

A woman with glasses, wearing a black sweater and a white clerical collar, stands in the center of the frame. She is positioned in front of a building with a stone facade and a window. The ground is covered with fallen autumn leaves, and there are bare trees and bushes around her. The overall scene is set in a park-like area during late autumn or winter.

THE Harvest

Winter 2020 | The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

Repurposing history

A new ministry uses the historic diocesan grounds to highlight creation care, neighborhood needs

New Covid guidelines / Food ministries / Diocesan Convention

Breaking open Covid like breaking open a geode



THIS TIME of the Covid-19 pandemic has been hard. We have lost lives, loved ones, jobs and breaking bread in Eucharist. It has been really rough, and this winter promises similar challenges.

Yet, I am beginning to view the 2020 pandemic a bit like a geode.

Geodes are spherical rock structures with an internal cavity lined with mineral deposits. They have a durable outer wall that is more resistant to weathering than the surrounding bedrock and allows the geode to survive intact when the surrounding bedrock weathers away. The mineral lining the cavity is often filled with tiny quartz crystals, with bands of translucent gray and white

agate underneath. Other common linings include rich purple amethyst and white calcite crystal.

A geode is rough and not very beautiful on the outside, but it is durable. Moreover, if cracked open, treasures are discovered.

I offer some of my personal pandemic experiences and that of the diocese, both the hard things and the hidden treasures. Maybe they will resonate with your experience?

Space and time

In my first year as bishop I was flying around the country and traveling to the corners of the diocese. When the pandemic put the breaks on, I found time for an important goal — walking across the street to meet some neighbors.

As we prayerfully consider how the diocesan grounds might best bless God's people, we have been able to meet with local partners: the local school superintendent; area high school and elementary school principals; and leaders of nearby neighborhood associations and community coalitions.

I give thanks for Zoom and Facebook Live and other digital platforms that keep us connected and empower ministry. I also am grateful that at the 2019 Diocesan Convention we voted to organize ourselves into regional minsters, which have offered a structure for clergy to find support in these demanding days.

Personally, our sons' career paths have been slowed by the pandemic, but Tim and I have enjoyed having more time with them, especially as young adults, than we have in many years. I am also discovering time to read again, and to pray, pray, pray.

Money

The faithful giving of Episcopalians during the pandemic is truly like seeing an opened amethyst or blue heart of a geode. Members giving to their parishes, and parishes giving to the diocese, has remained strong. Many parishes creatively have continued to feed and clothe people in need, and our task forces are working to find new ways for us to advocate for economic, earth and racial justice.

But it is painful to see the hardships that have fallen on so many small businesses, museums, musicians and performers.

The Council of Trustees and I want to use the diocese's money in healing ways. At its December meeting, the Council set aside funds that I can use if a parish is struggling because of the pandemic. They also designated funds for the first phase of the public gardens at Bethany Place.

In addition, the diocese will be able to send extra money to two diocesan-affiliated institutions that help so many people in need: NourishKC and Breakthrough/ESS in Wichita.

Theology

Not being able to be together in person has been rough. Limiting Christmas? Hard, hard, hard. But, as in other times of crisis the essential grace of our life in Christ is revealed. We are not the first people to worship God without church buildings, or concerts, or even schools. As revealed to the Israelites leaving Egypt, God moves with God's people.

God is in our homes, and in our Zoom time, and above all, in our hospitals and care facilities. The death of Jesus was rough. It was hard. But his resurrected presence everywhere and in all things shines as the geode-heart of our faith. ☉

In This Issue

2

Around the diocese

Learn how churches have reached out to help others during the pandemic, and see a special Christmas ornament and yard signs of encouragement.

5

New diocesan website

For the first time in a decade the diocese's online presence has a new look, featuring more news and photos of local ministries and Kansas nature.

6

Bethany House and Garden

The Rev. Jennifer Allen, bishop's curate for mission, is in charge of leading and overseeing a new ministry committed to creation care and outreach.

7

NourishKC is on solid financial footing

The Kansas City-based agency has overcoming big financial problems and is poised to expand its existing programs to feed people in need.

8

New Covid guidelines for activities

Beginning Jan. 6 indoor church activities, including worship, will depend on the level of virus spread in each county of the diocese.

8

Deacon is among the first vaccinated

Diane Kruger is both a deacon and an emergency department nurse, and she was among the first 100 people in the state to get a Covid vaccine.

11

Food ministries across the diocese

Churches and agencies have continued to feed people in spite of gathering restrictions, and some places are seeing a significant increase in need.

12

Wrap-up of Diocesan Convention

Lay delegates and clergy connected by video, some from home and some from small church gatherings, to conduct the business of convention.

THE Harvest

WINTER 2020 | VOL. 108 | NO. 1

A publication of

The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas
835 Polk St., Topeka, KS 66612-1688
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(800) 473-3563
www.episcopal-ks.org

The Anglican Communion is a global community of 70 million Anglicans in 41 member churches/provinces in more than 160 countries.

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The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry,
Presiding Bishop

The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas is a community of 8,500 members in 44 congregations across eastern Kansas.
The Rt. Rev. Cathleen Chittenden Bascom, *Bishop*

The Harvest is published four times a year by the Office of Communications of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas. Member, Episcopal Communicators and Episcopal News Service

Publisher

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Need to change your mailing address?

Harvest Address Changes
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receptionist@episcopal-ks.org

Upcoming deadlines:

Spring 2021: Feb. 15

Postmaster:

Send address changes to
Episcopal Diocese of Kansas
835 Polk St., Topeka, KS 66612-1688

ON THE COVER: The Rev. Jennifer Allen leads Bethany House and Garden, a new ministry rooted in creation care and outreach housed on diocesan grounds. | Photo by Melodie Woerman

News and notes from congregations

St. John's, Abilene took advantage of the period without in-person services to install a new drainage system in the church basement.

St. Paul's, Coffeyville hosted its 14th annual "Coats for Kids" motorcycle run, to raise money to help children in need.

St. Andrew's, Derby has installed an upgraded camera and sound system in the church, to provide a clearer online worship experience.

St. Martin's, Edwardsville continues work on its Hallelujah Trail, a path on land adjacent to the church that will be open to the public. Recent funding comes from the Vestry as well as a diocesan Alleluia Fund grant.

Trinity, El Dorado sponsored its annual peanut butter drive this fall, and hundreds of jars, destined for people needing food, were blessed on Oct. 18.

St. Andrew's, Emporia provided gifts and other items for a mother and daughter who needed help this Christmas, through a local agency that assists people affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse or neglect.

St. Mary's, Galena provided clothes and toys for a family adopted at Christmas, and parishioners also provided needed school supplies this fall to the local elementary school.

Epiphany, Independence St. Martha's Guild made 30 "Blessing Bags" filled with snack items for students enrolled in Head Start. Bags were sent out over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays to help children who often experience food insecurity.

St. Timothy's, Iola created a "casserole caravan" in October, selling 417 homemade casseroles and 37 dozen enchiladas, to raise funds for parish outreach projects.

St. Margaret's, Lawrence provided Christmas gifts and money for a special dinner to 17 people in four local families, through the parish Angel Tree.

Trinity, Lawrence normally provides fresh fruit for students receiving BackSnacks through their schools, but that hasn't been allowed because of virus concerns.

Money donated by parishioners instead was used to purchase hats and gloves for 300 students.

St. Paul's, Leavenworth in October resumed its monthly workdays around the church, with proper distancing, with a lot of outdoor cleanup planned, as well as interior painting.

St. Paul's, Manhattan participated in the Mayor's Holiday Food and Fund Drive, collecting food for Christmas baskets headed to people in need. They also provided gifts for families through the local Junior League Adopt-a-Family program.

St. Michael's, Mission collected more than 1,700 pairs of socks for area people in need, thanks to a "Sock Sunday" sponsored by its Men in Mission group. They planned to provide 700 more socks and hoodies for the program and for an elementary school that is a parish partner.

St. Matthew's, Newton this fall provided non-perishable food for the Salvation Army food bank, and it continued the practice of sending greeting cards to parish shut-ins and college students, as well as to those in the military.

Ornaments help parish ministries



The Youth and Children's ministries at Grace Cathedral, Topeka received financial support through the sale of fused-glass St. Nicholas Christmas ornaments, designed by local artist Kym Hughes and made in her shop, Prairie Glass Co. Director of Children's Ministries Kathy Smith also made doorstep deliveries. 📍

Overland Park church offers yard sign encouragement



St. Thomas, Overland Park, distributed about 200 inspirational yard signs to members and others this fall, based on an idea that began with parishioner Laura Bond.

She had seen some inspirational yard signs appear in her neighborhood over the spring, but by summer many were replaced by political signs that felt polarizing to her. She wondered what signs might instead offer positive messages from the heart of the Christian faith.

Bond pitched the idea to the church's priests, the Rev. Gar and the Rev. Kelly Demo, who supported the efforts. Together they came up with four signs, each with three short sayings, and had dozens printed.

By late October, Gar Demo said 200 signs had been delivered around the greater Kansas City area. ☺

St. Aidan's, Olathe helped provide memory flash drives for students in the Olathe Public Schools who needed them for remote learning. Parishioners also provided gifts for more than 20 children of inmates.

Grace, Ottawa had a parish clean-up day on Nov. 21, under the guidance of organist Hurst Coffman.

St. Thomas, Overland Park supported students at Kansas City's Gladstone Elementary and East High School by providing coats, gloves, mittens and food. Many of these students are in families hit hard by the pandemic, often with unemployed parents.

St. John's, Parsons members donated money, with the parish matching it, to help build a splash pad in a local park, to benefit children across the community.

Epiphany, Sedan invited members to sign up if they wanted to pro-

vide prayer support for the diocese's Kansas to Kenya ministry.

St. Luke's, Shawnee members donated laundry detergent pods for families of students at Hocker Grove and West Ridge Middle Schools, to help people hit hard by the Covid pandemic.

Grace Cathedral, Topeka through its Outreach Committee received enough donations to purchase 835 blankets, with 200 going to the Rescue Mission, and 200 each to a local middle school and high school. The remaining 235 were given to patrons of the church's Saturday morning food ministries.

St. David's, Topeka supported the Doorstep agency's Christmas adoption needs by providing money, blankets and full-sized items for health kits.

St. Luke's, Wamego had to forego its annual Cookies by the Pound sale

but instead had a bakeless sale, with donations going to camp scholarships for parish youth.

Good Shepherd, Wichita supported Breakthrough/Episcopal Social Services's "Fill the Gap" food drive, to help cover the gap between Thanksgiving and Christmas, when special meals often are needed.

St. James', Wichita continues to support area agencies through its Pocket Change Ministry. Members are asked to donate their loose change, and when it reaches \$500 it is given away. Recent recipients have been Saint Francis Ministries and Wichita Children's Home.

St. John's, Wichita continues to help organize meals for its Sandwich Saturdays, which now feeds about 200 people every week

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

St. Stephen's, Wichita youth group supported the local annual Operation Holiday drive to collect non-perishable food during the month of November, asking members to donate canned goods or money.

Grace, Winfield helped provide gifts for 30 students through the Winfield Public Schools Christmas Angels Project. 📍

Clergy news

The Rev. Ashley Mather is the new rector of St. Paul's, Manhattan, beginning Jan. 4. Since June 2019 she had been curate at Grace Cathedral, Topeka.

The Rev. John Bullock is serving as assistant priest at Grace Cathedral, Topeka, beginning Jan. 1. He most recently was priest intern at St. Aidan's, Olathe. He also has a law practice in Lawrence and is a vice chancellor for the diocese.

The Rev. Laird Macgregor is the new vicar of St. Martin's, Edwardsville, starting Nov. 1. He succeeds the Rev. Joe Alford, who retired on Nov. 1. Macgregor previously served as priest at St. Anne's, McPherson, in the Diocese of Western Kansas.

The Rev. Kay Dagg, resigned as rector of St. Paul's, Clay Center, on Nov. 22. 📍

LOVE
YOUR NEIGHBOR

#KSBeatsTheVirus

Churches join efforts to help 'Kansas beat the virus'

THE VERY REV. Torey Lightcap, dean of Grace Cathedral, Topeka, is a graduate of several programs offered by the Kansas Leadership Center, located in Wichita. KLC earlier this year began a campaign to remind Kansans that they can play a part in beating the spread of the coronavirus, and Lightcap wanted to be part of it.

He joined with the Very Rev. Vicki Smith, rector of St. David's, Topeka, and the Rev. Casey Rohleder, rector of St. Luke's, Wamego, along with lay leaders of all three congregations, to create a way for Episcopalians to offer a subtle reminder that beating the virus means loving your neighbor by doing things like wearing a mask and keeping physical distance.

They found a local artist to create a logo (*shown above*) that will be printed on yard signs and is available for download by anyone who wants to print their own signs. They also have created a Facebook "frame" — an image that goes around a user's profile picture — using the logo.

Lightcap said he thinks this effort is especially important as the region enters what he calls a "gap time" between the start of vaccinations and the time when vaccines have made a significant difference in the spread of Covid-19.

He said, "My fear is that people are going to get tired of feeling restricted and will start living again in ways that once more endanger public health."

He said images can be downloaded for free for use on signs by anyone interested in this effort; the link is bit.ly/LoveYourNeighborArtwork

Lightcap also offered instructions for those wanting to add a Facebook frame:

1. Select "Update Profile Picture"
2. Click "Add Frame"
3. Under "Choose a Frame," search for and select "Love Your Neighbor #KSBeatsTheVirus"
4. Set time parameters for how long you want this to be your frame
5. Click "Use as Profile Picture" 📍

Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

About Ministries News For Clergy & Congregations Minsters & Task Forces



The home page of the new website prominently features aspects of Kansas nature and diocesan life in a series of photos.

New diocesan website goes online

IN EARLY DECEMBER a new version of the diocesan website went online, capping a year of planning and preparation. The site, which can be accessed at the previous address, www.episcopal-ks.org, includes all the information that existed in the previous site but offers a variety of upgrades.

The old site, which debuted a decade ago in December 2010, relied on software that was loaded on a single computer. The software was becoming obsolete, making updates hard to make. The new site is cloud-based, using the WordPress platform.

The new website offers the ability to showcase a variety of photos at the top in a rotating slideshow. Many of these photos are the work of Deacon Charles Pearce, whose images of the Konza Prairie help give the site its visual identity and also highlight Bishop Cathleen Bascom's commitment to the care of creation.


Additionally, the site places posts of diocesan news in a more prominent location, and stories easily can be added as the need arises.

Specialty design work

The design work on the site, as well as much of the content migration, was done by Bill Joseph, a web developer whose firm, Words if Necessary, has produced

websites for Episcopal dioceses, seminaries and other institutions. He was able to customize all the design elements as well as the menu sections to reflect the needs of the diocese.

One new element is that the "Find a church" link points to the Episcopal Church Asset Map, a move taken by websites of the Episcopal Church and other dioceses. The map lets each congregation update its listing, meaning information is current and correct.

The website, which is the diocese's most important online presence, is one of the diocesan communication vehicles, which includes the *DioLog* newsletter, the *Harvest* quarterly magazine and social media platforms. 



About the Diocese

A diocese is the geographic area overseen by a bishop. The word "episcopal" comes from the Greek word for bishop, meaning an overseer.

Headers on interior pages continue the theme of Kansas nature, featuring photos by Deacon Charles Pearce.

Diocesan land provides home to a new ministry serving others

Bethany House and Garden plans to use the space to reach those outside the church

By the Rev. Jennifer Allen

SINCE THE 1860s, the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas has been the steward of an initial gift of 20 acres of land in the very center of Topeka, given by the city's founders as the site of a proposed girls school.

From 1870 until it closed in 1928, it was home to the College of the Sisters of Bethany, and after that, the two remaining buildings, built in 1875, became the diocesan offices and bishop's home turned conference center, now known as Upton Hall. What remains of that initial land gift is three acres that sits between what is now Topeka High School and Grace Cathedral.

Recently, the bishop's offices moved into new space adjacent to the cathedral, leaving the grounds and former office building ready for a new vision. As the bishop's curate for mission, I have been working to clarify that vision.

How could the diocese use the property to bring about a vision of the kingdom of heaven? Several things felt important: care for creation, building relationships with our neighbors and celebrating the historic connection the land holds with the education of women.

It has become my hope to transform the land at Bethany Place so it is a true benefit to the people of Topeka and part of the revitalization occurring in the city's core.

So that we could understand the needs of our neighbors, Bishop Cathleen Bascom and I have spent the last year meeting with a broad variety of stakeholders and civic leaders: the Vestry, staff and volunteers of Grace Cathedral; the neighbors living across the street; community leaders; experts in environmental sciences and native plants; and educators around Topeka.

During those conversations, three themes have emerged as possible benefits for the community at large:

- education,
- a space for rest in nature, and
- a gathering space.



The Rev. Jennifer Allen, bishop's curate for mission, is in charge of leading and overseeing the new Bethany House and Garden ministry.

During this idea-generating period several specific ideas have been suggested: herb gardens, raised beds, native grasses, an outdoor classroom, a labyrinth, a prayer walk, outdoor worship space and food gardens.

We are continuing to listen to the community as we prepare for a design charrette this winter. We plan to invite small focus groups to discuss their hopes and dreams for the space with a landscape architect, who will present three proposals for use of the land to those who attended the charrette.

After that, we will have a clear vision of the work ahead and the projects we will implement.

In the kingdom at Bethany House and Garden, we hope to help others find their way to God through care of creation. The kingdom of heaven is held in the grounds surrounding Bethany House, and as we work in creation we find that treasure. By finding our way to God in creation and connecting with our neighbors, we find ways to love our neighbor as ourselves. ☉

NourishKC now is on solid financial footing

By Melodie Woerman

ALMOST TWO YEARS ago NourishKC was in such dire financial straits that leaders feared they would have to close their doors. But thanks to careful budgeting and generous donations from individuals and local foundations, the agency enters 2021 on firm footing and is looking forward to the work of a new executive director.

Sue Fenske begins her work overseeing the agency that has roots in its former identity as Episcopal Community Services and which on feeding people through three programs:

- the Kansas City Community Kitchen, which provides between 2,000 and 3,000 meals a week,
- the Food Rescue Network, which gathers unused food from grocery stores, community gardens and other providers, and
- the Culinary Training Program, which offers older foster children the chance to learn food service job skills.

Fenske returns to her native Kansas City after a career that included serving as executive director of the Fresno Food Bank in California, as well as work in non-profit development. She said, “I am so excited to be back, doing this work that I love.”

The Rev. Gar Demo has been chair of the agency’s board and helped steer it through the rocky waters since

a near-financial collapse in early 2019. He said the agency had turned a corner late in 2019, after bringing some former obligations to an end and receiving financial support from local foundations and individuals, including Episcopalians on both sides of the state line.



Sue Fenske, the new executive director of NourishKC

Demo said that when the pandemic hit, NourishKC shifted its Community Kitchen meals to carry-out service. “We did not miss a day of service and continued to feed nearly 500 people daily,” he said, noting that these meals served some of the most vulnerable people in the greater Kansas City area.

The culinary training program, which was paused during the financial trouble, restarted in the summer of 2020

and hired a new director, Rachel Morningstar. Fenske said this program is offering real-world training to some of society’s most overlooked people — young people who are about to age out of the foster care system. “This is a woefully underserved group of kids,” she said. “The skills learned will help these young men and women gain employment now while preparing to be self-sufficient in adulthood.”

Demo said that as the agency looks to the future, the board hopes that existing programs can serve even more people. “There is belief that the Food Rescue Network has potential to expand beyond its existing reach, enabling more people to be fed rather than waste food.” And when the restaurant industry is able to recover from the pandemic-induced recession, the Culinary Training Program can expand and serve more students, helping them move “from unemployment into life-sustaining careers in culinary arts,” he said.

Fenske said she, too, believes NourishKC is solid enough to expand its reach. “We are in a really good place,” she said, “and I am excited to look to the future.”

Demo said that the agency’s success is due in large part to Episcopalians in Kansas and West Missouri. “Our two partner dioceses and congregations have been indispensable in their support, prayers and volunteers. We would not be here without that foundation.”

The Kansas City Community Kitchen Christmas Day meal, like all food since March, was provided in carry-out containers to more than 500 diners.



IMAGE VIA FACEBOOK

Indoor church activities now are guided by virus spread statistics

By Melodie Woerman

BEGINNING ON Jan. 6, all 44 churches across the diocese are operating under new guidelines established by Bishop Cathleen Bascom that determine when indoor activities, including worship, may take place.

These guidelines extend until Palm Sunday, March 28.

After nearly two months when all indoor activities were suspended because of a surge in coronavirus

cases — except for one, small indoor Christmas service permitted for each church — clergy and lay leaders now are guided by virus levels as reported by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Those numbers are listed on a spreadsheet compiled in the bishop's office and posted to the diocesan website every Wednesday afternoon.

That chart provides county-by-county virus statistics using two measurements of community spread recommended by medical advisors:



- the percent of tests that come back positive should be below 10 percent, and
- the case incidence rate should be fewer than 100 cases per 100,000 people.

El Dorado deacon is one of the first people

By Melodie Woerman

DIANE KRUGER, an emergency department nurse in Wichita and deacon at Trinity Episcopal Church in El Dorado, on Dec. 14 was among the first 100 people in the state of Kansas to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19.

Kruger works at the St. Francis campus of the Ascension Via Christi hospitals, where the vaccinations took place and which received the first of the state's initial 24,000 doses.

She was caught off guard when her department charge nurse asked her if she wanted to get the vaccine. "I thought it probably would start out in New York," she said. "I was surprised it was available in Wichita on the first day," which came only three days after the Food and Drug Administration issued emergency use authorization for the vaccine.

Kruger said she got the vaccine about 2:30 that afternoon and then was monitored for 15 minutes for any possible adverse reactions. She had none, saying the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Diane Kruger shows where she received a vaccine against Covid-19 on Dec. 14, making her one of the first Kansans to be vaccinated.



Bishop Cathleen Bascom (right) on Dec. 13 leads prayers during a snowy Lawn Chair Morning Prayer service at Grace, Winfield, as the rector, the Very Rev. Laurie Lewis, looks on.

PHOTO BY PATRICK FUNSTON

If both numbers are at or below the recommended numbers, that county is deemed in the yellow zone, and churches in that county may conduct activities indoors.

If one of the numbers is above the limit, the county is labeled orange, and clergy and lay leaders there must discuss and then agree on whether indoor activities can take place safely.

If both numbers are above the limit, that county is labeled red, and churches there must suspend indoor activities for at least two weeks, or until the county reaches the orange level.

Online and outdoors

After a period stretching back to May 2020 when indoor worship was permitted — with masks, distancing and other restrictions — on Nov. 12 Bishop Bascom again suspended indoor activities across the diocese, first for a period of three weeks and then for another three

weeks, including Christmas. In making that determination, the bishop wrote to clergy and lay leaders, saying, “We must move back into more online and outdoor spaces.”

She acknowledged the special difficulty of taking this step right before Christmas, with its many beloved traditions. But, the bishop wrote, “Christmas is a flesh-and-blood celebration, and the pandemic is a flesh-and-blood problem.”

While online worship became standard in the spring for almost all of the 44 churches in the diocese, several moved into the outdoor space over the summer and fall as a way to gather people safely.

Outdoor services, sometimes called lawn chair worship, allowed people to gather in greater safety,

Continued on page 10

le in Kansas to get the Covid-19 vaccine

injection felt similar to getting a tetanus booster. She is due to receive the second required dose in early January.

Because her excitement for the vaccine was well-known in her department, she was asked to speak to a reporter for a local television station about her experience. She readily agreed.

“I see this as an education component,” she said. “It’s why I’ve been putting everything on Facebook.” She said she hoped that by being open and telling her story about being vaccinated, it will help other people know it will be OK for them, too.

Lots of excitement

Her excitement about the vaccine is both professional and personal.

She said Covid “has been truly overwhelming” in her hospital and is “phenomenally worse than it was in the spring.”

The emergency department initially set aside a special area for patients who were, as she said “Covid suspicious.” That area had to expand to treat a large influx of patients this fall. And, Kruger said, someone might come in with a kidney infection, but after they were tested, she and other staff would find they were treating a patient with Covid.

Elsewhere in the hospital, the Covid area has expanded four times, with one of the intensive care units now reserved for Covid patients. In mid-December the Wichita area had the lowest number of ICU beds available anywhere in the state.

On the day Kruger received her first dose of the vaccine, Kansas reported 1,429 new cases of Covid, and 37 deaths.

Personally, she said she was thrilled to have a new way to help protect her husband, Denny, who is undergoing chemotherapy. “I have been diligent not to bring it home to him” she said, wearing an N95 mask under a surgical mask throughout her 12-hour shifts.

For three months in the spring she lived in their basement, and she and her husband had no physical contact. As more was known about how the virus spread, she and many of her colleagues have a new protocol. When she gets home from the

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

as doctors and scientists learned that indoor activities spread the coronavirus more than those that took place outside.

Some churches used their parking lot as a worship site, sometimes broadcasting the service using a low-frequency FM transmitter that allowed worshippers to listen on their car radio.

In a year-end video message to the diocese, Bishop Bascom thanked clergy for their hard work throughout the pandemic, acknowledging that many had to become “film producers,” recording worship services each week for broadcast on Sunday mornings in order to keep parishioners safe.

The bishop said she would offer guideline updates before the start of Holy Week in late March. ☉



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Rev. Kelly Demo leads a service in the parking lot at St. Thomas', Overland Park, in early December.

Deacon

Continued from page 9

hospital, she takes off her clothes in the laundry room and puts everything right into the washing machine. She then heads for the shower where she scrubs down with soap — even her eyelashes. After that, she uses Lysol wipes to clean her glasses.

Vocations in common

Since the spring Kruger has served every Sunday alongside the Rev. Les Jackson during online worship, both at Trinity in El Dorado and also at St. Matthew's in Newton. Jackson serves as rector of both parishes, so he and Kruger together alternate between the parishes weekly for livestream church services.

Kruger said her two vocations — nurse and deacon — share a common thread. “I have felt for a long time that nursing is diaconal in nature,” she said. “The role of the deacon is to care for people, finding the people who need our care and then helping.” And right now, for her, that

means getting a vaccine and following other public health guidelines.

“We have to take care of each other,” she said. “We have to look out for those in our community, for whatever reason, who can't get the vaccine. We must be diligent about masks and social distancing for a few more months, until the vaccine can roll out to more people.”

She said it was the calling of all Christians to take care of other people, and the vaccine, mask wearing

He said participation involved extensive follow-up tests and questions from doctors, to help ensure the vaccine was both safe and effective.

Demo said he signed up to take part because vaccines are “one of the best paths toward getting out of this mess.” He noted doing so had some risks, “but the greater risk is to society if we don't have some solutions.” ☉

and keeping distance are all ways to do that.

And, she said, this is the key to lives getting back to something more normal — sharing holidays, being together in church, and spending time with family and friends. For her, that will mean getting to be with her grandchildren in Connecticut, whom she has not seen in a year.

“This is the first step in a walk around the world,” she said, “but it is an exciting first step.” ☉

Food ministries continue serving people in need

By Melodie Woerman

FOOD MINISTRIES across the diocese have continued to provide food to hungry people throughout the year. And while some report the need has remained steady since March, others have seen a noticeable increase in people seeking help.

Two churches that prepare sack lunches every Saturday — Grace Cathedral, Topeka and St. John's, Wichita — are serving about the same number of people in December as they did in the spring. St. John's serves about 200 lunches each week, and the cathedral said they serve about 575 people each month, although in October that hit an all-time high of 656 lunches.

Kent Wingerson of the cathedral staff said they see the most people on the last Saturday of every month. "It's noticeably bigger," he said, surmising that money has gotten tighter for people as they await checks after the first of the month.

Breakthrough/Episcopal Social Services in Wichita has switched from serving lunch to breakfast, so people don't have to go without food in between noon meals. They serve about 120 people every morning. Staff member Rachel Newell said, "Breakthrough is not seeing a



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Patrons line up in front of St. John's, Wichita, for a sack lunch and other items on Saturday, Dec. 6.

rise in homelessness and hungry at our door, but the need is constant."

Barry Molineux said the Trinity Interfaith Food Pantry, housed at Trinity, Lawrence, helps between 250 and 270 households each month, which is about a 10 percent increase from the start of the pandemic in March. He said they are seeing more patrons who are unhoused or who live in transitional housing than they did before. "When they pick up a bag of food, they tell us they need food that does not require cooking," he said, like canned soup or peanut butter and jelly.

The monthly Mobile Food Pantry sponsored by St. Paul's, Clay Center, has seen a 30 percent increase in patrons recently. "In November we served 260 households," said Donna Long, a volunteer. "We usually are about 180-200." Deacon Carolyn Garwood said those 260 households represented 734 people. She noted that Harvesters Food Bank was able to provide more food, thanks to a new Coronavirus Food Assistance Program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The most dramatic jump in need is seen in Junction City, where the Church of the Covenant offers a weekly Community Dinner. It began in February serving 30 people on average, and by late November they were providing 160 or more meals every Tuesday evening.

Parish rector the Rev. Doreen Rice says dinner guests, who now pick up a grab-and-go meal, include "young families, Fort Riley soldiers, seniors and homeless members of the community." One grandmother, she said, picks up 11 meals to feed her children and grandchildren.

The church also will be the site for a new community kitchen pantry, which will provide basic kitchen utensils to people who may not have the means to cook for themselves. Covenant also will serve as a test kitchen for new online cooking classes. ☉

Grab-and-go meals at Covenant, Junction City, are serving about 160 people each week, up from 30 in February.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Convention during Covid

Lay delegates and clergy navigate a hybrid meeting to conduct business and discuss possible minster actions

By Melodie Woerman

FOR 161 YEARS, clergy and lay delegates from churches of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas have met for an annual convention in order to elect people to office, pass a budget and conduct other business. From the days of the Civil War, through economic recessions and depressions, even to times when the diocese was without a bishop, Diocesan Convention has continued, year after year.

On Oct. 24, in the midst of a pandemic that has required months largely without in-person church services or meetings to protect the health of members and their communities, a convention still took place but in a format never seen before — a combination of small, in-person gatherings and individuals participating from home, all connected by Zoom video conferencing that also was livestreamed to YouTube.

About half of the 195 voting members chose to participate individually by Zoom video, with the rest meeting in a church in one of the 11 minsters. Everyone in those gatherings was required to wear a mask and to sit at least six feet away from others.

Rising levels of the coronavirus in four counties meant that representatives from churches in those counties were not able to be part of minster gatherings but participated from home.

Bishop Cathleen Bascom presided from one of the classrooms in the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry, while members of the diocesan staff ran various elements of the Zoom meeting from other locations in the diocesan offices.

What being knit together looks like this year

In her address to the convention, the bishop said the theme, “joined and knitted together,” was an apt one for



the diocese, generally and specifically in this pandemic year.

“Like yarn in a shop,” she said, “we vary: fiber type, weight, color and twist. But we believe that there is an involved, loving God behind our very being. However, we are not only knit into being, we are knit together. We might say that we are — each of us — active stitches on God’s needles, waiting to be joined.”

She said it also represented the way the convention had to take place — people in various places joined together by online technology.

Noting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Bishop Bascom, said, “None of us could have imagined last year the challenges we have been through since last we met as a diocese.” But just as a knitted garment can stretch beyond its usual shape, “that is what has happened in the body of Christ in Kansas this year.”

She then listed ways she has seen the churches and people of the diocese adapt since March.

“Meeting masked up in memorial gardens. Gathering in your small groups and letting priests bear the sacrament there to you. Creating a system of care of vines and branches, reaching across massive suburbs to make sure every member is known and cared for.

“Virtual last rites by phone. Come-and-go animal blessings. More packaged meals to go than anyone can number. Zoom voices mixed into heavenly choruses. Hiking the Oregon Trail of the Konza Prairie with the bishop.

“Attending diocesanwide youth group online. Saving troubled parishes through collaboration. Pulling into drive-in-movie worship and accepting a small stack of wine and host, despite your Anglican aesthetics.



SCREENSHOT FROM YOUTUBE, VIA ZOOM

Bishop Cathleen Bascom gestures while giving her address to Diocesan Convention, which took place over the Zoom videoconference platform and also was streamed live to YouTube.

hours of filming and editing, where time and space have collapsed — and suddenly we worship or share coffee hour with people who worked on Sunday or who now live in another state or even halfway around the world.”

The bishop then described the way the diocese has engaged in the past year with the Minister Project, which she described at the 2019 convention. Minsters are groups of churches that work together to enhance ministry by sharing resources and exploring needs in their respective neighborhoods.

In the early afternoon, all voting members was placed into an online breakout room, one for each minster location, with those at home joining

“Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning. Hand washing, hand sanitizing, mask ablutions. Creating a vast variety of digital services through long



PHOTO BY MELODIE WOERMAN

The Rev. Casey Rohleder (standing) leads a discussion among lay delegates and clergy from the Tallgrass Minster who attended the convention gathered in All Saints Hall at Grace Cathedral, Topeka.

ELECTION RESULTS

Council of Trustees, at-large

- **Clergy:** The Rev. Ashley Mather, Grace Cathedral, Topeka
- **Lay:** Diana Waddell-Gilbert, Good Shepherd, Wichita

Disciplinary Board, unexpired terms

- **Clergy:** The Rev. Christine Gilson, retired
- **Clergy:** The Very Rev. Torey Lightcap, Grace Cathedral, Topeka
- **Lay:** Jeff Ellis, St. Michael and All Angels, Mission

the minister associated with their church. Groups then discussed a variety of action items proposed by the seven new diocesan task forces, with the goal of selected two or three for the coming year.

Increased videos throughout

Throughout the convention meeting, the work of youth, young adult and campus ministry, and the new Bethany House and Garden, were highlighted by videos.

The presentation of checks to the four outreach ministries receiving matching Alleluia Fund grants also took place by video:

- Trinity, Arkansas City, \$2,400, for a new Blanket Box Ministry
- Grace, Winfield, \$3,000, for a new Blanket Box Ministry
- St. Martin’s, Edwardsville, \$995.12, for its Hallelujah Trail
- St. Thomas’, Overland Park, \$1,000, for its Godly Play Giving Project

A special “Loaves and Fishes” Award of \$1,000 went to St. Jude’s, Wellington, whose 2019 grant for its Blanket Box Ministry inspired other such ministries this year.

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

Videos introduced delegates and clergy to those from the diocese who are attending residential seminary or Bishop Kemper School for Ministry, the recently serving members of the Council of Trustees, delegates representing youth and campus, and members of the diocesan staff.

The annual convention ministry awards also were presented via video (see the story below).

The proceedings were streamed live to the diocese's YouTube channel, and the concluding service of Holy Eucharist with Spiritual Communion, filmed at Grace Cathedral, also was posted there.

'Surprised by the intimacy'

The Rev. Sid Breese, vicar of Ascension, Neodesha and Epiphany, Independence, has attended many conventions, given his prior service in the diocese in the 1980s and 1990s. He said he wasn't looking for-

ward to this year's convention, without the usual gathering of colleagues and friends from across the diocese. Instead, being in his minster site at Epiphany, he said he was "surprised by the intimacy of a rather interesting format," citing the video presentations as one reason.

Jan Noyes, a delegate from St. Andrew's, Emporia, attended from home and said she struggled to make the online voting platform work for her. But she said her minster's online gathering resulted in "a great exchange of ideas."

Results of convention business

For the first time an online voting platform was used to elect people running for office as at-large members of the Council of Trustees and to fill unexpired terms on the Disciplinary Board (results are on page 13).

The convention also affirmed the election of new clergy members of

the Council of Trustees from each of the diocese's four convocations:

- **Northeast:** Deacon Jim Cummins, St. Francis, Overland Park
- **Northwest:** The Rev. Greg Doll, St. Mark's, Blue Rapids and St. Paul's, Marysville
- **Southeast:** The Rev. Mary Schrom Breese, Epiphany, Sedan
- **Southwest:** The Rev. Andrew O'Connor, Good Shepherd, Wichita

The convention also adopted the proposed mission plan (budget) for 2021 in the amount of \$1,923,187, along with a schedule of apportionment payments to come from each parish to help fund the plan.

Videos of the convention proceedings, presentation of awards and the convention Eucharist all are archived and available on demand on the diocese's YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/c/episcopaldio-ceseofkansas ◊

Annual awards recognize outstanding ministry

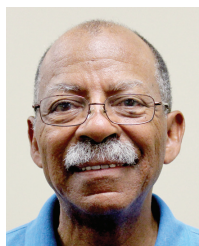
SINCE 2004, AWARDS have been presented during Diocesan Convention to recognize people across the diocese for outstanding ministry. This year these are the recipients.

The Bishop's Chair Award – Stephan Mann

Bishop Cathleen Bascom recognized Stephan Mann for his work as a member of the Council of Trustees and in his parish, St. Luke's, Shawnee, including serving as chair of their recent search for a new rector. The award is a rocking chair engraved with the diocesan seal.

The Canon's Award – the Rev. Gar Demo

Canon to the Ordinary the Rev. Patrick Funston recognized the Rev. Gar Demo, rector of St. Thomas, Overland Park, for his years of service to the diocese and his work in evangelism and congregational development. The award is a plaque, featuring a metal cannon.



Stephan Mann



The Rev. Gar Demo



Deacon Jim Cummins

The Archdeacons' Cross Award – Deacon Jim Cummins

Archdeacons Anne Flynn and Monte Giddings recognized Deacon Jim Cummins, St. Francis, Overland Park, for his years of ministry in Africa, including serving as director of Kansas for Kenya. The award is a silver cross on a chain. ◊



SCREENSHOT VIA YOUTUBE

Singers in the Virtual Hymn Choir based at Grace Cathedral, Topeka, join their voices as part of the online recorded service of Holy Eucharist during Diocesan Convention.

Virtual choir enhances online convention worship

By Melodie Woerman

VOICES FROM dispersed singers across Topeka and around the country provided music for the Diocesan Convention online worship service, thanks to the efforts of people at Grace Cathedral, Topeka.

Organist/choirmaster Steve Burk said he began thinking about how to get choir members together online to sing anthems back in May and soon discovered that what he and others really wanted to sing weren't anthems but hymns — the music they most missed by not being part of an in-person congregation.

Burk said after the idea got started, "it quickly became apparent that virtual singing wasn't for everyone, but that it was a singing outlet for some who yearned to continue to make music together." Emails and social media posts yielded replies from former choir members who had moved away, from professional colleagues and friends, and from singers whose own church wasn't doing any choir projects. His goal was to create one virtual hymn each week.

In all, there have been about 30 singers, although on any given week between 18 and 22 people participate. Burk said, "Singers come from the cathedral and other

churches in our diocese, plus singers from other denominations, other states, and even two singers from England."

He said technical upgrades now allow four singers to safely come together as an ensemble to create learning, or sing-along tracks, for each hymn.

Singers record themselves singing their part, usually on a computer but sometimes on a cell phone. Some had to enhance their equipment, like new microphones or headphones, to sing along to the learning tracks.

An upgraded Google Drive allows singers to send their files electronically, where they are handed over to choir member Dylan Ediger, who is in his first year teaching music at a Topeka Catholic elementary school.

He uses free audio software to separate the audio tracks from each submitted video and edit mistakes or add needed richness to make the voices blend better.

iMovie software lets him align each singer's video with their enhanced audio track and then create the multi-box layout that puts all singers on the screen together.

Ediger said when he starts to create a new hymn, with just one singer, "it never really sounds great." But as he adds more and more singers, he said "eventually it sounds, almost, like the real thing." 🎧

Joy in the midst of darkness

A Christmas message from the Presiding Bishop

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing.*

Perhaps like me, you've sung this hymn for years — in church, at home with your family, gathered with friends and neighbors. Perhaps you've sung it to yourself — in your car, on a walk, or quietly in the dark of night.

Joy to the world!

While we may not feel joyful this year — as the pandemic of disease continues to bring sickness and death, when fear and mistrust — a darkness — threatens to overcome the light — we, as followers of Jesus Christ must bear joy to this aching world.

We must shine light into the darkness. Joy to the world!

Like much in our lives, proclaiming joy is difficult work — also good and essential work — especially now. Though we mourn that which is lost in our lives, our families, and our communities — Joy to the world!

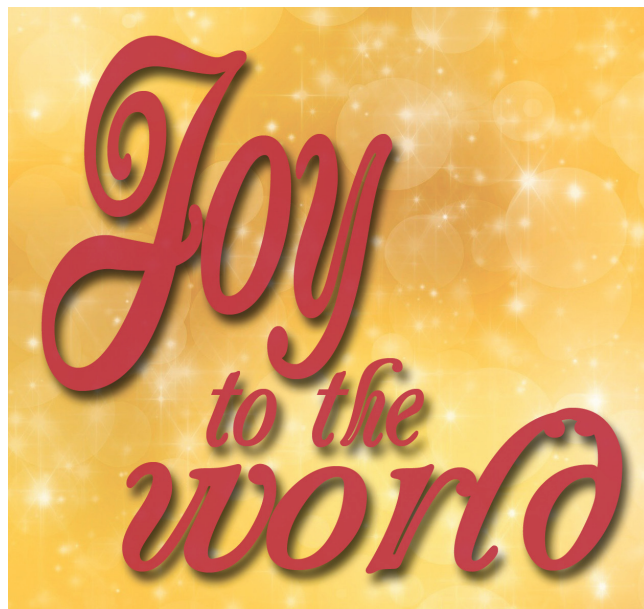
While we strive to pull up the twisted and thorny vines of hatred and bigotry and anger — Joy to the world!

Through streaming tears and gritted teeth — Joy to the world! — because God is breaking into our lives and into this world anew.

While this is a strange year, the ministry he gives us remains the same.

We will prepare him room in our hearts by taking on the ministry Jesus demands of us: feed those who are hungry; welcome the stranger; clothe those who are naked; heal those who are sick; visit the prisoner.

Love God. Love your neighbor. Sing joy into this old world. Prepare him room.



St. Luke writes of the first Christmas, “[Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” There, in the simplest bed, in the cool of the night, in a trough, in bands of cloth, lies the One for whom no room was made. And yet strangely, there lies the One whom not even the universe can contain.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come. In your hearts, in your homes, in your lives, prepare him room.

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

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate,
the Episcopal Church ☩

Naming the lessons of 2020 for a better 2021

AS OUR CALENDAR

turns from December into January, a new year begins. In the church we start the year with the Feast of the Holy Name — Jan. 1 being the eighth day after Jesus' birth and thus the day when he would have been taken, according to the Law, for his circumcision and formal naming.

Luke tells us the story in a single verse: "After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." (Luke 2:21) In this holy moment for a Jewish family, the male child is presented and named. The circumcision ritual marks him as a child of the Law, one of God's chosen people.

Of course, the ritual goes deeper for Christ, who is not only one of God's people, but God's Son whose name, conveyed by angels to Mary and Joseph, means "deliver, rescue."

Naming is a powerful process. When we name our children, sometimes we tie them to their ancestors; sometimes we tie them to a place, memory or hope we share with a co-parent.

When we name events, we color how we will remember them into the future: Independence Day. Black Tuesday. A date which will live in infamy. Bloody Sunday.

As we turn over the new year, I'm feeling and seeing a lot of, "Thank God 2020 is over." I get it; it's been a rough year.

However, I also worry about how we look back at the events and the unveilings of this past year and choose to "name" them as "of 2020."

I say this because 2020 is now officially in the past, but most of what happened in 2020 continues today.

If we celebrate the departure of 2020, ascribing those events to the last year, we run the risk of moving on too quickly and shirking our responsibilities as those who have been named Children of God.

We have encountered much this year: the Covid-19 pandemic, the revelation and expansion of systemic white supremacy, embedded structures of economic inequality.

These pains, among too many others, along with the death and destruction wrought by them, have worn on us and made this an especially painful year. But not one of them is over! These are not things to cast into memory by ascribing them to 2020.

As the people of God, we need to name, claim and repent of them for what they are: evidence of the brokenness of our world and our need to redouble our efforts and to claim the mantle of God's children.

Many years after Jesus's circumcision and naming, his Apostle Paul told us that Jesus's birth, life, death and resurrection brings us all into God's family: in baptism, we have been adopted and made joint-heirs with Christ. This is a status granted by grace, never to be taken away.



As God's children, we share Christ's "ministry of reconciliation" leading us to join God in restoring the brokenness of our world.

As a new year begins, do we celebrate an imaginary ending so that we can move on? Or do we celebrate God's continued love for us, and take what we've learned and how we've grown, to make 2021 better? ☉



The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

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The Bishop Kemper School for Ministry is deeply committed to the work of anti-racism

On July 18, 2020, BKSM's Board of Directors voted to make the *Anti-Racism Covenant*, authored by the Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri, the official policy of the seminary (<https://antiracismcovenant.org/>).

To equip future leaders with the tools they need to lead anti-racism efforts in their local faith communities, we covenant to:

- examine and revise our programs and coursework to include under-represented voices.
- increase diversity among our faculty, students and vendors.
- make discussions around race a centerpiece of ongoing spiritual and leadership formation.

We are grateful for your prayers as this transformative work continues.



BISHOP KEMPER SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
Theological Education for All People