Don’t go it alone.

People ask me about having a theme for each issue of CRUX.

Why don’t you have one on the theme of (insert topic here)? they ask, offering suggestions for where I could roundup some related material. Or they ask, What’s the theme of this issue? wondering how to focus an article they’re writing for it, or because they’re curious.

I keep saying, I don’t pick themes.

I do plan the content. As the editor, I work with the bishops and others to share my early thoughts about possible interviews and subjects, get their comments and other suggestions, and generate a backup list in case initial plans don’t work out. I tell them also when they ask, No, I don’t have a theme.

And yet by the time each issue gets to the printer, you can find a theme. I don’t attribute this to anyone but the work of the Holy Spirit.

Looking over this issue as it has come together, I see two themes that have emerged: Partnerships, and going into the world. You can’t go it alone — and go, you must. Doesn’t this sound familiar? It comes up so often in different contexts here in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

These themes aren’t limited to Christians. Digital communication, so widely embraced, gives us new ways and reasons to partner and network and join global communities.

Matt Poland writes about strategic partnerships and Hilary Greer about discovering partnerships along the way. Two postulants write about being sent into northwestern Connecticut to find Jesus. A photo essay highlights a three-way partnership that sends medical teams into northern Nigeria. A priest and a doctor write about how partnerships can help support healthy brain development in children. A Pakistan-born priest now in Shelton shares stories of how listening to your neighbors can be transformative. Our bishops write about apostleship and a call to “go.” Our new Presiding Bishop, featured on the back cover at the time his election was confirmed, ended his first sermon as PB-elect with the words, “Now, go!”

You get the point.

Don’t go alone, and go you must.

It’s nice to have a silent partner on the editorial board.
Called to be disciples and apostles
In a changing world and church

Ian T. Douglas

Scholars and advocates of the missional church movement (those who advocate that the Body of Christ should be primarily about participating in the mission on God in the world and not maintenance of an institution) are wont to point out that the churches in Western industrialized nations are living on the cusp of the end of Christendom.

And what is Christendom?

Christendom is the all-encompassing social, political, cultural and economic system that presupposes the church is central to the life of a people and nation. For example the established or “state church,” such as we Anglicans knew in our mother Church of England or as the Puritan/Congregational church was in Connecticut from 1662 until 1818, held the church as the warp and woof of the social fabric in which we lived. We need only consider blue laws that kept businesses closed on Sunday morning or the privileged place of churches on the main streets and greens of the towns and villages to see the privileged and exalted place the church has historically enjoyed in our society.

But all of this is changing as the United States, and particularly our corner of New England, becomes both increasingly secular and multi-religious. A 2012 Gallup Poll on the most “irreligious” states in the United States notes that New England leads the pack with Vermont #1, New Hampshire #2, Maine #3, Massachusetts #4, Rhode Island #6 and Connecticut #9. We cannot pretend that the age that placed the church at the center of our public and private lives is alive and well. People are no longer flocking to church on a Sunday morning because it is the right thing to do, no matter how attractive we try to make our worship and programs. Business as usual is not working.

Randy Ferebee, in his book Cultivating the Missional Church: New Soil for Growing Vestries and Leaders, adroitly describes the changing contours of the church as we confront the realities of post-Christendom. He says that if the church is to have a future in the post-Christendom world it needs to move: from the center to the margin, from majority to minority status, from being settlers to sojourners, from privilege to plurality, from an emphasis on control to witness, from maintenance to mission, and from being an institution to that of a movement.

These are aspirational goals that are not easy for those of us who have grown up in the 20th century church to inhabit.
The church as we have known it thus must adapt in the wake of the end of Christendom or it will die. The stories we have told ourselves about what it means to be a Christian, the “narratives of the Eurotribal church” as described by missional church thinker Alan Roxburgh, need to be reworked. We can no longer rest in our European colonial legacy as the established church. We need a new narrative of who we are as the Body of Christ after Christendom.

The new narrative, however, will not be handed down from on high. It will not be constructed by any “Task Force on Reimagining the Episcopal Church” or developed by any strategic planning initiative. The future contours of the church will emerge as we follow Jesus in new ways and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, try on many different experiments in God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation.

Our developing, post-Christendom narrative will be discovered as we live the ancient, pre-Christendom vocations as disciples and apostles in the world in new ways.

The vocation to discipleship and apostleship is given to us in baptism. In baptism we are both joined to our creator God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and sent out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s mission. Dying to our old self in the waters of baptism and rising to new life in Jesus, we own anew our calling as followers of Jesus – disciples of Jesus in a new age. Sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever, we are sent into the world as missionaries – apostles of the mission of God. Baptism is all about becoming disciples and apostles in the here and now.

The Baptismal Covenant is an invitation to own our vocation as disciples and apostles. In the first three questions of the Covenant, we are asked: do we believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we answer using the words of the Apostles’ Creed, we affirm our calling to be disciples of, followers of, God in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The five post-creedal questions that follow are about how we are to be apostles in the world, sent out in God’s mission. As we promise, with God’s help, to live lives dedicated to worship, forgiveness, evangelism, service, and justice-making, we own our vocation to be about the saving work of the Triune God: we join in God’s work of restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

In the promises of the Baptismal Covenant we own our calling to be disciples and apostles of God’s mission in a changing world and church.

The future contours of the church will emerge as we follow Jesus in new ways and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, try on many different experiments in God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation.

In the Episcopal Church in Connecticut we are indeed experiencing the realities of the end of Christendom. And, by and large, we are embracing the changes that Post-Christendom is bringing forth. Relying on the leading of the Holy Spirit, we are increasingly trying on experiments as followers of Jesus and missionaries in the new world.

Our new narrative of the post-Christendom Church has not yet been fully articulated. There is much work ahead of us.

What is needed as we move forward into God’s changing world as a changing church is greater formation as disciples and apostles in God’s mission. The future is pregnant with possibilities. Lay and ordained leaders in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut are already actively engaged in imagining, and trying on, new ways by which we all can be formed and resourced as disciples and apostles.

Imagine a new portfolio for our camp and conference center, Camp Washington, to become an expanded year-round resource for the formation of disciples in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. And imagine further Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford becoming a resource for encouraging experiments in God’s mission across the parishes and worshipping communities of our diocese.

Thanks be to God that a newly engaged Board of Camp Washington with new staff leadership, and the vision of the Cathedral Discernment Task Force, have already begun to recognize Camp Washington and the Cathedral as key resources to help all of us live more fully our baptismal vocation as disciples and apostles.

The post-Christendom future is already here in Connecticut. We all are called to be disciples and apostles in God’s mission in this changing world and church.

Two years ago I had the privilege of traveling to South Dakota with a confirmation class from the Episcopal Church in Connecticut’s “East of the [Connecticut] River” collaboration. Young people from Hebron, Vernon, and Manchester joined me and the Rev. Perry Perrine for a transformational spiritual experience learning about and participating in some of the Lakota traditions. We learned about sweat lodges and dream catchers. We heard stories of struggle, mistreatment and loss. We witnessed some of the ongoing challenges for the Lakota people. We could feel the strength and commitment of people who were living into hope and new life.

When I encounter new traditions or cultures, I ask myself, “How can what I am learning inform my Christian journey? How can the teachings and practices of others deepen my own spiritual practice?”

When I learned about how the Lakota pair the four primary colors to the four cardinal directions that make up the medicine wheel as a way to tap into some of their awareness of the world, I began linking this learning to my own walk with God. I began to research what the four colors meant and found that there are a variety of interpretations about what the colors mean and what they represent. One website I visited listed several definitions from different people and tribal bands of the Lakota, each slightly different from each other.

One particular interpretation noted that:
Black for the west. It speaks of Earth and also links to images of body and inner reflection.
Yellow for the east. It speaks of Air and is an image of beginnings.
White for the north. It speaks of Fire. Images of spirit and cleansing also inform this color.
Red for the south. It speaks of Water and also draws on images of change, family and growth.

I began to wonder how I might use the colors linked to the four elements of earth, air, fire and water as tools to frame how I think about my Christian faith. How could they inform and deepen my Christian spirituality and in particular my relationship with Jesus Christ? I am very aware that I have expanded and extrapolated ideas from the Lakota people that do not necessarily speak of their truths, but they have given me a tool to tap into my personal prayer practices and for that frame I am grateful.

Earth — Black
I heard this as a call to be grounded in my faith. It pulled me to a place of being grounded in my relationship with Jesus Christ and deeply connected to God. When I begin to pray, I am very intentional about grounding both my feet in the earth and breathing deeply. This practice helps me to ground my prayer in my relationship with Jesus Christ, taking the time to feel connected to God’s profound love. God became flesh in Jesus Christ in the incarnation. God treasures earth and our humanity so much that Jesus came to earth to walk among us, offering us love and compassion and calling us to do the same.

Air — Yellow
I found myself thinking about breath, wind and movement. I hear God calling us to move from our place of groundedness to “Go”. Go out into the world to engage with the world. Go. Taking our grounding in Jesus into the world to share it with others, to move into the neighborhoods and communities where God calling is calling us to Go. Take Jesus and go be with others, listen to those who you find there. Go.

These two elements resonate with much of what Ian and I have been talking about this past year as we invite people to explore both their discipleship and apostleship. To recognize the ways they and their church community have sought to be disciples of Jesus through learning, studying and discerning God’s Word. To think about the ways God is sending us out as apostles into the world to be instruments of the Good News, being with the people we meet and sharing Christ’s love.

Fire — White
Fire is what transforms one element to another. Fire is what changes the nature and properties of the element it touches. Water turns to steam, bread turns to toast and if the fire is the Spirit, bread becomes the Body of Christ. When you and I are open to the Holy Spirit’s power of transformation, it is we who are changed. We are called to be open to God’s fire, realizing God is changing us as we engage with our neighbors in a new way. I can lose sight of the fact that it is God who is doing the
changing and it is me who will be changed by my encounters of being with others in my local context. When we engage with others, it is to be with others rather than to do for others. When true relationships are nurtured, we are truly changed by God and by the other.

Water — Red
Water with all of its fluid properties is about connectivity. It can invite us to expand our definitions of boundaries and relationships in new ways. Water connects one thing to another. It could be the channel or river that connects two bodies of water. A herring run connects fresh water and salt water. Two bodies one would not expect to collaborate to create new life, but the herring who make this run every year know they need both bodies in order to live. Water is the voice of collaboration and team work, drawing on the gifts of each to create new life and hope.

My experience with some of the Lakota and my exploration of the four colors of the medicine wheel has opened up my prayer in some new ways. It’s an example of my own participation in a collaborative confirmation class’s experience of going out, and being with, that has transformed me, strengthened my relationship with the Triune God and how I seek to share God’s love. The frame of being grounded in my faith, going out into the world, being open to personal transformation and seeking partners for collaboration is a guide for me.

How is God calling you to open yourself to these symbols allowing God to work through them to share God’s love? I look forward to hearing stories of how your spirituality is deepened and transformed by these thoughts.
One thing we know to be true: The library will not reach its optimum level of sustained, purposeful service in the 21st century without a full spectrum of partners from the federal level to the local level.
The importance of partnerships

On Holy Tuesday April 2015, the clergy and bishops from the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) gathered at Bushnell Park in Hartford for prayer, Holy Communion, and a renewal of their baptismal vows, then split up four ways to visit one of four sites in Hartford. Their task there was to listen for what God was up to in those places.

One of those sites was the Hartford Public Library. Matt Poland, executive director of the Library, talked about the changes the Library has been facing and what they’ve done in response. There are similarities in the challenges facing the Church and the library’s response, to stop focusing on growing the number of cardholders and instead, to focus on “forming strategic partnerships to address the broader needs of the community,” is remarkably similar to our own call to go into our neighborhood and join God’s mission. This column was written by request so that CRUX readers who weren’t part of that April visit could hear and learn from the Library’s story. — the Editor

Matthew K. Poland

Hartford Public Library is awash with unprecedented change. Challenged by burgeoning technology and the need for immediate information, the expectations of our citizens, and the inadequate funding to meet these expectations, we are reimagining how we operate.

One thing we know to be true: The Library will not reach its optimum level of sustained, purposeful service in the 21st century without a full spectrum of partners from the federal level to the local level. Although we have always had “community partners,” these connections were usually programmatic and budget-dependent, not strategic. Historically we have been concerned more about attracting new cardholders and borrowers than about leveraging resources to provide services for a community with many needs - far too expedient to be sustainable, driven only by activities and not by mission.

While such activities continue within the library, strategic partnerships to address the broader needs of the community are now at the core of our work. And unlike the traditional outreach methods, building partnerships that will last is serious and complex business. Now organizations and funders must commit formally about how we will work together toward a common goal to address a specific need within the community.

A mission-driven partnership develops a particular expertise within the library and the partnering organizations, identifies new sources for program funding, focuses on an exchange of informational resources, and achieves quantifiable results. Each partner offers its unique orientation or strength, complements the contributions of the other and together provides service in a more cost-effective way than separately.

The Library has many strong community alliances that are dramatically new and different with lasting implications:

• Our partnership with Capital Workforce Partners to provide job and career services at the Library is a successful alliance that has strengthened services available to solve high unemployment within the city. This strategic partnership is enhancing the quality of life in the community by helping hundreds find employment.

• Hartford Public Schools and the Library have developed a collaborative, mission-based initiative to provide access to information on multiple platforms in a new urban learning model for students, teachers, and families. Pre-K readiness, grade level reading, and college and career readiness are common rallying cries for our institutions.

• Catholic Charities, a faith-based organization, partners with the Library to create a welcoming environment for thousands of immigrants and refugees. Although historically unlikely partners, our complementary missions to serve the needs of a specific population have created a powerfully productive alliance.

Our communities deserve more and are demanding better. Hartford Public Library has turned outward from a traditional, insular approach to one of innovation and inclusion. Partnerships take work, humility, time, vulnerability and resources. But in the end, results-based partnerships with the investment of public and private dollars will ensure that Hartford Public Library remains “a place like no other” for those we serve and a lead player in our city’s educational, social, economic, workforce development, and cultural missions.

Matthew K. Poland is Chief Executive Officer of the Hartford Public Library.
“Here because of you”
The power of partnerships at St. Mark’s Campus Ministry, Storrs
Hilary Greer

The student tentatively entered my office. She smiled nervously in a way that made me aware of my own uncertainty. I knew from the Residential Advisor in her dorm that she was struggling to integrate her fundamentalist Christian background with her own emerging sexual identity. But I didn’t really know what this meant—or if, as the new priest at St. Mark’s Chapel on the UConn campus, I would be able to offer her anything useful.

She sat down, and the words poured out of her: “I came to see you because I’m having feelings… feelings for other women… that I know I shouldn’t have. And I want to know if there’s any way to cure me. If you can cure me – stop this – before I do anything that makes me unredeemable.”

Unredeemable. The word hit me like a wall. Unredeemable – as if anything we can say or do would put us beyond God’s reach. And the unwelcome realization came inside me: if I believed that I might do something that would separate me from God for eternity, why wouldn’t I kill myself before I did it?

And looking at the student across from me, I knew exactly what she had come to talk about.

So we opened the Bible together and we talked about God’s love. We looked at stories of that love in action through Jesus, and imagined together how precious and beloved Jesus was whispering to her that she was. And I told her there was a community on her campus that would see her only as a beloved child of God, and where she could put her emerging sexual identity. But I didn’t really know what this meant—and concerned faculty and staff, I realized that many students still slip through. For all of the wonderful mental health therapists and concerned faculty and staff, I realized that many students struggle with a large hole that no secular counselor could fill. As Fleurette spoke, it became clear: there were students who were literally dying to know how much God loved them.

The chapel’s partnership with the Rainbow Center grew quickly after my first eye-opening encounter with that student. We began facilitating interfaith panels for students to reflect on the intersection of faith, gender, and sexuality. Out of this, a group of students asked to form a Bible study. This morphed into other gatherings and programs at both the Rainbow Center and St. Mark’s.

The congregation of St. Mark’s formed a missional group to attend other Rainbow Center events and simply listen and learn. Through the Rainbow Center, we began working with True Colors, an organization that holds a conference for thousands of middle school and high school youth on the UConn campus each year - the largest gathering of LGBTQ youth in the world.

In search of a wider network of partners, St. Mark’s reached out to The Religious Institute in Westport as well as Integrity Connecticut, our diocesan chapter of the national organization that advocates for full inclusion of LGBT people in The Episcopal Church. Thanks to Marie Alford-Harkey of The Religious Institute as well as others within Integrity Connecticut, we were collectively able to help True Colors expand their network of affirming faith leaders and build out a “Spiritual Institute” track at their annual conference. Who knows what God has in store next?

Last year, the student who helped to start it all graduated from UConn. She found a spiritual home at St. Mark’s Chapel after our first meeting. Before our annual blessing and commissioning of the graduates, she surprised me by asking if she could speak to the congregation. I expected a few words of farewell.

Instead, she took to the microphone with two pages of typewritten notes giving her life’s testimony. She talked about the darkness of feeling like God might never love her again, and of how every Sunday the community’s worship filled her with a sense of God’s nearness and a love that sustained her. When she doubted, she said, the belief of others had carried her.

“And I will carry you always,” she told them. “I’m still here because of you.”

The Rev. Hilary Greer is Priest in Charge of St. Mark’s Episcopal Chapel on the campus of the University of Connecticut in Storrs. St. Mark’s is a vibrant town-gown community founded in 1955 to serve as a spiritual home for all at UConn, and its doors have never been locked.
Poverty and brain development
A call to action
Paul J. Carling and Cherise A. Rowan

“Because the brain is the organ from which all cognition and emotion originate, healthy human brain development represents the foundation of our civilization...Scientific literature on the damaging effect of poverty on child brain development and the efficacy of early parenting interventions...represent a rare roadmap to preserving and supporting our society’s most important legacy, the developing brain.”

Joan L. Luby, MD
Poverty’s Most Insidious Damage: The Developing Brain

Living in Two Worlds
Standing by the bedside at the miracle that is the birth of each newborn, we’re reminded that according to the Talmud, just before birth, God’s angels come and tap the infant’s lips, sealing in the fact that she has just been gazing into the face of God. This accounts for the philtrum, that indentation between the nose and the lips. But that seal cannot contain the joy and hope in every birth. Walking into the waiting room of any community health center, or into the parish hall of an inner city church, we encounter some of the most beautiful children we will ever meet, bursting with energy, sharing the same dreams of all children, filled with boundless potential – the very incarnation of one of our favorite Christian images, “beloved children of God.”

Then visit with those same children and their families in the privacy of an examining room, and an entirely new world emerges, a world characterized by ambient and chronic stress; unemployment and underemployment; violence in the home, the community, and school; chaos and a lack of structure in family life; poor prenatal and postnatal nutrition; obesity; an absence of parental support, often for single parents; language difficulties; inadequate education; a lack of access to comprehensive and integrated health care, and to quality education. For families here illegally, life is lived in a kind of “shadow society” avoiding agencies or situations that might trigger deportation. Calling these families “multi-stressed” is about as huge an understatement as it’s possible to make. In fact, in many ways, poverty has become the leading childhood disease.

Twenty-two percent of American children grow up in poverty... research directly links socio-economic status with cognitive skills and achievement in language and memory, as early as the first two years of life.
Poverty and Our Brains
Until recently, we assumed that poverty was a reversible problem – change the economics, and opportunities change. But a new generation of brain studies now suggests that poverty itself has a devastating set of impacts on the very structure of our brains.

Cognitive Effects
The critical components of a healthy brain are volume of grey matter, and healthy development of those regions associated with cognitive and emotional development – the prefrontal lobe, cortex, amygdala and hippocampus. While we know the SES differences in cognitive development, we now find that income itself predicts brain structure among children living in poverty: small differences in income lead to large differences in brain surface area (grey matter), particularly in regions supporting language, reading, executive functions and spatial skills. With smaller brains and lower cognitive abilities, children in poverty develop lower intelligence, academic surface area (grey matter), particularly in regions supporting language, reading, executive functions and spatial skills. With smaller brains and lower cognitive abilities, children in poverty develop lower intelligence, academic achievement, visuomotor attention and cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control, and semantic fluency. As much as 20% of the gap in test scores can be explained by the maturational differences in the development of total grey matter, the frontal and temporal lobes, and the hippocampus. And it doesn’t take long for these effects to set in. As early as 21 months, researchers find significant differences related to SES.

Emotional & Behavioral Effects
Exposure to chronic stress in childhood impacts the development of the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, both of which regulate emotion. Under stress, our ability to control emotional responses is compromised. We know that chronic stress in early childhood and low levels of parental stimulation make children less sensitive to others, and can produce later behavior problems, but brain studies now show that childhood poverty actually alters our neurocircuitry, making us especially vulnerable in high stress situations, compromising our ability to reframe aversive situations and respond less reactively, and leading us to perceive neutral or positive social stimuli as threatening.

Brain changes formerly associated with depression in adults are now being found to be part of a developmental pattern associated with adversity in the first six years of life. Stressful life events, such as maltreatment, harsh parenting, or abuse and domestic violence lead to “internalizing these symptoms” (e.g., depression or anxiety) which in turn leads to specific brain changes in grey matter volume, and changes in the frontal lobe, cortex and other areas, which, in turn, make one vulnerable to these same symptoms as an adult. Thus rather than simply assuming that these are inherited traits, depressed and anxious adults who grew up in poverty appear to be exhibiting a post-traumatic response.

Conclusions
While this research makes early intervention with children living in poverty even more urgent, it is wise to remember that this is a very new field. Developmental biology and psychology have consistently affirmed the capacity of humans, and especially children, to be resilient. Researchers point out that whether we develop a psychobiological vulnerability or a resilience in relation to childhood events depends on a number of other variables we are just now beginning to understand.

For example, one review shows that enhanced stimulation, nurturance, and parental support during the preschool years have very positive effects on adult outcomes, compared to those applied in later childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. So early environmental enrichment can compensate for many of these threats to brain development, and develop more resilient children, in spite of the presence of other factors associated with poverty. And while chronic prenatal stress leads to damaging outcomes, mild prenatal stress leads to resilience against future stress.

While our knowledge is still incomplete, how can we respond as the Body of Christ to children living in poverty?

Community Health Centers Respond
Community health centers (CHCs), which offer comprehensive health and mental health services, can be an excellent resource for responding to the developmental needs of children in poverty. Unfortunately, funding for these centers is often vulnerable, so that partnerships with volunteer organizations such as faith communities are crucial for continuing many of the most critically needed developmental services. The Fair Haven CHC in New Haven, for example, is playing a vital role in early development through the following programs:

CenteringPregnancy: Pregnant women and partners with similar gestational ages meet to learn care skills and develop a support network, and to choose health-promoting behaviors.

CenteringParenting: Groups provide a continuing community for families for a total of 12-24 months during this challenging transition, and provide an opportunity for competence and confidence building, standard physical health assessments and well-baby medical care for the new mother. Both programs extend gestational age and increase birth weight.

Nurturing Families Network offers intensive home visiting services and parenting groups for first time parents and promotes positive parenting, provides information about infant-child development, connects families to community resources, and offers emotional support. Separate Fathering Groups are offered. All groups teach child development, nutrition, safety and education, and parenting skills. They connect families to community resources, build friendships and trust, and share free meals.

Minding the Baby is an intensive home visiting model for first-time young mothers and their families. The team includes a pediatric nurse practitioner and a licensed clinical social worker, and
A new generation of brain studies now suggests that poverty itself has a devastating set of impacts on the very structure of our brains.

promotes positive health, mental health and attachment outcomes in babies, mothers, and their families.

**Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** is a government subsidized supplemental food program which provides nutrition counseling and helps low-income mothers and their children buy nutritious foods.

**New Haven Farms** is an urban agriculture organization that transforms vacant urban spaces into small organic farms in New Haven’s poorest and most medically underserved neighborhoods, demonstrating how regular exposure to and participation in growing food, in combination with cooking and nutrition education and behavior change interventions, positively impacts the health, social capital, and food security of its participants.

**Reach Out and Read** is an organization of medical providers who promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by integrating children’s books and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud into well-child visits, to ensure that their children are prepared to learn when they start school. Children served score 3 – 6 months ahead of their peers on vocabulary and language skills.

**Wraparound New Haven** is an integrated behavioral health initiative to improve health outcomes in children and adolescents with chronic medical and behavioral health conditions who have been seen in an emergency room multiple times. Care coordinators link with these families, and focus on the families’ medical, behavioral, housing, school and employment goals, then develop a care plan to reach their goals over a six to 12 month period.

**School Based Health Centers** are a partnership between schools and CHCs. Students and their families rely on these centers for primary medical care, mental/behavioral health care, dental/oral health care, health education and promotion, substance abuse counseling, case management, and nutrition education. The centers emphasize prevention, early intervention, risk reduction, counseling students on healthy habits, and preventing injury, violence and other threats.

**Behavioral Health Services** provide mental health evaluation, counseling, psychiatric assessment and medication, life and parenting skills training, support groups, stress reduction and mindfulness training.

**Eucharistic Communities Respond**

Faith communities are a tremendously powerful resource for supporting healthy brain development among children living in poverty. To date, unfortunately, parish efforts to promote health have been focused primarily on their own adult members. Literally thousands of congregations, for example, have developed parish nursing ministries, yet few of those programs extend beyond congregations, and those that do, serve adults.

Thousands of African American churches have created “community health promotion” programs to meet both congregational and community needs. Again, the overwhelming focus is on adults. As Eucharistic communities on God’s mission, we need to prioritize our efforts toward those in our communities who are most vulnerable to lifelong damage related to poverty.

What can Eucharistic communities do? In fact, there are a plethora of responses that can support families and children toward improved health. Just a few examples of partnerships that parishes are developing with other congregations or local community organizations to address the risks of childhood poverty include:

- **Forming a partnership with the local community health center, and focusing volunteer activity on the specific services needed to enhance the development of young children (see above). Advocating for funding for these centers, especially for vulnerable services, such as prevention, early enrichment and other supports critical to early brain development.**

- **Collecting and donating food, then asking church members who garden to donate a portion of their produce to a community partner. Developing a vegetable garden on church grounds for local food pantries.**

- **Developing collaborative cooking programs, sharing skills in nutrition, healthy cooking, and building relationships by sharing a healthy meal afterwards.**

- **Working with local schools whose children are performing below the state average to develop tutoring programs.**

- **Volunteering at a local agency serving at-risk families. Helping to teach parenting skills. Gathering young parents in the congregation to develop a play group with young parents in a partner church, and creating joint enrichment activities. Collecting culturally appropriate children’s books and videos, and engaging parish youth in a reading program for young children.**

- **Partnering between two parish youth groups, building relationships, and then developing a joint project to assist local children with homework, study skills or other needs.**

One example of such a partnership is found in Bridgeport. St. John’s Episcopal Church, located in one of the poorest sections of the city, worked with area Episcopal churches to jointly develop the St. John’s Family Center, focused on...
serving at-risk children and families. The Center’s board consists primarily of the various area Episcopal congregations. The Center has developed a broad range of programs, including the Child Care Center, offering developmental programming and enrichment for children. In addition to emergency assistance, the Family Center also offers play groups for young children, and parenting classes for moms. A computer room provides opportunities for after school learning for children. And a nutrition program helps families prepare healthy meals. Classes at St. John’s in citizenship and ESL complement the Center’s programs.

One of the Center’s greatest successes is the GAP Program, a collaboration with local elementary schools. Through funding from suburban churches, volunteer mentors work with local children during the school year to increase basic academic skills, and to prevent any “learning decay” in the summer. The goal is to increase their state test scores at least to the state average, which is well above the average for the Bridgeport schools. Each year, the program has surpassed that goal, showing they can improve school performance regardless of the capacities of the school, the achievement level of the children, or other challenges related to poverty.

Programs like these in community health centers, Eucharistic communities, and other non-profit organizations, are changing lives. In fact, they are building a bridge between the two worlds in which these beloved children of God live.
Finding Jesus in the neighborhood

“The Lord sent them on ahead of Him in pairs to every town where he himself intended to go.” Luke 10:1

Jane Hale and Madeline Pantalena

“Excuse me, officer!” I yelled, maybe a bit too exuberantly, as I darted out of the coffee shop, my colleague, Seth, in tow, attempting to detain the uniformed man who was now trying to disappear into his patrol car to drink his coffee in peace.

Surrounded by the decay of this long-neglected neighborhood dotted with shuttered businesses, I was sure this police officer had experienced his fair share of unsettling encounters. He froze with one leg already in his patrol car, and he peered at us skeptically, mid-sip, over the rim of his Styrofoam coffee cup. He said nothing as we approached, but with his eyes fixated on us, very slowly removed his leg from the car.

We introduced ourselves, but the officer was nonplussed. He shook our hands, all the while, keeping his eyes carefully trained on us.

“What can I help you with?”

Just 30 minutes before, Seth and I had gathered for our annual retreat in April with our fellow postulants and candidates for the priesthood and the diaconate in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, our Bishop Diocesan, Ian Douglas, and our Bishop Suffragan, Laura Ahrens.

We spent some time with Luke 10 and Jesus’ instructions to his disciples to go out into God’s harvest in pairs, carrying nothing but a sincere desire to receive whatever folks might be willing to share. Then our bishops had us draw lots, pair up, and head out into the surrounding towns seeking to notice the in-breaking of God’s Kingdom in whatever context we found ourselves.

We had only two instructions. First, steer clear of the local Episcopal Church. Second, be back by 8pm. Seth and I had drawn matching tickets directing us to head to Torrington, and off we went to spend seven hours discovering what God was up to in a neighborhood where we were both strangers.

This is how we came to be standing in the parking lot trying to explain to a leery police officer who we were and what our bishops had put us up to.

“I don’t get it. What do you want?” he asked us.

I drew a deep breath, “Well, we were wondering if you’d be willing to tell us some stories about Torrington?”

“Wait.” He moved closer. “You want me to tell you stories?”

“Yup!”

“About this town?”

“Yup!”
“No one ever comes to me asking for stories! Ha! I grew up here! I’ve got all kinds of stories I could tell you about Torrington!” the officer exclaimed, and as he did, he threw back his head in laughter. He proceeded to tell us about what a beautiful childhood he had had in Torrington, and that he had always dreamed of being a police officer in his hometown. He told us about how there had once been booming local industry, and plenty of jobs and resources in town. Then he glanced up at the house across the street from the coffee shop, eyes lingering on the second story porch that had peeled away from the house and was now sagging well down into the first floor.

A wave of raw sadness washed over him, and his smile contorted. He shook his head, and, pointing down the street to similar houses in similar states of disrepair as far as we could see, he swallowed hard and continued, “We’ve hit hard times here. Jobs are gone, people’s livelihoods are gone, and heroin’s moved in. I sit on this corner and watch the drug deals go down in broad daylight. Just this morning I had to chase a guy down. We had 10 deaths just in this past month. It was only a matter of time before it found its way into our schools. Now it’s sucking our kids in too.” His voice trailed off.

Seth and I stood stunned and humbled by the sacred gift of the officer’s story. Where we had, moments before, been suspect strangers, we were now intimately drawn into this man’s intense love and sorrow for the folks he served. He invited us to share in the anguish of a community reeling from the effects of economic instability. He invited us into an unlikely relationship, by sharing his story with us as it was unfolding. Suddenly, we weren’t strangers, but new, and unlikely friends.

We spent some time with Luke 10 and Jesus’ instructions to his disciples to go out into God’s harvest in pairs, carrying nothing but a sincere desire to receive whatever folks might be willing to share.
Listening intently, Seth asked, “Where do you find hope?”

As it turns out, the officer sees hope all over the place, too. He sees it in the task force that the community recently assembled with the help of Trinity Episcopal Church to educate the community about heroin use. He sees it in the local drug treatment center with the director who takes it upon himself to hike deep into the woods during blizzards to find folks who are freezing in tent cities in order to invite them into a warm shelter for a place to sleep and something to eat. He sees it in the collaborative community effort to revitalize the heart of Torrington by nurturing art and creativity in their midst.

He suggested that we talk to some of these people, each of whom, to our great pleasure, were equally as thrilled to share their own stories with us.

It was through the collective stories of the community that we began to feel a sense of how God was moving in and amongst the people of Torrington.

imagined doing things that not one of them could do alone, Seth and I glimpsed God’s Kingdom breaking through in a place that had, merely hours before, on the surface, looked bleak and beaten down. We saw the face and love of Christ in these folks, and as they eagerly shared their stories, we realized that these were the stories of God at work. All we’d had to do was to reach out and listen.

When we reassembled at Camp Washington by the 8pm deadline, we were surprised to discover that each of the ten other groups had similar experiences with the folks they encountered in neighboring towns.

It grew increasingly clear to us that God’s kingdom was breaking in all around us in both quiet and remarkable ways, and that if we neglected to engage the local communities in our ministries, we’d miss this enormous invitation from the Spirit to join in with what God is up to in our neighborhoods.

Elaine Sleath, a postulant for the diaconate, and Phil Bjornberg, a postulant for the priesthood admitted, “At first, we didn’t have a clue about what we should say, or where we should go. We finally decided to let the Spirit lead us.” They soon wandered into the Litchfield Town Hall where they met Ann Combs, a Town Clerk in the First Selectman’s office. Ann was intrigued when Elaine and Phil first asked if she happened to know what God was up to in Litchfield, and she generously proceeded to shower them with stories of neighbors caring for neighbors.

Ann considers herself a collector of stories. Noting that Litchfield is Connecticut’s “poorest little rich town,” and that perception of Litchfield and its reality don’t really match up, she beamed as she shared tales of how folks in the community were responding to the very real need in the town. She shared stories about the cafeteria worker who collects coats all year and gives them to students who need them in the cold weather, and about the landowner who allows deer hunting on his land with the condition that hunters come back and help distribute frozen venison to hungry families in the night.

Ann, it turns out, is also the Sr. Warden at St. Paul’s, an Episcopal Church in nearby Bantam, CT. She sees all of her work as participating in God’s Mission, noting that her work in the Town Hall enhances her work in the parish. “I see Jesus everywhere,” Ann said. Knowing the real life stories of how God is at work in her community blurs the lines between church and the world.

The postulants and candidates of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut heard a myriad of sacred stories as they learned from locals about what God was up to in the neighborhoods they were exploring.
One pair met an elderly hospital parking attendant in Waterbury who not only greets folks in their pain, joy, and grief as they enter and exit the hospital, but who also looks out for the three homeless women who occasionally occupy the abandoned house across the street from his lot. Another group met a poet in Litchfield who started a bakery to help alleviate hunger in his neighborhood. Yet another team met the transient community at a residential care home who not only shared their rich and storied lives, but also asked them to sit and read the Bible with them.

“God rippled through all of these stories,” said postulant for the priesthood, Stephen Nagy, “Were any of these stories specifically about church? No. Were they about God and the sacredness of life? Absolutely!”

“It’s astonishing how much you can learn about a person and a place when you are open to listening to the stories they are so eager to share,” Elaine Sleath reflected. Not one of us had encountered these people inside a church, and yet God was at work in and amongst every one of them.

Tuesday Rupp and Madeline Pantalena, both postulants for the priesthood, spent most of the afternoon with a librarian and the head of the Fire Technology and Administration Program at Naugatuck Valley Community College. Tuesday reflected on her experience, nothing that, “So often in a 20th century, colonial model of Church, mission has amounted to something like, ‘You listen to my story, and be so impacted by it that you’ll surely start loving Jesus.’ But that feels inauthentic, and it’s not how I read Jesus’ story.”

Instead, Tuesday thinks that God’s Mission calls us to make a space for others’ stories, to find out what God is up to in the lives of others, and then to enter into mutual relationship by listening. “That’s where we discover that what seems profane is actually steeped in the sacred,” Tuesday said. “It’s in relationships of mutuality that we discover Jesus has been present all along.”

Seth Reese wholeheartedly agrees. He mused, “In today’s culture, we have a lot of messages coming at us telling us who we should be. Very rarely do we encounter people who genuinely care about who we really are. I think it is an important call of the Christian life to truly open our hearts and listen to the lived experiences of others, and yet it’s one the Church has too often missed.”

These discoveries about the mingling of the sacred and the profane in people’s stories is much of what our bishops were hoping we would discern.

Bishop Ahrens explained, “The Holy Spirit inspired the assignment. We talk a lot about engaging our local contexts and raising up leaders who engage their local contexts. Let’s give our candidates and postulants the experience of going out and engaging those around them.”

Bishop Douglas agreed with Bishop Ahren’s vision and said that, “As bishops committed to raising up priests and deacons whose point of departure is the mission of God in the world, and not the maintenance of the inherited 20th century institution, it made sense that the retreat be grounded in what God is doing in the world.”

We returned from our Luke 10-inspired outings, brimming with the life-giving and heart-rending stories of the people and places we visited, and the tables were turned when, the next morning we met priests, wardens, and vestry members of the Episcopal Churches from those same towns. The bishops had invited them to listen to what we had learned.

“Many of them expressed feeling affirmed in a lot of the ways they already engage in their neighborhood,” Bishop Douglas said, “and yet they also felt invited to go deeper and broader in their engagement, too.”

Some parishes have already acted on new opportunities based on insights gleaned from the postulants and candidates. St. John’s in Waterbury has made a concerted effort to connect the community more deeply with the extensive resources at the community college. St. Michael’s in Litchfield has begun to arrange transportation to and from Sunday services for the residents of nearby Fernwood Rest Home, and has proposed that their vestry might try engaging their community in a similar way.

Brett Figlewski, a postulant for the priesthood, feels that going out into the community in pairs is actually a powerful way for Christians to experience Gospel life.

“This isn’t simply an exercise for those of us currently in formation for Holy Orders,” he said. “Ultimately, it’s a way to experience God through an attentive and responsive relationship with God’s people. It is relevant for today, and it also has an ancient precedent.”

Bishop Douglas offered a word of enthusiastic hope that the Church is, in fact, moving in the right direction.

“We are living on the cusp of the end of Christendom in the West,” he explained, “We’ve moved from a place of settledness and privilege to the periphery, from the center to the margins. But the end of Christendom is really good news, because we are called to be the Body of Christ in the world in service to God’s Mission, not to a 20th century manifestation of institutional Christendom. As our postulants and candidates discovered in the hospitality of the people in Waterbury, Torrington, and Litchfield, it is truly at the periphery where we meet the living Jesus.”

Jane Hale (left) and Madeline Pantalena are postulants for the priesthood in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.
As Christians, we are called to bring to light the disease of addiction, which impacts not only the addicted person, but that person’s family and friends. Speaking the truth about something that has been hidden or held in secret can be transformative and healing.

Addictions distort relationships
God created us, loves us and cares for us. We were created to be in right relationship with each other and God. Addiction distorts our relationships with God and others. Addiction demands that a person’s focus be on a substance (alcohol or other drug) or process (gambling, pornography). The addict’s treasure becomes an earthly treasure; his or her heart follows that treasure, even when the addict desires otherwise. Addiction can affect anyone, regardless of education, income, race, occupation, or religion. It affects lay ministers as well as ordained ministers.

All people and situations can be redeemed in Christ, including addiction. We are not defined by our past. As Christians we believe in the possibility of new life for all. To “see” and speak of secrets in our lives requires vulnerability and allowing ourselves to be fully known to others. Authentic and trustworthy relationships necessitate that we

“Called to bring addiction into the light”
Robin Hammeal-Urban
acknowledge the truth about ourselves, each other and our church. This requires us to speak the truth and bring to light secrets or matters that have been kept in the dark.

Isolation, shame and lack of authentic relationship with others and God is not what God intends for us. Repentance and redemption are possible when addiction is brought to light.

**Responding to addiction**

As Christians we are called to “see” and speak the truth of addiction on four levels—the intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural. Addressing addiction on all four levels promotes healing and restoration to wholeness for all those impacted by it.

**Intrapersonal:** Bringing the secret of addiction to light requires recognition there is a secret or something hidden on an intrapersonal level. Many struggle to see and recognize their own brokenness within, which underlies addiction.

**Interpersonal:** On an interpersonal level, friends and family members may not want to see this brokenness even if the person struggling with addiction sees and speaks of it. These friends and relative may resist the truth and continue to live with the truth hidden—in the dark.

**Institutional:** Institutions such as schools, workplaces, political structures, and even the church may have practices that encourage the consumption of alcohol or other drugs to enhance productivity, solidify relationships (for example the martini lunch or certain networking or “fellowship” opportunities), or discourage recognition of addiction when an individual is an asset to the institution. Institutions may engage in these practices even when there are policies prescribing otherwise.

**Cultural:** On a cultural level, there are competing messages and values regarding the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs. While the messages of “don’t drink and drive” and the proliferation of 12-step recovery groups promote responsible consumption of alcohol and recovery, contrary messages and values are prevalent.

**Community is essential**

Community is essential to recovery from addiction. Often, the dis-ease of addiction is a manifestation of internal brokenness, dis-connection from authentic relationships with others and shame from believing one is not worthy of love and connection with others and God.

Loved ones often experience shame, brokenness and dis-connection from others. They may have endured years (or decades) of broken commitments, lies and chaos as a result of addiction. Their lives may center on hiding the addiction from others and controlling the addict’s behaviors. For those in the throes of living with addiction, treating others with dignity and respect may be difficult, while treating oneself with dignity and respect may be impossible. Authentic relationships, in which our brokenness can be exposed, is essential for restoration to wholeness.

Healthy faith communities can nurture healing and wholeness by providing us with an incarnate experience of Christian fellowship—the experience of being in right relationship with others. Christian fellowship is not merely companionship; it is a deeper level of connectedness, with God at the center.

Each individual is connected to God, through Christ, and is thereby connected with all believers. Christian fellowship and/or the fellowship of recovery groups can support individuals and families to be vulnerable and open to the truth about addiction as they seek to find and “try on” new ways of living. Members of these communities can also walk with people as they experience “slips” and retreat into old ways of being.

Those who have entered recovery from addiction, as well as their loved ones, may have experienced great release and relief that can come when the truth is spoken. Behaviors to hide and control the addiction can stop. This relief is often accompanied by sadness and fear of the unknown, new life now beginning, or fear that this is a false beginning and that the addiction will prevail. These moments, when we are broken open, are opportunities for God’s grace acting through the Holy Spirit to do more than we dare to hope.

If you suspect that you or someone you love is struggling with an addiction, seek out support, and find a way to speak the truth with love.

**Resources:**

Clergy and/or other trusted members of your faith community.

12-step groups for those addicted to a substance or process: AA (Alcoholics’ Anonymous for those addicted to alcohol); NA (Narcotics Anonymous for those addicted to narcotic medication); OE (Overeaters Anonymous for those addicted to compulsive eating); SAA (Sex Addicts Anonymous for those who are powerless over their preoccupation with sexual thoughts and behaviors including use of adult pornography); GA (Gamblers Anonymous for those impacted by addiction to gambling).

12-step groups for family and friends of those addicted: Al-anon (for those impacted by addiction to alcohol); Nar-anon (for those impacted by addiction to narcotic medications); O-anon (for those impacted by addiction to compulsive eating); S-anon (for those impacted by addiction to sexual thoughts and behaviors); Gam-anon (for those impacted by addiction to gambling).

For further discussion on the theology of being called to speak the truth see Wholeness After Betrayal: Restoring Trust in the Wake of Misconduct by Robin Hammel-Urban; Church Publishing; New York, 2015.

---

Robin Hammel-Urban serves as Canon for Mission Integrity & Training for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. She is the author of “Wholeness After Betrayal: Restoring Trust in the Wake of Misconduct” and a member of The Episcopal Church’s Taskforce to Update Sexual Misconduct Policies.
Committed to lay ministry, the art and practice of reconciliation, and world peace

Tokunbo Green, Esq.

Frankye Regis
Ever since she was 8 years old, Olatokunbo “Tokunbo” Green wanted to be a lawyer. She has fulfilled her lifelong dream and now uses her legal skills to bring about God’s restoration and reconciliation. At the same time she’s stayed active in her lifelong church, St. John’s in Bridgeport, where she now serves on the vestry and the property committee. Since her early teens she has also continuously served in leadership positions within the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

Tokunbo, as she prefers to be called, has worked extremely hard to achieve those accomplishments.

“My mom will tell you that I said I wanted to be a lawyer since I was 8,” Tokunbo recalled recently. “Besides [being a lawyer], I wanted to be other things too. In my sophomore year of high school, I took a business law class, and I said this is what I want to do. I went to college and then to law school.”

She majored in legal studies and business at Temple University in Pennsylvania. The Rocky Hill resident is a member of the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association and is co-chair of its professional development committee. She is a member of the Connecticut Bar Association and Greater Bridgeport Bar Association.

“It’s interesting,” she explained. “I love it sometimes, but running my own practice has its ups and downs. I kind of fell into [owning my own business]. I [had planned] to practice business law and work for a corporation in its business department.”

Instead, the 32-year-old owns a solo law practice, Law Office of Tokunbo T. Green, LLC in Bridgeport, where she does real-estate transactions, small claims, simple estate planning, wills, powers of attorney, landlord/tenant issues, business law, contract review and immigration.

However, her spiritual calling is in lay work, and she uses her attorney skills as a lay minister in various capacities.

“I find that in my work as a lawyer there are sometimes opportunities to bring about reconciliation and restoration,” she said. “If I can help get a mediated solution to conflicts or ordered judgment that brings about justice and help those who need it, I feel God’s work is done in some small way. Sometimes it’s about getting a landlord to be accountable for the conditions their tenants have to live in or helping people plan for the unexpected or the eventual future. I am occasionally able to engage in pro-bono work for those in need.”

For example, at the Brazilian Immigrant Center (BIC) (now the Brazilian Worker Center), Tokunbo helps clients at the center, which fights for social and economic justice for immigrant and domestic workers. In 2013, Megan Vesel, who was interning at St. John’s Church, started a local BIC chapter in the parish’s former rectory called the Sanford House. St. John’s Church rents office space to non-profit organizations.

“It was her ministry, and my work was an extension of her ministry,” Tokunbo said. “Meghan asked me to help fulfill it. I became one of a few lawyers who gave free immigration consultations to the center’s clients/participants and work at “low-bono” (as opposed to pro-bono) fees for those who want representation. I would love to do more pro bono work, but charging a lower fee is a compromise to helping people while trying to make a living. It’s not about money; it’s about some injustice carried out and helping them navigate the legal system. I see immigration work as mission minded – helping those who came here for a better life by helping them to be able to stay.”

Meanwhile, Tokunbo further participates in God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation by serving on the Title IV Disciplinary Board, which governs clergy misconduct and boundary violations. They concentrate on reconciliation, repentance and healing for everyone involved in cases of misconduct and violations. It covers both small boundaries and large offenses, such as embezzlement of funds and molestation.

In addition, she is a Safe Church training facilitator for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT). Her role is to provide people with the knowledge and tools needed to keep parishes safe and healthy for worship, ministry and joining God’s mission. Tokunbo also serves on the Commission of Ministry (COM), the body that is in charge of the process and guidelines for discernment, formation and ordination for those who want to be ordained priests and deacons. She works with the nominees, postulants and candidates from discernment to ordination.

A cradle Episcopalian, Tokunbo’s participation at St. John’s Church goes back to her childhood. She sang in the junior choir and in the short-lived Gospel choir. She was captain of the acolytes and served on the Diocesan Youth Council; she helped plan and facilitate junior and senior high school youth events at Camp Washington. Tokunbo also attended Province 1 youth events; the Episcopal Youth Event (EYE), which is a gathering of youth from across The Episcopal Church; and a Young Adult Festival, held in parallel with a General Convention of The Episcopal Church.

Tokunbo said her call to lay ministry was confirmed recently when she attended a training/retreat for groups and individuals to discern their baptismal calls.

“It re-affirmed my commitment to lay leadership and lay ministry in the Church,” she said of the retreat. “We spent a lot of time sharing in “Storytelling” and “Holy-Listening.” Sharing our stories resonated with all of us. I firmly believe that telling our stories and listening to others helps to further God’s mission. Towards the end of our time together we were asked, ‘What is possible now that wasn’t before?’ and “What am I called to do?” From those answers and ideas we formed groups to develop programs and ministries that we hear ourselves being called to. I was part of a group developing intentional fellowship groups dedicated to exploring spiritual practices. There is more to it and we continue to explore and tease it out and intend to live it out. Another group is concentrating on bringing back empowerment to youth of the ECCT and start having annual youth events.

“It got me thinking about what we can do in Connecticut. Our
Frankye V. Regis is an associate instructor at the Academy of Aerospace & Engineering in Windsor, CT. She is also an author and freelance writer.

Frankye V. Regis is an associate instructor at the Academy of Aerospace & Engineering in Windsor, CT. She is also an author and freelance writer.

“...story is the story of Jesus. By sharing our stories, we get closer to Jesus and each other. We thought of things we would want to do and then bring them back to the gospel and scripture and [show] how they bring us closer to Jesus and to each other. I feel called to facilitate and bring people together in sustaining relationships that matter and to enrich people in relationship and the world in some way. To build relationships in people, organizations and groups.”

In her church ministry, Tokunbo serves as vestry clerk at her parish and is a property committee steward of the parish-owned buildings and grounds.

When she graduated high school in 2001, Tokunbo interned at the Diocesan House in Hartford (offices for the bishops and other diocesan staff) and worked there every summer and during college winter break. While in law school, she worked there part time, and after graduating in 2008, she was employed at the Diocesan House fulltime. She was Bishop Ahrens’ administrative assistant until 2010 when she took a position as a temporary assistant clerk at Rockville Superior Court.

“The invitation to this event got me thinking about starting one again in the Episcopal Church in CT (ECCT). “I look forward to participating in the Welcome Table (a ministry “to feed the hungry, build diverse and inclusive community, worship as one, and give and receive the love of Christ”) at the Church of Epiphany in D.C., and meeting young adults from other Dioceses and talking with them about how [they] are organizing in their dioceses. I hope my visit will inspire and give me ideas on how to organize in Connecticut again.”

One of her ministries is making sure that people are taking care of themselves – self care.

“ECCT thinks that self-care is important,” she said. “I think it is important, especially if you’re engaged in ministries. I practice self care.”

Included in her self-care is carving out time for hobbies, especially photography. She takes pictures of things she likes, such as fine arts. She fell in love with the art of photography one year at Camp Washington, where as a young camper, she learned how to take pictures, and develop and print film; she continued photography classes in high school and college. She also enjoys jigsaw and word puzzles, Sudoku, reading, writing, poetry, short stories, fiction, movies and theatre.

In her spare time, she continues to discern her calling and explore ministries she wants to get involved in or develop. She’s set her sights high.

“I want to change the world,” said Tokunbo. “I want to live in a world where love, respect, tolerance and acceptance reign; a world where people recognize and celebrate what makes us the same; a world where people recognize and celebrate what our many differences are; a world where there is no longer injustice, oppression, discrimination, the many isms, war. I want to live in a world that is just and right. I want to always do what is just and right. It’s a cliché, but I want world peace. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.”

About 1,500 General Convention participants including nearly 80 bishops joined a “Claiming Common Ground Against Gun Violence” march in Salt Lake City on June 28. It was sponsored by Bishops United Against Gun Violence.

Bishop Diocesan Ian T. Douglas, Bishop Suffragan Laura J. Ahrens, most of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut’s elected deputation, several ECCT staff, plus visitors and General Convention volunteers from Connecticut were among those participating.

The “unholy trinity of poverty, racism, and violence” must stop, said Bishop Eugene...
Sutton of the Diocese of Maryland as he preached to the crowd before they set off, just after 7 a.m. on a Sunday morning.

“But we are really here because there is another trinity,” he said, “There is another trinity that is a holy trinity. It is a life-giving trinity.”

The prayerful procession walked the half-mile from the Salt Palace Convention Center to Pioneer Park while marchers sang hymns and prayed. Members of Utah anti-gun violence groups and civil rights organizations joined in.

Speakers at the park, and outside the Convention Center before and after the march, spoke of their personal experiences and of God’s love. Among the speakers were Bishop Scott Hayashi, Diocese of Utah, himself a victim of gun violence; Bishop Ian T. Douglas; Bishop Eugene T. Sutton; Bishop Jeffrey Lee, Diocese of Chicago; the Rev. Gayle Fisher-Stewart, deacon at Calvary Church in Washington, D.C. and a retired D.C. police officer; Bishop Ed Konieczny, Diocese of Oklahoma, a former police officer in California; and Utah resident Carolyn Tuft, who lost a daughter to gun violence at a shopping mall in Salt Lake City and is being slowly poisoned by lead pellets remaining in her body.

Deacon Stewart was optimistic about the possibility for change: “We’ve got to do something about gun violence,” she said, “and I believe the Episcopal Church is charged, at this particular moment, to lead the way for change of heart, because we are a church that believes in putting our faith in action.”

The event concluded with words from then Presiding Bishop-elect Michael Curry.

“Go forth into this world and proclaim that love is the only way,” he said. “Proclaim that we will end the scourge of violence, we will make poverty history, and we will end racism, because we have one God who created us and we are all children of that one God, and we are brothers and sisters one of another and all lives matter.”
Engage the community, engage God’s mission

The Rev. Amjad J. Samuel

Karin Hamilton

For Pakistan-born and raised Amjad Samuel, now an Episcopal priest serving as rector of St. Paul’s, Huntington, engaging God’s mission is about listening to others, allowing yourself to be vulnerable enough to feel their pain, and responding with the love of Jesus. That’s what makes it challenging, and that’s what makes it transformative.

“My dad used to say, ‘the people with the problem are the people with the solution,’” Amjad said. “He used to say that we don’t bring a solution, we facilitate a solution to emerge.” It’s a lesson he’s been living and teaching his whole life.

A Christian family

Amjad was born in Multan, Pakistan, the son of a bishop in the Church in Pakistan, part of the Anglican Communion. He has Christian clergy on both sides of his family. Pakistan is now about 98% Muslim, Amjad estimates, with the remaining 2% Christian and other minorities.

He came to the U.S. to earn his B.A. at Alma College, in Alma, Michigan, majoring in religious studies, with additional course work in sociology and political science. He returned to Pakistan for a while, then went back to the U.S. to Duke University where he earned his master’s in theology in 1995.

By then his parents were returning to Multan from Hong Kong, where they’d moved after his father, Bishop John Samuel, was elected to a five-year term as General Secretary for the Christian Council of Asia. Its offices were in Hong Kong. Amjad decided to return as well, instead of staying to complete a Ph.D. He spoke with his bishop in Pakistan and entered the process for ordination to the priesthood.

Plans for Amjad’s ordination moved ahead and his father was invited to be the preacher. During their two-day drive to Peshawar for the service, however, Amjad had doubts. By the time they arrived, he had decided not to be ordained at that time.

But God had other plans. Despite Amjad’s efforts he was unable to contact the consecrating bishop before the service. He didn’t want to be disrespectful he said, so joined the procession with his colleagues at the Cathedral. The bishop arrived just in time for the actual ordination, leaving no time for conversation, and Amjad was ordained to the transitional diaconate.

The process went on hold for a while.

“After [the ordination] the bishop took us out for lunch,” said Amjad, “and I said that I wanted to be part of the church but didn’t want to go ahead just yet.”

Building a school

Instead, he returned to his home city and decided to start a school. It opened in 1998. All of its students were Muslim and besides himself, only one other staff member was Christian.

“We (Christian and Muslim) eat same food, we speak same
language, we wear same dress, we are completely the same, but where it comes to outlook to life, we have very different perspectives. My question was, where does it change, where does it shift, and how does it happen? How does this narrative of faith end up forming a person so differently?"

What he learned was that formation had taken place by the time they were four years old, even before they arrived at school. Still, he enjoyed conversations he had with the students.

"In my language they would say, ‘God gives you sin,’ meaning God holds you accountable and judges you, which is a very strong narrative, and I would say – and this has a lot to do with how the language works – ok, so how does God give it to you? … As a Christian, I believe in sin and that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but I don’t believe that God assigns it, gives it to you. So I would really learn a lot from them.”

He also learned from his staff about the Pakistani system where women are “not as free to do things as they are here.” Women were expected to go to school and college, then get a job as a teacher for four or five years as a way to supplement the cost of their marriage, he said.
“I saw the women teachers struggle with … who were they going to be married off to, and when it was going to happen, and how much time they had, and all of that,” he said. “It was a deeply frustrating process sometimes, to see these very capable women being married off, mostly against their wishes, and that was hard to witness and experience so closely.”

In the meantime, Amjad had become active in the church again. He had been helping to reconcile different groups in the church that had been at odds. He was also preaching and drawing large crowds. But the State wasn’t happy with that, he said, and he had to leave, saying some details are still too uncomfortable to share.

“What I learned was, much like the history of the Ottoman Empire, the State kept the Christian church divided and the community fractured. You would think, why would a community of two percent or less be dangerous to 98 percent? I don’t know. But that’s what it did, and to me it was a surprise.”

Some of the reasons, Amjad believes, have to do with Pakistan’s colonial past.

Under British rule, the best properties were owned by the church, he said. In addition, one of the lower castes in Pakistan, the Choorahs, are majority Christian and for some Pakistanis, “Christianity” is associated with that caste.

The unexpected events led to a whole new chapter in Amjad’s life, and where his life began to intersect with the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

Connecticut connections
Amjad decided to return to the U.S. to take a course in interfaith dialogue at Hartford Seminary. His roommate there was Bishop John Danbinta, from the Diocese of Gusau in the Anglican Church of Nigeria. John’s bishop, the Most Rev. Josiah Fearon, was friends with Trinity, Tariffville and its rector, the Ven. Tom Furrer. Tom would come to visit John and take him to visit churches in Connecticut. As Tom and Amjad talked one day, Tom recommended that Amjad speak to Bishop Andrew Smith, then diocesan bishop of ECCT, about entering the ordination process here.

Amjad followed through, meeting often with the Rev. Marge Roccoberton, then Canon to the Ordinary for Bishop Smith. Amjad recalls her friendly encouragement and also recalls he was always looking for a parish placement.

One day, the Rev. Canon Mark K.J. Robinson, then rector of Calvary Church, Stonington, visited Marge in search of an assistant rector, as Calvary’s current one was leaving. He wanted a woman, initially.

She asked if he’d take someone from Pakistan instead, and without even meeting Amjad, he said yes. It happened that Mark had been roommates in college with a man from Pakistan and had later visited the country and enjoyed his time there.

Parish ministry
The two served together in Stonington, where Amjad was married “to an Irish Roman Catholic from Boston” and also ordained to the priesthood.

Mark left for a new position on the diocesan staff in Ohio and soon called Amjad to suggest he submit his name for an associate position in a large church in Akron. He was hired and given oversight of their “mission program,” which at that time consisted primarily of writing checks.
to local organizations and taking part in a Habitat for Humanity build every two years.

It was there that Amjad put his experience of being “the other” and his emphasis on listening to bring about a powerful new understanding of mission.

For the first year at his parish in Akron, St. Paul’s, he observed, he said. For the second year he started to build alliances and bring people together, and in the third year, three ministries took off: A community meal; a ministry to those who’d lost jobs; and a program for children. In addition, they’d formed a connection with a school in northern Nigeria.

Community meal
St. Paul’s in Akron had a large kitchen and a gym with a full basketball court, neither of which were used much. Amjad thought they were wonderful resources.

Now, every Wednesday the church hosts a community meal that serves 120-150 people. A percentage of the congregation attend regularly to help, but mostly to be with people, listen to them, and share a meal.

“The real issue isn’t how many people we can feed, the real issue is, are we aware of the lives of these people and the challenges, because that’s what transforms us. Just handing someone food doesn’t transform anyone, in my book. It’s the learning and appreciation of another person’s life, and the challenges of it, that’s what transforms us.”

Amjad encouraged the congregation to see the people who came as a new congregation that they were founding. He showed up in his collar and served as their priest. If any got sick, he’d visit them and the parish would take over the pastoral care, bringing prayer shawls and walking with them. A parishioner with skills in turning around businesses organized the teens who came to help prepare the meal and clean up afterwards. Then they played basketball.

“The beautiful thing is that [the teens] started calling it their church,” said Amjad. “They never showed up on Sunday morning. But it was their church and that’s what they called it and they were faithfully there every Wednesday to help with the meal.”

Barnabas ministry
Another ministry started when a man who’d lost his job came into Amjad’s office to see what the church had for him. During their conversation the man recalled a similar ministry at the parish decades earlier. With support from some of the original organizers, the ministry was re-started. It included partnerships with community organizations. For example, the local bank sent staff to teach financial planning, and staff from the local tax preparation office taught tax education.

For the children
South Street Ministries in Akron intentionally serves a tough urban neighborhood. One of their programs is for prisoners being released, and the third ministry started when Amjad met a young man in that program. From prayer and the kindness of strangers, and with encouragement from Amjad and others, the young man ended up receiving his college degree and started to study theology. Amjad, meanwhile, learned more about South Street Ministries’ programs for the children it serves. A new ministry began to bring the children to St. Paul’s Church to play basketball. While there, parishioners mentor them in math, reading, and more.

Overseas
Bishop John Danbinta and Amjad had stayed in touch, and Amjad knew of a parishioner with a keen interest in Africa, who had been involved in building schools there. Two people from the parish went on the annual trip to Nigeria led by the Ven. Tom Furrer. They took a side trip to visit the Diocese of Gusau, where John is working to establish a school for Christians and Muslims, then decided to endorse a partnership.

Back to Connecticut
One day, Tom Furrer called Amjad again to suggest he put his name in for consideration at St. Paul’s in Shelton, where Tom had once served. While Amjad was reluctant to leave, he found that he loved the new congregation. Moreover, his wife wanted to return to New England. His ministry at St. Paul’s in Shelton began just a year ago. They’re starting slowly, and keeping their focus on Shelton.

“We have to look at not only the strengths and weaknesses of our parish, but also our neighborhood. We are pulled to Bridgeport or Ansonia, and they’re important, but I’m saying, let’s look at Shelton itself, that’s where we are, that’s where our community is, where people live, where connections have to be built and understood. Often times we don’t think there is a need because we are not exposed to it.”

As always, prayer will continue to be an essential part of engaging God’s mission.

“For me, mission and evangelism are together,” he said, “because when we actually understand where we are in our communities and are open to receiving and feeling the pain of the community, if we believe that Jesus offers healing, then it is selfish of us not to offer Jesus Christ as a healer to the community.”

Amjad, who laughs easily and seems genuinely happy where he is, says he doesn’t know what the future will hold for St. Paul’s in Shelton. He is sure, however, that they’ll pray about it.

Karin Hamilton serves as Canon for Mission Communication & Media for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.
FaithCare Medical Mission 2015
Trinity, Tariffville & FaithCare

Since 2008, Trinity Episcopal Church in Tariffville has partnered with FaithCare, an international organization of volunteer healthcare professionals, and the Kateri Medical Clinic, which Trinity has supported for over a decade, to conduct a two-week intensive medical mission in a rural area of northern Nigeria, in Kaduna Diocese. During the last week in July and first week in August they typically help 5,000 to 6,000 people with medical care, including basic health consulting, health and wellness education, family and individual counseling, dental care, eye care and surgery.

Trinity’s initial invitation to northern Nigeria came in 2002 from Archbishop Josiah Fearon, now the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion. After helping to establish the clinic, they’ve continued to fundraise to purchase medicine, medical supplies, and to pay salaries. The clinic has recently expanded its services by training Rural Health Care Workers as “first responders” in remote villages.

The medical mission trip in 2015 helped 7,708 people with a variety of medical services, including surgery, dental care, eye care and general medical consultancy. Nearly 50 of the healthcare professionals participating were from Nigeria, recruited through FaithCare’s affiliate chapter in that country. The Diocese of Kaduna was a full partner with them, sending dozens of teens to help with logistics.

The trip is a striking opportunity to bring health, healing, hope, and God’s love to everyone who comes, regardless of their faith tradition. The photos and captions on the next page were selected from a blog written by Trinity’s rector, the Ven. Tom Furrer during the July-August 2015 medical mission trip. To read more, visit www.katericlinic.org.

For more information, or to donate or participate in a future event (healthcare professionals as well as those who can help with administrative and logistical support), contact the Ven. Tom Furrer (860-651-0201, tfurrer@trinitytariffville.org).
Autonomous individualism is not an African priority and almost everyone comes to the clinic with family members, as in this photo of a grandma leaning on a walking stick and a mother with her child. When you heal a child or a grandma or a dad or a mom, the effects are felt by all.

A new clinic was launched in Iburu last summer, about 40 minutes from the main mission venue in Jacaranda, diocesan property near the outer boundary of Kaduna. The team, pictured above, includes two doctors, one nurse, three pharmacy workers, two registration workers, three security/crowd control workers, two prayer counselors, three media team members and the team leader.

At the opening gate at 5 a.m. July 30: This Muslim man offered the opening prayer and this Christian woman offered the closing prayer at Morning Devotions that day. Center, the Ven. Tom Furrer.
In Christ,
divisions cease

In late July last summer, a remarkable healing took place

The processional cross and the new windows installed at St. James’.
When the former Bishop Seabury Episcopal Church building in Groton was sold, two dilemmas remained: What to do with the cremated remains of former parishioners, held in the outdoor columbarium, and what to do with the three-panel stained glass window in the church, a memorial to Samuel Seabury, which the Baptist congregation buying the building didn’t want.

St. James in Poquetanuck held the answers to both.

It turns out that St. James’ was the original church in Groton. Before it moved to its current location in Preston, St. James’ was on Spicer Hill Road in Groton, now Ledyard. It was directly across the street from the birthplace of Samuel Seabury, who later became the first bishop of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

“When we heard that Bishop Seabury Church was going to be sold, we thought we had a responsibility to be stewards of those cremains that were left in the columbarium,” explained St. James’ vicar, the Rev. Ron Kolanowski.

And when Bishop Douglas asked if any parish wanted the window from Bishop Seabury Church, which depicted Jesus the Good Shepherd, St. James stepped right up again. In 1938, St. James’ three-panel stained glass window on the wall behind the altar, also depicting Jesus the Good Shepherd, was blown out in a hurricane. It was covered over with wood and until now, never replaced.

“We are able to both preserve the window, and put back what was lost for us 70 years ago,” Ron said. With fundraising and grants, they were able to modify the frame to fit the new window.

Dave Desmarais, property manager for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, spent three years locating records and contacting family members of those in the Bishop Seabury columbarium to explain what was happening and ask if they wanted to take the cremains or have them reinterred in the cemetery in Preston.

“I spent a lot of time on the phone,” said Dave. “Some died many years ago, some I could never reach. Some stories really touched my heart. People were very kind and understanding of how difficult this was.” A majority wanted to have the cremains reinterred in Preston.

The service was set for the Feast Day of St. James, July 26, and invitations sent to the families of the Seabury members whose loved ones were to be reinterred as well as to members of the Seabury Anglican Church, formed by the congregation that left The Episcopal Church.

And it just so happened that the installation of the window was completed two days before the reinterment service.

Following the service, the congregation formally processed across the street and down a short road to the town cemetery, where a gravesite had been prepared to receive the cremains. A headstone identified it as the Bishop Seabury St. James’ Episcopal Churches Memorial Grave, and it already had metal name plates to identify those to be interred. After a short liturgy, each box or container was handed to Dave Desmarais who stood in the grave and carefully placed them.

The Rev. David Canon, rector emeritus of St. James, served Bishop Seabury Church for five years, at the bishop’s request, while it was in litigation over the building. In part because of that history, Ron asked David to lead the graveside liturgy.

“There was no way to really bring any peace to those times, so this offered us a real opportunity to do what is right,” he said.
Hurricane Sandy — the post-tropical cyclone that pummeled the Caribbean and swept up the East Coast in October 2012 — left an almost immeasurable path of destruction. Classified the largest Atlantic hurricane ever, “Superstorm Sandy” struck seven countries and 24 states within the continental U.S.; left a death toll of 285, including at least 125 in the U.S.; and caused upwards of $62 billion in damage, second only to Katrina’s $128 billion.

Sandy dealt a heavy blow to Connecticut, destroying homes and businesses, creating widespread power outages, crippling transportation and communications, and devastating natural coastal habitats. Many of our shoreline churches and homes were overwhelmed by the storm’s destructive wind, surge, and rain.

In the three years since Sandy, one thing is clear: there is no single mitigation policy or preparation strategy (i.e., technical fix) that can protect against severe weather events across every region. In fact, given the breadth of this storm’s reach—from Florida, to New York City and the highly-urbanized Northeast, westward to Michigan and Wisconsin — it is impossible to create a “one-size-fits-all” pre- and post-storm plan.

Preparing post-Sandy is an adaptive challenge. It’s complex; requires a change in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, and approaches; involves people “in the trenches” working together to design a response; requires experimentation, risk, and discovery; and defies implementation by edict.

An adaptive challenge is quite different from a technical challenge, requiring a different kind of leader to engage effective change. Unlike adaptive challenges, technical challenges are easily identified, respond well to expert-driven “cut-and-dried” fixes, rarely require cross-organizational buy-in, and because the solution is typically top-down, often create both immediate relief and long-term resentment for those who seek assistance.1

In fact, the response to Sandy has been remarkably adaptive. Post-Sandy policy-making has included a multi-disciplinary taskforce of civil engineers, climatologists, and urban planners. In addition, the full engagement of “on-the-ground” experts — home and business owners, communities, and local governments — is significantly informing how policy is being shaped and refined.

So what does this have to do with the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) or the Christian community in the 21st century? A lot, when we consider the adaptive challenges we face in this post-modern, post-Christendom world.

From global politics and economies (deepening income inequality, rising geostrategic competition, intensifying nationalism, persistent jobless growth) to shifting worldwide cultural trends (technological development and the advancement of connectivity, collapse of majorities and the rise of multi-culturalism, expansion of ideological polarities with the solidification of subcultures), to climate change and its subsequent realities (damage to property and infrastructure, lost productivity, mass migration, security threats and an informality that defies institutional structures), to the demise of religious relevance (notably, the decline of Christianity in U.S. culture, the rise of the non-affiliated, or “nones,” and the increased share of Americans who identify with non-Christian faiths), our world resonates change and presents an adaptive challenge.

What meaningful difference can ECCT make in a world where our small numbers and impact seems to have such minimal affect? There’s no ignoring the obvious adaptive challenges that diminishing relevance and capacity present.

A significant change shaping this conversation within The Episcopal Church and across ECCT is the shift in how we govern. We’re moving from a regulatory agency model (a top-down, inflexible,
checklist approach to problem solving) to a resource-based model (bottom-up, broadly engaged, agile). In plain terms, this adaptive approach more easily enables a parish or worshipping community to grapple with the challenges it faces in ways that make sense within a particular context and culture.

Within our parishes and worshipping communities there are those among us who are able to lead us to wherever God invites us to follow. These individuals, lay and ordained, are leaders with imagination and pluck. People who can, with encouragement and support, help us all approach the challenges that threaten to overwhelm us by reaching deeply into our shared experiences and inspiring us to stretch, experiment, risk, and try something new.

The adaptive leader invites us to:
1. Fearlessly name what’s happening
2. Engender conversation and open debate
3. Clarify assumptions and values
4. Protect the voices of leadership arising from the margins
5. Initiate creativity and encourage agility
6. Support storytelling
7. Review, refine, and begin again

Like the communities affected by Sandy, we can choose to hold on until the next storm and hope we’re still around after the rains and wind and surge subsides. Or, we can be a part of the solution and actively engaging a process that is broad, flexible, and invitational. And we need adaptive leadership to help us get there.

It’s important for us to remember that in this “adaptable process” we’re in good company. Even God is far from finished when undertaking the restoration and reconciliation of the world: “See, I am making all things new.” (Rev 21:5)

---


The graphic illustrates the proposal for changes in the organization and governance of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) as developed by the Taskforce for Reimagining the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (TREC-CT) and presented at the Annual Convention in November 2015.
Christ Church Cathedral affirms its vocation as a cathedral called to catalyze, connect, convene, and build capacity for participation in God’s mission.
After more than a year of intensive research, questioning, prayer, and conversation, Christ Church Cathedral put forth an expanded vision of itself as an Episcopal cathedral for the 21st century that would benefit the whole of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, deepening all of ECCT’s ability to further God’s mission.

Among the outwardly visible signs of this will be removing historic pews to allow flexible seating, and appointing a dean. One of these has already occurred. At the Cathedral Chapter meeting on October 13, Bishop Ian T. Douglas nominated and the Chapter voted unanimously to call the Rev. Miguelina Howell to serve as the Tenth Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, effective January 1, 2016. She has been serving as the vicar of the Cathedral congregation since 2013.

The report by the Cathedral Discernment Task Force was accepted by the Parish Committee as well as the Cathedral Chapter and submitted to the Annual Convention with a resolution to affirm the report and assist the Cathedral to realize its vision.

Here are the eight purposes defined for a cathedral, and the specific recommendations for Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford listed under each, as presented in the final report of the Cathedral Discernment Task Force. For explanations of each, a list of Task Force members, and more details on the process, look up the report on the Cathedral’s website, www.cccathedral.org.

1. Embody and enhance our common identity as the Episcopal Church in Connecticut
   Recommendation: The cathedral should continually look for ways to convene worshiping communities, communities of practice, and affinity groups from across the diocese.

2. Maintain and preserve a house of prayer and devotion open to all
   Recommendation: The cathedral church should be open for prayer, devotion, and quiet contemplation throughout the week, and should provide structured worship at least once a day.

   Recommendation: The cathedral church should be configured with flexible seating rather than fixed pews and furnished in such a way that it invites pilgrims to enter in and wander about, even when weekday worship is taking place.

   Recommendation: The cathedral should maintain and support a regular worshiping congregation that is committed to following Jesus.

3. Maintain excellence in the quality of worship
   Recommendation: The cathedral should have a sizable worship space that accommodates different liturgical styles, and a staff that has the capacity to craft and execute exemplary worship services open to all.

   Recommendation: The cathedral should continually look for ways to develop the capability of liturgical leaders across the diocese, and enable them to share best practices with one another.

4. Assist the bishops in their role as the public face and voice of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut
   Recommendation: The cathedral should develop ongoing relations with civic leaders, and with organizations and institutions that are devoted to the common good.

5. Provide sanctuary and a serve as a public meeting ground
   Recommendation: The cathedral should develop and maintain the capacity to function as a public policy arm of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut on issues in which our institutional interests are at stake or the church’s moral leadership is needed.

6. Engage with other faiths, religions, and wisdom traditions
   Recommendation: The cathedral should foster within the ECCT a critical self-examination of our own history (as Christians) and theology (as Anglican Christians), with particular attention to the barriers they might pose to engagement with other faiths, religions, and traditions.

   Recommendation: The cathedral should develop ongoing relationships with organizations and institutions that seek to foster meaningful engagement across faiths, religions and traditions.

   Recommendation: The cathedral should gather leaders from different faiths, religions and traditions to engage in mutual learning, and to identify areas of collaboration.

   Recommendation: The cathedral should encourage and equip the ECCT’s parishes to engage with other faiths, religions and traditions at the local level, and should lift up and support parishes and collaborations that are doing so already.

7. Embody and extend the bishops’ apostolic call to make Christ Jesus known and manifest in the world
   Recommendation: The cathedral should see itself as a catalyst for mission, identifying ways in which parishes can work together, connecting parishes with other faith communities that are participating in God’s mission, and connecting the faithful with secular “missionaries.”

   Recommendation: The cathedral should explore new mission fields from time to time, using its resources to clear a pathway for others to follow.

8. Collaborate as a center for theological learning and spiritual growth
   Recommendation: The Cathedral Chapter should develop structures that will enable the cathedral to function as a center of theological learning and spiritual growth for individuals and congregations.
The Episcopal Church
78th triennial General Convention

The Episcopal Church held its 78th triennial General Convention last summer in Salt Lake City to share worship and conduct common business through elections and resolutions. The Episcopal Church in Connecticut, along with all the other dioceses, sent its bishops and elected lay and clerical deputies to take part in the decision-making.

A highlight of the nine-day event was the election of the Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry of the Diocese of North Carolina as the next Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church. He succeeded Katharine Jefferts Schori, whose nine-year term ended October 31. Curry is known for his evangelical preaching and teaching as well as his engagement in social justice. His two published books include, “Crazy Christians: A Call to Follow Jesus,” and “Songs My Grandma Sang.”

Another highlight was the “Claiming Common Ground” public witness against gun violence. More than 60 bishops led a prayerful procession of about 1500 people in downtown Salt Lake City early on Sunday, June 28. Bishops United Against Gun Violence organized the event.

Highlights in legislation included:

- Racial reconciliation and justice as a priority: There was early and overwhelming support for Resolution C019, “Establish Response to Systemic Racial Injustice.” It affirmed, as a top priority for The Episcopal Church in the upcoming triennium, the “challenging and difficult work of racial reconciliation through prayer, teaching, engagement, and action.”

- Support for evangelism and church planting: “Creating a Capacity to Plant Churches” (D005), called for creating a church-wide network for planting congregations, training and recruiting planters, and establishing new congregations, including plans to train bi-lingual, bi-cultural lay and ordained leaders. The resolution also sought support for 30 new congregations.

- Creation of a Network of Partners on Latino/Hispanic Congregational Ministry Development to provide leadership training and other resources. (A086)

All three of these were funded over their initial asking. The usually conservative Program, Budget and Finance Committee gave an additional $2 million to C019, and the House of Deputies requested an additional $2.8 million to support D005 and A086.

Among other resolutions passed:

- Divest from fossil fuel companies and reinvest in renewable energy (C045)

- Start planning for Prayer Book revisions (A169)

- Continue financial support for global missions, Young Adult Service Corps, and Episcopal Volunteers in Mission (A013)

- Encourage interfaith engagement (A018)

- Create marriage equality (A036 and A054)

- Authorize new liturgical resources: A Great Cloud of Witnesses (A056)

For a complete list of resolutions by number, topic, legislative committee, or proposers, as well to obtain a Summary of Actions and the 2016-2018 budget, visit www.generalconvention.org.

The General Convention is the governing body of The Episcopal Church that meets every three years. It is a bicameral legislature that includes the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, composed of deputies and bishops from each diocese. During its triennial meeting deputies and bishops consider a wide range of important matters facing the Church. The Episcopal Church in Connecticut elects its lay and clerical deputies at its Annual Convention two years prior to each General Convention. The 79th General Convention will meet in 2018 in Austin, Texas.
Rachel Feenstra is a member of St. John’s, Vernon and a high school junior. She learned to sew and knit from her grandmother and mother and she planned to put those skills to use for others this fall. She and a friend are creating a new group, Hands Creating Hope. They will be sewing and knitting hats and scarves for people in the local homeless shelters and others in the local community.

In addition to her involvement at St. John’s, Rachel was a participant in the national 2014 Episcopal Youth Event. She is also a long-time Girl Scout.

Q. Do you consider yourself a Christian? If so, why?
A. Yes, When I was little, my parents brought me to church every week. I prayed every night. As I got older, I found God along this journey.

Q. When do you think that happened?
A. I was probably around 8 or 9 when I realized this. I have two older sisters who I’m close to, and they inspired me a lot. Also, as I was going through life I found little things that I saw as the presence of God in my life.

Q. What does it mean, in practical terms, to be a Christian?
A. To do your best, be as kind to everyone as you can possibly be. To treat them the way God would treat them. To respect everyone. To learn from your mistakes how to be better the next time.

Q. Do you have friends and acquaintance who are not Christian?
A. Most of my friends are Christian. I have a few friends that I talk to who aren’t, but my close friends are all Christians.

Q. How are you involved in your local church?
A. St. John’s in Vernon is the only church I’ve ever gone to. I’ve been an acolyte since fifth grade and in the Youth Group since sixth grade. More recently I’ve been working in the church nursery on Sundays.

Q. Do you like being a Christian?
A. I can’t imagine being anything but a Christian. It’s who I am.
KEEP INFORMED | Sign up at episcopalct.org for weekly eNewsletters with diocesan-wide news, information, resources, and events.

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry, at podium, at the confirmation of his election during the General Convention of The Episcopal Church on June 27, 2015.