

## From Our Bishop

### When God says “Go” but you can’t leave your house

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

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. It is Easter week and I am still thinking about the passage that we read on Sunday. I'm thinking about Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and how the angel of the Lord told them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus was alive, and they went as fast as they could, and in their running they ran straight into Jesus.

I'm thinking about the disciples – we didn't read about this section – but the disciples, once they heard that Jesus was alive and that the women told him that they would see him in Galilee, they got up and went. And I think of them in our own terms. Galilee was 90 miles away from where they were. If we were told that we could go see Jesus 90 miles away in Poughkeepsie – that's 90 miles from where I am right now – I would just get in my car and rush right over. But the disciples did not get in their car – they had to walk there. It would take me days to walk to Poughkeepsie from here, but they got up and they went.

So the thing that I started asking us on Sunday is to consider where it is that God is asking you to go. Now that's a hard thing to consider right now because we have a stay-at-home order that says that we can't go outside of our home. That we need to maintain this physical distance. But there's

something that we have learned in these weeks of being quarantined, and that is that we are so connected. That we're connected by our hearts, by our loves and by God's love for each of us. That that draws us together. It's drawn us together in worship, it's drawn us together in prayer, it's drawn us together in coffee hour online, and all the ways that we gather. It's drawing us together in picking up the phone, it's drawing us together in volunteering.

And so I ask you, from your home, where you are maintaining that physical distance, what is it that God is asking you to go and do? Because now is the time to go. Going may mean that it is teleconferencing, going may mean that it is a phone call, going may mean that it's writing a letter, going may mean that it's encouraging someone who needs encouragement, and going may mean that you sit in the foot of Jesus saying your prayers with as much fervency as such as that you have to bring. There's all kinds of ways we can go.

You know there's a group of people that I've been particularly worried about during this, and that is all of those college students that were released, especially the graduating seniors. They went home and they will not have their graduation. I imagine they're a pretty creative group of people, they're going to figure out ways to celebrate that with their college friends online. But they're not going to have that official rite of passage at the end of the time that they worked so hard to earn their degree. And also they're not having all those on-campus recruiters come on, and it might be hard figuring

out what your resume has, who it's going to be sent to and what your job prospects are. And I am wondering how God is asking us to go and encourage that group of people among us. Now if you've got one of those students in your own house I'm not saying it's your job, I'm saying it's the job of all of us around you. Of the people that know and have been a part of those students' lives as they were baptized and confirmed and went off to college. It's important for those students to know that we're praying for them. It's important for those students to know that we're willing to pick up the phone and help them find a place to apply for a job. It is important for them to know that they are not in this alone – and I suppose we all need to know that.

Here's the powerful thing about when we go – even when we're going from the safety of our own living room – that when we go, and when all of that time going is spent on the couch, but maybe on the internet or on the phone or writing a letter, that when we go we're helping ourselves and everyone else know that we are not alone. We are beloved by God and we are connected to each other.

## Easter 2020 – Running into Jesus

*(This is a transcript of Bishop Hughes' Easter sermon, which she gave during the live-streamed Easter service.)*

Thinking about Easter this week, I ran across these words from a poem that Pauli Murray wrote. The poem is "Devastation" and in it, Verse 8, it's in sections, in eight sections, and the section called Verse 8 has this phrase right in the middle as she talks about hope. And it says, "hope is a song in a weary throat." "Hope is a song in a weary throat." And that seems to describe so well, what this time is like, what this Easter is like, what Lent has been like.

Someone said to me recently, "Could we just put off Easter? Could we move it to later when everything is back to normal." And I thought, the

first thing I thought was, back to normal, I wonder what that's going to look like. How will we ever go exactly back to where we were, and, do we actually want to go back to that normal. There's some things that we've been learning we might want to hold on to.

But most of all I thought, no, we can't put off Easter until another time because we need Easter right now. Easter anchors us in who God is. It anchors us in God's love. It helps us to know more about God's love and who God is in that love, and because we're anchored in God's love we know more about ourselves. That we are beloved by God.

We need that from Easter. We need this resurrection, that's what makes Easter so important – the resurrection – and we claim that resurrection. Even the parts of it we may not know how to understand fully – we claim the resurrection, we claim the love that made resurrection happen, we claim the sadness, the sorrow in resurrection, we claim the mystery of resurrection, the power of resurrection, the transformation of resurrection, we claim Easter, because we claim God, and who we are as God's beloved people.

God whose love is so wide for us, so all-encompassing, so relentless, that when God got to the point where God thought, I cannot figure out how to stay in relationship with my creation, God found one more way and that way was one of the two events that makes us who we are as people of God. God came, God sent a part of God's self to incarnate to live among us, that part of God that we know as Jesus. Jesus was born like us, lived like us, learned like us, loved like us, ministered like us, died like us and the quintessential difference is that three days later Jesus rose. Alive.

That is something we had not been able to do on our own. Knowing that we will follow in his footsteps and we will rise again, alive, to live with

Christ, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. That this life that we're in is an important life, but our lives continue and go on. All of this born from God's incredible desire to be in relationship with us.

That love that God has for all people, and all means all to God. We are the ones that put boundaries around "all." God does not love the way we love. God looks at all of creation and thinks this is my creation, these are my people, whether the people believe or not does not matter to God. Whether we call the people them or us does not matter to God. Whether we say that people are right or wrong does not matter to God. Every single label we put on people does not matter to God because to God we are all beloved.

And God will come for us and stay with us no matter what trouble we may face. Even trouble so bad and so deep it makes the ground shake underneath us like Mary and the other Mary when they went to that tomb. Went to the tomb with sorrow, went to the tomb with the deepest of love needing to know that Jesus had been buried, that his body had been lovingly put into the tomb.

They got there in that sorrow and the ground moved underneath them, it shook, there was an earthquake and in that earthquake comes that fearsome creature. And it seems that angels are not the cuddly cherubs that we so cherish and put on our display as ornaments or on our mantels or on our trees. But angels seem to be these fearsome large creatures. The first thing they have to say is "Fear not" because they scare people so much.

In the midst of that earthquake comes this angel, and angel means messenger of God, comes this Messenger of God. In the midst of sorrow and shaking earth, and says, "I know who you're looking for and he's not here. He has risen from the dead like he said he would. Now go! Go and tell his disciples they can find him in Galilee."

And here's the really wonderful part to me about these women: they just went. He said go – now

maybe they were scared out of their minds and they would have just gone anyway – but, he said go and go tell the disciples and they went running as fast as they could. They didn't say, well my sorrow is private, my grief is private, my faith is private. They didn't say, I don't know that I have the right words. Is there somebody else who can convince the disciples better than me? They didn't say, I need proof before I go. They just went. And when they went they ran into Jesus. Oh my goodness the earth shook, the angel came, they ran and they ran in to Jesus. I wonder does anybody out there need to run into Jesus today.

I don't know about you but for me, I'm convinced this virus, Covid-19, has been our earthquake. We have been out of our churches for five weeks now. We have wondered how we worship and how we are Church without these buildings, and without a specific time where we gather. What will happen to our faith, how will we serve God, how will we serve other people.

We have watched as friends, family, neighbors lost their jobs. A friend of mine had a business and found out at five o'clock she had to shut it down at eight o'clock that night. She was in a state of shock, still is. That she had to close down her business that quick. We see the economic fallout. We see the death and the death toll that seems to strike higher and higher, further than anything we have ever expected.

And then there has been this strangeness of our leadership. In some odd way it feels like it was the NBA that made the entire nation say, we need to take this seriously, when they canceled their basketball season. Suddenly the whole nation took it seriously. I don't mean to denigrate how our leaders have worked it out and because some of them have truly risen to the occasion. But, it's been hard watching that struggle happen as a nation.

We've been in an earthquake all right, and there have been messengers of God all along the way.

We tend to think of messengers, we think that somebody's gonna walk right up to us and have a sign, or tell us, "Oh, these are the words that God has for you." But messengers come in so many different ways.

I think of the gift that technology has been to us. How it has drawn us together, not only in worship and in meetings and in businesses but connecting families and connecting friends. Those coffee hours and happy hours and lunchtime get-togethers that we have with our families. It was the most touching thing to me to watch one of my closest friend's family gather for Passover and listen to them singing their songs on video conference. They weren't at the same table. They were at many tables.

We've seen messengers be the neighbor to someone. To check and see if the elderly need help getting to the store. We've seen the messenger be the person who calls everyone on their calling lists. Rotating them every day, calling a different person so that those people know that they are loved and they aren't lonely. Everywhere we turn God is sending messengers. Sending people to help other people. And, sending God's Spirit to whisper into our ears, to encourage us to be compassionate, to encourage us to help other people. Thinking of a group of people that just gathered as much water as they could because it turned out their local community hospital didn't have enough drinking water for everyone who was working. They don't even know what inspired them to do that, they just said, "Let's gather water," and it turned out there was an incredible need.

I want to go even further as we think about this, because it's not just the messengers that we've been meeting up with, when we turn away from those things that scare us in this earthquake. When we take on those things that scare us in this earthquake. When we go the way those Marys went. Chances are we are going to run into Jesus. Jesus might look different than how we think Jesus

looks. But Matthew tells us every time we help that person that needed something to eat, every time we help that person that needed something to drink, every time we help that person that needed something to wear or needed shelter, that every time we help those people that we have helped Jesus.

And right now, Jesus is in need all over the place. There are people and food pantries and Episcopal churches and certainly in all kinds of houses of worship, all over this diocese, all over northern New Jersey, that see Jesus as they pack up food and hand it to someone who is hungry. Whether that person has been homeless and hungry for a very long time, or they're a student who no longer has access to the meals they would have had at school, or they're newly unemployed and those funds from unemployment and the stimulus have not come in yet.

We see Jesus as people sorrow. When they lay down their head and cry. We see Jesus in the loneliness of others. Every time we stretch out a hand, every time we pick up the phone, every time we make the offer of help every time we go. We see Jesus.

What this means for us, is we might have to give things up as we get to whatever it is that comes next. Some people are gonna call that the new normal. I don't know what to call it yet, because we're still in this and we don't know how much longer this is going to last. But what we will need every day of the rest of this and going into what comes after this, is the ability to be honest and name the tombs that we go to. The tomb of individualism that says I can make it on my own and I don't need anybody else. I don't know who my neighbors are and they don't need to know me because having to say hello to them is more trouble than I want. That tomb of individualism is a place that leaves us broke. That tomb of sorrow and of grieving that we seem so bent on acting like it's not happening, that we've got to force our way

through this. And I find that sometimes the way we force our way through this is to judge everybody around us. Rather than to face the facts that our hearts are broken. That we are not who we thought we are. That we are not as safe as we thought we would be.

And for us Episcopalians it's going to take being honest about the tomb of our church buildings. These sacred spaces that hold so much history and hold so many deep and loving memories. The thing is when we sat at that tomb and the messenger came to us about these churches it was a Wednesday and we found out we would not be in our churches on Sunday. And by Sunday we did the thing that we said was impossible. We said we could never get our worship online, we could never find someone to film things, we could never make this happen. We heard from the messenger and we went running. Running into church a completely different way. And, we've been meeting Jesus. We've been meeting Jesus on Zoom, on YouTube, on Facebook.

Not only have we been meeting Jesus, we've been talking about Jesus. When almost, not quite, but you would almost think we got a little Baptist, because we've been talking about Jesus so much because we've been excited about who we have been as church outside of our buildings.

There are things for us to know. There are things for us to learn. There is a song here, a song of hope even when our throats are weary. We are God's beloved, and this is Easter. And not only do we sing a song of hope, we sing a song of faith and a song of joy, we sing a song of sorrow, we sing a song of perseverance. And when we sing, our song is always, "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia." Amen.

# From Our Canons

## It's Easter. Now what?

*By the Rev. Canon Margo Peckham Clark*

Easter 2020 so far has been joyful, defiant – and strange. Everywhere on social media and in the newspaper were photos and videos of nearly empty, often beautifully decorated churches, and also photos of “normal” times and expressions of longing to return. Many, including myself, have noted that this was probably the first time in their entire life they didn't celebrate Easter by worshipping in a church building. The transformation was stunning, including all the incredible and moving ways God's people found to rejoice anyway. Joy and uncertainty, fear and hope all at once.

Easter is strange – perhaps this is a large part of what our bunnies and bonnets, as wonderful as they may be, help us to avoid. All has changed with the Resurrection, the very nature of being human, and in these days that follow, we watch the disciples struggle to understand and to figure out what happens next, what are they supposed to do? The Bible captures the strangeness, and their confusion and struggle. This year it seems very familiar to me, it comes very close to how I am feeling, and in the strangeness of what scripture recounts, and in what we are collectively experiencing in the here and now, the way forward is unclear and yet it glimmers with promise.

All that followed from the first Easter happened in uncertain halting steps taken by people with no road map other than Jesus. They didn't have a plan, they had Jesus. Everything seemed changed in a world that had already seemed dangerous. Maybe we need to hold on to that same uncertainty, and trust that we, like those first Christians, will find our way. Sometimes we have to admit we don't know.

So how do we do that? What does it look like for our churches to rest in the strangeness and wonder of Easter? We have seen in these last weeks, as Bishop Hughes has pointed out, incredible resiliency and creativity. We have moved very quickly into ways of being the church that didn't seem likely or even possible at the beginning of March. We need to remember this, to look at how we accomplished so much so quickly and let that guide our next steps. We need to hold on to how once we accepted that what we knew and expected could not happen, that what was important happened anyway by the grace of God, and by our persistence and vision.

These last years (decades even) have seen local parish churches change, and in many cases struggle, dramatically. Whether we have seen it or not, a common factor has been wondering about the future, trying to see how church could work in changing times. These last weeks have shown us, more than any method, plan or program, that the church is, because Jesus lives. If we remain constant to that truth and build on the experience of stepping forth quickly and decisively in faith, we will do amazing things, no matter how strange things are! When what's next emerges, we will find our way, as we have this Lent, Holy Week and Easter, and as God's people always have found the way – by seeking first God, and God's kingdom.

My friends, I am excited for what we will do next! We will make our churches and the world anew, because in Christ Jesus, God has made all things new!

# Stories from Our Congregations

## Four painters explore spirituality through art

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 four of our diocesan painters.

### **Debra Cook**

*Member, Grace Church, Nutley*

For Debra Cook of Bloomfield, the artist's journey and spiritual paths increasingly have intertwined and deepened each other.

Her art journey began in childhood.

"I started when I was 7," she recalled. "I have a picture that my mother saved. I drew a bagpiper sitting on a rock. I drew his plaid kilt and everything."

From there, she took every art class offered at school, served as arts editor of the school yearbook, attended the Parsons School of Design and the School of Visual Arts. As a mother, she created artwork and displays for her children's school and Scout functions. At her Presbyterian church, she directed Vacation Bible School every year. In 1996, she opened the Renaissance Art Studio in Bloomfield.

Then circumstances changed at her church, and she began praying to find a new church. In 2010, she attended a Christmas pageant at Grace, Nutley, where one of her students was performing. The church contains a series of early 1900s murals on canvas by English artist Clinton Balmer that are

mounted on the ceiling of the nave and the end wall of the chancel.

“I thought I was walking into heaven, with all the paintings on the ceiling,” Cook said. She told her husband, a Roman Catholic, that all she wanted for Christmas that year was for them to attend Christmas Eve service at Grace together. “That spring, we both joined the Episcopal Church.”

Cook began exploring liturgical art, learning how to write icons and do illumination. “My spiritual journey just keeps getting deeper and deeper into liturgical art,” she said. “It’s so exciting.”

Sometimes, she paints in reaction to current events, such as when ISIS beheaded a group of orange-clad Coptic priests in Libya in 2015.

“Sometimes that happens. I just get the feeling, and I have to do it,” she said. “I feel like the Holy Spirit is speaking to me. Rev. Pam [Bakal, Grace’s rector] sometimes calls me a mystic.”

She hasn’t yet painted anything in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But, in what she calls a “behold moment,” she posted on Facebook about how to “chalk your walk” with positive messages, and people in several surrounding towns followed her suggestion. She also posted about creating a rainbow picture to hang outside after hearing from her daughter in Germany about people creating rainbows there and in Italy. And she is giving her grandchildren online art lessons.

Cook closed Renaissance after eight years, switching to teaching art lessons at a home studio. In 2018, she launched Amour Colour de’Art. She teaches art lessons at her house, leads Advent and Lenten art workshops at churches, and holds wine-and-cheese painting parties at churches, including as a fundraiser for congregations. In January, she led children at a diocesan Prison Ministry workshop in painting a mural of themselves that was displayed at Diocesan Convention. At the wider

church level, she is a member of Episcopal Church & Visual Arts ([ecva.org](http://ecva.org)).

Cook works in a variety of artistic media, including doing photography, but she sees herself primarily as a painter and likes working in acrylics best. “I do like colored pencil, too,” she said. “That’s what I do botanical art with.”

### **Melissa Hall**

*Rector, St. James, Upper Montclair*

For the Rev. C. Melissa Hall, the COVID-19 pandemic spawned a rebirth, of sorts, for her painting career.

In 2008, she and a now-retired Diocese of Newark priest, the Rev. Judy Baldwin, began a weight-loss endeavor of walking together daily alongside the Hudson River in Hoboken, where Hall then lived. They began noticing old pieces of logs and lumber and other wooden detritus.

“These beautiful pieces of wood were washed up along the river. We started to collect them. We didn’t know why. This went on for about a month and a half.”

Then Hall’s partner, Fran Lapinski, said: “Enough! What are you going to do with all this?”

“I said, ‘I’m going to paint on it.’ She said to me, ‘You don’t paint.’ And I said, ‘Well, I will.’”

Thus River Bones was born.

“I started to paint on these pieces of wood and started to make things out of it,” Hall said. “I’ve got a piece upstairs. It’s like 6 feet long and 4 feet high. Someone had written on the back of it: ‘Take me home.’ So I did. I still do it.”

Over time, she expanded into painting on other surfaces, from conventional canvas to unconventional plastic torso forms from bathing suits, which she turned into five women’s faces and heads called The Bad Girls of the Bible, depicting women including Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba.

She prefers working in acrylics, both for their quick drying time and because “they have a mind of their own,” she said. “You start to push them around. They push back.” And something new and different than the artist imagined emerges.

A medical condition that affected her eyesight changed her painting style.

“When I started to lose my eyesight, it was distressing because, the preciseness of the art – I could not do that anymore,” she recalled. She began painting with bigger, bolder strokes.

One day, she created a painting “by accident.” She used red and blue – “not necessarily colors I’d put together.

“When you look at it, they’re women. They’re women dancing. When it happened, I couldn’t see it. I was just kind of slapping paint on there.”

But her daughter Katherine looked at the finished product and said: “Look at all the women you painted!”

“If you just relax and let it happen, the Spirit comes through you,” Hall said. “The Spirit handles the creativity.”

Entering Holy Week, Hall was awaiting the Spirit’s prompting.

Two Sundays earlier, she and Lapinski had gone for a walk in Montclair. “I said, ‘Let’s walk down the train tracks.’ How insane is that? It was that feeling of everything had stopped... nothing was usual.

“We walked down the train track from one station to another. Along the way, what did I find but these huge spikes, lots of them, that they use to put the rails into the ground, and these enormous screws.... I’ve started to collect them. I have about 14 of them. They’re in my backyard.”

“Every day, I go out, and I lay them on the ground, and I arrange them, and I look at them, and I’m

waiting for the Spirit to say, ‘Oh, do this.’ I think I’m going to paint them.”

“It is ‘found art.’ I just don’t know what it will be yet,” she said. “It’s River Bones all over again.”

### **Connie Halliwell**

*Member, St. Peter’s, Morristown*

“I’m not really painting spiritual topics or anything, but I do have to say, when I really get into it, it’s kind of a meditative process,” says Connie Halliwell. “It puts you in a reflective zone.”

Halliwell has been entering that “zone” for many years, and exhibiting and selling her work for four decades. She started painting as a child and majored in fine arts at Tufts University. She found her favorite medium – watercolor – while taking an adult school course in the late 1970s.

“I always come back to watercolor,” she said. “I just like... the light affects you can get with it.” It also has a practical side: “For most of my adult life I was painting in my dining room, and I didn’t want to have the mess and the smell of oil paints in there.”

Halliwell took several watercolor classes with the adult school instructor, a retired artist from Picatinny Arsenal. After a while, he pulled her and several other students aside and said, “You people really should go into an art show.”

Halliwell followed his advice. She earned her living as a schoolteacher, spending 25 years teaching mostly sixth-grade social studies at the Long Valley Middle School. But in her free time, she began entering art shows and taking additional classes and workshops.

She volunteered for eight years as a watercolor instructor at Heath Village Retirement Community, where she now lives. She served in various roles, including president, with the Art Association in Roxbury and is an exhibiting member of the Essex Water Color Club.

After retiring from Long Valley, she joined – and for a while coordinated – an informal group of artists who would gather at various outdoor locations to paint. They visited sites from historic Waterloo Village in Byram and the Cooper Mill in Chester to Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morris Township and the Convent of St. John Baptist in Mendham.

“That was a good experience, painting on location,” she said. “That really, I think, improved my painting. I wouldn’t often finish the painting [on site], but I’d at least have a watercolor sketch to bring home.”

Typically, Halliwell photographs a location she wants to paint, then does preliminary black-and-white sketches at home to “get it the way I want, and then I’ll do a bigger drawing.

“Some people can just go out there and just start painting, and they do it all in one sitting. I’m more one that will plan ahead and do a preliminary drawing and transfer it, especially if there’s buildings, because I want the [right] perspective.”

While she paints various subjects in different styles, she tends toward realistic paintings and especially enjoys including buildings in her artwork, she said. She likes the interplay of lights and darks and shadows. “I’ve just always been intrigued by the way light hits on surfaces,” she said.

Those buildings have included St. Peter’s, her long-time parish in Morristown. Her late parents also were members, and she first painted the church as a present for her father. Later, she sold prints of the painting at art shows at the church. She also painted the church on commission for a parishioner.

While many of her paintings feature building exteriors, she painted a view of the inside of St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna after a trip there in 2005. The acrylic shows a man sitting in a pew and praying, light streaming through the windows behind him.

“It was one of my favorite paintings I’ve ever done,” she said.

### **Lynne Bleich Weber**

*Rector, Atonement, Tenafly*

The Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber was attending an eight-day Jesuit retreat in Gloucester, Mass., when her art and prayer life connected in a powerful way.

These summer retreats, which she attended annually for several years, “were just profound spiritual experiences for me in a beautiful setting,” she said. In her free time, she sketched watercolors of the ocean and surrounding area.

One day, one of her spiritual directors asked: “Have you ever used your art in your prayer life?”

The idea made sense, Weber said, “particularly with Ignatian spirituality, because it’s all about the imagination. It’s all about entering into the biblical story and imagining yourself there.

“I started to do that that year. It was a wonderful experience,” she said. “I have to admit, I’ve had a hard time doing that when I’m not on retreat. There was something about being in that beautiful setting and spending all that time in prayer and, whether it was while you were praying or when you were dreaming, it all sort of flowed together. [It’s] much harder to do when you’re home and working.”

Still, some of those art-prayer experiences continue to resonate. On one retreat, during an “imaginative prayer” exercise, she experienced the story of Nicodemus meeting with Jesus by night in a new way – “very, very different from the way I had interpreted it or understood it before.”

“It was Jesus and Nicodemus caught up in the Spirit.... Like whirling dervishes, they were dancing together. Jesus was going, ‘It’s the Spirit.’ Nicodemus was saying, ‘Oh, I see!’

“I had to find a way of painting that.”

Years later, “I don’t always preach on it exactly that way,” she said. “[But] it’s impossible for me to preach on that text without thinking about that experience and looking back on that watercolor that I did.”

In worship, she sometimes invites parishioners into the creative process, by offering a painting station or providing them with pieces of paper to color or write on, based on a sermon’s theme, and placing them all on one canvas.

Weber has created art most of her life – beginning with drawing as a child and painting in high school – but not always consistently. As an adult working in advertising and busy at church while living in a small place in New York, “I went a lot of years without painting.”

But working with a clergy coach “really made a big difference for me,” she recalled. She learned to set aside time for self-care, including painting and taking retreats. In 2010, she spent two months on sabbatical in the British Isles and France thanks to a Lily Foundation clergy-renewal grant.

Weber creates mostly oil paintings, but sketches in watercolor when she travels. During the sabbatical, “I did a lot of sketching and watercolors.... It really inspired me for a long time.”

Last fall, she signed up for an art class as she resumed painting again after a hiatus necessitated by family obligations.

She enjoys participating in painting classes. “Everybody has a different style. Everybody has a different experience. You sort of encourage each other.”

Right now, she’s “trying a little bit of everything,” from still life to abstract art, she said. “I’m sort of trying to figure out whether I want to continue in the style I was working on after my sabbatical, or if I want to try some new things.”

One constant remains: her focus on the sky. “My landscapes are about 5/6 sky and 1/6 land,” she said. Looking through sabbatical pictures on her phone, every other photograph was of a sky and clouds, she said, “all the skies I wanted to use as resources for paintings.”

“That’s still something that really moves me,” she said. “It still just draws me in. I call it my heaven and earth series.”

## Diocesan Announcements & Resources

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.

All diocesan events scheduled in April have been postponed or canceled. A decision about May events will be made later in April.

### Stewardship Reflections: Gratitude Matters

This is the third in a series of reflections written by members of the diocese that reflect on concepts of stewardship, gratitude, and generosity in a time of pandemic, anxiety, and fear.

#### Gratitude for God’s Love

*By David Farrand, Calvary Church, Summit*

*God says, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.’ This is a fundamental truth of your identity. This is who you are whether you feel it or not. You belong to God from eternity to eternity. Life is just a little opportunity for you during a few years to say, ‘I love you too.’*

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Finding My Way Home*

I recently came upon this quote from the work of the late Henri Nouwen who remains an inspirational force in the effort to raise funds for the church and other charitable institutions. It struck me that here is an approach to asking for support without seeming to judge or to deliver guilt.

I know that “...God so loved the world...” I know that the Holy Eucharist is also known as The Great Thanksgiving; and why. Nouwen invites us to accept God’s love and, perhaps further, to look for signs that we are loved. And then, almost naturally, to think about how – beyond prayer – to return God’s love. In a quiet, gracious way, he sets up a feeling of gratitude which I believe is the precedent for generosity.

### Sign up for diocesan e-newsletters

If you have email, you can sign up to receive The VOICE Online, currently published weekly on Wednesdays. Visit [dioceseofnewark.org/subscribe](https://dioceseofnewark.org/subscribe).