

Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — April 29, 2020

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## From Our Bishop

### Share your prayers!

*(This is a transcript of a video message.)*

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark and I want to talk with you about prayer. Prayer has been on my mind, and especially because I keep wondering about the specific prayers we might be saying on our own in response to living through a pandemic.

I think often when we pray, we pray for people that we know, we pray for situations that we don't understand or that need help, and especially during this time of pandemic we've been praying for people in medical professions, for essential workers, for rescue workers, for all kinds of people that are helping us all to stay safe. We pray for the people that we know and that we love but that we cannot see with any regularity. We pray for the people that we love who've gone on before us and are no longer here for us to see because they have gone to the heavenly country.

There are all kinds of things that we pray for, and I don't think it crosses our minds that our prayers – to hear them -- actually help someone else. To read them could be a blessing to someone else.

So I'm going to ask you to do something that might be a first for you. I'm going to ask you to write your prayers. In particular, to write a prayer that you would consider sharing with the rest of the diocese as a way for us to help each other out through our

prayers. What I want to do is gather a group of our prayers at a place that we publish on the website, and that we call these prayers "Prayers of Pandemic from the Diocese of Newark." I invite you to be a part of that, that you can write your own individual prayer -- it doesn't have to look like a collect from the prayer book, or it could. Or you could write those prayers with children who are in your life, with members of your family or with a group of friends. Maybe it's your Bible study or your prayer group that writes those prayers together. But I'm asking you to spend some time thinking about how you want to pray and how your words put together in prayer could be helpful to other people, and to send those in to us so that we are able to help each other through prayer.

Almost everywhere I go these days I've been asking people to write a prayer and to send it in to us at the diocese, and someone actually listened to me and did it. I want to thank Jewels Quelly at St. James' in Hackettstown for writing a prayer. Her prayer was very specific in that it addresses the needs of people who are in health care. Let me share it with you.

"Our dearest Holy Father, we see your fortifying hand everywhere in the world around us. We come to you to ask that you shine down your special favor on our healthcare professionals and volunteers. Give them strength so that they may go on, both for their patients and in their own lives. Give them clarity so that in the midst of tired shoulders, achy feet and burdened

spirits, they have the ability to know what to do next. And dear Father, give them reconciliation. These selfless servants put themselves in harm's way for so many reasons. Many of them are witnessing death -- some for the first time. Help them find blessings and relief through their heartache. We ask all this through your Son our holiest Redeemer, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

And amen to all of your prayers.

## From Our Canons

### Keeping up a healthy life of prayer

*By the Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew R. Wright*

We focused last week on mental health, which is incredibly important, especially in these difficult times. Today I want to write a bit about keeping up a healthy life of prayer. Prayer is an amazing resource for us at all times, but especially when life is tough.

#### Personal Prayer

Sometimes our wonderful prayer book tradition of written prayers can make us second guess our own ability to pray, in our own words. It's great that we have the Book of Common Prayer to give us some amazing prayers and a tradition of prayer, but your own prayers, your own words, are really at the heart of our life with God. God longs to hear the prayers of our heart.

Of course, we can pray at any time - in any place - because God is always with us, wherever we are, whatever may be happening. And personal prayer can take any form – or even be non-verbal.

The Book of Common Prayer talks about this in the Catechism, asking "What is prayer?" It goes on to say that "Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words." ("An Outline of the Faith," *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 856.) Isn't that a great definition? It reminds me that,

first of all, prayer is responding to God and that prayer isn't just internal, thoughts and reflection, but also action. Prayer without action is really incomplete - we should always consider how we enact our prayers as well as hold them in our hearts. But notice that it also says that prayers can be with or without words. We can certainly use words, and often do, but also can pray through movement, through song, through art, through dance, and in so many other ways.

Even so, it is good to remember, on those days when may not have the words, that the Book of Common Prayer can always support us. You may especially want to take a look at the "Prayers and Thanksgiving" section on pages 810-841 of the prayer book.

However we pray, it's important to attend to the range of ways that we are invited to respond to God in prayer. One way to remember a "balanced diet" of prayer is the acronym ACTS, which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

**Adoration** is how we show our love to God – to adore God just for who God is, rather than for what God has done or promised. When we use that word in our daily life, saying we adore someone or something, it really is love language that we're using. This type of prayer is about how we love God. This topic is related to praise as well and our instinct to offer praise to God, as part of that.

**Confession** is, of course, when we account for the disconnection between us and God, the broken places in our relationship, and seek God's forgiveness to make us whole. We long to restore our relationships with God and one another and Confession is how we do that in prayer.

**Thanksgiving** is familiar to us. We offer thanks for what God has done in our lives or in the lives of those we love. This area is focused more on God's action and work in our lives.

**Supplication** is probably the most common type of prayer we use. Supplication is asking God to act, to

help. We ask on behalf of others (called intercession) for healing, for help, for strength, whatever it may be. We also ask for our own needs (called petition), for however we need God to act in our life today. We are sometimes reluctant to pray as much about our own needs as those of others, but it's important that we lift our own needs to God as well.

We don't do this to update God. In fact, God already knows what we need and what others need. None of this is news to God. We ask for our needs in prayer because doing so changes us. It changes how we look for God in our life and it opens us up to receive what God is already offering to us.

### **Collects**

A more formal type of prayer in our written liturgies is the Collect. We use Collects in our liturgy all the time. Sometimes when I use that word, people think I'm talking about the money offering or taking up a collection. In fact, the Collects as a prayer form are prayers said on behalf of the whole community – that is, everyone's prayers are 'collected' together into one prayer said for all.

In the first part of the Eucharist, we have the Collect for Purity near the beginning of the service. Some churches have taken to saying this together, but it is traditionally said by one on behalf of all. We'll look at this Collect in just a second.

We also have a Collect of the Day, which changes every Sunday or feast day, a prayer written only for that day, used at Morning or Evening Prayer or Eucharist. Collects are provided in both traditional and contemporary forms. There is also a Collect that follows the Prayers of the People in the Eucharist. We use Collects all the time.

In fact, anyone can write a collect. Collects are more structured than our personal prayers, of course, but it may help our own prayers to think through the parts of a collect. And, a collect, once

written, can be used by anyone, really – which may not be true of our informal personal prayers.

In the Book of Common Prayer, Collects follow the structure or pattern of Address, Description, Petition, Doxology. Let's look at these parts.

**Address** – Naming God, to whom the Collect is addressed. This could be as simple as "O God" - which it often is.

**Description** – The next phrase identifies some aspect of God, describing God's character or actions

**Petition** – The heart of the Collect asks God for what we need, usually related to the description section above. Sometimes this part includes a clause that says what we hope will happen – often starting with the phrase "so that"

**Doxological Ending** – we end with either a statement of praise about God or some sort of description of how we are praying - through Christ or through the Trinity, usually.

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#### *Example 1: Collect for Purity*

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

"Collect for Purity," *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 323 (also in traditional language on 355)

Let's break it down:

**Address:** "Almighty God,"

**Description:** "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid:"

**Petition:** Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we

may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name;”

Doxological Ending: “through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

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*Example 2: Collect for Fourth Sunday of Easter*  
(May 3, 2020 – next Sunday)

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people; Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter,”  
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 225 (also in traditional language on p. 173)

Let’s break it down:

Address: “O God,”

Description: “whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people;”

Petition: “Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads;”

Doxological Ending: “who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

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### Write your own Collects

*Adapted from materials prepared by Deacon Tracie Middleton, Diocese of Fort Worth.*

You can try your own hand at it! Try writing a collect in response to something you notice during your day, something that you want to commit in prayer that day.

Address

Use whatever form you wish to address God

Description

you are \_\_\_\_\_  
or who is/does \_\_\_\_\_ :  
Describe who you know God to be – attributes of character or past actions

Petition

We ask \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
Keeping in mind who God is, make your request in line with that knowledge  
(optional: so that \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
What for? What are you hoping will result?)

Doxological ending

through \_\_\_\_\_  
Part of our confidence in approaching God comes from remembering that Jesus connects us. How do you want to conclude your prayer?

### Invitation

Bishop Hughes wants you to write a prayer!

Whether it’s in a Collect form or some other form – it really can be in any form you want to use – we’d like to hear and share the prayers that you are creating. You may have just the prayer that others in our diocese need to hear.

Please send to me by email:  
[awright@dioceseofnewark.org](mailto:awright@dioceseofnewark.org).

I continue in prayer for you all and give thanks to God for all you do. I wish you God’s blessings as you go through the rest of your week.

Pax,  
*Canon Wright*

# Stories from Our Congregations

## Artists find inspiration in glass, clay and wood

*By The Rev. Sharon Sheridan Hausman*

As the COVID-19 pandemic has forced people across the world to shelter in place, many have turned to the arts for entertainment, solace and inspiration. *The VOICE Online* is profiling some of the many artists in the Diocese of Newark and sharing examples of their talents. This week's article features artists working in three different media.

### **Colleen Hintz**

*Member, Church of the Redeemer, Morristown*

The first time Colleen Hintz took a class on creating with stained glass, she emerged with bloody hands and instructions to bring her own box of Band-Aids. "I was basically in tears."

But, she'd paid for a six-week class, and she persevered. "By the time it was over, I made my first piece."

That was in 1980, and she's been working in stained glass ever since. "It's been a ton of fun."

Clergy and churches throughout the Episcopal Church and beyond routinely display Hintz's cloth handiwork in liturgical vestments from her business Fruit of the Vine ([www.fruitofthevine.us](http://www.fruitofthevine.us)). Hintz's successive homes in Sparta and Randolph and now the state of Virginia have displayed her stained-glass artistry.

In April, Hintz finished three windows for the family room in her house. "I call them part of my COVID blessings, to have the time to make them," she said.

Hintz reworked the new, square windows from transom windows she created for a previous

house. Wisteria vines wind across a background of clear glass, visited by multi-colored birds from a swooping swallow to a cardinal perched on a vine to a hummingbird sipping flower nectar. They continue the wisteria theme – inspired by the work of stained-glass artist Louis Tiffany – in three large windows that will be installed above. The flowers are so lifelike, they once attracted a real bird. "I heard this tap, tap, and it was a hummingbird at the glass... trying to feed at the wisteria."

One of the lower windows features a flowering crabapple with purple iris at its base – "what I refer to as my Dad Memorial Window," Hintz said. Much of her glasswork depicts nature scenes, inspired by both Tiffany and her father.

"I made my copy of the Tiffany grape arbor that is up over my fireplace," she said. "I've always admired his work, so I'll use those as a starting point."

Her spiritual connection to nature comes from her father.

"My dad never really grew up in church, but my dad was an intensely spiritual individual," she said. "He knew everything in creation, and he honored it and cherished it." In the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, "everything in creation was his brother or his sister."

"Dad and I would fish together all the time," she recalled. "Dad always fished from dusk until dawn because that was the best time to be on the stream, and you couldn't speak because you didn't want to disturb anything. I guess in many ways it was an intensely spiritual experience for me."

In both stained glass and vestments, she appreciates "being able to create the beauty that surrounds us and that he was able to name," she said. "All the flowers and everything I use... those were all things my dad taught me about: the awe and wonder of creation; those 'aha' moments in life.... I like to be surrounded by it. And now I don't need my first box of Band-Aids."

**Kathie Maglio**

*Member, Church of the Saviour, Denville*

"I've always loved art," said Kathie Maglio. "I can draw anything. I do cards all the time for my grandkids. I do cartoons. I can knit. I can paint."

But at Church of the Saviour, she may be best known for her pottery. Since retiring in 2010 from teaching art in the Randolph school district, she's found a new set of students as a volunteer for the Vision Loss Alliance, which meets at the church. She teaches blind and visually impaired adults ages 21 to 90 to create clay artwork.

"It's good for them," she said. "It's such a social thing, but they do some really good things."

Students create banks, vases, hearts, small animals (including doves and Easter bunnies), Christmas ornaments and crosses. One woman made a Corvette for her husband. Another student makes plaques as thank-you gifts.

"I just feel everybody can do art," Maglio said. "It's not about making a straight line, 'cause I can't!"

When classes first start, students pass around pottery items they or others have made to get ideas. Volunteers assist where needed, such as with lettering and detail work, but students do as much of the artwork as possible.

One challenge is that, "if you're born blind, you don't know color," Maglio said. "They don't know what color to paint their work. I'll say, 'Green is what the grass is.' ... It's hard to describe a color unless you can relate to something they kind of know. It's just a learning experience for me."

The latest 13-week class is on hiatus due to New Jersey's COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Under ordinary circumstances, Maglio fires clay works-in-progress every other week in a kiln at her house. "It takes more than eight hours."

Each piece requires two firings to complete: one after the clay is shaped, one after its final glazing. "Anything we work on and fire and finish, we pass

around for them to feel. They know what everybody's working on."

"I love three-dimensional [art]," Maglio said. She wrote a master's paper on the history of dragons in the world, from China to Norway, and then created clay dragons in different environments. "I did an emperor's dragon. I did a dragon in a swamp. I did a three-headed dragon. I did little eggs with little dragons coming out. I did a whole series for that class, even though I was really majoring in painting."

She continued the reptilian theme at home, using her daughter's pet as a model for a clay iguana on a branch.

When her daughter married, she created 150 clay birds as party favors for the guests. During her current downtime from teaching, "I'm making 25 little birds, so when I go back in September I can give each volunteer and each student a little bird," she said. "So far I have 17 birds made, all ready for firing."

Working with clay "calms me," she said. "It's almost like a meditation. Clay is a therapy. Art is a therapy." While focusing on creating art, "you don't worry about things that are happening in your life or around you."

**Chris Martin**

*Member, Church of the Messiah, Chester*

Woodworker Chris Martin specializes in resurrection. She loves to take old items and refurbish them – or give them new life as something entirely different.

"I just love old stuff, and I hate when people send something old out when it [just] needs to be fixed and paid some attention," she said.

Once, someone gave her a 1970s wagon wheel lamp. "I had it down in the shop for probably two or three years, and that's when I started getting into salvaging clocks," she recounted. One day, she walked past it and realized: "It had 12 spokes. I said, 'That's it! It's a clock!'"

She's since fashioned clocks on items like sawblades and a hubcap. "I have an orphanage here for old clocks," she said. "It has to look cool to me. It's not like I take any clock; it has to entice me."

She collects windows, too. That started when a client brought her a window from their grandmother's house. Martin suggested: "Why don't we paint it black, and we put a mirror in there?"

People started bringing her old windows. Soon, she was refurbishing them as frames for art prints. That started after she visited a Habitat for Humanity ReStore. "All of a sudden, I'm looking at this picture. It's of this old stone house at night in the full moon. The shadows that you got from the moon – it was just so cool.... I went back a week later, and it was gone."

But the picture made such an impression, she went online, tracked down the artist, Ray Hendershot, and bought the print.

Martin followed a circuitous career path before opening her current business, Woodworking Wonders. She took a shop class her senior year in high school – the first year such classes opened to female students – and "I thought it was really cool." But after graduating in 1974, she studied history and biology at Montclair State College and fulfilled a childhood dream of becoming a park ranger.

Then she owned a pet shop for 21 years, using her carpentry skills when needed at the store and creating things for fun at home.

Woodworking and home repairs emerged as a new business after she closed the shop. She especially loves working on historic structures. An owner planning to sell an 1880 house will call her to do work on it. She'll think: "How can I fix that, make it functional for the new people and make it look good?"

"Those are really cool projects," she said.

She thinks some of her love of "old stuff" stems from being raised by her grandmother, born in 1883. "It's like I was raised by somebody from two generations before. My grandfather, he was an actual artist who worked for McGraw Hill."

Woodworking is "very meditative," she said. "You're concentrating on what you're doing.... This is definitely my thing."

Her craft is interwoven with her spirituality. "To me, it's a God-given talent that I'm using," she said. "Some things are simple, but some things... when I get it done, I'm like, 'Wow,'" and I say, 'Thank you, God.'"

She also summons the wisdom of her forebears. "I tend to 'draw in' people that I have lost," she said. When she needs to draw a straight line, for example, she'll think of her grandfather, saying, "'Help me do this line.' What comes back is, 'Just take a breath and let it out and go.'"

Similarly, "my grandmother that raised me, I invite her in when I'm cooking and thinking about her.

"I wouldn't be here without those people, so I try to let them live on with me."

## Getting water to healthcare heroes

*By Birgitta Karlen*

A call to God's service can come from unexpected places, and one came to our congregation, Church of the Atonement in Tenafly, at the end of March. It was ten days since schools had been indefinitely shuttered, and a week since the diocese had instructed churches to temporarily cease gathering at their church buildings. COVID-19 had just crossed the Hudson River and was insidiously and stealthily infiltrating our suburban New York City enclaves. This was all new – for all of us – and most of us were uneasy.

Our Vestry made the decision to begin weekly phone calls to our parishioners, just to reach out and check in. My first phone call was to one of our church families, and the wife picked up. My casual

query, “So how are you doing?” began an unexpected conversation between us. I learned that she is usually a nurse at The Center for Ambulatory Surgery at Hackensack University Medical Center, but since COVID came, her unit had become a COVID unit. She said the situation at the hospital was dire; entire floors were now COVID floors, including the operating rooms. She said there were COVID patients everywhere, that nobody had seen anything like this before. Ever.

As elsewhere around the country, there was not enough PPE, specifically N95 masks, and the staff was fearful of contracting the virus themselves and/or bringing it home to their families. We talked about different options for protection against the virus, and she said that homemade masks were not effective for hospital workers because they didn't create a seal. Hearing the details of the COVID onslaught was truly heartbreaking, like calling someone on the front lines of a raging war.

I asked how we could help. She told me that restaurants and citizens were generously donating food, so everyone was being fed. I asked if there was anything else that she and her co-workers would possibly need. She responded that they could use bottled water for the doctors and nurses. COVID-19 was forcing healthcare workers to stay on their units for their entire 12-hour shifts, so anything they needed had to be brought in. I told her we would bring them bottled water.

I conveyed this conversation to our Vestry, and everyone was immediately on board. I also asked another nurse, who works at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck, if they had the same need. She said water would be great for them, as well.

Since then, our congregation has raised enough funds to purchase and deliver several dozen cases of bottled water to our healthcare heroes at Hackensack Medical Center and Holy Name Hospital. With the help of my two teenaged sons, we have made deliveries at approximately five-day intervals since the beginning of April and will

continue to do so until the water is no longer needed.

It is our hope that the nurses I spoke with, their colleagues, and all of the healthcare workers battling this disease, know that they are in our collective thoughts and prayers: that our congregations and communities are more grateful for their selfless service than they will likely ever know. Hopefully, our small contribution to this great crisis has eased their burden and lifted their spirits, if even just a little. We have been honored to help.

## Diocesan Resources & Announcements

Episcopal House is closed to routine operations at this time. Staff are continuing to work remotely from home, and can be reached via their usual work emails and phone numbers.

### Gratitude Matters: When Church Comes to Me at Home

*By Ross Wisnewski, St. Mary's, Sparta*

These days at St. Mary's Church in Sparta we are finding new ways to worship, to sing God's praise, and to serve those in need, thanks to so many resourceful, adaptive people who are pioneering new routes for our worship and for our connectedness to each other.

Everyone, it seems, is now zooming to church. I have been amazed at the realization I do not so much 'go to church' as that church now comes directly to me. As a result, my home, where I am sheltering in place, becomes quite literally, a house of worship. Our rector, Mother Debbie, our organist/choir director, Laura, our lay readers, all enter my home and shepherd me through the various complexities of online worship. Frankly though, I do not find it any more awkward than juggling a prayer book, a hymnal and a bulletin!

And of course, our youth are far more accustomed than I to accessing the world online. In recognition of this, on Palm Sunday, Renee, our Mustard Seed teacher prepared a lesson for her class immediately following our celebration of morning prayer. Hearing her greet her students and hearing their surprise and eagerness to be singled out was such a joy to those of us who miss seeing them scampering through the hallway on their way to class. That joy infused my home on Palm Sunday, and in recollection it continues to do so. May the peace of the Lord be with you.

## News from The Episcopal Church

### A Word to the Church: “What Would Love Do?”

*From Presiding Bishop Michael Curry*

Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult  
of our life's wild, restless sea,  
day by day his clear voice soundeth,  
saying, "Christian, follow me"

Text of Hymn 549, verse 1  
– Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95), alt.

Throughout the Book of Common Prayer there are rubrics, those small or italicized words that don't always catch our eye, that provide direction and guidance for how a liturgy or service is to be conducted. Rubrics tell us what must be done and what may be done. They limit us and they give us freedom. They require us to exercise our judgment. And when we are at our best, we exercise this judgment under God's rubric of love.

Jesus tells us things like: Love your enemies; Bless those who curse you; Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; As you did to the least of these who are members of my family you have done to me; Father, forgive; Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength. This is the first and great

commandment and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that the way of unselfish, sacrificial love – love that seeks the good and the well-being of others as well as the self – that love is the rubric of the Christian life.

This rubric of love is seen no more clearly than in the twenty-first chapter of the Gospel according to John.

When [the disciples] had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 21:15-19)

The death of Jesus had left his followers disoriented, uncertain, and confused, afraid of what they knew and anxious about what they did not know. Thinking that the movement was probably dead, the disciples went back to what they knew. They tried to go back to normal. They went fishing.

They fished all night but didn't catch a thing. Normal would not return. When the morning came, Jesus showed up on the beach, alive, risen from the dead. He asked them, “Children, have you any fish?” They answered, “No.” Then he told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. They

did and caught more fish than they could handle. And then, Jesus invited them to breakfast.

After having fed his disciples, Jesus turned to Peter and three times asked him, “Do you love me?” Three times Peter said, “Yes.” And Jesus said, “Feed my lambs,” “Tend my sheep,” “Feed my sheep.” In this, Jesus told Peter what love looks like. Love God by loving your neighbors, all of them. Love your enemies. Feed the hungry. Bless folk. Forgive them. And be gentle with yourself. Follow me. You may make mistakes, you may not do it perfectly. But whatever you do, do it with love. The truth is, Jesus gave Peter a rubric for the new normal – God’s rubric of love.

Today, like Peter and the disciples, we must discern a new normal. COVID-19 has left us disoriented, uncertain, and confused, afraid of what we know and anxious about what we do not know. Our old normal has been upended, and we hunger for its return.

I do not say this from a lofty perch. I get it. There is a big part of me that wants to go back to January 2020 when I had never heard of COVID-19, and when I only thought of “Contagion” as a movie. Looking back through what I know are glasses darkened by loss, I find myself remembering January 2020 as a “golden age.”

But of course, January 2020 wasn’t perfect, not even close. And anyway, I can’t go back. None of us can go back. We must move forward. But we don’t know for sure what the new normal will be. Fortunately, God’s rubric of love shows us the way.

In her book *The Dream of God* the late Verna Dozier, who was a mentor to me, wrote:

Kingdom of God thinking calls us to risk. We always see through a glass darkly, and that is what faith is about. I will live by the best I can discern today. Tomorrow I may find out I was wrong. Since I do not live by being right, I am not destroyed by being wrong. The God revealed in Jesus, whom I call the Christ, is a God whose forgiveness goes ahead of me, and whose love sustains me and the whole

created world. That God bursts all the definitions of our small minds, all the limitations of our timid efforts, all the boundaries of our institutions. [1]

Kingdom of God thinking is already happening. God’s rubric of love is already in action. I’ve been watching bishops, priests, deacons, and lay people of our church following Jesus in the practices that make up his way of love and doing things we never imagined. The creativity and the risk-taking – done with love – is amazing.

We’ve been trying, making mistakes, learning, regrouping, trying anew. I’ve seen it. Holy Week and Easter happened in ways that none of us dreamed possible. I’ve quietly read Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline online with you. I’ve seen soup kitchens, pantries, and other feeding ministries carefully doing their work in safe and healthy ways. Zoom coffee hours, bible studies, and small discipleship groups. I’ve seen this church stand for the moral primacy of love. I’ve seen it, even when public health concerns supersede all other considerations, including in-person worship. That is moral courage. Who knows, but that love may demand more of us. But fear not, just remember what the old slaves use to say, walk together, children, and don’t you get weary, because there is a great camp meeting in the Promised Land. Oh, I’ve seen us do what we never thought we would or could do, because we dared to do what Jesus tells us all to do.

As our seasons of life in the COVID-19 world continue to turn, we are called to continue to be creative, to risk, to love. We are called to ask, What would unselfish, sacrificial love do?

What would love do? Love is the community praying together, in ways old and new. Love finds a path in this new normal to build church communities around being in relationship with God. Love supports Christians in spiritual practices. Prayer, meditation, study. Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest.

What would love do? Love calls us to care for our neighbors, for our enemies. Love calls us to attend

to those in prison, to those who are homeless, to those in poverty, to children, to immigrants and refugees. Love calls us to be in relationship with those with whom we disagree.

What would love do? Love calls us to be gentle with ourselves, to forgive our own mistakes, to take seriously the Sabbath. Love calls us to be in love with God, to cultivate a loving relationship with God, to spend time with God, to be still and know that God is God.

Jesus says, *Simon, son of John, do you love me?*  
Jesus says, *Michael, son of Dorothy and Kenneth, do you love me?*  
Jesus says, *Do you love me?*

Jesus says, *Follow me, and take the risk to live the question, What would love do?*

This, my friends, is God's rubric of love. This, my friends, is God's very way of life.

In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us! By thy mercies,  
Savior, may we hear thy call,  
give our hearts to thine obedience,  
serve and love thee best of all.

Text of Hymn 549, verses 4 and 5  
– Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95), alt.

God love you. God bless you. And may God hold us all in those almighty hands of love.

Amen.

*+Michael*

The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church