thrive!

SPRING 2015

EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
OF CHICAGO
MAGAZINE

The ministry of the fishing pole
Making worship work for young families
Burmese refugees find help, make a home

Letter from Bishop Lee

"…attending to the opportunities where God calls us to show up faithfully again and again can have transformative effects for all involved."

At the top of my list of "improbable and amazing" ways to make a difference in the world is St. Chad's catfish ministry to Loves Park and the Rockford area. Indeed, back when we began Thrive! magazine three years ago, if you had told me we'd have a catfish on the cover, I'd have said you were crazy. And yet, this very improbable and amazing ministry coming from an unexpected place is really making a difference in the lives of that congregation and certainly in the lives of the people it feeds. If I ever need reminding of the many diverse and glorious ways our faith can be lived out in the world, the cover of this issue will certainly do the trick.

If you visit St. James Commons or encounter my team out and about the church, you'll often hear us say that what you focus on grows. Whether it is using a hobby like fishing to feed your neighbors, mentoring a young person in a summer job, or creating welcoming places for children in worship—attending to the opportunities where God calls us to show up faithfully again and again can have transformative effects for all involved.

As we move into the seasons of spring and Pentecost, I pray that you will be inspired by these stories and encouraged to see the way God's Spirit is moving within and among you in surprising ways. I'm convinced more than ever that it is the small, steady, focused and faithful movements that have the power to change the world. And we can start with whatever corner of the planet we happen to call home.

In Christ,
+Jeffrey

COVER PHOTO: RON BEN-JOSEPH; BISHOP LEE PHOTO: CHARLIE SIMOKAITIS

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SPRING 2015

Give a Man a Fish 02

…and he'll be grateful. St. Chad's, Loves Park, has made a ministry of catching and distributing catfish in the Rockford area. The parish tends a garden as well. Members say it is a good way to make friends. Here Jessica Simpkins talks with "Catfish Lenny."

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On our cover

Jessica Simpkins of St. Chad's, Loves Park, displays a hefty catfish. The parish catches and distributes the fish to neighbors in the Rockford area.

SAVE THESE DATES

September 19
Bishop's Associates Discover the Diocese Tour

July 20-23, September 24-26, October 22-23, November 12-14
Congregational Wellness Advocate Training
Nicholas Center

September 28-October 1
Fierce Conversations
Nicholas Center

October 11-13
Clergy Conference
Techny Towers Conference & Retreat Center

October 16-18
New Beginnings
(retreat for youths in grades 6 through 8)

October 30
56th Annual Episcopal Charities Gala
JW Marriott Chicago

November 20-21
Diocesan Convention
Westin Lombard Yorktown Center

Feeding Multitudes the St. Chad's Way

TINY PARISH PRACTICES POWERFUL MINISTRY OF THE FISHING POLE

By Jim Naughton

When Trisha Neujahr had her brainstorm about catfish, "Some people looked at me like I was a little bit crazy. I was okay with that. The worst thing that could happen was that it wouldn't work and we'd have catfish for coffee hour."

Judged by traditional standards, St. Chad's Church in Loves Park is hardly a flourishing parish. Sunday attendance fluctuates between eight and fourteen. A supply priest visits once a month to preside at the Eucharist. But traditional standards don't include the number of catfish you've caught. And sometimes that's the only number that matters.

Keenly aware of the economic hardship in their area, but unable to afford the commercial kitchen that a typical feeding program would require, the leaders of St. Chad's were meeting one April day with a diocesan support team to explore other ways of becoming more involved in their community when senior warden Trisha Neujahr had an idea.

"It was just like a little light bulb went off," she says. She and a couple of other church friends enjoyed fishing for relaxation. Mostly they released what they caught. But what would happen, Neujahr wondered, if they kept the fish. What if they kept them alive and gave them away?

"Some of the people looked at me like I was a little crazy," she remembers. "I was okay with that. The worst thing that could happen was that it wouldn't work and we'd have catfish to eat for coffee hour."

Her friend Matthew Wren was among those who gave her a funny look. "It was kind of out in left field," he says. "I wasn't sure how the public would take to it or whether anybody would actually benefit from it."

But within a few short months, thanks largely to the efforts of Neujahr, Wren and their friend Jessica Simpkins, St. Chad's was providing live catfish to ten families and a small church community in the northern suburbs of Rockford. Members of the parish also tend a community garden planted in six large beds, and neighbors are welcome to take peppers and tomatoes free of charge. This is good news in an area where the median household income is about 25 percent below the national average and the unemployment rate broke 13 percent during the recession.

"St. Chad's is a remarkable, feisty group of passionate and committed people," said the Rev. Andrea Mysen, the bishop's associate for ministry,

left: Marsha Gray, senior warden Trisha Neujahr, and Matthew Wren with a recent catch. Photo by Ron Ben-Joseph

> ***"It was basically people who have nothing but will give you everything that we have. That's what really kept me going to St. Chad's."***
>
> ***— Jessica Simpkins***

Alfredo Valencia "gets it," Jessica Simpkins says. "I remember he caught one once and he said, 'Look, look, look. Somebody is going to eat tonight.'"

who was sitting across the table from Neujahr when she first spoke about giving away catfish. "Honestly, I think they just needed an invitation or perhaps permission to think outside the box. And boy did they!"

To feed multitudes the St. Chad's way—which is to say without spending much money—the first things Neujahr recommends are a hose and 100-gallon horse trough. Next, she says, you need an aeration pump, so the fish you put in the trough don't die. You will also want bungee cords and some tulle—"like from a bridal veil," she says—to cover the top of the trough, because while the catfish don't do much jumping, the baitfish do. And you'll need to catch the baitfish because at $4 apiece, they are too expensive to buy.

With their infrastructure in place, and garage-sale fishing poles to offer to new recruits, Neujahr, Simpkins, Wren and Alfredo Valencia, Neujahr's 12-year-old neighbor, resumed doing what they'd always done, getting together to go fishing, usually in the Rock River, which flows through Loves Park.

Sometimes they fished at a spot near Neujahr's house. Sometimes they fished behind Simpkins' condo. "Most of the bridges that people who live here would drive over, we probably have been under them at some point," said Wren, a hospital administrator who sometimes took a change of clothes to work so he could get to the river more quickly.

For Neujahr, who has her father's passion for fishing, and Simpkins, who hadn't fished since childhood, their time along the river was peaceful, uplifting. "I like to sit out there and quiet my mind," Simpkins says. "It is the best time for me to have my meditation, my prayer, if I am doing that. For me it is my peaceful place. And of course, if I catch something, that is even more exciting."

The two women had met in a group for female veterans at the Veterans Administration clinic in Rockford. Neujahr is a former Marine, and Simpkins served in the Navy.

"Some of those women were attending St. Chad's," Simpkins recalls. "I had never been an organized religion person. My mom wasn't religious and my dad was Buddhist. I sort of started going and then over the years became more regular. It was basically people who have nothing but will give you everything that we have. That's what really kept me going to St. Chad's. I love the people there."

When they caught their first few catfish, the team returned to the church and posted the news that live fish were available for free on a sign that is visible from the street. "The phone started blowing up a little bit," Neujahr recalls. "I was a little surprised actually. People would call and ask if it was for real. Then word-of-mouth started. We had to take the sign down because the demand became too great."

The summer was hot and the fish were sluggish. "Not a great fishing summer by any means," Wren says. But between May and August, the people of St. Chad's caught 109 pounds of catfish, meticulously recorded in Neujahr's small black book. They also developed a regular rotation of recipients whom they knew almost exclusively on a first name basis: Catfish Larry, Catfish Lenny, and Catfish Marie. Some had lost jobs. Others didn't earn enough to

Top: Bill Fiorenza waits for a bite. *Bottom:* Neujahr hands off a fish to a recipient.

afford fresh food. One man was a pastor at a small local church that paid him a meager salary, and he'd freeze the fish until he had enough for a community meal.

Some of the recipients liked to sit and talk for a while, have a look at the garden plots and give the interaction the feel of a visit, Simpkins says, but others were happy to take the fish and be on their way.

"People were so grateful for it, and that really humbled us because for us, we don't see it as such a huge deal is the thing," she adds. "We see it as something we like to do. We get to minister and help other people and that's really cool. Catfish are $6 pound at the store.

"There were people who wanted to give a donation. Catfish Lenny we really got to know. He gave whatever was in his pocket as a donation. He said it was to make sure we would call him back."

The threat of hunger shapes the lives of many people around St. Chad's, giving gifts of food a meaning they would not have in more affluent neighborhoods. Neujahr lives near a couple who depend entirely on their Social Security checks. She takes them tomatoes that fall off the vines in the garden. Simpkins sometimes drives a member of the parish to a food pantry.

"We have a lot of pantries around here in Rockford," she says. "People go get a number. They wait in line and they get food boxes. The lady I take, she gets things she can't eat because of her diabetes. She gives that away. Or she uses what she couldn't eat to make a dish for coffee hour. "

The parish's pluckiness and creativity impressed diocesan leaders so strongly that Neujahr, Simpkins and parishioner Marsha Gray were invited to give a workshop on their catfish ministry at the diocese's convention last November. The 80 people who attended were presented with hooks and swivels.

"We actually gave [Bishop] Jeff [Lee] and [his wife] Lisa a package of frozen catfish," Neujahr says. "And we gave Vicki Garvey [the diocese's associate for lifelong Christian formation] a fishing pole."

Garvey was the one who pointed out that a horse trough could be used for baptisms, Neujahr says.

St. Chad's is exploring whether to become the diocese's first "total

above: Alfredo Valencia has face time with a catfish; six-year-old Johnny Hansen steps to the table; Wren after a successful outing.

ministry" parish, a process that would include the selection and training of a group of parishioners to serve as the parish leadership team. "In some ways, it would be a way of claiming what they are already doing," says the Rev. Ellen Ekevag, a member of the total ministry team working with St. Chad's. The process could include the formation of a member of the parish as a locally-ordained priest.

"The way we minister and the way we worship are pretty similar," says Neujahr. "On Sundays we have kind of a group sermon. People ask questions about things, and we all learn something from each other. You hear people say, 'Well, I didn't know that.' They are kind of interpretive services and I think people go away with more knowledge than they had before."

In early March, when it would have taken a jack hammer to drill a hole big enough for a fishing line, Neujahr had already begun thinking about the fishing season that is now upon her and her friends at St. Chad's.

"We may have to get another tank and another air pump," she says. "I would like to see it grow to at least twice of what it was last year and enlist other local fishermen. A lot of people will catch and release their fish."

Once again, Simpkins says, they will bring Alfredo and some of their young neighbors. "The cool thing with that is when we do take the kids, especially him, they just get it," she says. "I remember he caught one once and he said, 'Look, look, look. Somebody is going to eat tonight.'"

Bishop Lee has not disclosed whether he liked the package of catfish, but he loves the parish that gave it to him. "St. Chad's is a small church of people who are passionately committed to the mission of the church," he says. "By the quality of their life together, sustained by prayer and their sense of community in Christ, they really do mean to change the world around them." ✠

above: Gray, Neujahr, Wren, Simpkins, Valencia, Donna Bloyer and Bobbie Source show off a catch. Photo by Ron Ben-Joseph

Child Friendly

Special services, "soft spaces" are "godsends" for young families

By Jim Naughton

"I get surprised sometimes when somebody is there for the first time and they have a three-year-old who walks up and wants to give out communion."

Vicki Garvey always asks to see the evidence.

People frequently tell the diocese's associate for Christian formation that their congregation is eager to reach out to families with young children. "I always ask how a stranger would know that," she says.

Sometimes the answer is an uncomfortable silence. But recently, congregations around the diocese have been taking visible and sometimes risky steps to include young children and their parents more fully in Sunday morning worship. Some churches, like Grace and St. Christopher's, both in Oak Park, have developed intergenerational liturgies, while others have created a "soft space" near the altar, where younger children can see and hear, but also play unobtrusively during the Eucharist.

"A majority of the people who come to our service say, 'We didn't think we could go to church with our kids,' or 'We tried to go to church with our kids and it didn't work,'" says the Rev. Eric Biddy, who was a seminarian at Grace, Oak Park, and is now the associate rector at St. Christopher's. "The impression we get is that these are families that wouldn't be going to church if they weren't in a service that is deliberately built to accommodate these very young Christians."

Grace, Oak Park, was in the midst of a strategic plan when its rector, the Rev. Shawn Schreiner, and the committee realized the importance of reaching out to the many young families in their neighborhood. "We did one of those exercises where you stand outside the church and think about how what you see outside relates to what you see inside," she says. "We didn't see parents with young children in our church."

That began to change in 2005 after Schreiner, the parish's music minister, Dennis

left: Deacon Jon Baumgarten, the Rev. Shawn Schreiner and music director Dennis Northway pray with young communion ministers at Grace, Oak Park. Photos by Ben-Joseph

Northway, and others visited St. Columba's Church in Washington, D. C., which holds a 30-minute intergenerational Eucharist each Sunday morning geared to families with toddlers and children. Intrigued and inspired by the popularity of that service, the team from Grace began to adapt St. Columba's liturgy for its own purposes.

"A lot of us (staff) had experience working with children and we knew that we wanted this service to involve as many of the senses as possible," Schreiner says. The service she, Northway, Deacon Jon Baumgarten and parish administrator Douglas VanHouten developed is a modified Rite III Eucharist from the Book of Common Prayer that includes several distinctive touches. Worship leaders rub a singing bowl to produce the clear, bell-like sound that announces moments of meditation. A rain stick provides a soothing, cascading accompaniment to the reading of the gospel. And children carry processional items, such as crosses, bells, and streamers as they come into the sanctuary. "We quickly learned that having a basket to deposit the processional items in as they approach their seats would help to keep attention spans on the next part of the service," Schreiner says.

The music, much of it composed by Northway, is distinctive as well. "I looked around and found music that was either too simplistic and insulting to the intelligence, or songs that were short enough but with a vocabulary that would go over kids' heads with words like atonement and salvation," he says.

Northway has written some 70 songs and found others that can be adapted for the intergenerational service. While he begins each service with the songs of the day firmly in mind, given the congregation, he sometimes has to make changes on the fly.

"If it is a day when the kids are bouncing off the walls, I might sing a quiet song. But there are other sleepy mornings where we might sing a song like 'Stir up the flame, O Spirit of God.'"

Schreiner and Northway have chronicled their experience and distilled the lessons they have learned from it in "The Rite Place: Kids Do Church! Adults Do Too!" which was published last fall by Church Publishing. Slowly, they are becoming key resource people for parishes wanting to explore intergenerational worship.

When St. Christopher's decided to begin what it calls "Wiggle Worship," a 9:30 a.m. service for parents and small children, the rector, the Rev. J. Paris Coffey, consulted with a variety of people, including Schreiner, and developed a liturgy similar, in some ways, to the one at Grace. That is when Biddy confronted the challenge of preaching to very young children.

"Notes are a death sentence," he says. "What I do almost every single time is look at the gospel and then try to remember some story of when I was a kid, which usually ends up with me being dumber that any of the kids in our church could possibly be," he says. "Paris is really good at bringing a prop and getting everyone to hold this prop and touch it. For me, it is always stories."

Getting children to respond to the sermon is essential. "A lot of feedback happens in the middle of the sermon," he says. "We have some kids who are trying to follow along, and if you aren't making sense they just interrupt you. They'll say, 'Wait. What? I don't know what that means.' And that is a wonderful way of keeping you honest and keeping your feet on the ground."

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the intergenerational service at Grace is that child volunteers lead the worship service. They are the officiants for all of the parts except the Eucharistic Prayer. Children as young as three don aprons to help distribute communion.

"I get surprised sometimes when somebody is there for the first time and they have a three-year-old who walks up and wants to give out communion" Schreiner says. "They don't completely know what they are doing, but they see the other children doing it and they want to get involved. When that happens we will do a teaching moment and teach them how to do it."

For many families, an intergenerational service is a godsend. "It helps address the major concern that we had, which was that no one in our family was getting to worship," says Amanda Murphy, whose

above: Grace, Oak Park, mixes active and quiet times in intergenerational services.

"What they know is that something important is happening at that moment. There is something about this bread and wine that people are coming up for."

family attends Grace. "We used to spend an hour and 15, or an hour and 20 minute service trying to keep our kids occupied and catch little pieces here and there."

"I love a full choral service," says Murphy, who sang in the choir at St. James Cathedral when Schreiner was an associate there. "But that wasn't practical for us."

The intergenerational service was a welcome change for her daughter Anne Gartner, 9, and especially for her son Paul Gartner, now 12, who seized the opportunity to help lead prayers. "I did drama as my elective club at school, and I really liked being able to speak," he says. "I felt at first it was an exercise for me. It would help me get better at projecting my voice and be a stronger speaker. And then it got fun, and I kept doing it."

Paul Gartner says he enjoys the fluid quality of the liturgy at Grace. "There aren't really specific roles," he says. "They just kind of ask the kids if they want to help. I kind of do all of it, as much as I can. But sometimes I don't help with communion because I want to take communion from other people."

Not everyone is at ease with the idea of children who aren't speaking full sentences serving as communion ministers. Schreiner is sometimes asked if the children know what they are doing. "What they know," she says, "is that something important is happening at that moment. There is something about this bread and wine that people are coming up for."

Baumgarten says that some people opposed the creation of the intergenerational service on theological grounds. "They doubted that we could do it within the bounds of orthodoxy," he says. "So there was a fair amount of going toe-to-toe and saying 'Tell me what is not orthodox about this.' "

Amanda Murphy doesn't understand what the fuss was about. "It feels as Anglican as anything I've ever done," she says. "It feels sacred to me."

Not every congregation has the desire or the resources to put

above: Children are at home in the "soft space" at Emmanuel, LaGrange (top), and in their parents' arms at Grace, where there is a little something to take home. Photos by Ben-Joseph

"I would absolutely recommend it. Both of my kids pay more attention than they would if they were in the nursery or in the back of the church."

together an intergenerational liturgy, but Garvey says an increasing number are recognizing the value of keeping children in church throughout the service rather than sending them out for a children-only activity. For many the solution is a "soft space" like the one at Emmanuel Church in LaGrange.

Such spaces, usually created near the front of the nave, sometimes by removing pews, typically contain books and coloring books, pillows, stuffed animals and what Jennifer Holt Enriquez, whose two children sit in the soft space at Emmanuel, describes as "manipulatives that don't make noise when you drop them," such as pipe cleaners.

The soft space makes it possible for children to keep themselves occupied while still experiencing the Eucharist. "Even if they aren't obviously paying attention to what is happening, they know what is going on," Enriquez says.

"By the end of last year my son, Luke, [who is 4] could say the Lord's Prayer. Not by himself, but he could go along. He asks, 'When is he going to break the bread?' They love the passing of the peace. It is important to them to shake hands with people and they want to have their own offering included at that part of the service.

"Both of my kids pay more attention than they would if they were in the nursery or in the back of the church."

Like intergenerational worship, soft spaces make some people uncomfortable. The Rev. LaRae Rutenbar, now interim rector at Trinity Church in Indianapolis, was interim rector at Emmanuel, LaGrange, when the soft space was created. "Parents of this generation want something different than the parents of my generation wanted," says Rutenbar, 60, who has two grown children. "They wanted the children to have that sense of mystery and of spiritual development that takes place in the Eucharist. So the education piece was to educate people of my generation to say this may be a better way to look at things."

Enriquez says the soft space got off to a bit of a rocky start. Some people weren't happy about the removal of the pews, and some found the children distracting. She says it took a few Sundays to make sure that everyone understood the rules of behavior in the soft space: "Treat each other with respect. Use your church voice. Pray."

Toys aren't permitted in the space, she adds, "and you have to be strict about that."

Before long, the soft space became an accepted part of her congregation's Sunday worship, Enriquez says. "I would absolutely recommend it. I think it is a fantastic way to include small children without forcing them to sit in the pew."

Garvey agrees. While a Eucharist that makes special provisions to accommodate children and their parents will not suit everyone, the church must nonetheless respond to these families' needs. The Eucharist is a form of communal worship, she says, and children are part of the Christian community.

"When children are baptized, we are asked whether we will promise to uphold them in the life of Christ," she says. "We say we will. We don't say, 'We will, except for when they are two-years-old and making a scene.' We just say that we will." ✠

above: Emmanuel, LaGrange, offers children "manipulatives that don't make noise when you drop them."

A New Home

Rogers Park church eases refugees' resettlement

by Rebecca Wilson

Twelve-year-old Salla* has never seen her home country of Burma, also known as Myanmar, but her young life has been shaped by the nation's history of political and religious turmoil.

Born in a United Nations refugee camp in Thailand, Salla came to the United States eight years ago when she and her family were resettled in Chicago's north side by a refugee relocation agency. She remembers little of the long journey, but she does recall when her family found St. Paul's Church-by-the-Lake in Rogers Park.

"I thought it was really mysterious," she says of her first visits to the parish where she and her family are now members. "In Thailand, we were just sitting on the floor and praying together."

Salla and her family, who live in East Rogers Park, were some of the first Burmese refugees to find St. Paul's, and their arrival marked the beginning of what is now the 133-year-old congregation's principal outreach ministry.

Judith Gramer, who now coordinates the program, remembers the day. "One morning at the 8 a.m. mass, we had about five people who were Asian and in clothing from their country who couldn't speak English," she says. "They left immediately after the service. Next Sunday, eight people were in the group, and the week after, 13 or 14.

"By that time, we had learned they were Anglican," says Gramer. "One of the women showed us a laminated picture of their bishop that they had brought from the camps, and that's when our priest declared they were ours."

Salla and her family, members of the Karen ethnic group, are part of a wave of more than 73,000 Burmese refugees who resettled in the United States between 2005 and 2014. Karens are one of many ethnic minorities represented among approximately 132,000 Burmese people who have lived for as long as three decades in refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. They have fled decades-long violence between the Karen National Liberation Army, the military wing of the Karen National Union, and the military junta that seized the country in 1962 and later imposed house arrest on the country's best-known dissident, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

As Gramer and her fellow parishioners at St. Paul's soon learned, the neighborhood's growing community of Burmese refugees had found its way to St. Paul's because they recognized the Anglican shield on the church sign.

"We didn't know about the refugee resettlement movement and we

"It was September, and we realized they had no idea what was about to happen. We started to get clothes, boots, and warm clothes together to get them ready for winter."

didn't know that they had just come from a UN refugee camp," Gramer says. "But they came to church every Sunday. In the beginning, they would take off their shoes and the men and women would separate. But we could see they knew the liturgy, even though they couldn't understand English. They were very sweet and kind, and their fear was evident."

Once they realized that the new worshippers were freshly arrived from a tropical climate, Gramer and her fellow parishioners sprang into action. "It was September, and we realized they had no idea what was about to happen," she recalls. "We started to get clothes, boots, and warm clothes together to get them ready for winter."

It wasn't the first time the people of St. Paul's had responded with generosity to strangers in their midst. In 2001, child refugees known as "the Lost Boys of Sudan" began arriving in Rogers Park, and St. Paul's-by-the-Lake became their refuge. Today the Rev. Abraham Awan, one of those refugees, is assisting priest for Sudanese ministry at St. Paul's, which is home to a Sudanese Dinka Mass each Sunday at 1 p.m.

As Gramer and her fellow volunteers were assembling winter gear, the pregnancy of one of the Burmese women was advancing, and Gramer realized she had a pressing need for a translator. She had a promising lead, but it turned out that the man spoke Hakha Chin—a different language written in a different script.

One icy cold Sunday in December, the pregnant woman, her husband and their three children didn't come to mass. Gramer surmised that the baby had been born and set about trying to find them. "I found another translator and we went up and down the street asking people until we

above: Gramer (center) and a delegation from St. Paul's celebrate an Eagle Scout project. *right:* The first child of the St. Paul's Burmese community born in the United States is ready to ride.


LOYOLA ACADEMY
DAY CAMP

found them," she says. "The entire family was in a 600 sq. ft. apartment with baby equipment that they didn't know how to use. That's when the Burmese Refugee Ministry at St. Paul's really started."

Recognizing that the case workers who worked for the resettlement agency were overwhelmed by the influx of refugees, Gramer began visiting the apartments of the families who worshipped at St. Paul's. "I'd find milk in the bathtub and cornflakes in the freezer," she said. "Kids were in neighborhood schools, but they weren't learning a lot because they didn't speak any English."

Working with the Burmese refugees soon became Gramer's full-time volunteer job. She taught classes for women and children who wanted to learn English and "survive and thrive in an urban environment."

"The women's class became a social group around my dining room table," Gramer says. "We made notecards with words like 'table,' 'window' and 'stove' and then walked around the house putting them in the right place. Then all the women made cards to tape up in their own homes so they could practice. And practice they did!"

Gramer, who had previously been an advocate for rape survivors, also began advocating for the Burmese families when they encountered difficulty.

"At first it was how to get them through the winter," she says. "Then landlord intervention when they didn't have enough money to make rent, food assistance when they were hungry, and helping get the children into schools that could meet their needs. Then, once they learned to sign their names, they were signing up for everything, and we spent a lot of time looking at papers to see what was legitimate and what was a scam. Now they're much more aware and astute."

As time went on, many participants in Gramer's women's group enrolled in English as a Second Language classes at Truman College, and their children enrolled at Passages Charter School, both schools that had previous experience with refugee families. Gramer, whose own children are now grown, accompanies many of the mothers to parent-teacher conferences and helps coordinate the six volunteer tutors at St. Paul's.

"The parents are devoted to their kids' education," she says. "Each of the children has blossomed so tremendously. They are extraordinarily smart and have worked so hard to be on an equal level with their peers."

As both the Burmese children and their parents have learned English, Gramer and her fellow St. Paul's volunteers have learned more about the lives the former refugees left behind.

"The reason most of the families left Burma during the war is that women were being raped and taken away and men were being put into the army," Gramer says. "They hid in the jungle and came back at night until soldiers burned their village and destroyed their rice paddies."

Most of the refugees were subsistence farmers in Burma. When they first arrived in Chicago, many worked the night shift at O'Hare International Airport cleaning airplanes. Today the men work at packing houses or wash dishes and most of the women clean houses. But the parish's program helps families maintain their agricultural heritage by renting plots in an urban gardening initiative. "I am now an American farmer," one woman told Gramer with delight.

American food and Midwestern crops were initially daunting—the Burmese women at first recognized only the broccoli in the produce aisle—but now families shop at Vietnamese and Thai markets for familiar vegetables. Gramer takes groups of women to the grocery store to help them navigate the unfamiliar terrain. "At first it was, 'This is soup, but this is expensive soup,'" she says. "Now we're at the stage of, 'Let's look at the sodium content in this soup.'"

The Burmese families at St. Paul's continue to struggle with low

"The parents are devoted to their kids' education. Each of the children has blossomed so tremendously. They are extraordinarily smart and have worked so hard to be on an equal level with their peers."

incomes, medical and dental problems and difficult working conditions, but eight years after the first refugees arrived at St. Paul's, many of the refugees have embraced their new country. Three adults and four children recently became U.S. citizens, and the April mayoral runoff was the first opportunity for the new adult Americans to vote. "It was the perfect election to practice," Gramer says, "because there were only two people on the ballot."

Trusting law enforcement has been a more difficult challenge for many of the refugees, who remember the Burmese police force's brutal crackdowns on pro-democracy movements and its strict control over ordinary citizens' lives. When Gramer learned that the members of the Burmese women's group at St. Paul's wouldn't call 911 or go to the police station for help, she arranged for an officer to visit with the Burmese community at her home and helped some of the young people enroll in the Chicago Police Explorers program, part of its Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy program. "Once the kids had gotten to know the officers and marched in parades with them, the families weren't so afraid any more," she said.

As the Burmese community's children become American teenagers, the people of St. Paul's are providing them with books, computers, tuition, and educational opportunities.

Salla, who remembers her first Sunday at St. Paul's, is now a sixth grader who dances jazz, ballet and hip hop, competed on her school's Academic Olympics team, and hopes to be an astronomer or study culinary arts. Ten years ago, her parents fled a nation that Reporters without Borders ranked 163rd out of 167 countries in press freedoms, but today she is a proud member of the school newspaper club where she writes pop culture articles, jokes, and interviews. This summer, thanks to a scholarship provided by the diocese, she and her brothers will attend Camp Chicago, the diocesan summer camp at the Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center.

"It was hard back then and it's still hard now," she says of life in Chicago. "We're still getting back on our feet and trying to do the best we can." The hardest part, she says, is getting straight A's and, "for my family, money. But the education here is great, and I hope to keep learning."

"One of the things we are trying to instill in the children is that, in the beginning, they were the recipients of a lot of help," Gramer says. "Now it's time for them to think about how they can give back some of that help." Salla and two other teens spend Saturday mornings at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Evanston where they make sandwiches for the parish's feeding program, called Moveable Feast. Several Burmese boys recently volunteered to help Gramer's grandson refurbish a fire-fighting memorial for his Eagle Scout project. Another teen volunteers in a not-for-profit retail store, and others work in a food pantry.

Grants from Christ Episcopal Church in Winnetka, the Chicago Convent of the Order of St. Anne at the Church of the Ascension, the Episcopal Church Women, and many St. Paul's members and friends provided funding to start the refugee ministry and make much of the ongoing work possible. But fundraising is a perpetual challenge for Gramer and her fellow volunteers.

"Anything we do for our Burmese we get back tenfold from them," says Gramer, who raised her family in the suburbs and believes that God asked her to move to Chicago in order to help the Burmese community. "One Easter morning, I heard bells and followed them and found St. Paul's-by-the-Lake. I am being guided by God." ✣

**To protect her privacy and that of her family, Salla's name has been changed.*

left: Gramer and Salla; the novelty of winter; celebrating citizenship. Photos courtesy of Judith Gramer

Opening Doors

Proclamation, experimentation on new dean's agenda

By Jim Naughton

When friends in the United States began to urge the Rev. Dominic Barrington, a priest in the Church of England, to apply to be the next dean of St. James Cathedral, he did a little preliminary research and saw the outlines of "a place that seemed to be open in the right kind of way to reinventing itself and working out what God is calling it to be in 2015."

Now, as the cathedral's incoming dean, Barrington, 52, has gotten to know the cathedral community better, and as his knowledge has deepened, so has his enthusiasm.

"I've seen people who seem fabulously open and responsive to what the future might hold," he says. "A robust, educated, switched-on Christian community that has a sense of who they are as the body of Christ in downtown Chicago."

Barrington, who is concluding his 12-year tenure as rector of St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Kettering, about 90 miles north of London, will be installed as dean at a 4 p.m. service on September 13. His selection culminates an international search that began after the Very Rev. Joy Rogers retired as dean in February 2013.

"In Dominic Barrington, St. James Cathedral has called a strong, loving and wise priest to be its dean," Bishop Jeff Lee said. "I believe he will be an inspirational leader at the cathedral and a strong presence in the city of Chicago, championing the mission and ministry of the cathedral as a place of extraordinary hospitality, significant outreach, and excellence in the arts."

"We were looking for a dean who could help us to open our doors to a greater cross-section of God's people, deepen our involvement in the life of the city and strengthen our arts and music program," said Graham Bell, the cathedral's senior warden. "We are delighted that Dominic has accepted our call."

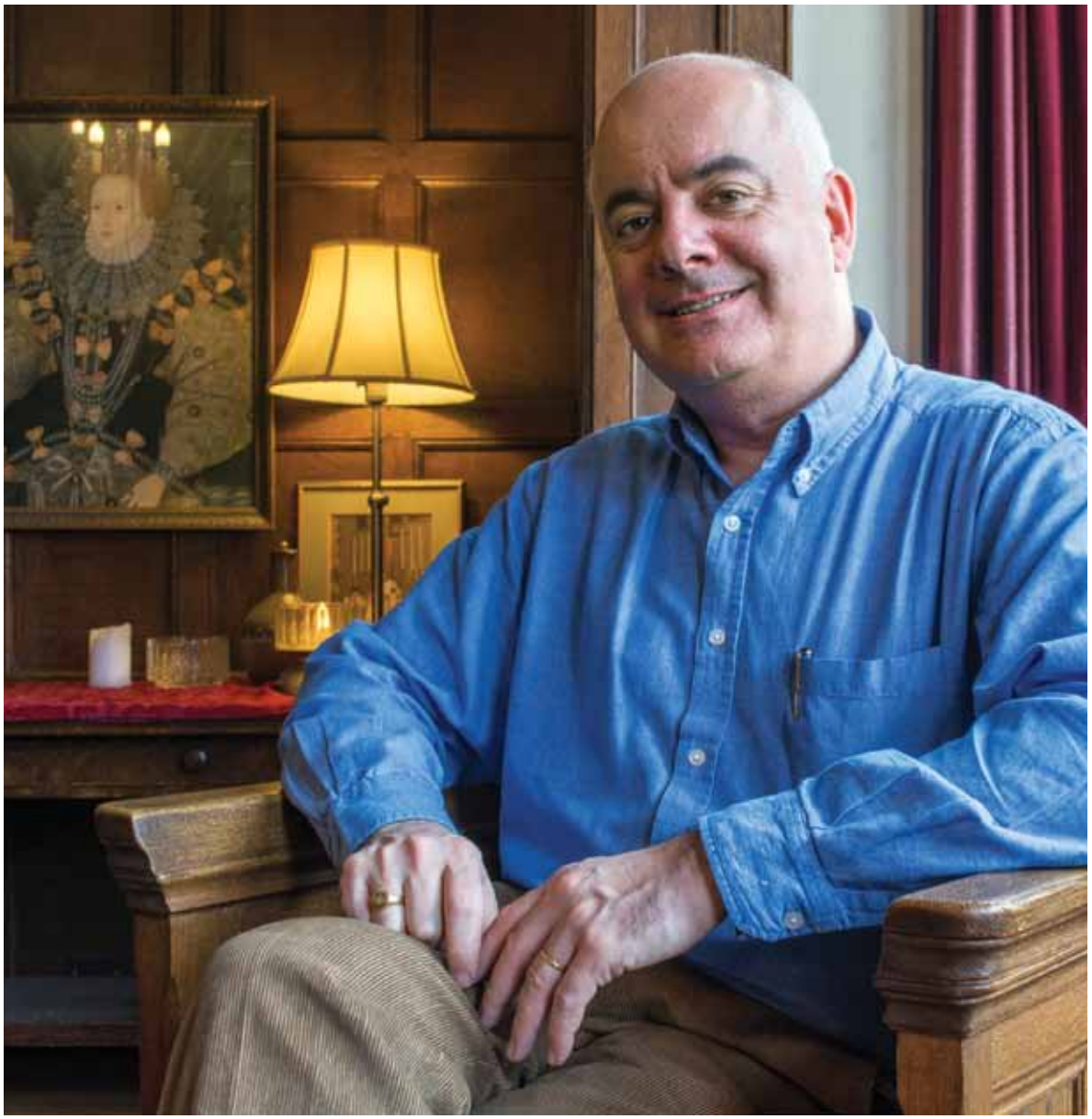
Barrington's road to St. James began more than 20 years ago when he came as an exchange student from Ripon College Cuddesdon, near Oxford, to Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California. His fellow students at CDSP included the Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, who is now the diocese's director of networking.

He has also gotten to know a number of Episcopal bishops and priests through his work organizing and leading pilgrimages to the Holy Land that are based on the principles of ethical tourism and structured to encourage the indigenous Christian business community. "Christians in Israel and Palestine have their own network," he says. "I have worked to help Christians from the west intentionally support local Christians so that they will have income and employment and will not feel that they have no choice but to immigrate."

The church, and particularly church music, has been an important part of Barrington's life since his adolescence. "In 1975, just before my voice broke, I changed school, and encountered an extraordinary music teacher who was director of music at a major parish church," he recalls. "His influence, coupled with some peer pressure led me to join the choir of the church, even though I had not ever gone to church in my life and had atheistic parents. The teacher said it would be good for my musicianship. That led to me discovering God, the church and music, going off to read for a degree in musicology, and knowing I felt called to ordination."

Barrington's love of classical choral and instrumental music inspired his first career as an arts administrator. Before entering seminary, he spent five years with Arts Council England working to create and fund new performance opportunities for the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic and other orchestras. He also worked for several years with some of Britain's leading professional choirs and vocal groups, including The Sixteen and the Hilliard Ensemble.

St. James' music program is one of its greatest strengths, Barrington says. "I don't think it will take much to make the 11 a.m. Eucharist, which is already strong and exciting, attractive to a much wider range of people," he adds. Barrington is also interested in developing "parallel liturgies for people who are looking for a spiritual experience, but won't sit through a Palestrina motet."



"I've seen people who seem fabulously open and responsive to what the future might hold. A robust, educated, switched-on Christian community that has a sense of who they are as the body of Christ in downtown Chicago."

He is intrigued, he says, by the success of the choral compline service at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle and the more contemporary "Wilderness" service at St. John's Cathedral in Denver, both of which, in different ways, have inspired young people to participate in church services that their peers tend to avoid. "These are services that say 'spirituality' rather than 'established church,'" he says. "Yet they can be delivered by the established church."

Unlike their Episcopal counterparts, most cathedrals in the Church of England do not function as parish churches, Barrington says. Rather, they play a prominent public role as venues for the arts, conveners of community conversation and advocates for social justice. St. James, he says, is well positioned to synthesize these two identities into something new.

"Without putting the life of the parish out of joint, cathedrals have fabulous opportunities for proclamation and experimentation on the behalf of the diocese," he says. "It is inconceivable to me that you can have a cathedral not standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the bishop on the mission of the diocese."

Barrington, who was ordained in 1995, served as a curate at a parish in London before becoming chaplain at St. Chad's College in Durham University, where he served for five years. He is married to Alison, and they have two young sons—Benedict, 7, and Linus, 5. The Barringtons have applied for a non-immigrant visa and hope to move to Chicago in August.

Barrington says he is "eager to begin work at a cathedral church in an amazing location in one of the greatest cities of the civilized world," and to minister among "passionate people who want to see what will happen next." ✠

above: the Rev. Dominic Barrington, the new dean of St. James Cathedral

Job One? Give One Job

A recent study confirms the axiom that nothing stops a bullet like a job. Anne Driscoll sponsored CROSSwalk intern Michael Padilla last summer, and she and her firm are stepping up again.

By Lu Stanton León

It didn't take much coaxing last spring to convince Anne Driscoll to sign on as a sponsor for the CROSSwalk to Work program. Her rector at Christ Church, Winnetka, had described the teen-employment program and asked if her firm hired summer interns.

"I didn't hesitate to say yes," said Driscoll, who is a partner at McCarthy Bertschy & Associates, a boutique executive search firm that helps companies find senior-level business leaders. It was a decision that made a profound difference in her life, and it gave a paycheck and first-time job to Michael Padilla, a student intern from Roberto Clemente Community Academy. Driscoll and her firm plan to participate in CROSSwalk to Work again this summer.

"It's a brilliant program," Driscoll said, "and it's quite straightforward to participate by offering an internship. If you've ever had a summer intern, the process is exactly the same. The challenging part is how to help these students adjust to a business environment. But that is part of what you sign up for."

CROSSwalk to Work encourages businesses, nonprofits and local institutions to hire at-risk youth for two months of summer employment and then connects them to job-ready young people eager for the chance to prove themselves.

Michael was one of 15 students who participated in last year's pilot of CROSSwalk to Work, which operates

as a partnership between the Diocese of Chicago and Youth Guidance, a social services organization that identifies appropriate 16-19 year olds who have successfully participated in its employment readiness training.

Many individuals and parishes contributed to CROSSwalk to Work either by offering jobs and becoming a mentor or by funding these jobs. The cost to employers for CROSSwalk to Work is approximately $1,700 for 20 hours a week or $3,500 for 40-hour weeks.

Last summer, Youth Guidance sent three students to Driscoll to be interviewed. Driscoll said the interview process itself was a learning experience for the students, who told her they had never been to the Chicago Loop, where her office is located; some had never been on an elevator.

"I interviewed all three, but when I met Michael I knew he was the student for us," said Driscoll. "He told me somewhat modestly that he had skipped ahead a year in math. When I asked him what he did in his spare time he said he visited people in a local nursing home who didn't have any family."

Driscoll said her entire office —four partners and a support staff— worked to make Michael feel as comfortable as possible.

"We tried to give him as many learning opportunities as we could," opportunities that included learning business etiquette and behavior.

"One of the purposes of the program is to give these students a view of what else is out there beyond the world they know, to let them know there is a world beyond gangs, that there are ways out of that."

Working with Michael also gave Driscoll a view into a world outside her own.

"I was surprised by how much I thought about how to make the experience a good one for him, but not in the ways I expected," Driscoll said. "I thought about how to be firm, but compassionate, especially given the challenges I knew he was facing every day. It made me and my colleagues see our world differently.

"The things we take for granted every day were not necessarily part of his life…. We heard details about Michael's life that were very different from ours."

What she found out right away was that Michael "was an unbelievably quick study."

"He was so accurate with the database entries, but we knew it was utterly tedious for him, so we had him doing Internet research for us," Driscoll said. "He got it right away. On the database entries, we were amazed with the speed, the accuracy involved. No matter what we asked him to do, it was done to perfection."

As it turns out, Michael is good at a lot of things. The 17-year-old junior, who comes across as reserved and self-confident, rightfully describes himself as "a very good student." This year he is taking Advanced Placement (AP) English and honors physics. Last year he took AP history, and in his freshman year, he took all honors classes. His favorite subject is math, and this spring he is taking a college math class. He is also on the school archery team and is a member of Chicago's JROTC program.

All that is in addition to getting up at 5:30 a.m. every school day to help his mother get his three younger siblings ready for school. During the summer, it took him an hour to commute each way, taking the train and a bus, to reach his job at McCarthy Bertschy.

"I liked it there; the people were nice," Michael said one day this spring. "That was my first paying job. What I liked is when I got to help look for people for them to interview. Sometimes I was successful in finding people that they actually agreed with," he said with a laugh. "I liked being in the office. It was quiet there, and my house is loud. I don't live in the best of neighborhoods."

Plus, he liked getting a paycheck. Michael said he used the money he earned to help his mom pay bills, to buy clothes for school, and to start a savings account for college. He said he'd like to become an engineer.

Driscoll, who this past year moved to Chicago and now attends St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church, feels CROSSwalk to Work is exactly the kind of program the church should support. She's eager to participate again this year.

"It's a real opportunity for the church to truly make a difference in the world," she said. "We can make a difference, and this is how: by providing a teenager a job and showing them what the world has to offer."

"I think it's easy to talk about making a difference, but it can be tough," Driscoll said. "It was unexpectedly challenging. I learned a ton, and we're going to do it again.

"Working with Michael made me that much more committed to making sure we have even more internship opportunities available for students this year."

Interested in participating in CROSSwalk to Work? For more information, contact Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows at (312) 751-3577 or at JBBurrows@episcopalchicago.org. ✠

left: Anne Driscoll. Photo by Grant Kessler *above:* Michael Padilla. Photo by Milton Tanco

John Hillman's Generosity Policy

By Lu Stanton León

John Hillman is hard-wired to give back, whether it is serving in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia, working with youth, singing in choirs, volunteering at his church or providing financial planning to individuals and businesses. Throughout his life, the cradle Episcopalian has made it a point to dedicate himself to many worthy causes and organizations, including the church. ¶ Hillman is a charter member of the Society of Miriam, which welcomes all Episcopalians in the Diocese of Chicago who have made a planned gift to any institution affiliated with the Episcopal Church. By including the Diocese of Chicago and St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Oak Park in his estate planning, Hillman has ensured that his giving to the church will continue after he dies.

"One of the things about church contributions is that they will stop. We will all die and not be in a position to make checks out to the church anymore. I think people should think about creating a fund that will continue to make contributions to the church."

"The church has been an important support to me, and it's a very special organization," Hillman said. "One of the things about church contributions is that they will stop. We will all die and not be in a position to make checks out to the church anymore. I think people should think about creating a fund that will continue to make contributions to the church."

Hillman wasn't thinking about death in 2010, when he decided to make the church the beneficiary of a whole life insurance policy. He is, by profession, a financial planner, and he saw an opportunity.

"Waiting longer would have increased the cost of the policy," Hillman says. "It was the right time for me to make a planned gift that was meaningful and whose cost was within reach."

After he made his decision about the policy, but before he could deliver it to Bishop Jeff Lee, Hillman learned he had an aggressive form of bladder cancer. He has now been cancer free for almost five years, but at the time, the news was devastating.

"When Bishop Lee first heard my news of the diagnosis, he showed his distress and expressed his concern," Hillman said. "He took the time to learn in detail what I faced in the upcoming surgery.

"He made it seem that he had all the time I might need to be with him. He said, 'Would you like me to pray with you?' I eagerly accepted. I don't remember the exact words of his prayer, but I left that encounter knowing that the bishop was confident that God would be with me during my surgery and throughout my recovery period. I left with that same confidence that my health would be restored."

St. Christopher's held a special prayer service for Hillman prior to his surgery in October 2010, a service he described as "an extraordinary experience."

The Episcopal Church has been interwoven in Hillman's life since his youth in Fairfield, Connecticut, and in Schenectady, New York, where he served as an acolyte, sang in the boys' choir and, as a teenager, assisted the rector of his church. He later majored in religion and philosophy at Amherst College and went on to get a Master of Theology and an MBA from the University of Chicago. His singing continued, too. He is a member of MastersingersUSA, a male glee club, and sings in the Oak Park Heritage Chorale and in the church choir.

After graduating from college, Hillman met his wife, Linda, while they were both serving in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia ("Where does a New Yorker go to meet a Californian? Ethiopia!" Hillman says).

"We came back, and, as I like to tell people, we have been temporarily located in Chicago for 47 years," Hillman said. "I went to the divinity school because they were exploring new forms of ministry, both inside and outside the church. I was focused on the outside part."

The Hillmans later became great friends with the late Bishop Robert Scott (Bob) Denig and his wife, Nancy. Denig had been bishop of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts for two years when he died in 1995, at age 48, of multiple myeloma.

In large part, Denig was responsible for Hillman's return to organized religion after a two-year hiatus. Denig and his wife visited the Hillmans in Oak Park where the family had moved after leaving Schenectady in 1991.

"I had served every conceivable canonical position when I was at my church prior to our move," Hillman said. "When we moved to Oak Park I took some time off, went underground for a couple of years. Bob and Nancy came for a weekend and Bob asked if we were going to church, and I said sure."

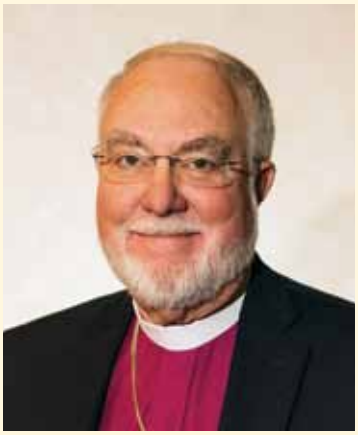
Bob and John visited St. Christopher's in Oak Park that Sunday. At the end of the service, Denig turned to Hillman and said, "This is a really nice place. Why aren't you a member?" Hillman has been a member ever since.

Hillman has great respect for the rector of his church, the Rev. J. Paris Coffey, and for Lee, whom he calls "an extraordinary leader of this diocese." Hillman said he finds both the congregation and the diocese deserving of financial support.

Hillman is sometimes asked how people considering planned gifts can do so with confidence. "What I say to people is, do a comprehensive plan of your needs and what you want to leave behind for your family," he said. "Then figure out if there is a surplus. If you do that analysis, you'll see what your realistic capacity is to make charitable contributions."

The Society of Miriam welcomes all who have made a planned gift, or made provision for a gift to any Episcopal entity in their estate plans. If you would like more information on the Society of Miriam, please contact the Department of Networking at (312) 751-4215. ✣

"The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." **(John 16:2)**



United in Grief, Faith & Hope

by C. Christopher Epting

One of my great privileges as an assisting bishop is to serve as our representative on the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. This venerable interreligious organization is not so much a dialogue group as it is a forum for people of faith to stand together in making a difference in our city on issues ranging from gun violence to education to economic disparity. Another contribution is that, as a community of friends, we are able to respond quickly when acts of religious discrimination or hate crimes afflict our member faith communities.

On the First Sunday of Lent, I was honored to read a lesson at a memorial service to honor the 21 Coptic Orthodox Christians who were martyred in Libya by the extremist forces who have falsely taken to themselves the name of the "Islamic State." These 21 young men have been designated the "New Coptic Martyrs in Libya" because, as the exposition in the service has it:

> The abductors offered to release them if they would renounce their faith. But they were all the more willing to die than to deny the Lord Jesus. And so, before the whole world their captors paraded them in front of the shores of Libya, and as they beheaded each one, the last words on their lips was the noble name by which they were called…"Ya Rabbi Yasod"…"My Lord Jesus"…and they gained the crown of martyrdom…

When I served as the presiding bishop's deputy for ecumenical and interreligious relations, I had the privilege of visiting the Coptic Christians in Cairo with a delegation from the National Council of Churches. We were granted an audience with the late Pope Shenouda and later were sped through the streets of Cairo to attend a Bible study he led in the cathedral that was attended by hundreds of devout Christians, many of whom were young people. I shall never forget the vibrancy of this ancient expression of Christianity, and was therefore unsurprised by the courage demonstrated by these "new martyrs" in Libya, even as I was appalled by their murders.

Hundreds of people attended the memorial service—Christians, Muslims, Egyptians, Americans, religious and political leaders, relatives of the slain. We were united, not only by our sorrow, but also by our conviction that evil will one day be overcome by good, that people of faith must all work together to make it so, and that the blood of these martyrs must not have been shed in vain. In the words of a Gospel reading in the memorial service:

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:44-45). ✠

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