

Diocesan

FALL 2017



messenger

ENCOUNTERING DEATH AND DYING

Practicing Resurrection

BY KATHARINE JEFFERTS SCHORI, PAGE 4

Helping Children Grieve

BY COLLEEN GRITZEN, PAGE 13

FALL CONTENTS 2017

holy endings

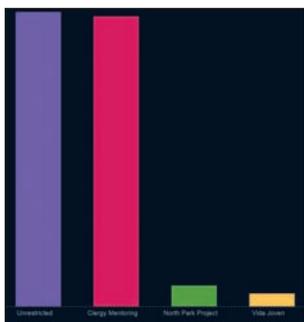
- 4 Practicing Resurrection?
- 5 Afterlife: Eternal Life
- 6 On Grief
- 12 Walking Through Death
- 13 Helping Children Grieve
- 15 Dying the Way you Want

diocesan news

- 8 Fall Calendar
- 10 Celebrating a Faithful Servant
- 11 A Nominating Process
- 14 Diocesan Convention

Cover Photo: Superflewis/Wikimedia Commons/Sun Behind Clouds

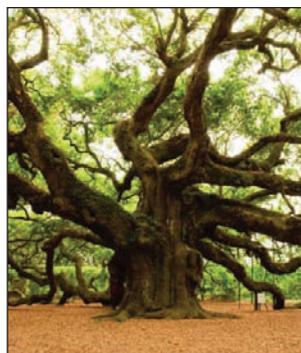
ON THE WEB



FAREWELL INITIATIVE

The Farewell Initiative in honor of Bishop Mathes' episcopacy has raised \$141,524. The initiative supports the Clergy Mentorship Fund established by the 2013 Build the Serving Church capital campaign, the North Park Project and Vida Joven de México. In the graphic, the columns show from left to right, unrestricted giving (\$67,565), clergy mentoring (\$66,560), the North Park Project (\$4,854) and Vida Joven (\$3,005).

MORE INFORMATION: edsd.org/farewellinitiative



BISHOP'S APPEAL

Gifts to the Bishop's Appeal support our mission to share Christ's love and reconcile all people to God and each other. Your gift directly supports ministry programs and outreach projects. To date, the appeal has raised \$35,720. Our goal is \$100,000 by year end.

MORE INFORMATION: edsd.org/bishopsappeal

UPDATED SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

What does the diocese have to say about healthy boundaries on social media? Find out in our newly updated social media policy compiled by the diocesan communications committee.

MORE INFORMATION: edsd.org/socialmediapolicy

COMMON LIFE SHARE REPORT

The common life share supports our collective work. Fourteen churches gave more than the 10.5% minimum thereby supporting Showers of Blessings, the Episcopal Youth Event, the Schools Coalition and the North Park Project.

MORE INFORMATION: edsd.org/commonlife

DEATH & DYING

EDITOR: Hannah Wilder

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Why spend time talking about death and dying? Why explore such a grim subject? Well, if we can't talk about death in the church where we profess hope in the resurrection, where can we talk about it? Death touches all of us. As my father likes to say, death and taxes are life's only certainties. It seems appropriate that in the communities where we explore the stirrings of our souls, we would also reflect on the conclusion of our earthly lives. For in doing so we may gain greater appreciation for this life we have been given. Fall with its changing colors, a beautiful season of dying that makes way for new life, seemed an appropriate time to encounter death and dying.

There exists among us much wisdom about death, grief, pain and loss. Our assisting bishop, Bishop Jefferts Schori, encourages us to practice resurrection (page 3). Processing grief is never easy. The Rev. Laura Sheridan-Campbell shares openly about her own personal losses, how she dealt with grief, and how faith communities can provide solace (page 6). Have you ever helped a child grieve? Colleen Gritzen, Sunday school teacher and parent whose kids have lost a grandparent, a dog, and a close family friend in 18 months, provides practical advice (page 13). Our cathedral's dean, the Rev. Penny Bridges, explores

the ways we may think about death as Episcopalians in 2017 (page 5). If you are dealing with family dynamics around death, see the Rev.

Babs Meairs' article from her perspective as a seasoned hospital chaplain (page 12). Faye Girsh, president of the Hemlock Society of San Diego, articulates her perspective on end of life options on page 15. These stories, and more, are in this issue and online at edsd.org/blog.

Death changes us. It often paves the way for profound shifts in our thinking and behavior. That change starts with new questions we ask ourselves. What questions do you ask yourself as you ponder your own mortality? What grace has supported you when loss felt overwhelming? We'd love to hear from you. As always, thanks for reading the *Messenger*. Share it with a friend or neighbor and invite them to join you in church. +



messenger contact

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magazine info

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submissions

We welcome submissions of original articles, letters, poetry, art and photographs. Submissions should pertain in some way to the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of San Diego. It is advised to check with the editor prior to submitting, to ensure your materials fit thematically and that there is space. All submissions should be sent via email: hwilder@edsd.org. Include your name, congregation, phone and home address. The editor reserves the right to edit all material for length, clarity and accuracy. At this time, the magazine cannot provide compensation for submissions.

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distribution

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PRACTICING RESURRECTION?

AUTHOR: Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

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Have you ever asked yourself if you are (practicing resurrection)? It's a useful question to consider when life brings change, disappointment, or grief. Do we respond to the unexpected by assuming the worst, or do we insist that God is undoubtedly up to something new and lively, even if we can't see it yet?

Jesus' story about the widow seeking justice¹ gets to the heart of that question. She knew she was going to get justice, eventually, and she just kept on pestering that judge until she did.

An older tennis-playing friend of mine fell recently and broke her hip. When I called her in the hospital, she told me the pain was an unpleasant challenge, and her life had been summarily interrupted, but life happens.

When the Israelites are wandering in the desert, complaining about the food and how hard life is, how does Moses respond? He reminds them (and probably himself) that God is still on the road with them, and that their job is to 'choose life' rather than death.² Moses encourages them to remember that the word (of life) is already at work within their hearts and on their lips.

The word of life was planted in each of us before we breathed this planet's air, and it was deeply watered at baptism. How's it doing? Through the ages God's people have found that the water and fertilizer and pruning it needs to thrive have a lot to do with our expectations. What we feed expands; what we encourage, grows. Most of us have experienced the reality that children who are encouraged and expected to thrive, do, and those who don't have encouragers and examples in their lives struggle harder to find hopeful direction in life. We can offer the word of life to the despairing—and discover that it becomes greener and livelier within us.

What do you hope for in the face of your latest disappointment or grief? What new opportunity might this expose? Sometimes (often!) we need the solidarity of community to help us see those possi-

bilities, and the ways that apparent losses become manure for greener and more productive trees in the future. The summer wildfires in the West used to do this quite predictably, until we started

meddling. We acted as though fire was the worst thing possible, and we made the inevitable fires a lot worse because the regular cleansing of brush and undergrowth was hindered for decades.

We may not always think about Lent that way, but clearing out the rank growth is a lot of what that season is meant to do. When we do it regularly, it's easier to recognize the need in all seasons. And when we can see the majesty of the trees, absent the press of undergrowth, maybe we can remember where they come from. That's what Jesus said in the garden, "your will, not mine, be done"³—I trust that you, God, are always bringing life, even if it all looks like death right now. Even his abjectly despairing cry on the cross, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"⁴ affirms his connection with the bringer of all life.

The next time death or grief confronts you, pause and give thanks for the life that was—for the gifts received and the life shared. It is thanksgiving that reinvigorates the life within us all, and prompts hope and expectation for the new life already aborning. Give thanks for what is, for what has been, for what is yet to be—and know that God is still at work. Always and in all ways. +



1 Luke 18:1-18

2 Deuteronomy 30

3 Mark 14:36

4 Mark 15:34

AFTERLIFE: ETERNAL LIFE

AUTHOR: Dean Penny Bridges

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What are your first thoughts when you consider the afterlife? Do you think of classic images of heaven or hell, do you tremble at the thought of judgment or smile with anticipation of bliss? Do you worry about loved ones who died before they ever embraced faith? In the gospels Jesus talks a lot about the kingdom of God, judgment, and eternal life, but most of us remain confused about what we are to expect after our mortal bodies cease to function.

We live with conflicting expectations and images, which we have absorbed from the various theologies presented in scripture and the traditional teachings of the Church. For many of us, these sources raise more questions than they answer. Is heaven a place? Can you go there if you weren't baptized? Do we need to keep our physical remains intact so that we can be resurrected in them? What about grace—does it really matter how we live our lives if God is going to forgive us all our sins anyway? Do good people who don't believe in God get a pass? What about our pets? Will we have to share heaven with people we didn't like in this life? Will we be able to watch over our loved ones left behind? Is hell a place of fire and pitchforks? And on, and on.

Any rational reflection on the afterlife is complicated by our cultural reluctance to think about death. We have come a long way from the devout Anglicans of the early Reformation, who slept

in shrouds and prepared themselves daily for the possibility that they would not wake up in the morning. We have almost succeeded in convincing ourselves that death is avoidable—just notice the way mortality statistics are reported, with their percentages of probability of death (hint: the probability is always 100%).

For most of Christian history, and still in most of the world, life has been fragile and early mortality likely. Life was and is hard and filled with suffering, heaven a longed-for blessed rest after a life of drudgery. But we who live in comfort in the developed

“Does it really matter how we live our lives if God is going to forgive us all our sins anyway?”

world live pretty good lives, for the most part, and don't spend a lot of time thinking about what comes next, until a loved one dies or we are brought face-to-face with our own mortality. We lack incentives to focus on the afterlife because this life is so sweet. And our Anglican tradition has, thank goodness, largely let go of the guilt-inducing theology of the past, which was, to our shame, used to exercise control over people taught to be terrified of the consequences of disobeying Mother Church.

Having stripped away the remnants of our pre-Enlightenment understanding of the afterlife, what is left? Of course nobody actually knows what happens to our souls after death. We must, in the end, come to terms with the not knowing: that is where faith comes in. But imagine this possibility: that when we die we are exposed to the fullness of the

AFTERLIFE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

ON GRIEF

AUTHOR: The Rev. Laura Sheridan Campbell

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Despite having lost a father, mother, brother and close friend to death by the time I was 40, I have a fair bit of experience

avoiding grief. Because it is so painful, there's almost nothing I'd rather avoid more than grieving. In December 1985, my 31-year old brother, Tim, was killed in a peace-time military air crash near Gander, Newfoundland. Along with 247 other members of the 101st Airborne Division's 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, he was returning from the Middle East. The soldiers boarded Arrow Air Flight 1285 in Cairo, Egypt. The DC-8 would refuel in Cologne, Germany and Gander, Newfoundland, before returning to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. All went smooth through the second refueling stop. Then moments after takeoff, the plane came back down, killing 248 soldiers and eight crew members. Given the scope of the crash, it took two months for Tim's partial dental plate to be identified. In February 1986, a casket carrying those tiny remains arrived in Des Moines, Iowa.

The night before the funeral, family and friends gathered at our small-town funeral home. Tim's Korean wife, O (that's her name) and their four-year old son, Joshua, were present, as well as O's mother, Yung Kim, herself a widow who had flown in from Incheon, South Korea. In our family's Disciples of Christ Church tradition, it was customary to have a viewing, but for obvious reasons the gathering was absent that ritual. Rather, we sat and stood around the room. Some talked. Others were quiet. Then without notice, Yung Kim walked to the closed, American flag-draped casket, laid her body over it, and began to sob. She and my brother had grown close over five years. As we watched and listened to her, the room fell silent. Tears streamed down faces in the room. Without being able to speak a word of English, one woman expressed the collective grief of so many. She was like a midwife, birthing grief from barren hearts.

Until then, I didn't know that the impetus not to grieve was wired into my German-Irish ancestry and reinforced

through a rural midwest upbringing. All I knew was what I had experienced. Someone dies. Friends, family and neighbors come together. Food is brought. Flowers are sent. Burial happens. And life goes on. The only thing is, from the earliest days after loss, life doesn't go on as it was. It goes on very differently.

One challenge of grieving in 21st century America is that we have dropped customs for the grieving. Black used to be the color of mourning. Civil War widows wore mourning clothes for a year and a day. Black. Every day. All day. After 366 days, color could be added, but only gradually. In the absence of universal customs, the Church has much to offer:

Context: The Church encompasses the temporal and the eternal. After a loved one's death when we tend to focus on the emptiness of loss, the knowledge that the Body of Christ includes the living and the departed can offer a more solid foundation for grieving.

"There's almost nothing I'd rather avoid more than grieving."

Safety: I sometimes hear people say, "I almost started crying when I heard that hymn, but I was able to hold it back." If faith

communities are the safe contexts that we strive for, then why hold back tears? And yet, feeling safe is important. Church leaders do well to remember that at any given time, some members are grieving. Perhaps we could do more to make them feel safe.

Permission and Latitude: The words from the burial office on p. 507 of the *Book of Common Prayer* underscore the human nature of grief: "The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all meaning in the resurrection. . . . This joy, however, does not make human grief unchristian. The very love we have for each other in Christ brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death. So, while we rejoice that one we love has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord, we sorrow in sympathy with those who mourn." Similarly, while Episco-



MILITARY MOURNING: Caskets of the members of the 101st Airborne Division's 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, all of whom died after a routine refueling stop on their flight home. One of the soldiers was the author's brother.

pal liturgical rites are prescribed, they also offer latitude to customize celebrations of life and funerals that speak to the value of each life.

Ritual: When caskets or urns are present, we cover them with a pall, signifying that each life is hallowed in God's sight. A paschal candle, first lighted on Easter Eve, is visible, reminding all of the power of Christ's resurrection. Whereas black and purple were once liturgical colors for burial, white symbolizes Christ's victory over death.

Word and Sacrament, Prayer and Song: Scripture is filled with living examples of those whose lives have been transformed through grief. Ruth and Naomi come to mind. The Psalms, filled with emotion, are prayers of our spiritual ancestors. The Word can be a lexicon for grieving. Prayerbook burial rites and other authorized liturgies offer meaningful resources. And, while holy communion isn't always included at the time of burial, the weekly eucharist can draw us into sacred mystery and fill us with Life that death cannot overcome. Prayer calls us to be honest before God. Hard as that can be when we feel anger and sorrow, a growing relationship with God teaches us that God invites our honesty, even when being honest is painful for us. Hymns bind our lives together. Poetry and song are often the best that we can do in the face of our unanswerable questions.

Professional Help: Therapists and spiritual directors offer help navigating the unpredictable terrain of grief. Our diocese is blessed to have many who are gifted in this way. Talk with your priest or contact the diocesan staff if you need help finding professional help.

Community: As a priest of 23 years, some profound moments of blessing have come in witnessing the Church being the Church to those who grieve. Grief can isolate us, but the Church continually invites us to live together. We can support those who grieve by asking others how they are doing, and really meaning it. We can respect and make room for different cultural grief rituals. We can remember those who have gone before on the feasts of All Saints and Souls, and on occasions like Mothers' and Fathers' Days, birthdays and anniversaries. We can equip pastoral care teams with resources to better meet grieving people where they are. We can support clergy who minister to the grieving, by caring for them and sharing their burden.

While I am still inclined to avoid grief, the church has helped me to understand that grief doesn't fit in a box. It's not a linear process. It is both a part of life, and different for each person. I haven't seen Yung Kim for 29 years. She is 84 now. I dream of visiting her in Incheon, along with Jerry, O and Joshua. Maybe then I will be able to thank her for a moment when she taught me about the pain and beauty of grief in a lesson that will last a lifetime.

FALL CALENDAR

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

SEMESTER BEGINS

Classes commence at the diocesan School for Ministry. The semester runs through December 9. No class is held on November 11 due to Diocesan Convention nor on November 25 due to Thanksgiving.

TIME: 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Episcopal Church Center, 2083 Sunset Cliffs Blvd., San Diego

MORE INFORMATION: edsd.org/sfm

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

SAFEGUARDING GOD'S PEOPLE

Bring your laptop and lunch to this online training about preventing misconduct. A live assistant will guide the online process.

TIME: 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

LOCATION: Christ Church, 1114 Ninth St., Coronado

RSVP: Keren, kmondaca@edsd.org with "Safeguarding" in the subject line

FRI - SUN, SEPTEMBER 15 - 17

ALTAR GUILD CONFERENCE



Come learn about the altar guild and connect with other altar guild members from the western region of our church. Be renewed in your ministry.

LOCATION: Wasatch Conference & Retreat

Center, Salt Lake City

INFO: amlarsen@coastside.net

MON - WED, OCTOBER 2 - 4

CLERGY CONFERENCE

Clergy members are invited for a few days of rest and relaxation as we explore this



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

LATINO/HISPANIC HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Tercera celebración anual de la herencia latina/hispana centrada en artistas, actores y autores. Ven a disfrutar de la comida, mariachi, bailarines aztecas, películas, juegos, artesanías, brincolines y postres.

Third annual celebration of Latino/Hispanic heritage focusing on artists, actors and authors. Come enjoy food, mariachi, Aztec dancers, movies, games, crafts, bouncy houses, and desserts.

TIME & PLACE: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. St. Philip's, 2660 Hardy Drive, Lemon Grove

RSVP/INFO: stphilip1950@yahoo.com

year's theme of Deepening Connections. Bishop Jefferts Schori will lead us, as will seasoned retreat facilitator Steve Romano. We will also have a deacons' panel discussion.

PLACE: Viña de Lestonnac Retreat Center
REGISTER: edsd.org/clergy-conference

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

LEARNING FROM LONDON



Eighteen percent of congregations in the Diocese of London are growing. Come learn how to apply what they have learned in our churches. This is

the third offering of this kind; it is sponsored by the diocesan School for Ministry.
TIME: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
LOCATION: St. Dunstan's, 6556 Park Ridge Blvd., San Diego
RSVP: Mark Hargreaves, mark@sjbts.org

THURS-SUN, OCTOBER 19 - 22 CURSILLO



Cursillo is a plan for living a Christian life. It begins with a three-day gathering of those seeking to strengthen their lives of faith through worship, prayer, music, and fellowship.

LOCATION: Camp Stevens, Julian
INFO: sdcursillo.org or gmcavert@att.net

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21 ENNEAGRAM WORKSHOP



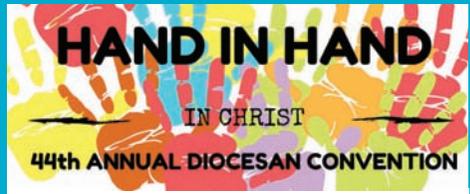
The Enneagram is a model of the human psyche that teaches a typology of nine interconnected personality types. The Rev. Janet Wheelock will guide the discussion with the Rev.

Cn. Allisyn Thomas assisting.
TIME: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
COST: \$50 per person
INFO: Allisyn, athomas@edsd.org

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28 FEARLESS FORMATION

Learn from peers across the diocese about what's working in Christian education for all ages. Breakout sessions will examine formation from different lenses including:

multicultural, intergenerational, online and more.
TIME: 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
COST & PLACE: \$25, St. Paul's Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Ave., San Diego
INFO: edsd.org/fearless-formation-2017



FRI-SAT, NOVEMBER 10 - 11

DIOCON

Hand in hand we form the body of Christ in Southern California and Yuma, Arizona. By hand we will pack 50,000 meals for hungry people in San Diego and beyond. Come to this two-day annual gathering of the diocesan family as we vote on resolutions, elect people to leadership positions, learn in interactive workshops, and worship together. All are welcome. See page 14 and visit edsd.org to learn more.

COST: \$105 per person / \$45 for Friday's dinner / \$45 per youth / \$25 per child
LOCATION: St. Bartholomew's, 16275 Pomerado Road, Poway, CA 92064
INFO & REGISTRATION: edsd.org/diocon

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5 UTO INGATHERING

It's time to gather all the offerings for the United Thank Offering (UTO). Jamie Wood, our UTO coordinator, is available to give informational presentations to your church.
LOCATION: All churches in the diocese
INFO: Jamie, jamiewood2@cox.net

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13 ARMED FORCES EVENSONG



A beautiful Anglican service honoring our armed forces and veterans.
TIME & PLACE: 5 p.m., St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11 ALTERNATIVE GIFTS EXPO

Find holiday gifts from around the world and join the fight to end poverty. 10,000 Villages, Tomorrow Project, RefugeeNet, Equal Exchange and more. Enjoy a complimentary lunch of soup and bread.
TIME & PLACE: 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego



CELEBRATING A FAITHFUL SERVANT

AUTHOR: Nancy Toti

CHURCH: St. Mark's, City Heights

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Father Mac is retiring! He is a San Diego native raised in National City, where he helped out at his dad's television repair shop. He went to Sweetwater High before going on to SDSU, majoring in literature and discovering Bob Dylan. He was raised Methodist and also worshipped as a Pentecostal. He attended Point Loma Nazarene, worked in sales and heeded God's call. Father Mac graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1987. He served at the cathedral and at St. Bartholomew's, Poway before arriving at St. Mark's in 1998. While at St. Mark's he encouraged the congregation to become even more involved with the City Heights community, identifying gaps in services, specifically around food insecurity. He spoke and preached on poverty, loving your neighbors and social justice. He brought the gospels to life and gently and effectively called the congregation of St. Mark's to embrace its mission. Father Mac called us to worship, called us together, called us to the Holy Spirit. He called us to welcome the stranger, seek justice and grace, touch the lonely,

remember the forgotten, comfort the sad and celebrate the miracles. He has called St. Mark's to fearless love, to feed the hungry, to provide solace to the hurting, to celebrate joy and to see the risen Christ in the face of each one we encounter.

He is leaving a grateful and blessed congregation. He is leaving a congregation brought forth to act in God's love, and to witness stories and transformations. Plus the coffee and salvation are free. Membership has its privileges! We embrace him as he goes forth in his retirement and we celebrate his kindness, warmth, humor and grace. We celebrate his ministry and we are most joyful that he brought us forth to live out the gospels in real and tangible ways. +

The Rev. Mac Collins' retirement celebration takes place on Saturday, September 9 at 3 p.m. at St. Mark's, City Heights. He requests that any retirement gifts be designated to the Mac Collins Legacy Fund for the ongoing work and mission of St. Mark's. For more information, email smarkscityheights@gmail.com

AFTERLIFE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

love of Christ. As so beautifully rendered in Elgar's setting of Newman's poem "Gerontius," that exposure is exquisitely painful, even for the most devout Christian, for we can have no conception in this life of just how vast and intense that love is. The degree to which we have prepared in this life to know that love, through practicing love ourselves, dictates the level of pain we suffer as we pass through the crucible of love. What remains is absorbed into some eternal dimension that transcends all that we can imagine and is the ultimate source of love.

As for the eternal life to which

Jesus refers, I believe that this is something that we can strive toward in the here and now, rather than hoping for it in the by-and-by. Eternal life means abundance of life for all, the triumph of justice over oppression and love over hate. It's a quality that we glimpse in transcendent moments: communion, intimate relationships, birth and death, great music and awe-inspiring nature. Or, to quote the catechism, it is "a new existence, in which we are united with all the people of God, in the joy of fully knowing and loving God and each other." What more could we wish for, in this life or the next? +

A NOMINATING PROCESS: DO WE REALLY NEED IT?

AUTHOR: The Rev. Paul Carmona, PhD

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Does finding a new bishop really have to be so complicated? Does the process have to take so long? Why can't we just do a simple search, and let the chips fall where they may?

In a more predictable world, a simple search process—unencumbered by elaborate schedules, multi-layered guidelines, and months of burdensome meetings—might achieve a perfect outcome . . . but then again, it might not. So where does that leave us as people of faith? We trust that God will lead us to a good outcome, to a good choice of bishop, but in spite of that we still have the nervous feeling that prayerful trust may be merely the starting point—an excellent starting point, I might add—in our collective quest for identifying the next bishop of San Diego.

To begin with, it needs to be acknowledged that last time around the nominating committee encountered significant challenges. The guidelines for our current nominating process have taken into account the painful lessons we learned from 2004. That in itself is a precious gift from prior experience. And it was our prayerfully conceived process—guided by the Holy Spirit and assisted by the standing committee—that ultimately enabled us to move forward to the election of our fourth bishop.

What is it, then, that a good episcopal nomination process should do? First of all, an agreed-to process provides a plan for how to proceed—a plan that includes, among other things: appointment and establishment of a nominating committee; development of a timeline and target dates; scheduling of committee meetings, on-site interviews, candidate forums, travel arrangements, etc. Because there's so much to accomplish, a good plan can go far to lower the blood pressures and calm the hearts of all participants.

Secondly, a good nominating process sets clear guidelines and boundaries for appropriate behavior within the process. We Episcopalians tend to take pride in our penchant for civility, but we're just as human as anyone else, and we all benefit from reminders about behavioral

standards. Mandatory confidentiality is non-negotiable, but so is providing a safe spiritual, emotional and physical environment to all whom the process touches—whether they be church officials, committee participants,

nominee hopefuls, members of forum audiences, or the general public. Also, every aspect of the process should be welcoming and inclusive. It is unfortunate that we sometimes hear people say, "I'm sick and tired of political correctness!" Such comments overlook the fact that political correctness is not the same thing as showing true respect for all God's people. Political correctness essentially seeks a self-serving end—to win approval or votes, for instance—while respect selflessly honors the image of God present in everyone. As a sign of our unconditional welcome, we must recruit persons from diverse demographic backgrounds to serve on the nominating committee. Their wise and informed input will be invaluable to the process. In 2004, our nominating committee included three Latinos/as and one African-American. I sincerely hope that our current process results in numerical increase and demographic broadening of minority participation on the nominating committee.

Thirdly, a good process will always keep the doors open for self-correction and self-improvement, should the need arise. The standing committee will surely be helpful for ensuring that. Additionally, all participants should feel sufficiently enabled to call proper attention to undesirable occurrences or inappropriate behaviors that may arise. Hopefully, and



FATHER CARMONA
served on the nominating
committee in 2004.

WALKING THROUGH DEATH AS A FAMILY OF FAITH

AUTHOR: The Rev. Babs Meairs EMAIL: bmeairs17@yahoo.com

I had the privilege of being at my mother's bedside when she died. As a seasoned hospital chaplain I have come to appreciate this opportunity to experience presence and transcendence as a holy moment, and it was especially important to me to share this with the woman who meant so much to me. Her last weeks she spent in agony; the cancer diagnosis came too late, and was too widespread, for any treatment other than comfort care. And that was where the family dynamics were complicated. Though I had spent much time with families making difficult decisions about end-of-life care, when it was so personal, I was given little voice. My father and brother made the decisions, and that meant a prolonged and painful period for my mother as her body gave out. The family decided to keep her alive to receive a visit from her new great-grandchild, which gave her joy though at personal cost. When hospice was finally brought in, it was too late for much benefit. Instead of lasting a few days, my mother continued in her nursing home bed for over a month. Her faith, however, remained strong, and we knew where she was headed; after all, she had raised me to believe in the promises of Christ.

Death is inevitable, and as people who believe in the resurrection, we know death does not have the final word. My comfort when dealing with dying comes from Romans 8:37-39: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Still, even those who have a deep and active Christian faith find coping with the death of a loved one a powerful test in what they think, feel and believe. This is made more complicated by what is now available in modern healthcare.

Family members and healthcare providers look for guidance in the dying patient's advance directives, and if that is not available, in remembering discussions and actions taken in the past. And

even when the patient is alert, family pressures and modes of decision-making may take control from the patient. Sometimes the resistance to a final goodbye makes a family member's pain more powerful than the dying person's pain. And sometimes the options for prolonging life interfere with what that life is like for the one losing it.

For example, most people offer food when they want to do something comforting. This is problematic for a dying person who cannot eat and may be hurt physically and emotionally if trying to please the kind gesture. When family asked Mom if she would like a milkshake, she nodded yes, but couldn't even swallow. It is a good idea to separate good intentions from the reality of the patient's abilities. Peaceful presence is often the best comfort for the dying person and may include prayer.

These concerns are best discussed among all who are closely involved. This may mean seeking assistance from an ethics committee and spiritual leadership, though approaches from faith-based, well-meaning, and maybe uninformed religious perspectives will vary. A helpful book is *Faithful Living, Faithful Dying, Anglican Reflections on End of Life Care*. Led by ethicist Cynthia B. Cohen, the book provides detailed analysis of the difficult decisions and options regarding care and coping at the end of life from a



CHAPLAIN MEAIRS was board certified by the national association of VA chaplains and served on the committee that drafted the end-of-life policy for the VA department.

HELPING CHILDREN GRIEVE

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The death of a beloved family pet, a relative or friend is just as hard for children as for adults. I am sharing this as a mother of two young children who have been in the trenches for about two years coping with multiple deaths and guiding my children to a healthy and safe place of healing.

Children do not understand nor process death rationally the way adults do, but they still feel the pain, confusion, uncertainty, fear, anger and sadness. It is important for adults, parents, and caregivers to put our children first so they can heal and learn how to understand what they are feeling. Children show their grief in different ways based on their age, how close they felt to the deceased, and the support we give them. Below are some of the things I did to help my children with our losses, their Grampy being the most painful.

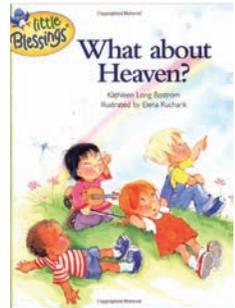
Use clear, simple words. At the time of my father's death, my son was just shy of nine and my daughter was three-and-a-half. I explained that Jesus had asked Grampy to come to heaven and help with all the animals there. I knew they would process the news of his death differently so I took each aside and after telling them, gave them time to absorb the news. As I sat on the floor with each of them crying in my arms, I realized they needed to know they were not alone in their grief.

Listening and comforting is huge! Some children will cry. Others will ask questions. Some do not seem to react at all. No matter how they respond, stay with them! Hug and reassure them. An-

swer their questions or just sit together.

Emotions will be raw so keep a close eye on them. Do they seem sad, worried, or upset? Ask about their feelings and really listen. Let them know it takes time to feel better. Share your feelings about the death, or death in general. Children might have difficulty sleeping or concentrating; they might have increased fears or worries for a while after the death. Provide comfort but do not dwell on the sadness. Children do better when they have a routine—try to get back to it as soon as possible! Go on family walks. Make art. Cook together.

Most importantly, give your child time to heal from the loss. Grief is a process that happens over time. The days, weeks and months ahead will be hard. Stay open for your children. Have them write down their favorite memories and put up pictures of the loved one. The worst thing you can do is avoid mentioning the person who died. Remembering the person with love will allow the happy memories to assist the healing process. You may find that when you look back, the help and comfort you provide for your children will also help you. +



WHAT ABOUT HEAVEN? This book by Kathleen Bostrom is available on Amazon for approximately \$5.

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NOMINEES: Nominees for leadership positions are posted to the website. edsd.org/nominees

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NOMINATING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

by the grace of God, that will not need to happen.

I am delighted by how well our episcopal nomination process has been developing, and I truly believe that we can all look forward with faith and confidence to the election of our next bishop. Let us support both process and participants with our actions and prayers, trusting that the Holy Spirit will bring us a good bishop who will lead us in proclaiming Christ's good news to all. +

FAMILY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

faith perspective.

Issues of guilt for what might have been, what is going on around the dying person, and how family will cope with the history of their actions after the loved one's death need to be sensitively addressed. Professional chaplains and spiritual directors can help both individually and with families. Often processing the death of a loved one needs time and the support of a less directly involved friend. Each person explores grief uniquely; we hold in common the hope in our faith. +



DYING THE WAY YOU WANT

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

AUTHOR: Faye Girsh, PhD EMAIL: fayegirsh@msn.com

Many people are willing to put up with prolonged, debilitating, sometimes painful ways to die because they think it's sinful, selfish, or sacrilegious to choose the time and manner of their death. Or they think of hastening their inevitable death as suicide and they see that as wrong. Some believe that only God can take a life. In this day of medical miracles it is often difficult to know when a natural death has occurred. People who would have died years ago are saved with gene therapy, heroic surgeries, antibiotics, complex medications, and remarkable advances in emergency medicine. The signal that God is ready for you is so obscured that there is almost no such thing as dying naturally. People who would welcome an end to their misery often have no idea about their legal options.

Humane ways to end suffering are a basic human right. Though death is inevitable, a bad death is not. We should be able to choose the way we die that is consistent with our values and beliefs. Knowing that a peaceful death is a choice can bring happiness and peace of mind. The reality is that often assistance is necessary to bring about a good death and doctors are the only ones that can prescribe medication to bring it about.

In the past 30 years we have won the right to state our wishes for medical care in an advance directive, to appoint a surrogate to speak for us if we can't speak for ourselves, and to refuse unwanted

treatment. Hospice and palliative care can soften the agonies of incurable conditions. People can end their lives by refusing food and fluids. Now California residents who are terminally ill and mentally competent may ask their doctor for a prescription for medication that will end their lives peacefully. Much end-of-life misery for patients and their families is avoidable when we have conversations about available choices and what family members would want.

The Rt. Rev. John Shelby Spong, an Episcopal bishop, spoke to a 2003 Hemlock Society national conference and said, "assisted dying should never be a requirement, but it should always be a legal and moral option. The decision to end one's life needs to be faced openly, honestly, freely and in consultation with our loved ones, our doctors, and our spiritual advisors. When the decision on assisted dying is made this way, I am convinced that it is a life-affirming moral choice." +

*Ms. Faye Girsh is the president of the Hemlock Society of San Diego, which will host a day-long conference, **Achieving a Peaceful Death**, on Saturday, November 4 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Speakers will cover ways to protect yourself and your family from a difficult dying experience. Visit hemlocksocietysandiego.org for information. Ms. Girsh will also offer a workshop at diocesan convention on Friday, November 10 at St. Bartholomew's, Poway. Visit edsd.org for more information.*

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