately? I have, everywhere.

*Rubinson is interim pastor at the Church of the Intercession in Manhattan, and serves on the Episcopal New Yorker editorial advisory board.*



## Getting Closer to God through Forgiveness

By the Rev. Martin L. Smith

*"We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins."*



Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece - Baptism, Confirmation, and Penance*, detail, 1445-50, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

**W**ell, we say we do as we recite the creed every Sunday, but have we ever really been helped to explore this connection between baptism and forgiveness? I can't remember ever hearing a single sermon on the topic!

Perhaps baptism is the key to understanding forgiveness. We may just have never been shown how to put it into the lock to open up the treasure.

Let's give it a try.

To say that the once-and-for-all act of baptism enacts God's forgiveness of sin expresses one of the most powerful claims Christians make about God. God has the power to re-invent and remake us. "If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation, the old has passed away." This re-creative power overcomes the guilt and estrangement that destructive behavior entails. God's creativity is more powerful than the acts of anti-creativity that we perpetrate out of fear and mistrust. This claim radically differentiates Christianity from those religions that insist that karma is a relentless fate, requiring multiple reincarnations to provide sufficient opportunities to gradually work off the guilt we have brought upon ourselves through wrongdoing. Christianity is radically anti-karmic. When God forgives, we are totally forgiven, here and now.

The word "forgiveness" is an emphatic version of the word "gift." And what God gives in forgiveness is not an arbitrary acquittal, amnesty, or deletion of our record. We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The primal gift is God's gift to us of God's own self, a three-fold intimacy with God. We are gifted with a loving connectedness to the All-Embracing One, Parent of All, in whose love we know ourselves to live and move and have our being. We are gifted with union with the crucified and risen Christ, through which he dwells in us and we dwell in him, and realize our identity as members of his Body, expressions of his ongoing life in the world. We are gifted with the indwelling Spirit who prays within us and stimulates our desire to be inventive agents of God's healing love, imagination, and creativity towards ourselves and others. When we acknowledge "one

baptism for the forgiveness of sins" we are reminding ourselves that forgiveness always takes the form of a renewed experience of God's commitment to us, God's intimacy with us, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So, in the absolution proclaimed in the Eucharist after we have ritually confessed our sins of thought, word and deed, forgiveness is offered, of course, as a gift of the Almighty, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is no mere formula. Every experience of being forgiven by God is a matter of re-experiencing what we already possess through our baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When the Church provides a special opportunity through the Sacrament of Reconciliation for an individual Christian to make a confidential confession of sin to a priest, it is providing help for those who might find it difficult on their own to experience forgiveness in personal prayer, or through the collective absolution proclaimed during the Eucharist. It is the Church's skillful means of intensifying the radical impact of the good news of forgiveness for someone who really yearns to receive it. And the Rite of Reconciliation makes really clear that its purpose is to reactivate our awareness of God's constantly renewed offer of loving intimacy, which overcomes any barrier our stupidity and self-destructiveness might seem to have thrown up against it. The Rite of Reconciliation is a revival of baptismal identity and a reactivation of its grace. That is why the priest begins the rite by encouraging the penitent to confess his or her sins "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" and why the absolution that brings the rite to its climax reproduces the words of baptism: "I absolve you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

If we explore forgiveness of sins through the lens of baptism, it can even help us reframe how to think about sin itself. Instead of equating sin with the breaking of rules imposed by the Almighty, or as an inevitable by-product of our character defects, we can begin to imagine that sin really means behavior that represents our reluctance to act consistently with our intimacy with God, misbehavior that represents our mistrust of and disbelief in our immersion in God's love. Our lack of compassion, our self-centeredness, our complacency, our meanness, is our refusal to resonate with the heart of God. Our manipulation and use of others, our withholding of help, our timidity in witness stems from our push back against the truth that we are actually members of Christ's Body bound to express his ongoing mission. Our inertia is a symptom of refusal to take responsibility to stir up the gift of passion and imagination that the indwelling Spirit continually offers. So repentance for sin isn't a matter of somehow "making plans not to fail again," but rather a reacceptance of the gift of our immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, a reacceptance of our baptismal identity.

In the gospels the experience of being forgiven is linked unbreakably with our practicing of forgiveness. A continuous loop of feedback reinforces both. In accepting God's forgiveness for our works of pettiness and cruelty and rejection of empathy, we are fired up to forgive others for their failures and offenses against us. In actualizing our power to forgive others we appreciate more deeply the re-creative and redemptive power of forgiveness. We get a sense of how God not only forgives sin but redeems it, so that in being raised up after a fall we actually end up closer to God than if we hadn't acted out. And in forgiving others their wrongs against us, we can end up closer, or more empathically attuned to a fellow human being than if nothing had gone wrong. The brilliant French poet George Marmbrino, a Jesuit, writes in one of his poems that someone who asks you to forgive them is "overwhelming you with the gift of inventing yourself out of nothing." They are giving us the opportunity to be like God, a creator. And if you do, then you will experience the creator thanking you, "even for your setbacks, your falls, your despairs." Our sins are redeemed by God as he converts them into a springboard into the experience of his forgiveness of us, and the source of a more resilient readiness to be compassionate to our neighbor.

*Smith is a retreat leader and preacher and the author of a number of books.*

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# Forgive? Why Not!

A Story of Everyday Forgiveness and Redemption.

By the Rev. Canon Petero A. N. Sabune

**T**he title of this article is a take from the book *Why Forgive?* by Johann Christoph Arnold, which contains a foreword by Steven McDonald, an NYPD officer who was shot and paralyzed for life. During the press conference at the hospital after the shooting, his wife Patti had to speak for him because of his injuries; she announced that he had forgiven the young man who had tried to murder him. Everyone was shocked: Why would he do such a thing? Steven's answer was very simple, but very profound, "I needed healing—badly—and the way forward was love. And I learned that one of the most beautiful expressions of love is forgiving."

Because of my work at Sing Sing for nearly 7 years, and my current work as the DRL (Department of Corrections Reentry Liaison), forgiveness is not, for me, a theological or a philosophical term, but an everyday occurrence. Not a single day goes by without a member of a family whose son or daughter is about to come home from prison wondering, "Will they ever be forgivable?"—while at the same time, the people going home are asking themselves if they can ever forgive themselves. This is an everyday occurrence in prison, but everyone, wherever they are, struggles with burdens of guilt, shame, anger, and other emotions because we can't forgive people who have hurt us. Steven McDonald forgave the young man who almost took his life, but why did he decide to do so? The answer is simple: so he can heal! As the South African writer Alan Paton observed, when an injury is done to us, we never recover until we forgive.

The readings for September 14, 2014, included Matthew 18:21-5, in which Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" and Jesus answers him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times," after which he goes on to tell a story about forgiveness and unforgiveness.

Charles Blow, in his essay *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, tells how when he was at college he received a call from a man who had molested him when he was a boy of seven. He jumped in his car and drove to meet his molester with a loaded gun in his hand. "That night," he writes, "I forced myself to come to terms with some things...he didn't deserve to die for what he had done, and I deserved to live in spite of it. I had to stop hating him and start loving myself. Forgiveness was freedom. I simply had to let go of my past so that I could step into my future."

Since his retirement, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho Tutu have embarked on a forgiveness crusade, not only in South Africa but throughout the world. He reminded us in his book about the Forgiveness and Reconciliation Commission that "Forgiveness is not just some nebulous, vague

idea that one can easily dismiss. Without forgiveness there is no future." We don't forgive for the sake of the other person, but for ourselves. We need to forgive to heal and be whole. Likewise in her two books, *Radical Forgiveness* and *A Pummelled Heart*, Antoinette Bosco agonizes over her struggle to forgive her son Peter, who killed himself, and Joseph, who killed her son John and her daughter-in-law Nancy.

When my brother James was killed in 1976, it took me 20 years to begin the slow and brutal process of revisiting the painful memories of his abduction and execution by Idi Amin. After his death, my other brother Joseph was also subject to harassment; he ran away and died in Nairobi from a broken back the following year, while his wife and children were tortured and became homeless. My sister Ruth was killed three days after Christmas, 1978, with her two sons, Patrick and Francis. Her surviving daughter Kami and Joseph's son Richard came to live with my wife and me at Union Theological Seminary in 1981.

Yosa, the family friend who led James to his torture and death, was unforgivable, wasn't he? After all he was a family friend; he had been to our house many times; we had shared holidays when he came and stayed with us during Christmas. How *could* he be forgiven?

Peter asked Jesus, how many times? He might have asked "and who deserves to be forgiven?" Forgive us as we forgive!

Our forgiveness, our healing and wholeness, depends on our ability to let go like Charles, Steve, and Antoinette. I *had* to let go of the pain and the blame. I could not sit with Antoinette at Sing Sing and hear her tell the guys at the chapel why she forgave Peter, her son and Joseph, the killer of her son John and Nancy, her daughter-in-law. It is painful and you will think about him or her everyday but you will be at peace. Forgive us as we forgive, every minute, of every hour, of every day, of every week, every month, and every life. We all need to taste the sweet waters of forgiveness and let them wash and cleanse us.

How many times should we forgive, and who deserves to be forgiven? Forgiveness is not in the past tense—there is NO future without it. The words are not "as we forgave" but "as we forgive"—they speak of everyday forgiveness. We need to forgive, so we can be forgiven.

Breathe out the toxic air of revenge, and breathe in the fresh air of forgiveness.

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*Sabune is the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Liaison for Reentry DRL and Founder and President of the Forgiveness and Reconciliation Project, Trinity Fellow, Trinity Wall Street, 2007-2009.*

## The Imperative of Forgiveness

By Nicholas Birns

Why,” a friend asked me some months ago, “is attending church a necessarily superior way of expressing one’s spirituality? If one is alert to the beauty of the world, with an awed and reverent sense of the numinous, why go inside a box for an hour every Sunday morning and think you are more spiritually aware?”

I wanted to give an experiential answer, an answer from the heart. The one I decided to give was that the reason lay in the act of repeating, every Sunday, the words:

**Forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.**

The Lord’s Prayer is divided in half between describing God’s attributes and evincing hope about what he can do for us. The forgiveness lines, though, do not just promise that God will do something for us, they tell us that we have to do something for God. God will forgive us our deficiencies—a word I like for the Greek *opheilema*, even if it would be too many syllables in English—if, and *only* if, we forgive the deficiencies of others. If we do not, the whole process is a non-starter.

The word-order—in both Greek and English—make it a bit odd, as if God *can* only do this if we do it; whereas one would think that God, as the all-causative agent, would be able to do it without our help, or without any precedent established by us. Mark 11:25 puts the same sentiment in a more expected verbal order, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” In this case, our forgiveness comes first, and the wording does not proffer it as an anterior model for God, so much as it says that this is something we have to bring to the table if we expect God to forgive us in our turn. But the virtue of the Lord’s Prayer version is that it is a real injunction: It says not just that forgiveness is a quality we should bring to the table, but that we cannot hope to gain God’s forgiveness unless we give it to others.

Moreover, if others’ deficiencies, or our own, are easy to forgive, it is not truly forgiveness. Forgiveness applies precisely to those situations that by ordinary logic would be unforgivable. Forgiveness also does not consist of exculpating each other, or expecting God to exculpate us, for our fundamental flaws. *Opheilema* is not *hamartia*, the most common Greek word used for sin in the Bible. Our deficiencies (*opheilema*) are side effects, symptoms, which can be acknowledged. Only God can cure sin (*hamartia*). But we can offer forgiveness precisely because it is not a cure-all, *because* we see only through a glass darkly.

Forgiveness is something we do. It comes from us. It has to do so. It does not just happen. It is for this reason that the great twentieth-century philosopher of forgiveness, Vladimir Jankélévitch, who, in being a Jew who survived the Second World War, had much to forgive, cautioned that the cliché that time brings forgiveness is wrong. As Jankélévitch puts it, “raw time” cannot “render the guilty person less guilty.” Any lessening of guilt, the philosopher argues, is a part of “axiology”—the study of values—and not of temporality.

This is very much concordant with the Lord’s Prayer, which in the forgiveness lines tell us that if God is to fulfill our own need to be forgiven, we must, similarly, hold out forgiveness to others. Jesus did not only most unquestionably say the Lord’s Prayer himself, it is also a prayer that he asked *us* to pray. In other words, Jesus, who knew God, who *was* a part of God, thought these words were the best way to reach God. In such a short prayer every clause matters. That forgiveness is the one act Jesus calls upon us to actively perform indicates that, for him, it was a total necessity in order to be able to approach intimacy and harmony with God.

In a small way, I have experienced this harmony many times as an adult, as I have been privileged to give forgiveness to, and receive forgiveness from, family members, colleagues, and friends. This is not to say everyone should forgive everyone. There are some people I will not and will never forgive; they are what the country song “God may forgive you, but I won’t” was written for. There are some situations where it is *hamartia* and not just *opheilema* that is at stake. But I make an inner promise to myself, and to God, not to go over the amount of fingers on one hand in terms of unforgivable people. Also, I have made a vow that I will not hold grudges against anyone who affronts me now that I am a middle-aged adult, only those who hurt me when I was more vulnerable. Everyone else, I must forgive. And the point here is *must*. It is an imperative.

Jesus told us that *if* we were to be forgiven by God, we *have to* forgive others. More challengingly, Jesus asked us to accept other people’s affronts against us as normal, the same way God accepts our affronts against Him as normal, and pardons them. If we shrink from this, find it rebarbative and appalling because others’ affronts against us are so severe and cause us so much pain, then think, Jesus’ prayer urges us, on how our affronts against God must hurt Him, when He has given us unconditional love of the sort we can ourselves never hope to approach. I might be a good person without going to church; a kind person; a thankful person. But without the harsh burr of Jesus’s words to spur me on, I would never forgive. And every Sunday I relearn that necessary lesson.

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*Birns, who is an academic, author, and member of Grace Church, Manhattan, serves on the Diocesan Chaplaincy and Ecumenical Commissions.*

# A Matter of Grace

By the Rev. John Warfel

**F**orgiveness—it's an absolute mandate of the Christian faith, a central and essential element of the Lord's Prayer, so basic to the Christian charge that even a child grasps it. Yet there are times when forgiveness seems impossible. Some acts are so atrocious, so hateful, that forgiveness is out of the question.

What can we possibly say to victims of such notorious evil as the man abused and molested continuously as a boy, or a brutally beheaded journalist? Thousands suffer from senseless, purposeful acts of cruelty each day. Forgiveness is not so easy for them.

Forgiveness sometimes seems pointless, especially when the perpetrator neither seeks it nor cares to be forgiven. What purpose is there in forgiving someone who's not sorry? Why waste our time, our heart, our compassion on such a person? Forgiveness can be immeasurably healing for the person who seeks it, but why spend the spiritual and emotional energy on someone who is indifferent or even hostile?

Why? Because forgiveness is essential to the spiritual wellbeing of the one who forgives, regardless of whether someone asks for it or not.

Consider what continued anger and festering grudges do to the soul: They make it bitter, judgmental, hateful, and sour; they exhaust it; they wear it down. It takes energy, time, and great effort to plot revenge, or to think of clever retorts or ways to demean our offender.

Remaining angry drains away precious spiritual resources, resources intended to heal, to love, to reconcile. Some say, "I can forgive but I can't forget," and that may sound noble; but what a waste! Refusing to forget simply lets the hurt live rent-free in your brain.

We move closer to holiness when we forgive—not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it focuses us once again on our dependence upon God. Forgiveness is not a matter of willpower; it's a matter of grace. Sometimes the *only* way we can forgive is to ask for God's help. There are times in life when our anger is so strong, so justified, that we cannot will ourselves to forgive. This is when we turn to God and ask God to help us to grasp and accept that God loves the perpetrator as much as God loves us. Now that's a sobering thought.

If our anger, our fury, is so great that we cannot forgive now, we can acknowledge this and simply put it on hold. Sometimes we are not ready to offer our peace to another—the wound is still too fresh, the anger too strong. But even then, we can still affirm God's peace: the peace that passes all understanding; the peace of the Lord; God's unlimited peace; the peace that God offers both friend and foe alike.

You have one thing in common with the person who has wronged you: You both share the source of peace. So start there. Affirm God's peace when you cannot offer your own.

Genuine forgiveness is often a very lengthy and painful process. But grace flows from the process; grace pulsates in the process. Angry thoughts, grudges, hardened hearts are offered up to God, named, claimed, and confessed to God, and then left behind. It's not easy; it takes time. But when it's coupled with faithful intentional prayer, we are healed, strengthened, and transformed.

The act of forgiving is not weak or wimpy: It's a lot harder to confront our anger than it is to let it fester. Forgiveness is not a passive act. We don't become doormats when we forgive. Forgiveness does not preclude confronting or stopping evil. But it does insist that once we confront it, we try to let it go.

Genuine forgiveness begins with small steps and this is step one: Take the one grudge that you still hang on to, or take the one person whom you still

haven't forgiven and in your soul's eye prayerfully place that one grudge or that one person on the altar. Place the grudge or the person in God's presence and embrace. Then ask God to help you to forgive, not instantaneously, but gradually. Invite God into the process. Ask for some insight into the brokenness of whoever wronged you. Ask for grace to catch even a glimpse of Christ in them.

If we can start to do that right now, today, we'll progress to the next level of spiritual maturity. We'll move up to *Higher Ground*, as a beloved old hymn puts it.

Those whom we start to forgive today may never know what we're up to. They may never know that we are holding them up before God and perhaps they could not care less. But we will know. We'll know the first time they drift into our mind and our stomachs no longer churn, or our blood pressure doesn't rise.

That's the moment we realize that some of our anger has subsided, and that the peace that we send their way, God's peace, has finally come back to rest on our own souls.

*Warfel is the rector of Grace Church, Middletown.*



## SAVE THE DATE

### New Camino: Reimagining Latino/Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of New York in the 21st Century

Friday Evening, November 21  
through 3:30 p.m. Saturday November 22

Christ Church, Poughkeepsie

Presenters:  
The Rev. Al Rodriguez  
The Rev. Dixie Junk  
The Rev. Tom Callard  
The Rev. Anthony Guillén

This is the first of three presentations of this event. The remaining two will follow in Region II and New York City in 2015.

**More details and registration information will be distributed via email soon.**

## How I Came Home *By Jannie Wolff*

I was born again above an Irish bar. At the time in my life that was the darkest it's ever been, God reached out His hand and pulled me out of the pit I had dug myself into.

For many years, I had my own business doing public relations for performing and visual artists and putting on events in the community, and I had a dream of starting my own community center. I sent out an email to my friends and contacts describing my vision of sharing living and creative space to create a place for artists to come together and show their work. I heard back one February night, when the phone rang and a friend told me he'd forwarded my email to an artist who had a space he was looking to rent. By April I had moved in. It seemed so perfect I thought it was heaven sent.

In retrospect it may have been a Divine appointment. God sometimes allows us to go down paths that lead us to destruction if that's the only way we can come to our senses and turn to Him. By 2005, I had lost everything. I was in debt; friends and family had either forsaken me or couldn't help me, the mess I was in was so deep. The place where I was living was being taken over, and I was dealing with an angry landlord who wanted me out so badly he was threatening me daily and had people destroying the walls and turning off the water and heat. I had nowhere to go and I thought I'd be better off dead.

People kept telling me I had to start praying. Some were Christians, some were not—but the message was always the same. They told me I needed to forgive and pray for everyone in the situation, including the people who were harassing me. I said no way. I hadn't ever spent much time in church, but whenever things went wrong in my life I'd beg God for help and He always came through. I'd start praying now, but I wasn't going to pray for these other awful folks.

Then one night on my way home, I saw a cartoon booklet lying on the ground. I was walking down a dark street when a shaft of light from a street lamp on the corner beamed on it. It had been raining all day but the paper seemed dry. The cover picture was the character Scrooge from Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," saying the words "Bah Humbug!" I love cartoons and always have, and it is a family joke that my father used to walk around at Christmas time saying that. It made me smile, something I desperately needed, and reminded me of my father who I desperately

needed too. He passed away in 1998 and I never missed him more than I did then. I threw the booklet in my bag and forgot about it until the next morning.

When I started to read, it was a Chix publication tract that used the story of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" told in cartoon format to illustrate the theme of forgiveness. When I got to a page with a picture of Jesus on the Cross saying, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," I threw it down and said, "I know you want me to forgive them but I can't. I know you were able to forgive when you were on the Cross but I'm not you." The answer came back, "You're not on the Cross." In that moment I was filled with the knowledge of the love of God. I understood that I was a sinner, that I was no better than the people who had been threatening me; I understood that God loved them just as much as He loved me, and that He could forgive me and love me even more if I could forgive them. I started weeping and said, "I understand, I understand, I understand, I forgive them, I forgive them, I forgive them." An enormous weight came off me, and in a few days I found a new place to live. I didn't know what had happened to me except that I was now talking to God all the time.

Six months later, when I was visiting a church, the pastor made an announcement that they needed soup kitchen volunteers. I heard the voice of God saying, "You need to go." I was scared because I didn't know what kind of people I'd find there, but the voice kept saying, "You were almost homeless. Go." When I walked down into the basement and saw the depressing environment and the unhealthy food, I heard the voice of God saying, "Only the best for my children." He sent me to high quality markets for donations, and they started pouring in.

Then God started opening doors for me: One of them led to teaching nutrition and health workshops to both faith-based and non-faith-based organizations all over the five boroughs. Now I go to shelters and soup kitchens and harm reduction centers, food pantries, recovery programs and schools. My work and my daily life today are walking testimonies to the transforming power of God's love, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation, and through word and action I do all I can to show His love and bring hope.

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*Wolff is an actress and writer living in New York.*

## Changing the Future *By Laura Mills*

Many years ago, my child was very seriously abused by a family member. The response from Protective Services was woefully inadequate, with the result that the Family Court ordered the child to have continued unsupervised visits with the abuser—which in turn resulted in continued abuse. No matter how hard I tried, I was powerless to change the situation; and as the years went by and I watched my child suffer, I was overwhelmed with helplessness and depression. Of course, the failure of the authorities to handle the situation properly caused many problems for my child—problems that would not go away overnight. As for myself, I carried resentment, anger, and bitterness inside me. I would have liked nothing more than to make everyone who hurt my child realize just what they had done; yet they had gone on with their lives, and we were long forgotten.

This experience had brought me back to church after a long lapse—but my faith felt weak. I routinely slogged through Lent, never really sure what to give up or take on, uncomfortable and unsure that my faith was "good" enough. The events of Lent were incredibly painful to hear, especially the references to Mary, the mother. I only relaxed when those wonderful Easter hymns blasted forth once again and Lent was behind us for another year.

But a couple of years ago, when our priest invited us to listen to the still, small voice that would tell us what to do during Lent, I listened—and later in the service, the word "forgive" came through loud and clear. I knew that forgiveness did not mean that the events of the past were now okay, because they never would be; but I thought about something my uncle once said, "Forgiveness can't change the

past, but it sure can change the future."

And so I devised a plan: I would read L. William Countryman's book *Forgiven and Forgiving* (for the second time) through Lent, and then on Easter Day I would symbolically place all the people I needed to forgive, including the abuser—now deceased—on the altar, and I would leave them there.

I read the book (which I heartily recommend) slowly and carefully through Lent, preparing for the Big Day. But much to my surprise, the moment came not on Easter Day but instead—quite spontaneously—at our solemn Maundy Thursday service, the service that I find the most beautiful and moving of all. With the book finished, and as I sat in the pew absorbing the events of the evening, I knew I was now ready: If I had been forgiven for all of my own well-thought-out mistakes that had caused harm, then I in my turn could forgive others. And so in my mind, I placed all of the people I needed to forgive on the altar, and gave up my right to indulge in resentment, anger, and bitterness toward them ever again.

With that, a huge weight was lifted and I have felt enormously better ever since. People even commented that I seemed different to them somehow, and that my face had altered.

Now I can look back on, and even speak briefly about, the incidents that took place long ago, but as I always tell people "I don't live there anymore."

My child, meanwhile, after much hard work, is well and living a good life, which includes the addition of two wonderful grandchildren for me to love.

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*Laura Mills is the pen name of a member of a parish in the Diocese of New York.*

# Forgiveness in the Pews

By Rick Hamlin

This is hard to say because it's going to make me sound small-minded and narrow and the worst sort of hypocritical Christian, the kind that is easy to make fun of, but for me, the people I've struggled the most to forgive have been people I've worshipped with, parishioners whom I've sat with at long committee meetings, beloved members of the congregation who have lined up behind or ahead of me to take communion, voices that have mixed with mine as we've praised God, sung the hymns, chanted the psalms and yes, said the prayer of forgiveness.

Why, I've asked myself, should I wince at the sight of that person whose opinion, so vociferously spoken, seemed so wrong-headed, or should I look for a pew further away from that member who behind my back shared something that was said in confidence, or why did I grit my teeth when it was time to pass the peace?

I recall something my spiritual advisor said, a priest with many years of experience in pastoral ministry: "When someone goes on and on about the color of a new chasuble or the stitching on a frontal or the choice of a hymn, it's often about something that happened years ago in their childhood, something I can do nothing about."

We are vulnerable souls when we come to his table, flawed, struggling, wounded. The healing magic of church is that it addresses our deepest places, our need to be loved, the unresolved conflicts in our past. We look to each other kindly, seeking sanctuary and peace, and find ourselves asked to do truly difficult things: love the unlovable, pray for our enemies, forgive. "Love your neighbor as yourself," the Lord said. He must have known how our neighbors are often the hardest ones to love, especially the ones sitting in the next pew.

Earlier this year I found myself deeply moved by the film *Philomena* starring Judi Dench (she could read the phone book and I would be entranced). In the movie, based on a true story, Philomena as a young woman gives birth to a boy out of wed-

lock in the secrecy of a convent. She is only allowed to see the baby for an hour a day, and then he is taken from her as a child—without her even getting to say goodbye—adopted by an American couple. In her older age she goes on a long, heart-breaking search for her son. (No spoiler alert necessary here; I won't say more about the plot.)

The scene that had me stunned is when she goes back to the convent and confronts the elderly nun who whisked the child from her, the sister who still justifies her behavior with horrifying self-righteousness. "I forgive you," Philomena says to the woman. Later the cynical journalist, her companion in her odyssey, observes, "That was easy." With steely-eyed gaze, Philomena turns to him and says, "No, that was hard."

Was there ever a truer line said in a movie? Forgiveness is hard.

If I ran down the list of the forgiven and unforgiven in my mental cavern, I can see growth in the first column and diminution in the second, but I would have to confess there are a few names—I hate putting this down—in the second whom I knew from church. The only thing I can tell myself is something I remember from Corrie tenBoom, who had to forgive the Nazi officers who killed her own sister in a concentration camp: That our grievances are like a bell that keeps ringing, slower and slower when we forgive until it finally stops, until we let go of the rope. It's an act of will; the emotional part can only be God's grace.

"Lord, I forgive, and please forgive me," I pray. The rest is his work. No wonder I need the healing power of worship. There is that prayer at the center of it, "Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed..." right here, right here in your church.

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*Hamlin is a member of St. Michael's Church, Manhattan, the executive editor of Guideposts magazine, and serves on the Episcopal New Yorker editorial advisory board.*

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# The Bastard as Orphan

By Sheila McDonald Brandes

*Now, gods, stand up for bastards!*  
(Shakespeare, *King Lear*: I, ii, 1-22)

I was born to Mama Bunzie—who was not married to my father—at Hobson's Choice, a homestead in the district of Labyrinth, in the parish of St. Mary, Jamaica. My mother, who was ashamed of her own "bastard pickney," was very critical of her older sister, Aunt Dud, who also had an illegitimate daughter, but was proud of her. In my mother's words, "Dud walk round telling everybody that she have bastard pickney as if she think is anythin' to be proud of."

For my first eight years, I lived with my maternal grandmother and grandfather, one of many grandchildren there. Since my grandparents eventually had fourteen children, the oldest son, Uncle Herman, apparently tired of waiting, started his own family before they had finished. He had ten—all legitimate, unlike me—the oldest one older than my youngest aunt.

When I was two, Mama Bunzie yanked her breast from between my lips and left me. She told me she was going twice in a matter-of-fact manner, unaware of the bombshell she had delivered (as far as I know, my mother had two names—Bunzie, her pet name, and Lilieth, her "real" name. The latter, Uncle Manny told her, meant "witch" or "evil angel").

Surrounded by all those pickneys and grandpickneys, I lived in the pages of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, patiently waiting for my knight in shining armor. He never came. Perhaps the stony roads of Labyrinth impeded his progress. In any event, I was determined that one day I would find him. But before that could happen, the first phase of my life came to an abrupt end when my father—a womanizer who, like King David, as John Dryden aptly puts it in *Absalom and Achitophel*, "scattered his image over the [is]land"—burned to death when the grocery truck he was driving careened into a gully.

Soon after my father's death, I went to Friendship to live with my paternal

grandparents for two years, before going to Kingston to live with my mother, who was now working as a stenographer in a branch of the Jamaican Army. I must admit that she looked quite smart in her well starched and ironed khaki uniform and her dark green beret tilted to the side—and her shoes, of course, were always gleaming.

At first, I was glad to go to her, but I soon learned that the big city carried its own peculiar problems, since my mother was intent on hiding me. At first, she would introduce me as her sister or her niece; soon I began refusing to leave my room when visitors came, but this didn't seem to bother her. When one of my aunts inquired about my penchant for staying in my bedroom, my mother simply replied that I was strange.

Our relationship deteriorated even further when she got married about two years later. My two half-brothers soon followed, and the bastard faded even farther into the background. (Years later, I met a cousin, a contemporary of my brothers, who was clearly shocked to discover that his Aunt Bunzie had a daughter.) My stepfather's jealousy of my dead father also proved problematic. He demanded that the photograph of my father hanging on my bedroom wall be removed, and my mother acquiesced. I placed the photograph in my album, and long afterwards, when my son was applying to college, he used this picture of the man he called "the grandfather I never knew" as the basis for his admission essay. I felt my father had been vindicated.

My son was also curious about the grandmother he barely knew. One day when he was about fifteen or sixteen, I entered his room as he was studying at his desk. He looked up and asked pointedly, "Mommy, how come we never see Grandma Bunzie?" There was no escaping the question. Right then, I told him the whole story, "My mother disowned me, and for that I can never forgive her." Without so much as a pause, he replied, "You are going to live to regret it."

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*Brandes is a member of the parish of Calvary-St. George's, Manhattan.*

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## A Body's Memory

By Dana Y. Wu

Last summer, I had the chance to travel to Japan with my then 13 year old daughter, Hannah, and my husband, Mike. We visited many temples and shrines during our vacation, but the most memorable was the mountaintop Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto dedicated to Daizūgu Bosatsu, the mother of Buddha. When we arrived, we took off our shoes, paid our donation and started down the stairs under the temple—a “tunnel” to remind us of the womb of a mother. It is said that the Daizūgu Bosatsu can grant one's wish, whatever it may be.

Mike and Hannah were ahead of me, with a group of Japanese tourists in front of them. Behind me was a bunch of giggling girls. The sign on the wall simply said to hold onto the railing because we might bump into the wall as we walked through. The railing was made of round wooden balls—not a solid wood handrail, but like a string of prayer beads that swayed as we walked. Apparently, I hadn't read the fine (Japanese!) print that said the reason we cannot see anything was because it is very, very dark—so dark that you could not see your hand in front of you.

I started to feel my heart pound. I suddenly wanted to bolt backwards and run out. I heard noises and smelled incense, and felt an intense wave of fear. I knew where I was, but I felt like I couldn't catch my breath. I called out “Mike, I'm having a panic attack” and felt the blood rush from my head. There were a couple of turns to navigate, but I felt like my feet were stuck. My heart was pounding and I thought I'd pass out. I hear him say, “It's OK.” I was having a flashback to the first World Trade Center bombing. I couldn't breathe.

Back in 1993, I was on the 63rd floor when terrorists detonated a truck bomb in the basement garage of One World Trade Center. The power was knocked out immediately, so I just grabbed my purse from my desk and ran out to the stairwells with co-workers from the Port Authority of NY/NJ. We had to walk downstairs in darkness, with the smell of smoke and panic swirling as we evacu-

ated the building. We walked past the 44th floor where the cafeteria was, and where you changed elevators to go up to the higher floors. Some people were carrying their lunches in hand, talking on cell phones. It was stop and go as we moved slowly down those stairs.

People from other floors emptied into the stairwells. At one point, we saw a firefighter who herded us onto an empty floor where we were grateful for the light from the windows. The stairwells were completely dark after a while—the emergency lights didn't seem to be working, and we were proceeding down into increasingly smoky darkness. When we finally reached the ground floor, there were fire trucks, policemen and ambulances. We could see debris and smoke. They directed us across West Street. Somehow, my colleagues and I managed to get to the World Financial Center where the Red Cross had set up tables. We were covered in soot and dust—we didn't even realize what we looked like until we reached daylight.

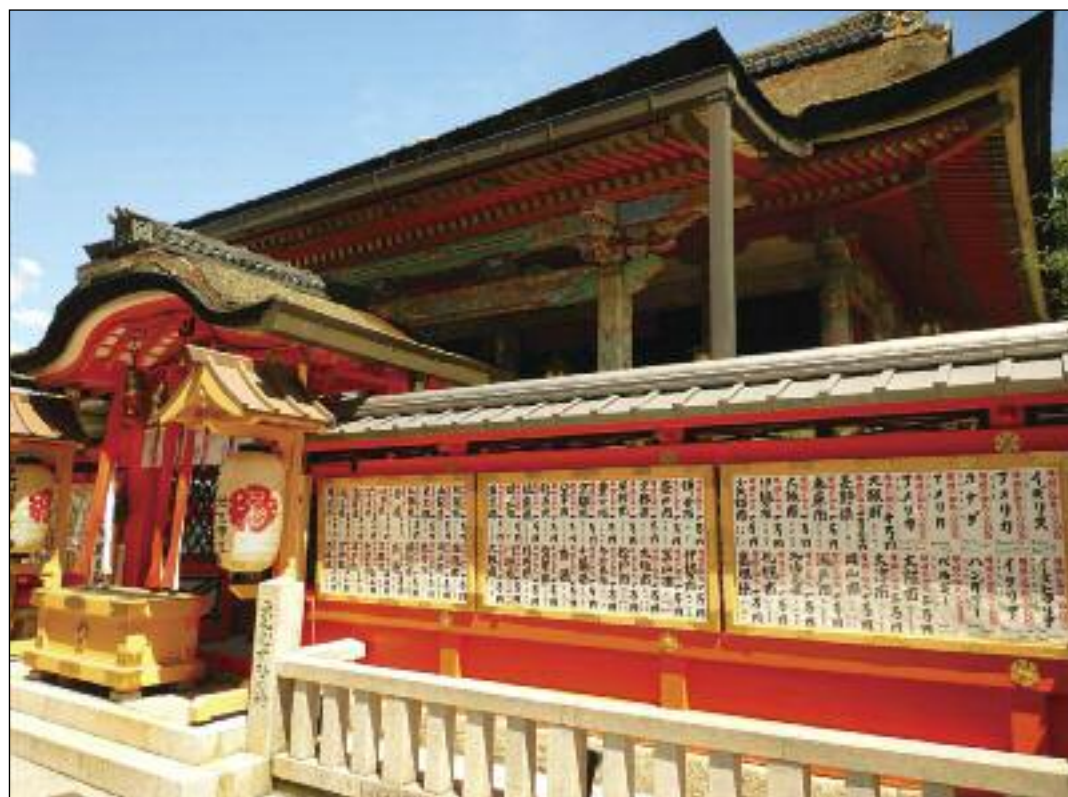
To this day, I can't remember how I got home from work on February 26, 1993. It must have been cold, but I don't think I even had my coat. My husband said I called him to say that I was OK, but at that point we didn't yet know that it had been a bomb that went off in the underground garage. Most of us thought it was a power outage or that a subway transformer blew up. I recall that we at the Port Authority of NY/NJ went back to work fairly quickly in the Twin Towers after the cleanup of the rubble. There were six deaths and many injuries, and a world forever changed by that act of violence.

So here I was in Kyoto, all these years later, paralyzed with fear in the womb of the female Bodhisattva. I was in the tunnel of the temple and Mike and Hannah were right in front of me. But I was having a “fight or flight” reaction in my body. I knew this was a memory triggered by the darkness and incense of the temple “rebirth” but it also triggered some deep fear in me. I called out to Mike again. He reassured me that we were coming to some light. “A few more steps.” Well, that's what the firefighters said to us in 1993 on our way down those smoke-filled flights of stairs.

Near the end of the temple “tunnel” was a stone, rotating and bathed in light, on which is written the word “womb” in Sanskrit. I was grateful for the dim light, gasping up the stairs for air. The entire temple tunnel adventure was probably less than 10 minutes in duration and those giggling girls kept up their chatter throughout. My own daughter was unaware of my fearful “rebirth” during this sight-seeing adventure.

When the taxi dropped us off that morning at the Kiyomizu temple, I hadn't expected to be transported back 20 years to a memory that I had forgotten. I emerged from that temple experience with a visceral and physical reaction. I was reminded of how I am blood and flesh. Like a newborn emerging from a mother's womb, I felt complete powerlessness. In a world where we feel the constant threat of terrorism and gun violence, where in every corner of the globe there is disease, war and abuse, hunger and inequality, I was faced with my body's own memory of how our life can be taken away in an instant.

What did I wish for when I reached that stone and the light? What would you wish for?



The Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto. Photo: Nanonsanchez, Wikimedia Commons

*Wu is a member of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Chappaqua.*



# Global Women's Fund Update

The 10th anniversary year of the diocese's Global Women's Fund (GWF) has been a very productive one.

*By Judi Counts*

**GWF RECIPIENT SPEAKS AT UN:** Faith Metiaki from Kenya was invited by the Canadian Mission to the UN (facilitated by the Working Group on Girls) to be part of a panel at the opening the General Assembly of the UN on September 22. The topic was "Ending Child, Early and Forced Marriage." Faith was able to speak from a personal perspective on this issue, having fled her home to avoid being married at nine years of age to a much older man. Faith will graduate in December from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelor's degree in International Studies and has secured a job with an NGO in Nairobi. Faith's future objective is to be a diplomat.

**SISTER-TO-SISTER FUND OF GWF AWARDS FIRST SCHOLARSHIPS:** Earlier this year the Sister-to-Sister Fund raised \$10,000 for their mission of awarding scholarships to women on the ordination track. The recipients are Jenny Pinge from the Philippines and Siede Williams from Liberia. Jenny will attend St. Andrew's Theological Seminary and Siede will attend Cuttington University when it reopens once the Ebola crisis is under control. Meanwhile Siede is working with her church, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Monrovia, to provide spiritual support to the surrounding communities.

**GWF RECIPIENT THE REV. MARIE CARMEL CHERYL ORDAINED IN HAITI:** Bishop Jean-Zache Duracin ordained Marie Carmel earlier this year. Bishop and Mrs. Dietsche and Archdeacon Bill Parnell travelled to Haiti for the ordination. Marie Carmel is now one of three ordained women in Haiti. The GWF board then secured funding to bring her to Philadelphia for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of Women's Ordination.

**GWF RECIPIENTS ATTEND ANGLICAN WOMEN AT PRAYER CONFERENCE:** The Rev. Alyse Sibaen (Philippines), Lucie Nzaramba (Rwanda), and Faith Metiaki (Kenya) were invited to be among 100 women from across the world gathered for three days at Virginia Theological Seminary to attend the conference titled "Anglican Women at Prayer. Weaving our Bonds of Affection." The purpose was for each to learn from their Anglican sisters the power of prayer.

*Counts is the chair of the Global Women's Fund board.*

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# From the Budget & Finance Committee

*By the Budget Committee Chair*

Every year at Diocesan Convention the Budget and Finance Committee offers a report and resolutions to adopt the Assessment Budget for the coming year. The Calendar of Convention which is mailed out to every congregation and delegate prior to Convention includes a spreadsheet of the proposed Assessment Budget and also a detailed budget narrative, both of which were approved by Diocesan Council on September 11, 2014. This article offers a very brief summary of the proposed Assessment Budget and Narrative.

The Budget Committee report to the 2013 Diocesan Convention anticipated that “2014 would be a transition year where the Diocese would prepare for the challenges of the future.” In his speech at that 2013 Convention, Bishop Dietsche addressed the transitions that would take place by outlining the ways that the makeup and function of the Diocesan staff would be altered over the course of 2014, and indeed 2014 saw the elimination of several diocesan staff positions, retirements and departures of a number of diocesan staff members, and the creation of several new diocesan staff positions.

The 2013 Convention passed the 2014 Diocesan Budget with the knowledge that these planned transitions would require midyear adjustment to numerous lines in the 2014 budget. These adjustments are reflected in the 2014 Estimated Projection. Overall the 2014 Estimated Projection notes a 2% increase in disbursements, the bulk of which is caused by two things: 1) the lack of provision for Medical Insurance Increases in the 2014 Budget (this provision is included in the 2015 Budget) and 2) the temporary duplication of staff salaries for an outgoing staff person and an incoming staff person.

The 2015 Budget builds upon the transition that was accomplished in 2014. For that reason, it is impossible to understand the 2015 Budget without first understanding the adjustments that were made throughout 2014. Therefore, the executive summary included in the Narrative examines each line that was adjusted in 2014, explains the adjustment, and then explains any changes budgeted for 2015. Some of the highlights include:

- The EDNY Contribution to TEC/ECUSA moves closer to full payment of our Asking to The Episcopal Church, and we expect changes enacted at General Convention in 2015 will ensure that we can pay 100% of our Asking in 2016 without further increasing our contribution.
- Aside from the CFO, no staff transitions for the coming year have been announced, and it is not expected that there will be significant overlap of staff during that transition.
- The majority of existing offices, programs, grants, and ministries are budgeted at the levels projected for 2014.
- Expected decreases in certain areas of direct support for congregations (e.g. the CSP) are offset by increases in other areas of direct support for congregations (e.g. Regional Pastorate, Harlem Initiative, etc.).
- A Provision for Medical Expense increases has been included in the 2015 budget.

- A significantly smaller draw on Diocesan Reserves is budgeted.
- Reserves funds are budgeted at levels that will ensure they will be available when needed.

Overall, the 2015 Budget allows the diocese to continue to support the ministries, missions, and programs that our congregations rely on, and also fund and expand the transitions begun in 2014.

I invite you carefully to examine the Assessment Budget spreadsheet and read the entire Narrative (Please go to [www.diocesenyny.org](http://www.diocesenyny.org) > The Diocese > Governance > Diocesan Budget, and click on the link). Once you have done that, if you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at your convenience before Convention. I think it is very important that our Assessment Budget process is open and easily understood by everyone in the diocese, and for that reason, I am happy to field any questions that you might have about the budget or the process.

In Christ,

The Rev. Matthew Hoxsie Mead

Chair of the Budget & Finance Committee of the Diocese of New York

Rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Granite Springs

(Cell) 914-471-0260; (Office) 914-248-5631; mead@goodshepherdny.org.

	2014 Budget	2014 Estimated Projection	Variation From Budget	2015 Proposed Budget	2015 Changes From Projection
<b>INCOME</b>					
Gross Assessments		9,633,000	2,133,000	9,369,000	(264,000)
Projected Unpaid Assessments		(1,895,000)	(1,895,000)	(1,873,800)	21,200
Net Assessments	7,500,000	7,738,000	238,000	7,495,200	(242,800)
Gross Congregation Support Plan Contributions		532,000	32,000	532,000	-
Projected Unpaid CSP Contributions		(170,000)	(170,000)	(170,000)	-
Net CSP Contributions	500,000	362,000	(138,000)	362,000	-
Allocation from Investment Income	1,100,000	620,000	(480,000)	1,175,000	555,000
Rental Income		50,000	50,000	-	(50,000)
Trust income		142,000	142,000	150,000	8,000
Fee Income	60,000	100,000	40,000	100,000	-
Transfer from Diocesan Reserves	353,000	353,000	-	273,950	(79,050)
<b>Total Operating Income</b>	<b>9,513,000</b>	<b>9,365,000</b>	<b>(148,000)</b>	<b>9,556,150</b>	<b>191,150</b>
<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>					
Missions and Programs Beyond Diocese	1,079,700	1,082,481	2,781	1,097,700	15,219
Direct Support Provided to Congregations	2,545,000	2,393,873	(151,127)	2,355,000	(38,873)
Missions and Programs to Diocese	2,044,996	2,056,661	11,665	2,146,510	89,849
The Episcopate and its Support	1,117,320	1,255,817	138,497	1,125,540	(130,277)
Diocesan Administration and General Expenses	2,029,906	2,108,260	78,354	2,083,000	(25,260)
Cathedral Cost Sharing & Rent	597,078	592,320	(4,758)	592,300	20
Provision for Medical Insurance Increase	-	-	-	78,000	78,000
Conventions and Meetings	80,000	37,000	(43,000)	50,100	13,100
Reserves	19,000	24,000	5,000	28,000	4,000
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>9,513,000</b>	<b>9,550,412</b>	<b>37,412</b>	<b>9,556,150</b>	<b>5,777</b>
<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>		<b>(185,412)</b>		<b>0</b>	

	2014 BUDGET	2014 ESTIMATED PROJECTION	2014 REVISED TO CONVENTION	2015 PROPOSED BUDGET	2015 CHANGES
<b>MISSIONS &amp; PROGRAMS OUTSIDE DIOCESE</b>					
CONTRIBUTION TO TEC/ECUSA	832,000	832,000	-	850,000	18,000
ECUMENICAL AND MULTI-FAITH COUNCILS	10,500	10,500	-	10,500	-
PROVINCIAL SYNOD ASSESSMENT	22,200	22,200	-	22,200	-
SOCIAL CONCERNS	55,000	62,000	7,000	55,000	(7,000)
GLOBAL MISSION	45,000	43,900	(1,100)	45,000	1,100
CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS	70,000	66,881	(3,119)	70,000	3,119
RURAL & MIGRANT MINISTRY	45,000	45,000	-	45,000	-
<b>TOTAL MISSION &amp; PROGRAMS BEYOND DIOCESE</b>	<b>1,079,700</b>	<b>1,082,481</b>	<b>2,781</b>	<b>1,097,700</b>	<b>15,219</b>
<b>DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDED CONGREGATION</b>					
ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO CSP CONGREGATIONS	1,900,000	1,550,000	(350,000)	1,300,000	(250,000)
THE HARLEM INITIATIVE	70,000	197,346	127,346	210,000	12,654
FIRST STEP GRANT	20,000	20,000	-	20,000	-
NEXT STEP GRANT	30,000	30,000	-	30,000	-
REGIONAL PASTORATE		33,232	33,232	220,000	186,768
HISPANIC MINISTRIES	75,000	75,000	-	75,000	-
HISPANIC COMPENSATION	350,000	404,773	54,773	400,000	(4,773)
GROWTH TRANSITIONAL GRANTS	100,000	83,522	(16,478)	100,000	16,478
<b>TOTAL DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDED CONGREGATIONS</b>	<b>2,545,000</b>	<b>2,393,873</b>	<b>(151,127)</b>	<b>2,355,000</b>	<b>(38,873)</b>
<b>MISSIONS AND PROGRAMS TO DIOCESE</b>					
PROPERTY SUPPORT GRANTS	350,000	350,000	-	350,000	-
EPISCOPAL CHARITIES	110,000	110,000	-	110,000	-
CSP COORDINATOR	158,507	157,660	(847)	157,660	-
CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	159,595		(159,595)	25,000	25,000
CANON FOR CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY		29,856	29,856	161,000	131,144
CAMPUS MINISTRY	225,687	233,747	8,061	233,750	3
CANON FOR CHRISTIAN FORMATION	152,497	66,464	(86,032)	-	(66,464)
ARCHDEACON FOR MISSION	215,641	235,365	19,724	235,400	35
CANON FOR TRANSITION MINISTRY	190,689	208,155	17,466	208,200	45
CANON FOR MINISTRY	193,689	212,155	18,466	212,200	45
CANON FOR PASTORAL CARE		160,194	160,194	160,200	6
MID HUDSON	136,108	145,897	9,789	145,900	3
PROPERTY SUPPORT	152,584	147,167	(5,417)	147,200	33
<b>TOTAL FOR MISSIONS &amp; PROGRAMS TO DIOCESE</b>	<b>2,044,996</b>	<b>2,056,661</b>	<b>11,665</b>	<b>2,146,510</b>	<b>89,849</b>
<b>THE EPISCOPATE &amp; SUPPORT</b>					
BISHOP DIETSCH	259,401	267,637	8,236	267,700	63
BISHOP SHIN	161,477	184,970	23,493	240,540	55,570
BISHOP KNUDSON	63,216	53,544	(9,672)	-	(53,544)
BISHOP'S OFFICE	258,173	270,425	12,252	270,500	75
BISHOP SUFFRAGAN'S OFFICE	117,000	86,141	(30,860)	110,000	23,860
ASSISTANT BISHOPS' OFFICE	5,000	20,000	15,000		(20,000)
DISCRETIONARY FUND-HOSPITALITY	26,000	26,000	-	26,000	-
SHARED TRAVEL	30,000	44,000	14,000	40,000	(4,000)
CANON TO THE ORDINARY	197,053	303,100	106,047	170,800	(132,300)
<b>TOTAL EPISCOPATE &amp; SUPPORT</b>	<b>1,117,320</b>	<b>1,255,817</b>	<b>138,497</b>	<b>1,125,540</b>	<b>(130,277)</b>
<b>DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION (COMPENSATION)</b>					
OFFICE SERVICES - COMPENSATION	252,128	245,237	(6,891)	246,000	763
ADMINISTRATION - COMPENSATION	910,613	941,050	30,437	915,000	(26,050)
PUBLIC AFFAIRS & ARCHIVES - COMPENSATION	242,165	235,373	(6,792)	235,400	27
OFFICE SERVICE	25,000	21,000	(4,000)	21,000	-
ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES	100,000	163,100	63,100	163,100	-
IT EXPENSES	100,000	110,500	10,500	110,500	-
PUBLIC AFFAIRS EXPENSES	10,000	8,500	(1,500)	8,500	-
EPISCOPAL NEW YORKER	100,000	90,000	(10,000)	90,000	-
OVERHEAD AND FIXED OBLIGATIONS	280,000	282,500	2,500	282,500	-
WEB MANAGEMENT	5,000	6,000	1,000	6,000	-
ARCHIVES	5,000	5,000	-	5,000	-
<b>TOTAL DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>2,029,906</b>	<b>2,108,260</b>	<b>78,354</b>	<b>2,083,000</b>	<b>(25,260)</b>
<b>CATHEDRAL COST SHARING RENT</b>	<b>597,078</b>	<b>592,320</b>	<b>(4,758)</b>	<b>592,300</b>	
<b>PROVISION FOR MEDICAL INSURANCE INCREASES</b>				<b>78,000</b>	<b>78,000</b>
<b>CONVENTION &amp; MEETINGS</b>					
DELEGATES TO PROVINCIAL SYNOD	4,000	5,000	1,000	5,000	-
JOURNAL AND DIRECTORY	2,000	5,000	3,000	5,000	-
DIOCESAN CONVENTION	149,000	148,000	(1,000)	83,100	(64,900)
DIOCESAN CONVENTION (FEE INCOME)	(90,000)	(136,000)	(46,000)	(58,000)	78,000
COUNCIL/CONVENTION MEETINGS	5,000	5,000	-	5,000	-
COMMISSIONS OF CONVENTION	2,500	2,500	-	2,500	-
ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH	7,500	7,500	-	7,500	-
<b>TOTAL CONVENTION AND MEETINGS</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>37,000</b>	<b>(43,000)</b>	<b>50,100</b>	<b>13,100</b>
<b>RESERVES</b>					
DEPUTIES TO GENERAL CONVENTION	13,000	13,000	-	13,000	-
RESERVE FOR FUTURE EPISCOPAL ELECTIONS	3,000	7,500	4,500	10,000	2,500
RESERVE FOR LAMBETH	3,000	3,500	500	5,000	1,500
<b>TOTAL RESERVES</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>24,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>9,513,000</b>	<b>9,550,412</b>	<b>37,412</b>	<b>9,556,150</b>	<b>5,737</b>

## “Heroes”: Victims of a Sick Society

By the Rev. Frank J. Alagna

*“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.” (Mark 9:42)*

**W**e are rightly appalled and disgusted when we learn about another innocent child who has been sexually abused and/or raped. Why, then, are we not equally stricken at the parade of damaged “heroes” returning from Iraq and Afghanistan?

The answer, of course, is that we do not see them as the victims that they are. For while we understand that sexual abuse is typically the result of a grooming process, few among us recognize that the same dynamics that are at work in the production of “love objects” for sick adults are also at play in the production of “heroes”—war’s love objects—for our sick society.

In both cases, a sick, predatory individual or a sick, predatory society identifies potential victims, educates them about the specialness of the engagement, affirms the victim’s privileged position, coaches the vulnerable not to resist, and enlists the victim’s cooperation in the protection and defense of the predator.

Just as the sexual predator seeks naïve and pliable victims, and encourages and demands those victims’ acceptance of their abuse and of its rationalization, so too does our nation withhold from its children the education required to think critically about their country, its consumer culture, its economic machine and the diabolical relationship that exists between endless war, profiteering from war, and the abuse and exploitation of hundreds of thousands of veterans and others.

The accolade “hero” that we indiscriminately bestow on every returning veteran is, in fact, the self-serving epithet that our nation attaches to the final phase of a process of victimization that begins much earlier—a process nurtured and advanced by the rhetoric of militarism and nationalism that is so much a part of the air we breathe as Americans. Under the cover of this accolade, a systematic process of violation of our sons and daughters, far more extensive than sexual assault, goes unacknowledged and unchallenged.

In the course of this process, young men and women are brainwashed into accepting the abuse to which they are, will be, and have been subjected. Raw recruits and veterans alike are assured they are special, much as a predator assures an abused child that he/she is special.

Children are groomed to be “heroes” through an extensive social conditioning process. In school they are taught to salute the flag as a sacred object of reverential devotion. Both there and very often also at home, adults indoctrinate them in the gospel of American exceptionalism—just as the sexual predator assures the victim that what they have is something special. Our children are formed to “own their responsibilities” as citizens of the greatest and most powerful nation on earth, and to respond wholeheartedly and unquestioningly to any summons by their government to “defend their country and their freedoms”—and to do so without question and with no value assigned to dissent.

Military recruiters prowl our streets and campuses in search of idealistic, some-

times uninformed and sometimes uneducated, usually lower income and generally employment-challenged young prey that has been already been well groomed for the kill. These children, nurtured to be naïve and idealistic about their country, are so very vulnerable. The sell is brought home as the recruiters dangle benefits and incentives before them, much as sexual predators seduce their potential victims with gifts, while assuring them that they will be special.

Then in boot camp the new recruits begin a process intent on depersonalizing and dehumanizing them so that they can kill with precision and without compunction. This is precisely what makes war evil: We were made not to kill our enemies, but to love them, and to be so shockingly countercultural as to return good for evil. At least such is the teaching and, indeed, the command of Jesus.

The patterns by which children are made special by those who prey on their innocence, either as “love objects” or “heroes,” are appallingly consistent. This truth is often difficult to face; but unless we begin to connect the dots, will not our children and grandchildren continue to be exploited, victimized, and destroyed—and this with our encouragement, support, and even active participation?

The church has a responsibility to educate our children about the specialness that they already possess by virtue of being created in God’s image and re-created in the image of Christ. Service to the agenda of the kingdom of God bears witness to this specialness.

Military service, on the other hand, in and of itself, adds nothing to the specialness of human or Christian identity. Service to the gods of war can never be rightly understood as service to the God and Father of Jesus.

The church is guardian of the Spirit; its task must be to support the development of informed consciences in our young and keep a clear vision before their eyes of the nature of true heroism—heroism that is grounded in gospel holiness and not in displays of aggressive power, and that expresses itself in doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God.

The freedom won by Christ can *never* be taken away and is *never* to be confused with the freedoms enshrined in our Constitution. The freedom won by Christ is the freedom that compels us to love even our enemies and to triumph over every impulse to violence, retribution, and revenge.

Can the church, therefore, given its mission of protecting our children, effectively carry out that mission when it cultivates too intimate a rapport with the nation state? Is not, for example, the singing of “My country ‘Tis of Thee” every Sunday at the conclusion of the Offertory, as happens in at least one Episcopal church, a way of grooming the children in attendance? Should, as happens in at least one other Episcopal congregation, we be laying hands on young men and women, in a quasi-sacramental ritual, as they are sent off for their “ministry” as active duty soldiers? Do not actions like these, that surely are repeated in so many and varied ways within our diocese and beyond, represent the church’s ongoing complicity in grooming children for the spiritual rape that will make them war’s love objects?

*Alagna is priest-in-charge at Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Church, Kingston.*

### **SOUTH BRONX** (continued from page 18)

on 40 years of priesthood so far and asked what might come after the Barrier Free Living Apartments project. One of the staples of Credo is to ask each priest if there is one “big hairy audacious dream” in the back of his mind. Credo renders the term in Spanish, “*Mi Gran Sueño*.”

Feuerstein’s *Gran Sueño*, as he enters his fifth decade of priesthood, is a call to explore spiritual care for people with special needs. He wonders if other institutions, such as the military and health care, might offer a more effective approach to spiritual care. In the social service system, faith can often languish between underexplored and openly scorned. In the military and in hospitals, spiritual care, as defined by the person’s own faith, is valued as directly relevant to the success of the mission.

Feuerstein sees spiritual care with people with special needs as a next step in a lifetime ministry of reconciliation with community and healing in faith.

*Fitzpatrick is vicar of St. Anne’s, Washingtonville, and a member of the Episcopal New Yorker Editorial Advisory Board.*

For more information on Barrier Free Living, see their website at [www.bflnyc.org](http://www.bflnyc.org).

For more information on domestic violence, see the new Diocese resource page at [dioceseny.org/pages/548-domestic-violence-resources](http://dioceseny.org/pages/548-domestic-violence-resources).

# A Year of Service

By Heather Krulewski

**W**s I stand for the last time in the bedroom that I've shared for the past year, my mind drifts back to my first day. I can remember standing in the same room wondering how I would fit into this new community, how I would cope with the physicality of rebuilding homes—I had a million questions and thoughts running through my head about how the year would turn out. The day that I arrived in Staten Island to begin a year of rebuild work, I had no idea what was in store for me, but I had a gut feeling it would be life-changing.

It most certainly has been. From learning the hard skills of rebuild work to authentically becoming part of the beautiful community of Staten Island, I have been transformed every step of the way. I can now look back and say that we worked on 40 homes, with 40 volunteer groups from all over the country, and put in countless hours of preparation and active work. I can also say that I had numerous meaningful conversations with homeowners and volunteers alike, which enabled me to establish real connections with the people I was most blessed to work with. As I look back and take stock of the challenges and rewards of this past year, my mind is flooded with images and memories that will last a lifetime. These memories range from frustrations at trying to hang sheetrock in homes that are not straight or square by any definition; to the tears of homeowners as they walked into a finished home; to learning how to lay a tile floor correctly; to laughing with youth volunteers as they sang while they worked; and to the many dinners hosted by parishes on Staten Island to honor and thank the volunteers who are integral to the process of getting people home.

Each memory converges with the next, creating a story of hope and community—a story that is peppered with fascinating characters who came together not

just to rebuild homes, but to rebuild lives as well. One such memory is that of a homeowner with whom we hung sheetrock, who said to me one day “you brought me back to life.” But perhaps my most pivotal moment this year has been the recognition that this experience has been about *bringing life back*—to homes that were destroyed, to people struggling to get home, to volunteers looking for a way to make a difference. In that recognition I have also discovered what it is that makes my heart soar, that this kind of work is a source of new life for me as well.

It amazes me how much we were able to accomplish in just one short year—how many people were able to move home because of the work that we did. And yet the work is not nearly finished. My year is over but there are still many people who are not back in their homes, a fact which fills me with bittersweet emotions. I am proud of the work that we have been able to do as both a team and community, and yet it feels unfinished.

All these memories and more coalesce in my mind as I say goodbye to this year of service and step forth into a new year and a new adventure. I walk into my future holding each of these memories, cultivating the lessons, the connections, the gratitude, the love that so often surrounded the work we were doing all year. While a year of service may not be the right choice for everyone, I would strongly recommend that everyone find their own way of giving life back to the communities which they call home.

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*Krulewski has recently been appointed regional volunteer coordinator for Sandy Recovery for the dioceses of Easton, Newark, New Jersey and New York. For information on volunteering, visit [relief.episcopalny.org](http://relief.episcopalny.org).*

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## ISRAEL PALESTINE (continued from page 25)

the hundreds of children who were killed over the course of the past month in Gaza—in addition to the dozens of families that were erased when one-ton bombs were dropped on their homes. The destructive images give rise to feelings of pride, rather than questions about the people for whom the rubble was once a home. The abject poverty in Gaza arouses contempt, instead of questions regarding the roots of poverty in a region that remains under Israeli control.

From 2004 to this day, our activism in Breaking the Silence is guided by a refusal to accept Livni's reality. This is not “growing up,” but rather brutalization and dehumanization. In order to grow up, we need to stop thinking like occupiers, and to start thinking like human beings. As human beings, we cannot avert our eyes, and close our ears. Most important, we cannot maintain our silence and stop asking questions: questions about our moral red line as a society; questions about the moral price that we've paid, and will continue to pay, for the ongoing occupation; questions that are related at their core to the recognition of the value of all human lives in this region, both Israeli and Palestinian.

The future of peace after over a century of conflict and 47 years of occupation is through reconciliation and “re-humanization,” if you will. Israeli society has not “grown up,” but has rather regressed into brutally accepting the normalization of an unacceptable status quo. Humanization of Israelis in the eyes of Palestinians, and Palestinians in the eyes of Israelis, is a necessary step in the direction of peace, and must paint the reality in which both nations “grow up.” Speaking the truth about the nature of occupation and taking responsibility for its moral price, will pave the way for true discussion and sustainable change. In honor of the recently declared cease-fire, I invite you to join us in sustaining it by sounding voices of reason and breaking the silence around the occupation.

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*Shaul is a co-founder and member of Breaking the Silence, an organization of almost 1,000 Israeli veterans who work toward ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine.*

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## REDEEMING THE PAST (continued from page 31)

Healing of Memories, he began to develop these workshops as a form of liturgy: the telling of true counter-memories as a liturgical event that connects people to others and to the divine.

The prose is somewhat clumsy at times, but the real strength of Lapsley's writing is its unflinching honesty: he is someone who has seen the power of that honesty, of authentic stories, and does not shy away from matter-of-factly conveying what happened to him and what he has seen, even when he must acknowledge his own naivete in retrospect.

Most importantly, of course, Lapsley's autobiography carries serious relevance for the American situation today. This is a country still wracked with the legacy of slavery—a history about which, Lapsley writes, there is “a purposeful national forgetting”—that enriched white communities while destroying black lives. Today, the United States imprisons African-Americans at a higher rate than the apartheid government imprisoned black South Africans. In Lapsley's experience, healing—true healing—requires restitution, an acknowledgment of the harm done to the victim, and dutiful, steadfast accompaniment. This book, a testament to Lapsley's life of sacrifice and transformation, suggests that America must interrogate its own past to find a humane future. The prevailing narratives of American history, of a country founded on white self-reliance, of a Northern bloc of states that abhorred slavery, of a Civil Rights Movement that ended racism, have obscured our country's wounds for too many years.

There is not only one way to live the reality of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection in a world full of brokenness. But, as our Words of Institution suggest, our very faith serves as a counter-memory of a nonviolent man killed by imperial violence. Reckoning with an ugly and bitter past that still haunts us can be done with the telling of stories from a different perspective, one that exposes evil and opens the possibility of healing. Perhaps then we can redeem our histories.

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*O'Reilly is a third year M. Div. student at Union Theological Seminary, and interned with the diocesan committee on reparations this past summer.*

# BISHOPS' VISITATION SCHEDULE

## OCTOBER 18 (SATURDAY)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Luke's, Somers (p.m.)

## OCTOBER 19 (19 PENTECOST)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Andrew's, New Paltz

**Bishop Shin:** Holy Communion, Mahopac (a.m.); St. Luke's, Katonah (p.m.)

## OCTOBER 26 (20 PENTECOST)

**Bishop Dietsche:** Zion, Wappingers Falls

**Bishop Shin:** St. Peter's, Peekskill

**Bishop Wolf:** Resurrection, Hopewell Junction

## NOVEMBER 2 (ALL SAINTS)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Paul's, Staten Island (a.m.); St. Simon's, Staten Island (p.m.)

**Bishop Shin:** All Saints, Harrison

**Bishop Sauls:** All Saints, Staten Island

## NOVEMBER 9 (22 PENTECOST)

**Bishop Dietsche:** Christ Church, Sparkill

**Bishop Shin:** St. Paul's, Spring Valley

## NOVEMBER 16 (23 PENTECOST)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Margaret's, Bronx

**Bishop Shin:** St. Alban's, Staten Island

**Bishop Wolf:** St. Andrew's, Staten Island

## NOVEMBER 23 (24 PENTECOST)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Andrew's, Beacon

**Bishop Shin:** Christ Church, Warwick

## NOVEMBER 30 (1 ADVENT)

**Bishop Dietsche:** Christ & St. Stephen's, Manhattan

**Bishop Shin:** St. Andrew's, Brewster

## DECEMBER 7 (2 ADVENT)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Philip's, Garrison

**Bishop Shin:** St. John's, Kingston

**Bishop Sauls:** Resurrection, Manhattan

## DECEMBER 12 (OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE)

**Bishop Dietsche:** Virgen de Guadalupe, Poughkeepsie

## DECEMBER 14 (3 ADVENT)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. James', Hyde

Park (a.m.); St. Andrew's, Poughkeepsie (p.m.)

**Bishop Shin:** St. Matthew & St. Timothy, Manhattan

**Bishop Wolf:** San Juan Bautista, Bronx

## DECEMBER 21 (4 ADVENT)

**Bishop Dietsche:** St. Mary's, Scarborough

**Bishop Shin:** Good Shepherd,

Roosevelt Island

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## CLERGY CHANGES

	FROM	TO	DATE
<b>The Rev. David M. Carletta</b>	Vicar, St. Andrew's, Beacon	St. Andrew's, Collierville, TN	September 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Mark Hummell</b>	Student Life Advisor, NYU Abu Dhabi and Assistant Priest, St. Andrew's Anglican, Abu Dhabi	Chaplain, Grace Church School, Manhattan	September 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Kristin C. Kopren</b>	Priest-in-Charge (Half-time), St. John's, Tuckahoe	Priest-in-Charge (Full-time), St. John's, Tuckahoe	September 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. J. Gregory Morgan</b>	Assistant Rector, Christ & St. Stephen's, Manhattan	Supply	September 1, 2014
<b>The Rt. Rev. Chilton R. Knudsen</b>	Assistant Bishop, Diocese of New York	Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Long Island	September 2, 2014
<b>The Rev. Carol D Gadsden</b>	Rector, St. Mary's, Sparta, NJ	Rector, St. Thomas', Mamaroneck	September 15, 2014
<b>The Rev. Keith C. Lane</b>	Priest-in-Charge, St. Simon the Cyrenian, New Rochelle	Supply	September 15, 2014
<b>The Rev. Canon Anne Mallonee</b>	Vicar, Trinity Wall Street, Manhattan	Chief Ecclesiastical Officer, Church Pension Group	September 15, 2014
<b>The Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah TSSF</b>	Interim Pastor, Grace, Millbrook	Supply	September 15, 2014
<b>The Rev. Duncan A. Burns</b>	Rector, St. John's, Kingston	Rector, St. John's, Huntington, Long Island	September 21, 2014
<b>The Rev. Matthew H. Calkins</b>	Rector, St Timothy's on the Hill, Fairfield, CT	Rector, Grace, Millbrook	September 21, 2014
<b>The Rev. Colin M. Chapman</b>	Curate, Christ's Church, Rye	Associate Rector, Christ & Holy Trinity, Westport, CT	September 21, 2014
<b>The Rev. Robert D. Flanagan</b>	Interim Pastor, St. Stephen's, Armonk	Interim Pastor, St. Paul's, Pleasant Valley	September 24, 2014
<b>The Rev. Benjamin DeHart</b>	Associate Priest, St. Thomas, Oakmont, PA	Associate Minister for Pastoral Care & New Members Ministries,	September 28, 2014
<b>The Rev. Euan Cameron</b>	Ordained Priest September 27 (Diocese of New York)	Priest Associate, Heavenly Rest, Manhattan	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Karen E.J. Henry</b>	Assisting Priest, Adirondack Mission, Brandt Lake, NY and Priest Associate, St. George's, Clifton Park, NY	Priest-in-Charge, St. John's, New City	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Jennifer Reddall</b>	Priest-in-Charge, Epiphany, Manhattan	Rector, Epiphany, Manhattan	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Jacob P. Nanthicattu</b>	Ordained Priest September 27 (Diocese of New York)	Supply, All Saints', Valley Cottage	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Jennie Talley</b>	Ordained Priest September 27 (Diocese of New York)	Priest-in-Charge, St. John's (Wilmot), New Rochelle	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Matthew L. Wright</b>	Supply, St. Andrew's, Brewster	Priest-in-Charge, St. Gregory's, Woodstock	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Mary L. Foulke</b>	Senior Associate, St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan	Rector, St. Mary's (Manhattanville), Manhattan	October 5, 2014
<b>The Rev. Canon Albert J. Ogle</b>	Clergy Residentiary, St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego, CA	Vicar, St. Peter's Church (Lithgow), Millbrook	October 5, 2014
<b>The Rev. Christine A. Jones</b>	Ordained Priest September 27 (Diocese of New York)	Co-Pastor, Congregation at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and per diem Chaplain, New York Presbyterian Hospital, NYC	October 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Canon Altagracia Pérez-Bullard</b>	Rector, Holy Faith Church, Inglewood, CA	Canon for Congregational Vitality, Diocese of New York	November 1, 2014
<b>The Rev. Katharine G. Flexer</b>	Rector, Church in Almaden, San Jose, CA	Rector, St. Michael's, Manhattan	December 14, 2014



# Waiting for the Lord

By the Rev. Joanne Izzo

One Sunday morning when I was a child, after the last gospel was read and the priests were in the sanctuary, an inner movement bubbled up and caught my attention. In that moment, it was as if I was held lovingly and my attention was being drawn to the sanctuary: inexplicably, I felt a call to the priesthood.

I was so surprised by this notion that I didn't attribute it to myself at all. I can honestly say that priesthood was not only the last thing on my eight year old mind; until that moment it wasn't even in my imagination. I recall responding to God: "What? God, look at the altar, there are only men there." I recall thinking God just didn't understand how things are in the Roman Catholic Church. Time seemed to stop. A response arose: "nonetheless." I can still recall this liminal place, and the moment my imagination was expanded by a felt sacred call.

From that moment on, I could not imagine not being a priest.

I kept silent for a very long time. I pondered, imagined in my heart, wondered, and went about my life. Our Lord led me one step at a time: through meditation and scripture to discipleship, discovering social justice at the heart of the gospel message, and on to leadership.

In years to come I would hear God's call through the voice of others who broke through my silence. Clergy and laity in the Roman Church, friends and colleagues from other denominations said aloud to me what I had heard in the silence of my heart so long ago: I was called to the priesthood. I was just as surprised when people said this to me as I was on that Sunday morning in church. In time, it became clear to me that what was most important was being where God needed me to be, so that I could be who God called me to be; this led to a different discernment process, in which I explored other denominations. I began to consider the Episcopal Church, not in order to be a priest, but wondering if God was calling me to it.

The Book of Common Prayer, the daily office, the Episcopal Lectionary and Sunday worship became the environment for my prayerful discernment. One Sunday I was worshipping in a congregation where there was a baptism. Hearing the baptismal covenant aloud was breathtaking and life giving. When the congregation was asked the question will we "do all in our power to support the baptized in their life in Christ?" I experienced how Christian responsibility is embodied in the Episcopal Church. Joining the congregation in the response "we will" ended my wondering and wandering.

Not long after I had settled into a parish in the Episcopal Church, I was approached by a member of the congregation and asked if I would consider the priesthood. In time others asked as well. A retired priest in the congregation craftily weaved his own exploration into the content of our coffee hour chats, slipping questions in between bemoaning the blunder of the week by the NY

Giants. Two years later, the new rector asked me to share my spiritual story with him. This led to meetings to explore each possible vocation: teacher, religious order, vocational deacon, priest, and bishop. He asked me write essays on each vocation as part of the process. Our meetings focused on vocation in relation to who I am as a person and my life history. The rector recommended that he convene a discernment committee. At his suggestion I purchased a small book for each member of the committee, *Listening Hearts*. This helped us work together

thoughtfully and prayerfully. We met monthly for about six months. Sometimes I struggled to express my feelings. There was some frustration along the way for the committee and myself. At other times, I was at a loss for language to describe the call I felt to the priesthood. Discerning in community and struggling was a wonderfully grueling experience. I felt lovingly held while being challenged to bring out what remained

unspoken for so long. Breaking the silence, I finally found language for something that still feels beyond words. I feel called to let the Love of God in Christ Jesus that fills me and is beyond me flow through me as pastor, priest, teacher—declaring God's forgiveness, celebrating the sacraments of baptism and Christ's body and Blood, shepherding God's people—as a community of reconcilers together reaching out to be "transformed by the renewal of our minds so that we may discern what is the will of God for us."

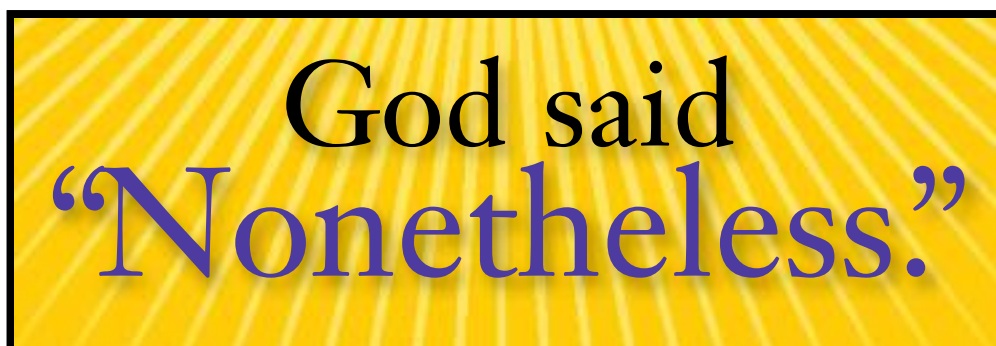
Each opportunity for reflection and conversation in this process—meeting with the diocese's then Canon for Ministry, Constance Coles, participating in a discernment conference with the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee, and meeting with Bishops Sisk and Dietsche—brought to the fore things hidden deep within me. Discernment in community is at times not easy; the search for truth in love never is. The question at the heart of the process is "How is the Lord calling me to live out my baptismal vows in the Episcopal Church?" It is no accident that the last question at baptism to the congregation is paralleled in the second question at ordination; "Will you uphold her in this ministry?"

A bishop's advice to me upon entering seminary was: "Go to chapel, go to class, go to lunch." In each of these places and in between, seminary is where I continued to discern my vocation to ordained leadership in the church. In my field internship, I received feedback from the rector and a special committee walked with me discerning my sense of call to ordained priestly ministry.

As I prepare for ordination to the priesthood this September I am reflecting on what it means to be a steward of the gifts God has given me for the good of the community as an ordained priest in God's Church.

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*Izzo, who was ordained a priest this September, is assistant priest at Christ Church, Tarrytown.*



God said  
“Nonetheless.”