



EPISCOPAL
CHURCH OF NH

63 Green Street
Concord, NH 03301

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Manchester, NH
Permit No. 724

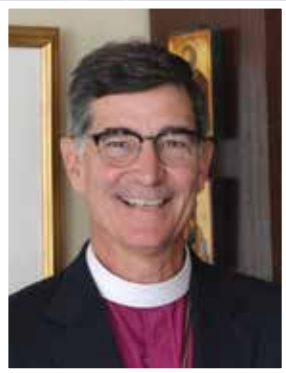
Epiphany 2021

News From The Vine
A Publication From The Episcopal Church of NH



News From The Vine

A Publication From The Episcopal Church of NH



Letter from Bishop Rob

In the past, I would send out small, colorful cards to every household of the congregation where I served as priest. The message, printed in elegant Victorian script, was simple:

*May you behold the glory and peace of
God in the Holy Child of Bethlehem as you receive your
Christmas Communion.*

Christmas Communion means something different this year. We find ourselves in a strange spiritual place, a scattered place and eager for a new light to pierce the gloom, pain, and sadnesses of the past year. I, for one, diligently seek a new mood to descend on the world, a new perspective that will once again give us all those things our hymns and carols and scripture readings repeatedly mention: Hope. Peace, Glory, Goodwill, Light, Gladness, Joy.

What do I say to the Church this Christmas and Epiphany-tide about the ancient mystery of God-with-us? When stumped, I often go to my shelves of old prayerbooks. There I find this:

O God, you have declared thy love unto humankind by the birth of the Holy Child of Bethlehem: Help us to welcome him with gladness and to make room for him in our common days; so that we may live at peace with one another and in goodwill with all thy family; through the same thy Son, Jesus Christ.

What strikes me new about this old prayer is nothing new at all. In fact, it is the most basic, timeworn truth upon which all our faith is settled. God seeks entrance to “our common days.” We are to feel gladness in this welcoming of God’s eternal presence in our life. And, having welcomed the Holy Child, how we relate to one another changes. We can live at peace and share goodwill with all. That’s an old truth worth telling anew.

This prayer is grounded in how the earliest church came to understand how God comes to us in Jesus. God steeped Godself in humanity, in one human being found on the very fringe of society. From that tiniest child, God’s very presence radiates and pours out and overflows to all humanity. As a result, humanity and divinity become inseparable.

One theologian from the 8th century, Andrew of Crete, likened the God-made-human event of Christmas to when one places cold hard iron in a fire. Soon the iron becomes red hot, so much so that one can’t pull apart the fire from the iron — energy and matter become one. Such is how God’s love enters human flesh and blood and mind and soul. When we draw near to Jesus, we get that God-force, if not all of it, though we know how we wander so often and become cold again. And that God-energy is love. Let me try another metaphor.

Remember Spring? Remember how the days get longer at both ends, both early in the morning and late in the day? Remember how your windows are open in your bedroom and your blinds are up just a bit? Remember how the early light begins to flood your room, even passing through your eyelids. Remember how it may still be mostly dark outside, but at the first light, a wren, or a robin, or a blackbird can wake up the whole neighborhood, even before the first alarm clock?

That dawn is coming, my friends. That dawn starts stretching out to reach us at Christmas, the day when, after the lingering effects of solstice, the days start getting longer, and brighter, and cheerier. There is nothing new about these things, yet every year it comes as a *canticum novum*, a new song.

And the prayer I cite contains even more welcome news for us this year as we turn from 2020 to the possibilities of 2021: this new light, this new song, this new infusion of God’s embodied love for us in Jesus, does not leave us unchanged. We are not the same as a result of Christmas, and perhaps especially THIS Christmas. As the room is filled with new light, new fresh

“Letter from Bishop Rob” continued inside...

ANNUAL CONVENTION HELD VIRTUALLY

Over 230 Attend
Via Zoom and
YouTube



The 218th Convention of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire was successfully conducted online, over two days, this past November 13 and 14.



The Rt. Rev. Shannon
MacVean-Brown

Convention opened on Friday evening with worship and an inspiring sermon from guest preacher the Rt. Rev. Shannon MacVean-Brown, Bishop of Vermont. Bishop Shannon shared her experiences and insights about learning about her ancestry, tracing her family to enslaved peoples living on a plantation in South Carolina. She spoke of discipleship, the way of love, and the need for meaningful racial reconciliation and reparation, and what that means for us all.

On Saturday, Bishop Rob opened his annual address saying,

*“Behold, I am doing a new thing,
do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19*

Usually we see our Annual Convention as a time to tout accomplishments and share our goals for the year ahead. In these addresses, I’ve striven to provide encouragement, a spiritual boost, and clarity of vision that sets a direction for the time ahead. This year is both no different and completely different.”

Bishop Rob expressed our shared grief over our exile and the opportunity to seek new meanings and new purpose. “Exile makes people see things with new eyes,” said Bishop Rob. “We might see things that we would not have noticed before. We come to appreciate afresh what we missed. Perhaps God sends God’s people into Exile in order to show them who they really are. Perhaps people leave their homes on pilgrimages because even being home they are homesick.”

The Bishop also spoke of new growth from the pruned vine and new shoots growing from the stump — “New things” in the diocese, including the efforts of Renewal Works, the School for Ministry, the new mission in the town in Franklin, the creation of a church in the Ashland, Plymouth, and Holderness region, and a renewal of the Episcopal Identity at White Mountain and Holderness Schools.

He reflected upon the calming, contemplative, spiritually-grounding presence on social media of our priests and lay leaders: the Rev. Colin Chapman’s Red Church Door Podcast, Linnae Peterson’s educational contributions on Facebook, Aaron Jenkyn’s Messy Church in Newport, nightly Compline offered by Archdeacon Derek Scalia and Deacon Maryan Davis, and the revival of the Daily Office services by the laity in several of our congregations. “There are some shoots coming out of the painful clearcutting of the past year,” noted the Bishop.

A New Congregation! Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

In addition to elections, appointments, and reports, the convention considered and approved three resolutions, including a resolution to admit a unified Episcopal mission congregation in the Pemi-Baker Valley region into union with the

Convention of the Diocese of New Hampshire. The resolution unites the congregations who have historically worshipped as Church of the Holy Spirit, Plymouth, and St. Mark's, Ashland, and welcomes that new congregation — named Emmanuel Episcopal Church — into the Diocese of New Hampshire. Welcome!

Committing to Racial Reconciliation and Reparation

A Resolution for the Study of and Actions Leading to Reparations was also approved by the convention. The intent of the resolution is to carry out the Episcopal Church's Presiding Officers' efforts to follow "the Way of Love" in order to act in accordance with our baptismal vows, in particular as it pertains to racial justice in the history and actions of our state and church.

The resolution calls all congregations and Episcopal schools:

- ☺ To a covenant with each other that commits to consistent and long-term actions toward racial reconciliation throughout our communities.
- ☺ To affirm their Baptismal vows of seeking to serve Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of every human being; and follow the *Becoming the Beloved Community* long-term framework of telling the truth, proclaiming the dream, practicing the Way of Love, and repairing the breach as described in the Episcopal Church resource *Becoming Beloved Community...Where You Are*.
- ☺ To commit to the study of actions that lead to reparations and reconciliation in New Hampshire addressing legislation, education, access to healthcare, housing, economics, and other areas as appropriate.

Uplifting Virtual Connections

In addition to the business of the annual convention, two wonderful videos were created and shared at the convention. The first was a "Quire" — an archaic English spelling of "choir." Coming from several congregations, the Quire virtually recorded and produced the hymn, "No

Saint on Earth Lives Life to Self Alone." It was presented on Saturday morning. Over two dozen voices performing separately, yet together, created this lovely, moving music.



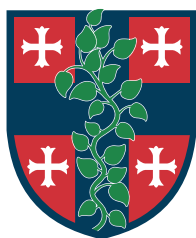
From the photo montage, "New Paths of Discipleship." The Rev. Josh Hill, Chaplain of the Holderness School

The second video was an inspiring montage of photos and video clips titled, "New Paths to Discipleship," that demonstrated the range of ministries continuing during this time of pandemic — revealing and celebrating the congregations throughout New Hampshire that are very much "open" during COVID!

Online Links and Resources

As you might expect, there were a few minor technical bumps in the road, but everyone engaged in the virtual convention with grace and patience. Thanks to all for making it work!

Watch both days of the full convention, Bishop Rob's annual address, the Quire video, "New Paths to Discipleship," and more, by clicking on the links found on the Diocese' Convention webpage at www.nhepiscopal.org/convention. Or, visit the Diocese' YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/c/nhepiscopal.



Follow The Episcopal Church of New Hampshire

SIGN UP FOR ENEWS!

A regular e-newsletter is sent to church members, clergy and lay leaders, delegates, wardens, and retired clergy. Anyone who is interested may join the mailing list by emailing their interest to ajboots@nhepiscopal.org.

OUR WEBSITE: www.nhepiscopal.org

ON FACEBOOK: [Episcopal Church of NH](https://www.facebook.com/Episcopal Church of NH)

ON YOUTUBE: [NHEpiscopal](https://www.youtube.com/c/nhepiscopal)

ON TWITTER: [@NHEpiscopal](https://twitter.com/NHEpiscopal) [#NHEpiscopal](https://twitter.com/NHEpiscopal)

The School for Ministry Takes Flight

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL START, ADAPTING AND PLANNING FOR 2021

There's no doubt: 2020 was a challenging year to start a new school. But there have been as many unexpected blessings as there have been challenges for the School for Ministry.

Housed at Trinity Episcopal Church in Tilton, NH, the School for Ministry is designed for those who are seeking an alternative to attending a conventional residential seminary due to family, employment, or other ties to their community. Dedicated to local formation, the school includes the six study areas required by the Episcopal Church's canons — scripture, church history, theology, ethics, worship, and practice of ministry — in line with the School's core values: common prayer; life in community; and context and continuity in ministry.

The School for Ministry was originally planned as a low-residency program. The pandemic required the school to rethink, and operate completely online, at least to start. "Unofficially, we launched mid-summer with weekly, one-hour virtual conversations and Compline," said the Rev. Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Dean of the School for Ministry. "Studies officially began in September, with students and mentors meeting online one weekend a month."

The School opened with six students who are preparing for the priesthood. As required, all students have been admitted into the ordination process and approved by Bishop Rob. Aaron Jenkyn, a student at the School for Ministry and Missioner of Newport, NH, at Epiphany Church, chose the School for Ministry, saying, "My ministry started in Newport and it is a community that supported and loved me into my call to ordained ministry. I couldn't imagine leaving Newport and I wasn't convinced that now was the time to attend seminary — if it meant leaving. Newport is my primary call right now.

This option allowed me to be present in my community, with my family, and continue in my primary ministry."

Some students are on a three-year educational track to complete their preparations for the priesthood. Others are enrolled in a one-year Anglican Identity track — mentored this year by the Rev. Mike Greene, Rector of Good Shepherd, Nashua — for students with prior theological education and formation, typically coming from other religious traditions.

"We all wondered how this was going to work virtually," said Sundberg Seaman. "Could we form a sense of community remotely? I think establishing and continuing our weekly online conversations and Compline has created a steady rhythm of talk and prayer. It's an adaption to the pandemic and is a practice that has helped in creating community and fellowship among us."

"One of the things that was so appealing to me was the fact that we were going to get together with each other once a month," noted Jenkyn. "So at first it was a disappointment to imagine how we were going to do this remotely. And then, out of the conversations, the coming together, the shared uncertainty we all felt, and Kelly's remarkable leadership, a community has emerged — not only on the weekends we get together, but every week when we gather to pray. We



Ministry Transition Updates: The following transitions and celebrations

✿ **The Rev. Sandra (Sandi) Albom** has been called as Interim Rector at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Sandi had been serving as Priest Associate at All Saints, Peterborough after finishing her curacy there. Sandi has also recently been elected to serve a two-year term on the Board of Directors for the Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church.

✿ **The Rev. Ray Bonin** has been appointed part-time Executive Director of Isaiah 58, a NH non-profit organization whose mission is to assist

homeless and low-income individuals and families in obtaining adequate housing, maintaining a self-sufficient lifestyle, and helping pay the rent of those in danger of eviction. Ray feels that the work meshes well with his part-time position as Rector of Church of the Transfiguration, Derry.

✿ **The Rev. Susan Eibner** has been called as Interim Vicar to uniquely serve four Episcopal/Lutheran churches located in the greater Claremont region — Trinity Church/Prince of Peace Lutheran, and Union/St. Luke's Episcopal. Susan succeeds the **Rev. C. Richard**

Davenport, who is currently on medical leave. A farewell for Richard was held on Zoom, November 16, celebrating the good work that the parish accomplished under Richard's leadership.

✿ **The Rev. Cricket Cooper** has expanded her ministry at St. Thomas, Hanover and is now serving as Interim Associate Rector alongside the **Rev. Dr. Guy Collins**.

✿ **The Rev. Peggy Schnack**, Curate at St. Paul's, Concord, was sworn in as part-time chaplain to the Concord Police Department. Peggy will be a pastoral resource to support the overall

support each other behind the scenes too. We have coalesced as a group.”

“The school isn’t just about academics,” emphasizes Sundberg Seaman. “It’s truly about formation, not academic credentialing.” The program is rigorous but proving to be flexible and adaptable. As assignments and readings in the syllabi have proceeded, Dean Sundberg Seaman, collaborating with her students, has been quick to modify the learning in ways that are most helpful for students.

For those currently serving in a ministry, every aspect of the curriculum impacts their ministry and is immediately applicable — from preaching to pastoral care. “For example, in my ministry, few people were praying the Daily Office every day before the pandemic,” said Jenkyn. “Now, many people are. Something is happening. The prayer book is coming alive. Let’s talk about that.”

With hopes of returning to an in-person, low residency model sometime in 2021, Sundberg Seaman says that post-pandemic, some new approaches will persist. “The weekly virtual meeting and prayer has proven to be really meaningful, and will continue as a way of coming together and to support community-building and fellowship.” She added that “Inviting guest presenters and speakers to meet with students virtually has also been effective. Going forward, the option of inviting guests to present remotely will help engage students with a deeper and more diverse range of experts.”

In 2021 the remodel of Trinity church in Tilton, NH, will be completed and the building will be fully ready for worship and learning. Sundberg Seaman also hopes to reach out to students from New Hampshire’s immediate neighbors — Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts.



“Another important aspect of the school’s mission is to support formation among the laity,” said Sundberg Seaman. With Canon Tina Pickering, she is working on programs for lay persons, such as “How to Lead a Daily Office,” and to lay the ground work for programs for licensed lay persons — those who may

be called to preach or teach, for example.

The School for Ministry is particularly suited for bi-vocational calls. However, Sundberg Seaman adds, “A bi-vocational call is not a limitation or an expectation in the program. There are no ‘second class’ priests — you are ordained as a priest for the whole church! It’s simply something we recognized as an important and emerging trend, and designed into the framework of the school.”

“Ordained and lay ministry are highly individual, complicated, and particular callings,” continued Sundberg Seaman. “The School for Ministry makes it possible to pursue discernment, ask questions, and address these wonderings without presuming that you will have to pull up stakes, quit your job, and move somewhere to attend seminary full time.”

Jenkyn reflected, “I feel I have entered into seminary with my sponsoring parishes, and with my extended family and friends, because I am rooted in place — my home, my community. And that, for me, is really important.”

That is the real gift of this school.

For more information about discerning your path in faith, visit www.nhepiscopal.org/exploring-gods-call. For more information about the School for Ministry, visit www.nhepiscopal.org/sfm.

News are joyful reminders that the Church has remained open and active in the midst of the pandemic.

wellbeing of the officers and staff of the Concord Police Department, as well as the Concord community.

✿ **The Rev. Leah Torrey** was ordained to the priesthood November 7, at a small outdoor service at Church of the Woods, Canterbury. Leah will continue to serve as Curate to St. Martin’s Church in Fairlee, VT.

✿ A Discernment Grant in the amount of \$5,000 was awarded to the **Rev. Alanna Van Antwerpen** through the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church on behalf of the Task Force for Church Planting and Congregation

Redevelopment. Alanna is discerning a possible church plant in the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire.

✿ **The Rev. Greg Baker** is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood on January 18. **The Rev. Kathy Boss** is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood on March 20. Both ceremonies are subject to the changing circumstances of the pandemic. **Chris Potter’s** ordination to the diaconate was postponed in December and will be rescheduled as soon as public health conditions permit.

✿ The search committee of **St. George’s Episcopal Church, Durham** is in the

process of interviewing candidates to serve as their new rector. The position is ¾ time, and includes campus ministry opportunities. Please keep St. George’s and the candidates they are considering in your prayers during this time of deep discernment.

If you are interested in learning more, or happen to know of someone seeking a new call, please contact the **Rev. Canon Gail Avery**, Canon for Transition and Community Engagement at gavery@nhepiscopal.org.

Standards of Conduct, Transparency, Justice: UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF "TITLE IV"

It's long and complicated. It's filled with legalese, and process. It's called "Title IV" of the Church canons. You may have never heard of Title IV, but it is an important set of canons (church laws) that establish standards of conduct for clergy and provide a process for reconciliation, discipline, and justice.

According to the national church's website (www.episcopalchurch.org/title-iv/ecclesiastical-discipline), "Title IV... addresses the grounds and processes for 'ecclesiastical discipline,' a canonical process adopted by the Church to encourage accountability, reconciliation, and pastoral response when a member of its clergy (deacons, priests, or bishops) are accused of misconduct."

The news and media tend to focus on high profile cases of sexual abuse and misconduct. However, Title IV includes broad standards of behavior including dishonesty, fraud, retaliation, hostile work environment, harassment, unfair treatment, or any conduct "unbecoming a member of the clergy." In many respects, Title IV is analogous to secular law governing workplace behavior and human resources.

"It's critically important that people know that there is such a thing as Title IV, and that it establishes a high moral and ethical standard for clergy," said Tina Pickering, Canon for Ministry Development. "It's equally important to know that if anyone has issues or concerns, or is feeling uncomfortable, there is recourse — a safe path within the church for people to share their story."

CREATING THE HEALTHIEST CHURCH POSSIBLE

The goals of Title IV are restitution, justice, reconciliation, and healing. The intent of Title IV is not punitive. "This is about creating the healthiest church possible," noted Canon Tina. "The Church seeks to be as transparent as possible about Title IV and we want to make sure that people know there's a process that is supportive and caring and interested."

Do you want to talk? Where do you start? The diocese has two Diocesan Title IV Intake Officers who can be reached by phone or email. The Diocesan Intake Officers are the Rev. Caroline Hines and Canon Tina Pickering. For more information, including contact information, visit www.nhepiscopal.org/clergyconduct?rq=Title%20IV. The Rev. Caroline and Canon Tina will listen with respect and confidentiality, respond with a sense of pastoral care, and provide information about next steps in the Title IV process.

"If you see or hear something you are uncomfortable with, or experience something you are uncomfortable with, please, say something," Canon Tina emphasized. "We want to hear your story."

"Letter from Bishop Rob" continued from front page:

air, and the song of blackbird, so our hearts are changed. We are newly moved and inspired to live at peace with each other, in good will with the whole human family, with new love for the earth Jesus created, breathed in, drank from, and walked upon. That God took on our flesh means that we get to start again and see all our neighbors as agents of God's grace. Justice sprouts from that vision since justice is love made visible.

May this vision of God's new song, sung in our every encounter, be our real Christmas Communion this year. And may God's infinite compassion break upon us in a dawn like no other we've known before.

Faithfully Yours in Christ's Light,



The Rt. Rev. Robert Hirschfeld

