

The New Epistle

a newsletter of

The Progressive Episcopal Church

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Easter 2018



The Lord is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!



April News from the Secretary . . .

Over the course of the last month, work has been going on behind the scenes to continue building the church. Things have been on a plateau for a while, and the lingering details of dealing with my late mother's estate left me quite drained of mental and physical energy. As a result, my administration of TPEC has admittedly been left wanting for a few months. But watching the brief video recording my cousins made of the interment of my mother's ashes in the family grave in the Netherlands brought me the closure that I didn't realise I needed. Closure after death can be a curious and strange thing. But I am grateful to be running on all cylinders once again, so to speak.

Now then ... after about a year and a half of delay due to unexpected changes, we are finally moving forward with Incorporation. The necessary paperwork is being mailed to our bishops - who will be the initial corporation officers - for their signatures: Rt. Rev. Michael Sherbert, President; Rt. Rev. Rick Ward-Harder, Vice-President; Rt. Rev. Thurlow Weed, Secretary/Treasurer. The Incorporation will be filed in Arkansas, since the state's filing requirements are simple and straightforward, and also accommodate the structure of TPEC.

Once the Incorporation is in place, we will move forward with formal application for 501(c)(3) status.

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We have also renewed our membership for 2018 in the International Council of Community Churches.

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In March, the Council of Bishops met, and unanimously reelected Rt. Rev. Thurlow Weed to serve a second term as Secretary General, this term expiring in 2021.

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This Fall, Bishop Michael Sherbert's term as Presiding Bishop will expire, and he has announced his decision to step down. In my initial discussions with Michael when he shared his intention, successors were discussed, but also the possibility of adapting the model of the Anglican Province of New Zealand. That Province of the Anglican Communion is divided into three cultural areas (*tikanga*), which in many ways compare with our structure of affinity dioceses.

(Secretary's Desk, cont.)

Each of the Province's tikanga are headed by a Senior Bishop, and the three Senior Bishops together govern the entire Province as Co-Presiding Bishops. There is no single "chief bishop."

Upon reflection, The Progressive Episcopal Church has been largely operating on a comparable model for the last several years, almost since its inception, in fact. Our dioceses are by affinity, which reasonably equates to the concept of the Polynesian *tikanga*. Further, our dioceses are largely autonomous – as are the tikanga. And our diocesan bishops have been meeting as a [electronic and/or telephone] group when things affecting the Church need to be discussed, and are already sharing equally in the governing of the church.

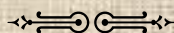
Of course, in order to adopt this model, it requires changes to our canons. All of our active clergy have been sent an internal email communication via the Realm system regarding the changes & revisions to our canons. We are open to input and questions on the changes to the canons before the Council of Bishops votes in late Spring.

How will the transition work?

Based on the canons of the New Zealand church, there are two ways to go about it. 1) Prior to his retirement as Presiding Bishop, +Michael can issue an edict establishing the Co-Presiding Bishops; or 2) he is re-elected, and immediately appoints the other diocesan bishops to serve as Co-Presiding Bishops. The second option is actually the way the New Zealand canons specify the appointment of the CoPBs; the first option is a possible adaptation for TPEC. Option #2 is likely the most appropriate, from the canonical perspective, and is also consistent with how the revisions to our canons have been drafted.

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The TPEC website, domain name, and corporate email have been renewed for another year.



Our Lady Mother of Ferguson and All Those Killed by Gun Violence



This icon combines Mary, a boy caught in the cross-hairs of a gun, the Sacred Heart of Jesus symbolizing His compassion for the whole world, and the Christus Victor mark symbolizing His victory over the powers which hold humankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil.

Mary, the God-bearer, is always depicted in iconography wearing the blue of humanity closest to her body and the red of divinity over the blue.

It combines Mary in the pose referencing Isaiah 7:14, a boy caught in the cross-hairs of a gun, the Sacred Heart of Jesus symbolizing His compassion for the whole world, and the Christus Victor mark symbolizing His victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil. The pose of Mary is called Virgin Orans (the Orante, the Oranta).

Mary is shown with arms in *orans* [praying] position. A most popular form of this style is the “Lady of the Sign” (a.k.a. Virgin of the Incarnation, Platytera, or Panagia), in which Mary is shown with arms in orans position, with Christ enclosed in a circle in her womb. When Christ is shown in Mary’s womb like that, she is known as the “Mother of God of the Sign,” hearkening back to the words of Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.” Implicit in this icon, therefore, is the prophetic promise of Emmanuel - “God is with us.”

Mary is depicted as an African-American woman, implying “God is with our Black community.” Mary also lost her son to a violent death and so she gives comfort to those left behind, since death is not the end. Mothers suffering the loss of their children unexpectedly killed can identify with the same feelings of loss and grief experienced by Mary.

In the middle of the icon, within the circle frame common to this icon pose, we don’t see Jesus in her womb. Instead, we see a boy caught in the cross-hairs of a gun. Inside him we see the “Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

The devotion to the Sacred Heart (also known as the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu* in Latin) is one of the most widely practiced and well-known Roman Catholic devotions, taking Jesus Christ’s physical heart as the representation of His divine love for humanity.

This devotion is predominantly used in the Roman Catholic Church and among some high-church Anglicans and Lutherans. The devotion is especially concerned with what the Church deems to be the love and compassion of the heart of Christ towards humanity, and its long suffering.

The Sacred Heart is surrounded by a crown of thorns, with further implications of suffering and self-sacrificial love for all.

The hands of the boy are in the praying posture called 'Orans.' It's the sacrificial position priests take at the Eucharist.

The posture of the boy's hands echo the same posture in the hands of Mary.

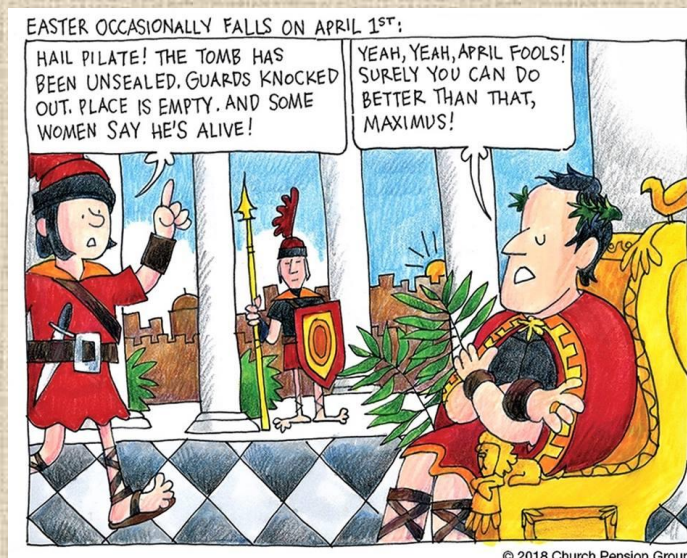
The boy's praying hands hint at Jesus praying for his enemies, even praying for his tormentors, even praying for those who killed him.

There is a second circle around the head of the boy - a halo, representing a sacred, holy, dedicated-to-God person. The figure of the infant or child Jesus in this usual icon pose would also have a halo, so that's another clue that the boy with a halo, hands raised in prayer, about to be executed, hints at Jesus Christ, who usually fills the central part of this icon pose (within Mary's womb).

Within the victim's elbow bends are a 'C' and a 'V' = Christus Victor.

According to the Christus Victor theory of the Atonement, Christ's death defeated the powers of evil, which had held humankind in their dominion. It is a model of the atonement that is dated to the Church Fathers, and it, or the related ransom theory, was the dominant theory of the Atonement for a thousand years, until Anselm of Canterbury supplanted it in the West with his Satisfaction theory of atonement. "The work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil."

This view of the Early church (Christus Victor) is rooted in the Incarnation and how Christ entered into human misery and wickedness and thus redeemed it. Aulén argues that the Christus Victor view of the Atonement is not so much a rational systematic theory as it is a drama, a passion story of God triumphing over the Powers and liberating humanity from the bondage of sin.



April Awareness



Autism is not a disease or an entity. It is not something that we must seek out to eradicate. Rather, it is a mode of being, an umbrella term to describe how one relates (or does not relate) to the world.

The world of the autistic is often misunderstood, one may see the person flapping their arms, and see this as 'strange' and in need of suppression. But if we look inwardly and explore the meaning behind this action, we may find it is telling us of something, it is indicative of how that person feels. It is one of their few ways to be able to share their experience.

-- [Rev.] Dr. Dan Edmunds

Often following a storm, the presence of a rainbow provides optimism and motivates us to endure through dark times. Similarly, organ, eye and tissue donation is the bridge of comfort and hope between one family's mourning and another's healing — turning tragedy into renewed life. The vibrant Donate Life rainbow in the National Donate Life Month artwork rises from stormy clouds, recognizing that it takes both rain and light to create the gift of a rainbow.

Maya Angelou's message applies to all of us, no matter our background or experiences. We all know rainbows — people that have helped carry us through life and its challenges. In turn, we may also have the opportunity to be rainbows in other people's clouds through the gift of organ, eye and tissue donation. This April, we encourage you to reflect on the lives of those touched by donation and transplantation, and to share its prismatic effect. By registering to be a donor or considering living donation, you can change one ray of light into a spectrum of healing and compassion.



(Click on the image to go to the DonateLife website.)