



CAMINOS

OUR ROADS TOGETHER

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Serving The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania



“For we are God’s
handiwork, created in
Christ Jesus to do good
works, which God
prepared in advance
for us to do.”

~ Ephesians 2:10



My siblings in Christ,

Inspired by the love of Jesus Christ, the spirit of creativity and innovation fuels what we do and who we are. There is no doubt that the past year has been filled with that same spirit. Together, we are finding new ways of responding to the needs of our communities. Together, we dream, listen, discern, plan, and respond. With a second round of technology grants, a renewal of the Growth and Development Fund grant program, the launch of Serviam, trainings from the Media Center, our Casting Nets process – we are preparing for not only the future, but for today.

In this issue, we will focus on creativity and innovation. The people who are trusting in our Lord and doing those things people say cannot be done. To do things differently in ways big and small. Not just reaching into their communities, but by making sure they are a vital part of their communities. Responding to needs, living out the Gospel. The willingness to fail, get up, try again, and find life.

Together, we are daring to dream. United by the love of Jesus and with His presence, we are fearlessly bringing a new church into being. It does not take decades ... it's happening right now. May these stories and photos inspire you as they have inspired me. Christ is with us and we have nothing to fear.

The Rt. Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutiérrez
XVI Bishop of the Episcopal
Diocese of Pennsylvania

CONTENTS

6-9 ENGAGING WITH THE DIVINE
All Hallows Episcopal Church
Wyncote

10-11 A LOVE OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Calvary St. Augustine
Episcopal Church, Phila.

12-17 A PLACE OF WELCOME
AND COMFORT
Church of the Redeemer
Bryn Mawr

18-19 AN AFFIRMING PLACE
Diocese

20-23 NEIGHBORS HELPING
NEIGHBORS
All Saints' Episcopal Church
Torresdale

24-27 COMBATING GUN
VIOLENCE
Diocese

28-31 HARVESTING SUNLIGHT
St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Whitemarsh

32-37 NAVAJOLAND YOUTH
PILGRIMSSION
Diocese

38-41 A HOME AWAY FROM HOME
St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Hamilton Village

42-45 PILGRIMAGE TO
THE HOLY LAND
Diocese

46-47 THE COMPASS ROSE SOCIETY
Anglican Communion



PAGES 6-9

Engaging with
the Divine



PAGES 20-23

Neighbors
Helping
Neighbors



PAGES 42-45

Pilgrimage to
the Holy Land

ON THE COVER

YOUTH ENGAGE IN THE
PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB
AT CALVARY
ST. AUGUSTINE CHURCH.

LOCATIONS



Innovative, faithful
communities exist all
across our diocese.

HERE ARE A FEW WE SPOTLIGHTED
FOR THIS ISSUE.



Engaging with the Divine

All Hallows Episcopal Church Rector Christopher Exley is fond of saying, “Church isn’t just for Sunday.”

Spending an hour every Sunday morning is important, he said, “but it’s not the only way to engage somebody in the faith. Someone can come here, see the beautiful depictions of the Gospel on the stain glass windows, see the picture of Jesus above the high altar, listen to the music, and be engaged. But we’ve only begun a conversation. What’s important is where that goes next. When someone leaves here filled with that joy, they become ambassadors for our church and the people they encounter will be more likely to think: ‘This is something I want to be a part of.’”

The next step, he said, is bringing that joy into the community All Hallows serves. “We need to be everywhere the people are.”

Exley has enthusiastically embraced that charge since he came to the parish after serving as assistant rector at St. Peter’s Church in the Great Valley. His path to the parish was an unconventional one, following a nearly 30-year career in information technology before he pursued a Masters of Divinity degree at the Virginia Theological Seminary. Friends saw a posting on the Episcopal Diocese website about an opening at All Hallows, and encouraged him to apply. “They told me that ‘It reads you.’ I considered that a Holy Spirit moment, so I opened up the profile, and they were right,” he said.

Exley was struck by the frequent use of the word “entrepreneurial” in describing a quality the Discernment Committee was looking for in the next leader at All Hallows – a word he’d use often in his own professional profile. “It was exciting to me that they were interested in someone who could think in new ways while still

The Rev. Exley greets people coming into church.



respecting the roots and traditions of the Episcopal Church. It felt right.”

The committee agreed, and Exley was welcomed to All Hallows in December of 2021. Within a few short months, he began engaging with the Cheltenham Police Department, reached out to local political representatives to find ways to host community conversations, and organized family-friendly gatherings such as the popular (and socially distanced) Halloween “Trunk or Treat” event. He also partnered with the Glenside Library to host benefit concerts and is looking for

more ways to maximize church spaces to benefit the community.

The over-arching issue, he said, is determining how to best leverage institutional assets to meet community needs. “What can we do to be relevant in the community is really the question,” he said. “What can we do that is worthy?”

One program that accomplishes precisely that is the recently announced “Curtis at All Hallows” series of organ concerts that will be performed by accomplished young musicians from the renowned Curtis

“What can we do to be relevant in the community is really the question”

Institute of Music (see sidebar for details). This development is the latest outgrowth of a long-standing relationship between All Hallows and Curtis that can be traced back to the founding of All Hallows in 1891.

“The conversations around the Curtis at All Hallows event began before I came here, but I could appreciate how important music is to this parish,” said Exley, the son of a Navy musician and the father of a talented pianist, organist, and church music director. “The musical heritage grew, in no small part, through the largesse of Cyrus H. K. Curtis and his daughter Mary Louise Curtis, who provided the support for the earliest music at All Hallows.

Cyrus Curtis was a prominent publisher during the Gilded Age (Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal). His daughter, Mary Louise, shared his love of classical music and liturgical organ music. The family donated the Skinner organ to All Hallows, creating an environment in the church where congregants and professional

musicians joined at a workshop each Sunday. In 1924, Mary Louise Curtis Bok founded the Curtis Institute of Music and provided significant financial support to Settlement Music School to develop music education among children of immigrants to Philadelphia.

Aside from the broader community outreach goals, the All Hallows/Curtis partnership will offer extraordinary opportunities for the music students from the highly selective school. It will continue a nearly century-old tradition of providing its small student body with an unparalleled education that is distinguished by a “learn by doing” philosophy and personalized attention from its accomplished faculty – many of whom are still actively performing musicians, according to the Curtis Institute website.

The physical manifestation of the long relationship between the Curtis family and All Hallows is the exquisite 1929 E. M. Skinner Pipe Organ (Opus 769) that was installed in All Hallows following a fire that heavily damaged

the altar, melted light fixtures, cracked stained glass windows, and completely destroyed an existing pipe organ that had been commissioned by Curtis and installed at All Hallows in 1896. The 1929 organ – which remains in All Hallows today – was built by Ernest Skinner, who was nationally recognized in the early 20th century for building pipe organs for some of the most prominent churches, concert halls, colleges, and civic auditoriums in the country.

“The Skinner organ is a wonderful, historical instrument in church,” Exley said. “We are fortunate to have a fantastic organist and music director in Chris Kehoe, who also maintains it for us.”



Albert S. Tedesco, parishioner at All Hallows and Emeritus Professor in the Paul F. Harron Graduate Program in Television and Media Management at Drexel University, agrees.

“For the size of this sanctuary, it’s highly unusual to have this organ,” said Tedesco, who chaired the Discernment Committee that brought Exley to All Hallows. “And the students all know the pipe organ. Evidently, these instruments are so idiosyncratic, tuned at such a level, that no one is like another. They work so hard to prepare and always want more performance opportunities, and they don’t always get a variety of spaces. So the music students will experience this new space and acoustics. It will allow them to get out of their comfort zone a little. It’s all part of their learning.”

Also significant will be one-on-one discussions between each of the performing students and Kathleen Krull, branch director of the Settlement Music School in nearby Willow Grove. These moderated conversations, he said, will provide another growth opportunity for the performers. “In the same way that nobody walks into a lecture hall with

40 pages of notes on yellow-lined paper and just reads from them, we want to flip that,” Tedesco said. “We want to open it up, break barriers, and reach out.”

Hopefully, he added, students who never considered seriously pursuing artistic opportunities will see a path forward. “Just as important is what these experiences will say to those students,” Tedesco said. “That’s what my focus is: education and opportunity.”

Ideally, said Exley, the “Curtis at All Hallows” partnership will be a multi-year one, with the hope of bringing in string instrument performances in the near future. The parish is also engaging with the Settlement Music School to “see how we can support their goals and offer student opportunities.”

The arts, in all forms, are a great way to engage, Exley added.

“When you come to church, you can pray out loud or silently, you can listen, but music is the place where you can express emotions that we have no words for,” said Exley. “It’s one of the most important ways we engage with the divine.”

Outreach Goals

Four talented young music students from the renowned Curtis Institute of Music will perform in four concerts over the 2022-2023 season. The students who were selected are:

Emily Dawn Amos (who performed October 1, 2022)

Alexander Leonardi (slated to perform November 19, 2022)

Isza Wu (February 11, 2023)

Oak Martin (April 29, 2023)

All performances will be presented on Saturday evenings at 7:00 PM in the church sanctuary. There will be a “Conversation After the Concert” during which the students will describe how they came to love music and the organ, why they came to study at Curtis, and what they plan for the future. Questions from the audience will be welcomed. The Conversation After the Concert will be moderated by Kathleen Krull, branch director of the Settlement Music School in Willow Grove.

“This partnership is only possible through the hard work of the dedicated planning team, and the whole congregation,” said Rev. Exley. “It isn’t just me. It is all of us, working together, figuring out the best way to share the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.”





A Love of Photography

Summer fun. Looking to provide something fun for children in the summertime, Calvary St. Augustine Church in Philadelphia organized a photography club for children in grades 6-12.

The club was the brainchild of the Rev. Renee McKenzie who invited the Rev. Cathy Kerr to assist after both women bonded over their love of photography. The children began to learn about photo composition and handling digital photo files on the computer.

“The goals of the club were to encourage self-expression and self-reflection, to get the kids started on a life-time learning skill with employment potential, and to promote community interest and engagement as they explore the world around them through photography,” said Kerr.

With some donations of cameras and supplies – and instruction from Revs. McKenzie and Kerr - children ventured into their communities to capture images. Their photos were shown in the church, where the children discussed what the photos meant to them.

“During the summer we were interested in storytelling,” said Rev. McKenzie. “This theme will continue into our fall curriculum, which will challenge our students to give thought to their personal identity and then create images that tell that story.”



Creative Youth



A Place of Welcome and Comfort

The Church of the Redeemer repurposed a space for itself and the community.



It was the week before Thanksgiving, 2021, and the Christmas Bazaar at The Church of the Redeemer was back after a pandemic-mandated two-year absence. Although virtual versions of the traditional Bazaar auction had been held during the Covid-19 restrictions, the members of the Bryn Mawr parish hadn't been able to kick off the holiday season with the traditional bustling two-day event of antique sales, children's activities, and fellowship that had typically drawn hundreds to the 11-acre campus on Pennswood Road.

With pandemic restrictions loosened, the in-person event was back on.

But now, with a grassy courtyard created by the completion of the new Parish House and the renovation of an existing Victorian-era sexton's cottage, the event was re-imagined to become a Christmas Village reminiscent of European Christmas markets. Tents were erected, sparkling lights were strung, and food trucks were brought in. The voices of carolers rose in the cool evening air, providing background music for the happy crowds of visitors and enthusiastic parishioners alike.

"It was just wonderful to see," said parishioner and interior designer



Welcome



Ginger Woods. "It was the first time we could all be together in this new space, and the joy was palpable."

It was a moment of validation for Woods, who served as co-chair of the Parish House Design Committee along with parishioner Betsy Crowell. The \$12 million project, which had been completed just a few months earlier, replaced a dark rabbit warren structure with an inclusive and welcoming space for community engagement.

"Our old Parish House was not what you'd call user-friendly," Woods said. "And when we set out to design a new space, we did extensive interviews with many groups in the parish, specifically asking them, 'What could we do to make this space function better?' What quickly emerged, at the very top of the list,

was creating a sense of welcome. And that became our goal and highest priority – to have anyone who came to this campus not feel intimidated, but immediately welcomed and comfortable."

The Parish House Project Team, which was led by the Rector, Peter Vanderveen, was both inspired and challenged by the church's historical architecture. "As a parish, we are very proud of our history, our long tradition and our place in the community," said Woods. "So that became part of our design challenge: to honor our history while creating spaces that are open and welcoming to anyone. Woods credits Vanderveen with shaping the inclusive design vision from the outset, and gently but doggedly steering it throughout the process.

Vanderveen assumed The Redeemer rectorship in 2009, at the time when restoration work on the church itself was coming to completion, and the parish was planning the renovation of the existing Parish House. Built in 1889, with an adjoining section added in 1955, the somewhat foreboding building with dark, narrow hallways and nondescript rooms did little to invite people to either enter or linger.

Nonetheless, Vanderveen said from the outset that he was "struck by the power and beauty of the campus – the church itself, the Parish House, and the church yard. "The project provided us the opportunity to dramatically rethink the design and how it could work for the community."

“Our goal became having everything facing outward.”



Perhaps the greatest impediment to encouraging community involvement on campus, he thought, was that the original layout had the building interiors facing inward. “Our goal became having everything facing outward,” Vanderveen said. “We want people to drive by and think, ‘Wow, that’s a really beautiful campus.’ We want them to feel comfortable being here, walking the church yard, which really holds so much history of Philadelphia. There is a magnificent canopy of trees and it has the feel of a public space, a public park. If we do this right, we thought, anyone can feel comfortable coming across our threshold to explore and enjoy what the campus has to offer.”

As it turned out, defining the vision of the new space was just the beginning of a series of challenges for what became a complex project. Once the former Parish House was demolished

and a new foundation was dug, it quickly filled with water from uncommonly wet weather. “For a few weeks, all we did was pump water out the foundation,” Vanderveen said. Several months later, Covid hit, and with it came mandated shut-downs. It wasn’t until late spring when construction crews who worked outside were able to resume the building process, which was expansive in scope.

Close attention was paid to accessibility: both physical and technological. The new Parish House is now in complete compliance with standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. It has complete WiFi access and critically located large video display screens. Several gathering rooms can accommodate large gatherings. The project team worked hard on creating a clear layout and signage - a stark



departure from the darker Victorian interior. The end result is a design that Woods described as “easy to read.” Entering a new space, she said, shouldn’t be intimidating or confusing. Consequently, the new Parish House is a space of enhanced flexibility that is easily configured to suit a variety of needs. “We considered many different ways that these spaces could be used—not just for the parish, i.e., for Church School instruction and administrative offices, but for the entire community,” Woods said.



Indeed, the new building now functions as a welcoming home to many different groups: interfaith gatherings, 12-step program meetings, local garden clubs, and most recently, the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra.

Burns Hall is able to accommodate 120 people in theater-style seating. Smaller areas can be configured as either classrooms or presentation spaces. The Raymond Library provides space for both round table meetings and quiet contemplation, and a nursery, together with bright children’s spaces, encourages both play and learning.

“And we specifically designed one of the largest spaces on the lower level as a hospitality suite, with the intention that it be available to all kinds of service groups that need overnight accommodations,” Woods said. Groups as diverse as college work teams visiting the area to aid in community service projects, and the Interfaith Hospitality Network, which assists families and individuals in securing permanent housing, can access sleeping and gathering space, laundry facilities, and fully accessible, gender-neutral bathroom/shower rooms.

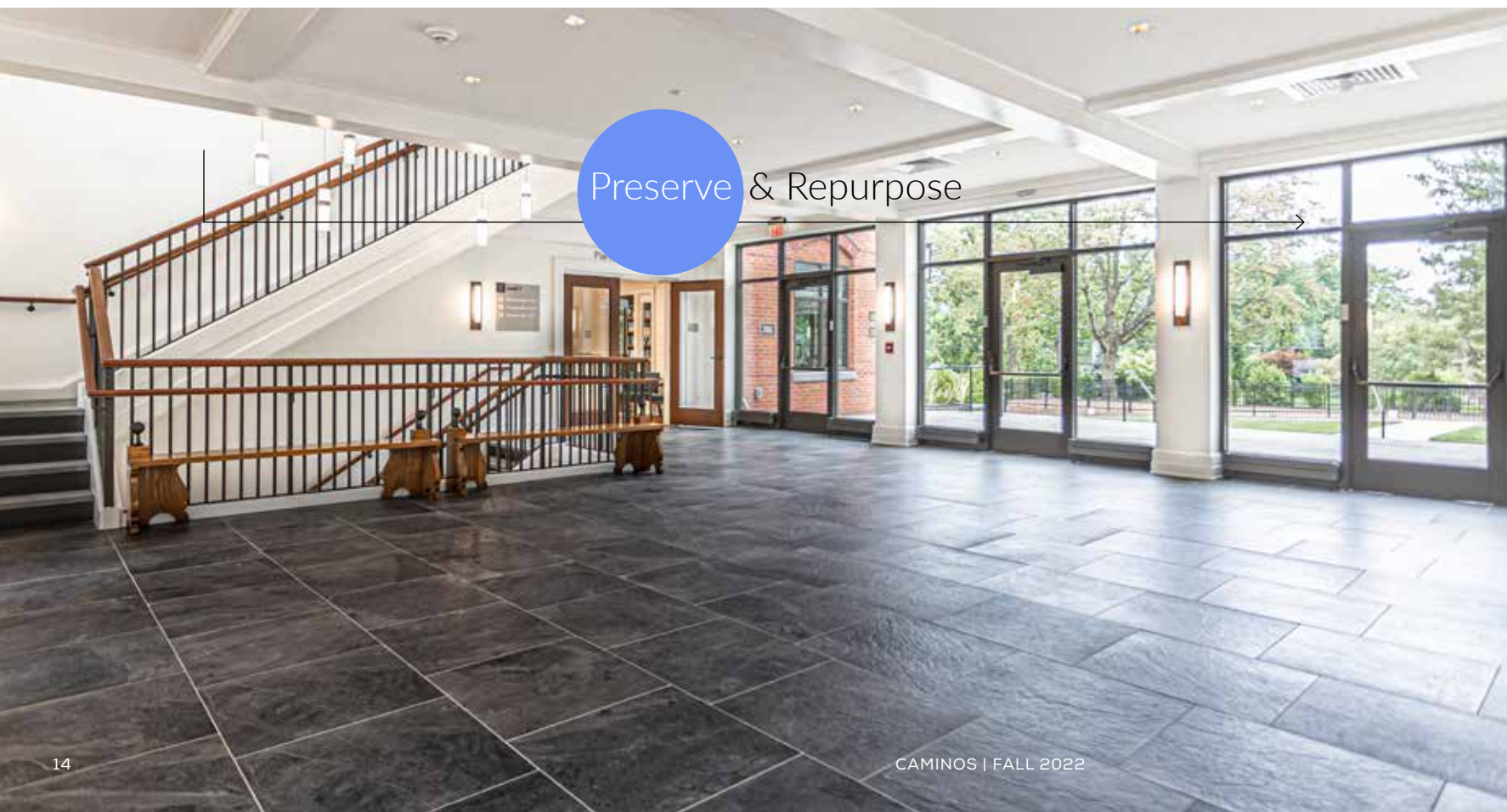
There is also a spacious, gleaming state-of-the-art commercial kitchen -- certified by the Montgomery County Board of Health -- that can support hosting and feeding up to 200 guests. “It allows everyone to

A Sensitive Repurposing

The design of a new Parish House was part of a broader, \$12 million construction project that also included the renovation of the adjacent 19th century Sexton’s Cottage. The final phase of the project began with the demolition of the existing 1955 Parish House addition in August 2019. Construction on the three-story addition that would replace it began just a few weeks later and was completed in Spring 2021.

“Paramount during the design and construction of this new facility was the preservation of the historical nature of the existing Parish House and Cottage to integrate it into all of the building’s magnificent new spaces,” said Carter Young, who worked closely with the construction manager, design team, church staff and committee members.

It is what the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia would call a “sensitive repurposing” of the space, while maintaining the church’s historical and architectural legacy. The PAGP recognized the achievement of the delicate and tasteful balance between preservation and practicality that the planning committee was able to achieve by bestowing a Grand Jury Award on the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer Parish House in 2022.



Preserve & Repurpose



be able to use that space instead of going outside the parish for a facility,” Woods said. “It can be used for receptions, funerals, weddings, and many kinds of social gatherings. And we are a parish that loves to get together. It’s really a big part of our personality as a parish.”

Two moments from the planning process stand out to Vanderveen. The first was when architect and parishioner Bob Nalls pronounced a succinct judgment on the future of the 1950’s wing of the old Parish House: then slated merely for renovation. “If it was a horse,” Nalls declared, “I’d shoot it.” For Vanderveen, it was an ah-ha moment. “It was like, okay, that’s what we need to do,” he said. “We have to move in a new direction.”

The second revelation came when parishioner John Fry, president of Drexel University and chair of the church’s capital campaign advisory committee, delivered an eloquent articulation of the power of anchor

institutions. Such organizations and their built environment, he noted, have the potential to exert a gravitational force that pulls the surrounding community in.

Ken Garner, director of communications and stewardship at The Redeemer for the past 18 years, credits the project’s high-functioning operating committee for its singular focus on creating the physical structure that would foster inviting, warm, and inclusive social interaction.

“Before I came to work here,” he said, “I knew that Redeemer had this Main Line, upper-crust, stodgy reputation, but I quickly found that it was anything but that. It is a very welcoming community, and it’s striving to become even more so. Everyone has been on board with that direction -- which is very much in line with the direction of The Episcopal Church as being open and welcoming to all -- and this building is an outgrowth of years of work to accomplish that.”

The fact that the project came in on time and on budget, said Woods, “is a testament to the strength of Reverend Vanderveen’s leadership.”

An integral part of Vanderveen’s leadership strategy was to keep the neighboring community apprised of developments and delays throughout the construction process. Garner, who served on the project’s operating committee, diligently documented building progress through a weekly slide show posted on The Redeemer website, and crafted strategic communications based on unfolding developments. By being “in the room where it happened,” he said, “it made a huge difference in how and what we communicated.”

Neighbors were given information on how to reach someone – usually Vanderveen -- if there were issues or problems, and as the project neared completion, the parish also accelerated outreach efforts

to members of the community, inviting people to walk the campus, explore the new building, ride bikes, walk dogs, or stroll through the churchyard. Banners were strategically placed to encourage visitors to spend time in the church courtyard during the Covid lockdowns, or to attend events that marked progress and completion of the new Parish House.

“We’re aware that a religious association can be perceived as an obstacle,” read one message sent to more than 350 neighboring households. “It’s important to us that you know that you’re welcome to attend any of our programs, events, or worship. Children from the neighborhood sing in our choirs. Students from the community participate in our Youth Group. Individuals join with us in tending to those in need. God is generous, not exclusive.”

Fostering Interaction

That text represents a message that cannot be stressed enough, according to Vanderveen. And it was a message that was clearly received. Increasingly, community members visiting the church campus are seen through the expansive windows of Parish House, using the space for socialization, recreation, and contemplation. Strollers of both the two- and four-legged variety are encouraged to enjoy the grounds, taking advantage of a fountain at the beginning of the paved walk that offers two distribution levels: one at human level and one at leash level. Even members of the construction crew have commented on the open and welcoming feel of the new structure. “Are you sure this is a church building?” one contractor asked Vanderveen, “because it doesn’t feel like one.”

Not long after the Parish House was completed, Vanderveen looked out his rectory window and saw a group of some 15 people riding bicycles in the extensive, newly-paved parking lot. After some time, the cyclists gathered and took a group photo on the Parish House steps.

“They weren’t parishioners, but they clearly felt comfortable here, and that’s how we want our community to feel and how we want them to use these spaces,” he said. “Regardless of religious affiliation, everyone is welcome to come here for worship, for fellowship, education, or just appreciate the sense of beauty and possibility here. Our doors are open to everyone.”



An Affirming Place

“Come and see,” Jesus says to the disciples in John 1:39, encouraging those curious about His teachings to take the next step by learning more, and following Him. For the past nine months, the LGBTQIA+ Committee has been helping members of our diocesan community do just that: gather together to explore the intersections of faith and identity, and consider how our church and denomination can create opportunities for LGBTQIA+ people to grow their spiritual lives in a safe and affirming environment. The progress they’ve made in carving out a space for LGBTQIA+

people and issues has been deeply impactful. “Every member of the LGBTQIA+ Committee brings gifts to the work we are doing to spread Christ’s message of compassion and acceptance,” said Alexander Ames, chair of the committee and a member of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Roxborough. “We are an ambitious community: we envision a world in which people of all genders and sexual orientations feel they have a home in the Church. If that vision speaks to you, then please come and join us!”

To get involved, contact LGBTQIA@diopa.org.

“Christ’s message of compassion and acceptance”



A Home in Church



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

All Saints' Torresdale has rallied around the cause of "neighbors helping neighbors." That commitment led the church to welcome young adults from across the country for a summer of teaching and neighborhood volunteerism. The work focused primarily on city programs that addressed food insecurity – a critical issue that was exacerbated by the Covid crisis.

Through a partnership with YouthWorks Inc., each week, a group of young adults arrived at All Saints' for a week of service to the community. The students worked side by side with community partners to help plant and maintain vegetable gardens throughout different sections of the city, as well as provide much-needed care for children in the underserved North Philadelphia neighborhoods.

While in Philadelphia for the week, the young adults and their chaperones were housed at All Saints', sleeping in every available area of the building, including the sanctuary and chapel. Every Wednesday evening, the community was invited for a free dinner that was provided by volunteers of All Saints'. During the dinners, the youth discussed the impact of their work and how the mission experience deepened their relationship with Christ.

During down time, the youth volunteers also had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with popular area destinations, such as Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, the Philadelphia Art Museum (and Rocky statue), Magic Gardens, Penn's Landing, and several cheesesteak shops in and around the city.

Young Community Partners



The Rev. Jay Walton, second from left, with people from YouthWorks.





Service



“Do Something”

The diocese joins with other faith leaders across the country in addressing the critical issue of gun violence.

Raise Awareness

As a licensed clinical social worker and Canon for Mission for The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, Toney Smyth has had more than her share of difficult conversations. Smyth serves as a liaison to a number of groups dedicated to addressing racism, human trafficking, homelessness, addictions and disability issues. Perhaps the most emotionally wrenching conversations are the ones she has with victims of senseless gun violence.

“The effects,” she said, “last a lifetime. And it’s an issue that affects all of us. It’s not a ‘Black problem’ or an ‘inner city

problem.’ There is no place, no zip code, that isn’t impacted by suicide, for example, or domestic violence, or school shootings. Those issues impact everyone and are made exponentially worse by access to guns.”

When she came to the diocese in 2018, much of the role that she and fellow clergy played was in addressing grief in the aftermath of a shooting. “We did a lot with walks or visual displays or memorials – like t-shirts draped over a cross to represent the number of victims,” she said. “But now we’ve shifted more to action and prevention.”

Retired school teacher Alice Brown echoes that sentiment. A member of Calvary-St. Augustine Episcopal in West Philadelphia, she is leading the Diocesan Gun Violence Commission, which was formed roughly eight years ago. Although she is involved in a number of civic groups and community causes, she considers the issue of gun violence as among the most critical.

“I think of what it was like when I was a kid and you could go out and run around and play,” she said. “These poor kids can’t do that. They can’t even be on their porch because the parents are worried about guns. And I think about how gun violence affects everyone. For every person shot, there are hundreds of people who are impacted.”

Brown and fellow worshipers across the diocese have participated in marches and public memorials that raise awareness while honoring the victims of gun violence, but she recognizes that the impact of these events is limited. “People come, and yes, they are touched,” she said. “But then they want to know, what are you doing about this? What’s the next step?”

Understandably, many Americans feel helpless in the face of the specter of increasing gun violence. Despite overwhelming and growing support for stricter gun laws (68 percent of those polled, according to a June 2022 Morning Consult/ Politic poll), effective legislation has stalled, or been thwarted, for decades. And often, the discussion about a legislative response quickly fades, until the next mass shooting forces the topic back in the spotlight, only to be met with a predictably partisan response.

What role can The Episcopal Church play?

That question is at the root of broad efforts across the country, and within The Diocese of Pennsylvania, where Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez has identified effectively addressing gun violence as a moral imperative.

In a message to the diocesan community this summer, following the shooting of 10 African Americans by a white gunman in a Buffalo, New York grocery store, Gutiérrez encouraged his parishioners to first engage. “We follow Jesus Christ and are called to walk in His light,” he wrote. “As Christians, we carry the name of Christ; and we are expected to give everything. Once again, this is our cross, and we must carry it. Entering into the pain of racism and violence is the cross with our names written upon it.”

“It’s not about Democrat or Republican. I could care less. It’s about people, and helping people feel safe in their own communities. It’s about the people who are grieving for the victims of gun violence. We can’t just give it lip service.”


- Retired school teacher Alice Brown, who is leading the Diocesan Gun Violence Commission

Moral Imperative

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they are the children of God.”

- Jesus (Matthew 5:9)





Innovative Programs

He also implored parishioners not to lose hope, which would be understandable in the face of seemingly unrelenting violence. “I believe in the goodness of humanity,” he said. “The first step is to change how we treat and view one another. There is no ‘other.’ Every moment of the day, we have the choice of how we encounter our siblings in the world. We must choose community over division, listening over argument, understanding over attacks, light over darkness, peace over violence, and love over hate—one person at a time, one loving act at a time.”

Joining with Episcopal leaders across the country, Bishop Gutiérrez is one of three conveners of Bishops United Against Gun Violence (BUAGV). With a goal of advocating policies and legislation to reduce the number of people in the United States killed or wounded by gunfire, the group has collectively employed a number of innovative, community-based programs. These include everything from lobbying for stricter gun laws and penning editorials, to hosting blood drives to help victims of gun violence. The group also provides a critical space for processing the grief and trauma that results from gun violence by organizing public gatherings, healing ceremonies, and commemorative events.

At a live-streamed event, Bishop Gutiérrez specifically spoke on Resolution B003, which addresses “ghost guns” -- or untraceable firearms -- and the dangers posed by the capacity to produce firearms through 3-D printing, and Resolution B007. The “Investment in Community Violence Intervention to Prevent Gun Violence” resolution was proposed by Gutiérrez, endorsed by Bishops Perry and Douglas. It calls for the investment in evidence-based community violence intervention programs and identifies a series of strategies that address gun violence as a public health issue. The strategies include improving physical environments, strengthening anti-violence social norms, engaging and supporting youth, reducing substance abuse, mitigating financial stress, reducing the harmful effects of the justice process, and confronting the proliferation of guns.

A Call to Action

The diocese recently put forth a detailed “Call to Action to End Gun Violence,” characterizing it as “our obligation as the Church to show all of God’s children they are worthy – even one life lost in unacceptable.” The diocese is comprised of 135 churches covering five counties, the report stated, and “that is more than enough to make change.”

The detailed plan set forth by the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania focuses on three key areas: legislative change, church empowerment, and future efforts. All involve encouraging members of the faith to actively engage on what the report describes as a national crisis and bipartisan issue.

Many of the suggested action points involve putting pressure on legislators through letter-writing campaigns to support raising the age for sale of automatic weapons to 21, making gun trafficking a federal crime, expanding time for background checks for gun purchasers, restricting sales of semi-automatic rifles, banning sales of large-capacity ammunition magazines and supporting “Red Flag” legislation, which would allow the courts to temporarily seize firearms from anyone believed to be a danger to themselves or others.

A key component lies in recognizing the role of mental health, and diocesan clergy and outreach ministry leaders

are encouraged to take Mental Health First Aid training to recognize important warning signs, such as suicidal ideations and depression. Training sessions will be held throughout the diocese and within the broader community, and will be offered in both in-person and virtual formats. Programming geared specifically toward youth has already begun, with a series of events scheduled through Fall 2022.

Other community events can help to engage and galvanize support for broader efforts. These include gun buy-back/turn-in events with community groups such as Ceasefire, local police departments or Mothers Fighting Against Gun Violence. Earlier, the diocese received a donation of an anvil and forge that can be used at such events to help turn discarded guns into art, jewelry or garden tools. In that effort, the diocese is partnering with RAW Tools Philly, which will help train

people in how to decommission a gun through a five- to ten-minute process, or organize the event. Such an event has already been held at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, which recently joined with five churches in the state in hosting Brian Miller, the executive director of Heeding God’s Call, a faith-based movement dedicated to ending gun violence.

Future efforts will involve examining new ways in which the diocese can take concrete and meaningful action, such as ongoing collaborations with local schools that will focus on mental health and at-risk youth. These efforts will build on existing partnerships with Depaul Catholic High School, the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services, and the city’s school district.

The diocese will also be creating a community review team that will be comprised of representatives

from local law enforcement, parole officers, probation officers, school police, and social services. Building on a model that has been highly effective in reducing gun violence in Oakland, Calif., by nearly half, the team will review recent cases and identify potential high-risk situations. By intervening with the appropriate resources and support, gun violence can be hopefully prevented.

Experts agree that the problem is so complex, and so deeply entrenched in partisan political views, that gaining consensus of effective action is a considerable challenge. “But we can’t give up,” Brown said. “It’s not about Democrat or Republican. I could care less. It’s about people, and helping people feel safe in their own communities. It’s about the people who are grieving for the victims of gun violence. We can’t just give it lip service. We need to figure this out and do something.”

What can I do to help?

Sign up to receive alerts from the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which coordinates efforts to contact members of Congress and urge them to pass legislation addressing the crisis of gun violence and other issues.

- Participate in a blood drive, which are hosted by the American Red Cross and held at churches throughout the year. Blood donations will help meet a growing need in the country, since gunshot victims require an average of 10 times more blood than other trauma patients.
- Learn about gun safety, beginning with the safe storage of weapons. Please check with your parish offices to see if free gun locks are available. More information about gun safety is available through endfamilyfire.org, everytown.org and besmartforkids.org.

Harvesting Sunlight

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church joins a growing number of churches nationwide that see both economic and faith-based benefits to investing in solar power.

News of climate-related disasters seem to be inescapable. Wildfires, floods, droughts, hurricanes, and tornadoes seem to occur on an increasingly frequent basis across the country, leaving communities devastated and social support networks strained. But while politicians debate the causes and solutions – or whether climate change even exists – The Episcopal Church has underscored its commitment to honoring and protecting God's creation through the Genesis Covenant.

Adopted in 2009 at the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, the covenant serves as “a public commitment by the Church to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

from every facility it maintains by a minimum of 50 percent within a decade.”

“At St. Thomas', we are blessed to worship and serve God amid the beauty of God's creation,” said Rev. Emily Richards, who came to St. Thomas' Whitemarsh in early 2022. “The solar farm is a tangible sign of our commitment to the Genesis Covenant and our work to care for God's creation so that the generations who come after us may continue to experience God's goodness and abundance in our small corner of the world.”

Viewing protection of the earth as a moral imperative and a vehicle for expressing and honoring God is a message that resonated with members of the St. Thomas' parish, who already embraced sustainable practices such as recycling, composting, maintaining a community garden, and incorporating energy-

saving LED lighting in buildings. But clean energy enthusiasts within the parish felt that the timing was right to consider more significant strategic investments.

An earlier, successful Capital Campaign allowed the Church to invest and build on the 48-acre lush and leafy campus in Fort Washington, Pa. Projects that were the outgrowth of that campaign included the Emily Norris Carey Learning Center and chapel, which were part of the renovations and additions to the church's Parish House that was erected in 1956. That project included the modernization of the building, an update of the MacColl Auditorium, and addition of school and meeting space. While the completion of the project in late 2016 greatly increased the capacity of the church to serve its parishioners and the surrounding community, it also presented additional maintenance and energy needs.

“When considering how to manage these escalating costs, the Finance Committee asked, ‘What is St. Thomas' doing to help itself?’” wrote Pam McKernan, leader of the St. Thomas' Solar Task Force, in the church's 2020 Annual Report. “An idea was proposed to investigate using a small portion of the ‘Back Ten’ to install solar panels.”

On paper, the economic imperative was inarguable. At that point, McKernan said, St. Thomas' had nine PECO (formerly Philadelphia Electric Company) accounts that drew more than 400,000 Wh/year. “PECO costs rates vary for each account, but assuming an ‘aggregated’ rate base of 12 cents/kWh, St. Thomas' spends almost \$50,000 per year on electricity. Figuring a 3 percent increase annually in energy costs, in 25 years, St. Thomas' can expect to spend almost \$100,000 a year (same usage, no additional/fewer buildings) and over \$1.8 million on electricity for the entire 25 years.”

Incentivized by those calculations, the church leaders assembled a Solar Task Force to review their options. A request for proposal (RFP) was issued after an extensive due diligence process that reviewed available options, and Mechanicsville, Pa.-based Solar Renewable Energy LLC was selected. “SR Energy is a local company, has a long history of success demonstrating a sustainable business model, and was able to be a tax equity investor,” McKernan explained.

With a structured funding approach that included an initial down payment, a Five-Year Power Service Agreement and outright purchase commitment in the sixth year, tax incentives were maximized while payments were balanced. “The savings over 25 years is likely to be in excess of \$800,000,” she wrote. “These savings can be directed to much-needed building maintenance and the general operating budget. This solar panel installation is a key step to making St. Thomas' more sustainable for generations to come.”

Funding for the solar farm came through both large and small donations, according to Tamika Gerhardt, business administrator for St. Thomas' parish. The parish was able to raise more than \$136,000 prior to installation of the solar farm. To continue to raise funds for the Year 6 buyout, the church announced a Panel Dedication Campaign that allows individuals to contribute \$200 to the cause and dedicate a panel to a

Solar Power at St. Thomas' BY THE NUMBERS

754

Number of solar panels that were installed on the St. Thomas' campus

6

Number of rows in the panel configuration, which involves 29 strings of 26 modules

405

Wattage capability of the bi-facial solar panels, which have the capacity to capture sunlight on both the front and back of each panel, increasing efficiency

9

Number of buildings on the St. Thomas' campus that can be partially powered by the solar installation

42

Number of households with typical electricity use that is equivalent to production of electricity by the St. Thomas' solar panel farm

1

Number of parishes in The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania that have opted for solar power, out of 135 churches

20

Percent of funds raised for the project by members of the St. Thomas' Parish

100

Percentage of the church's energy use that the solar panel installation will ultimately offset

Dedicate a Panel

loved one. Names will be included on a permanent solar array display that will be erected on the church campus. Efforts have already raised close to \$16,000 in support of this project, Gerhardt said.

The solar panel field is nestled in the northwest corner of the church campus, on roughly 1 acre of land that was not being used. Flat, with a southern exposure, the area presented an ideal location for the configuration of six rows of bi-facial panels that had the capacity to capture sunlight from both the front and back of each of the 754 panels, said Steve Crimmel, sales director for SR Energy.

"We typically do a physical assessment and utilize a software program that allows us to see an aerial view of the property and

its particular land contours," he explained. "Sometimes the client has a strong idea about the location they want, and in this case, it was an ideal spot."

The process began with church approval in 2019. By November 2021, the solar panel farm was fully installed and operational. Since the physical installation took place during Covid, opportunities to engage the parish were limited. Progress videos showing the clearing of the location and installation of the panels were posted to the church website, keeping parishioners informed and engaged, Gerhardt said.

Just a year into the project, the economic incentives are considerable. "About 85 percent of the total electricity needs by

St. Thomas' buildings will be met with the installed system, based on projected usage and typical costs," Crimmel said. The church will assume full ownership of the solar panels by 2025, allowing for significant savings on the church campus' energy expenses.

The environmental concerns present perhaps a more compelling incentive. The St. Thomas' solar system generates clean and sustainable electricity without emissions that contribute to global warming. Each

year, the St. Thomas' solar system has the potential to eliminate the release of 654,589 pounds of CO2 emissions, save 687 barrels of oil, or offset 1.6 rail cars of coal. In total, this solar energy system will reduce St. Thomas' greenhouse gas footprint by 38 percent – a substantial step toward meeting the 50 percent reduction target.

Whether it is motivated by costs, the environment, or a blend of both, solar industry experts expect an increase in institutions deciding to go

solar. "Between the unpredictability of energy costs and the incentives recently put in by the federal government, we've seen a real increase in interest," Crimmel said. "Either people are already looking into it, or they will be soon."

Should we consider going solar?

While an increasing number of institutions, businesses, and homeowners are considering at least partially converting to solar power, there are some considerations. The initial investment in purchasing a system can be high, as can the cost of storing solar energy. The system is weather-dependent and therefore less efficient on cloudy and rainy days. And highly efficient systems – such as the one installed on the 48-acre campus of St. Thomas Whitemarsh – can require a significant amount of physical space.

Still, the potential to access free and readily abundant energy while reducing energy costs and protecting the environment often override those concerns. More information that could be helpful in formulating a decision to go solar can be found at the following sources:

- Visit the website of Interfaith Power and Light, a network of 40 independent state affiliates that engages faith communities in environmental stewardship and climate action. State-specific actions and resources can be found at interfaithpowerandlight.org.
- Learn more about new clean technologies, integrated energy systems, and scientific breakthroughs in this area by going to the website of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) at nrel.gov.
- Research federal and state solar programs that can reduce the cost of installing a solar system at cleanenergyassociation.org. Some energy companies that are interested in reducing demand on the energy grid are offering credits through the Pennsylvania Power Payback Program.
- To assess costs in any zip code in Pennsylvania, go to the free, online solar energy calculator at solar-estimate.ecowatch.com.

Efficient Energy



Navajoland Youth Pilgrimission

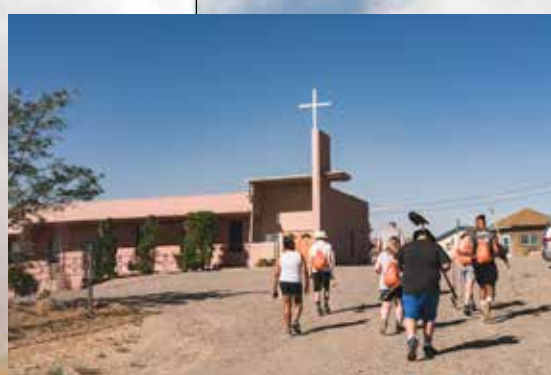
“Our journey with them will be more than funding or a companion relationship,” said Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez. It will be “an actual life-giving relationship.” That relationship with The Episcopal Church in Navajoland continued this summer as youth from our diocese embarked on a “pilgrimission” to several sites in the diocese’s three regions - San Juan, Southeast and Utah.

Youth Journey



“Our journey with them will be more than funding or a companion relationship.”

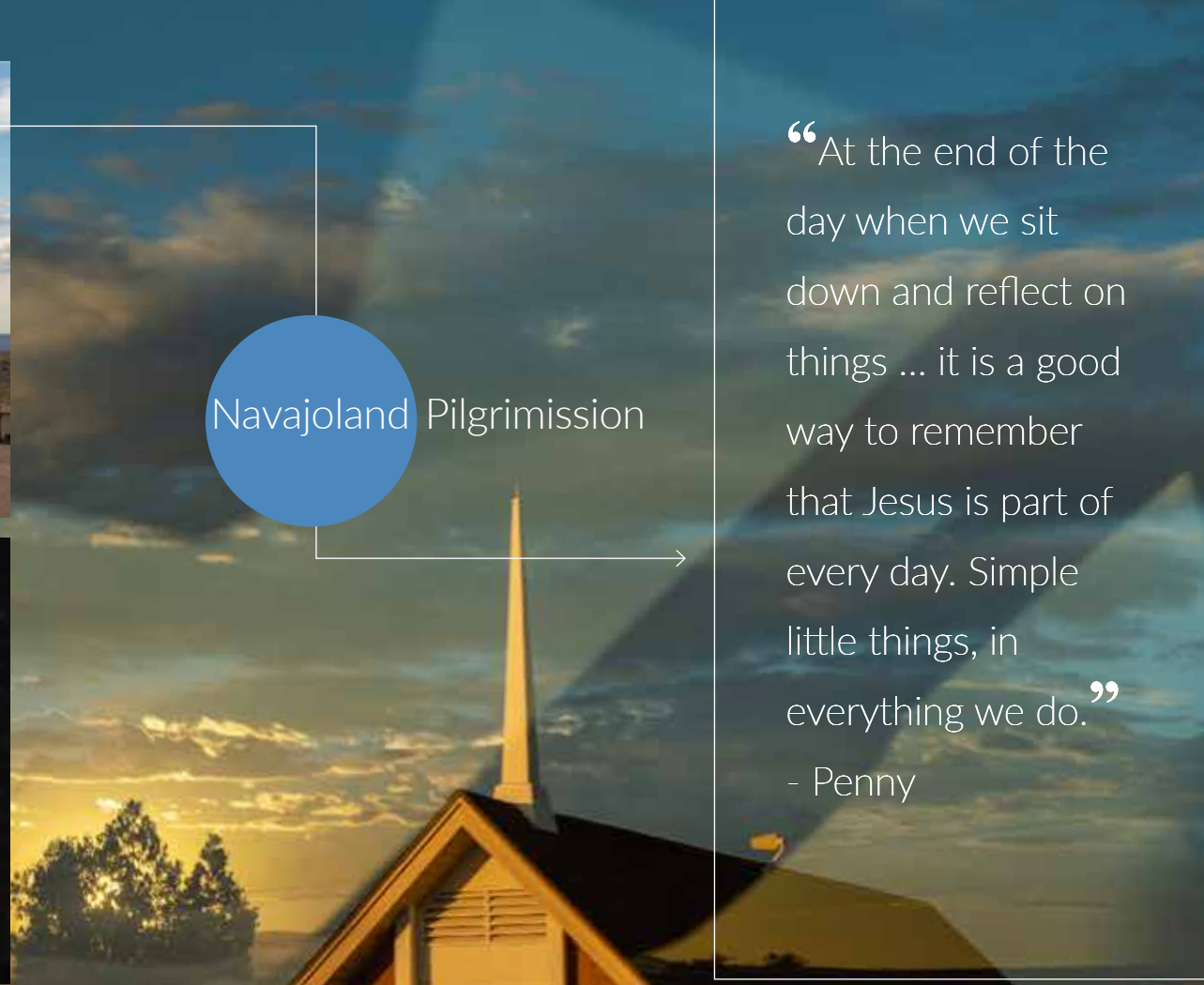
- Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez



“I think this trip changed me because I have become more confident in myself as a person ... and more confident in my faith.”
- Archie



Life - Giving



Navajoland Pilgrimission

“At the end of the day when we sit down and reflect on things ... it is a good way to remember that Jesus is part of every day. Simple little things, in everything we do.”

- Penny



Home Away From Home



Chase Castle

“What we are doing is really unusual because we are supporting students interested in refining their musical skills,” said Castle. A current PhD student and Benjamin Franklin Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, Castle jumped at the offer to work at the church. “It is a fantastic fit. As a practicing Episcopalian, I adore the church. The people and the music are fantastic.”

St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, Hamilton Village, sits in the center of University of Pennsylvania’s campus, but is also convenient to 20 other colleges and universities in the city. The church’s Choral Scholars Program, initially funded by a diocesan grant, seeks to capitalize on student singing talent by providing compensation to students selected for the program. Each year, 4-5 students are selected for the program from audio applications and then in-person interviews. Students serve at least one academic year. Choir practice is held before service on Sunday, making it easy for students with busy weekday schedules. According to St. Mary’s Choirmaster and Organist, Chase Castle, the program has also increased the amount of student volunteers as well. “Even if the choral scholar positions are filled, we see students wanting to sing with us.”

“It’s important that smaller churches and congregations have access to this kind of worship.”

Renée Olo

I am from an Estonian background and we really place a lot of emphasis on music. I kind of fell in love with Anglican choral music when I was at university. There is a very satisfying and beautiful repertoire. I was in Anglican choirs for five years there, and I found the music so beautiful, so complex, so wonderfully grounded in history, and I really wanted to keep with it. I’m not of that background, but singing in choirs in the Anglican tradition has become a really important and meaningful part of my life. It’s so beautiful. And there is this wonderful inter-generational element of it as well. The music is so close to my heart, and this program at St. Mary’s has been able to sustain me.





“I grew up surrounded by music. My grandfather was the organist and choir master of the Anglican Church in Nigeria and my dad followed suit after his retirement. I was brought up constantly appreciating music.”

Tise Ogunmesa

When I walked into St. Mary's church for the first time, I remember sitting in the middle of the pew and just started singing out loud. Because of the choral program, I'm around people in the church so much more often and I feel much more connected. I've been integrated into this community and it feels like having a second family. It's really been a home away from home for me.



Pilgrimage to Holy Land

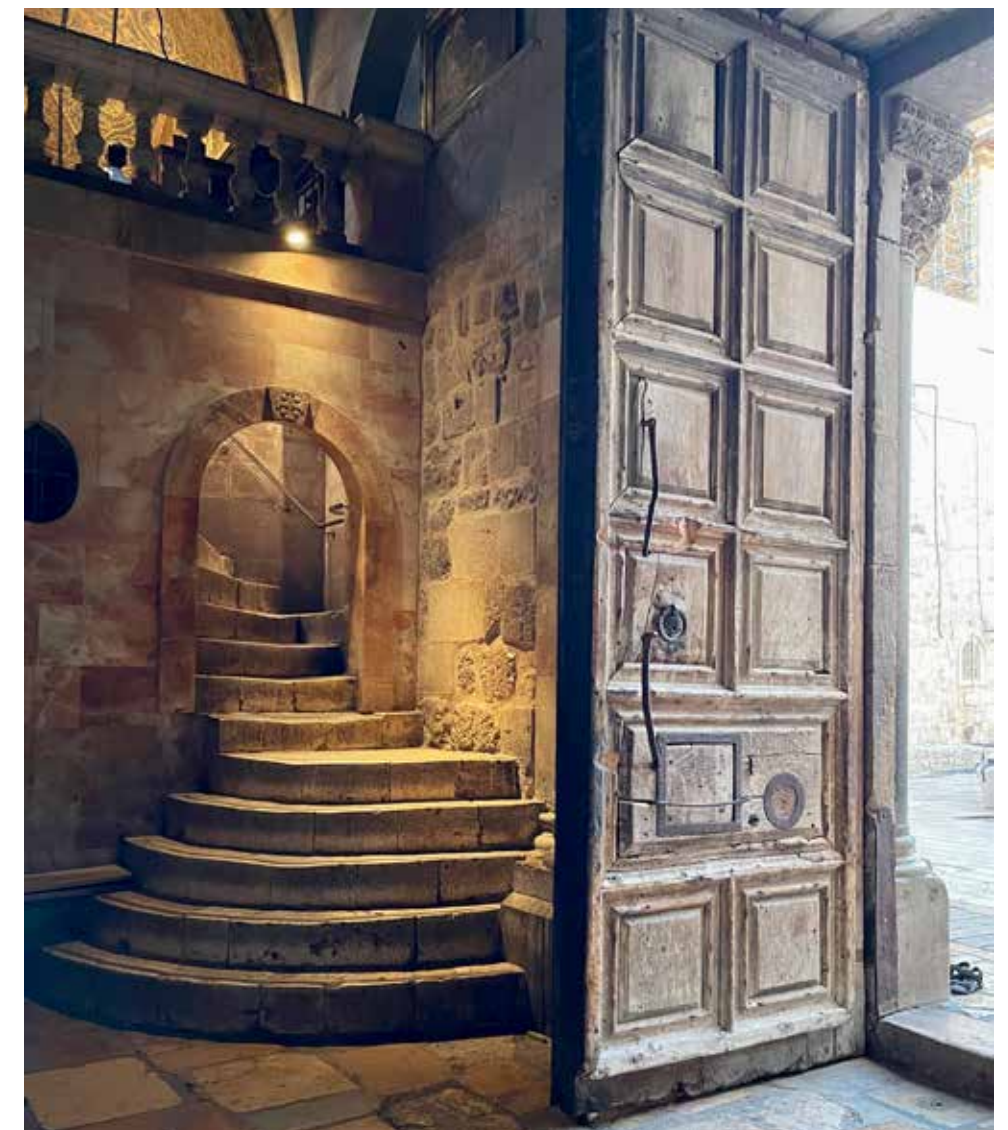
Twice this year, members of the diocese retraced the footsteps of Jesus in Jerusalem, Israel, and Palestine. There, they encountered the Gospel in stone and flesh, visiting the sights that mark the story of our faith and the people who keep that faith alive in the Holy Land today. They also visited the people and ministries within the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, with whom we have a covenant relationship.



“I knew I had to do this.”
- Marty



Covenant Relationship



Compass Rose Society



In 2020, Bishop Gutiérrez was named president of the Compass Rose Society, which works closely with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion Office in empowering God's work through the Anglican Communion. Founded in 1994 at the Old Palace in Canterbury, the Society has become an important financial resource to the Anglican Communion and a valuable voice for supporting the work of maintaining and improving unity in the Communion.

Since its founding, the Compass Rose Society has donated over \$12 million to support the mission of the Anglican Communion. Some of those funds have supported the reconciliation and communication initiatives of the Anglican Consultative Council; the Princess Basma Centre for Children with Disabilities in the Diocese of Jerusalem; the Green Anglicans; and many hospitals in Gaza and Nablus.

Members of the Compass Rose Society come from nine countries and are comprised of individuals, parishes, chapters, dioceses, and institutions. Members have rare opportunities to participate in Communion Visits to Anglican churches around the world; meet church, political and governmental leaders; and travel in the company of the secretary general of the Anglican Communion. To learn more about membership, please reach out to the Rev. Jeremiah Mustered, jeremiah@stpaulsoaks.org.

Valuable Voice



“Together, we are
daring to dream.

United by the love of Jesus
and with His presence,
we are fearlessly bringing a
new church into being.”

- Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez



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