



# The New Epistle

*a newsletter of*

The Progressive Episcopal Church

Volume II Number 7

July-August 2016



# JULY - AUGUST NEWS

## *A note from the Secretary General ...*

The latter portion of June came with significant life changes, which resulted in there being no July newsletter. I had received two communications from Key West, Florida that all was not well with my mother, and that I needed to get down there as soon as possible.

A trip had already been planned for September with the idea of getting her moved up to Ohio to live with us, since she was starting to have significant challenges living on her own. But in light of an urgent email and an urgent phone call, I found myself driving (through the blast furnace of the Carolinas and Georgia in a black Jeep with no air-conditioning!) to Key West in the middle of June. Two cousins (my mother's nieces) had also come from California to assess the situation. This itself was a blessing, not only to have other family there who had gone through the same thing with their father, but also to see my cousins for the first time in 38 years.

We quickly realised that my mother could no longer be on her own, and the only option was to bring her back to Ohio with me when I returned. In the meantime, we unexpectedly needed to admit her to the local hospital where it was discovered her INR (Coumadin level) was dangerously high, as well as dehydration issues.

While all that was being rectified over five days, it was necessary to determine what essentials in terms of clothing/toiletries/shoes, etc needed to come with us, as well as selected family heirlooms. There were also other things to think about, such as closing a Post Office box that had been opened on February 2, 1968; also closing a safe deposit box at the local bank.

I rejoiced in discovering that some wonderful person has invented air-conditioning repair kits for cars (AC Pro brand) – I call it “fix-a-flat for air conditioning” – which worked beautifully, and allowed us to make the journey in comfort, something that was very much needed for the health and well-being of my 86-year-old mother. (I wish I'd known about this product sooner – I could have had A/C in my car for the last 6 years!)

Now, my mother has been part of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Key West since 1968, when my late father accepted a call there. When I began 1<sup>st</sup> grade at the local Lutheran school in 1972, she was hired to play for the school's Friday morning school chapel services. She later started serving as their Sunday organist as well, after which she would drive across the island to her own church for services there, eventually becoming organist after the previous one retired. After my father died in 1980, she ran the church for nearly three years until a new minister was called; she also served the church as secretary, financial secretary, and also treasurer over the course of 48 years. Since she was also a very capable pianist and organist, she was called upon from time to time to assist at every other of the Black churches in Key West – all nine of them (Trinity Presbyterian is a Black church). To say she was a greatly loved and respected fixture in the community would be an understatement. On her last Sunday, the congregation of Grace Lutheran (which she had served for 44 years) came to Trinity Presbyterian for a joint service (*very* unusual for Missouri Synod Lutherans!) to wish her farewell and godspeed, along with representatives of the other nine Black churches. There was an abundance of cards and offerings which will fully provide for every expense to have the rest of her things moved to Ohio in the Fall.

The second half of June, and most of July have been adventurous to say the least, and some days I've not been sure whether I'm coming or going. But we are slowly settling into a routine, though there is much still to be

figured out. But despite the challenges of the unexpected, God and Spirit did provide in both small and large blessings, and I'm thankful for all of them. (Still hoping for a little more in the "patience" category, though. Definitely could use a little help there!)

So though my patience is tested at times, all will be well and I trust Spirit's guidance to lead toward what is right. And I'm also happy to be able to get back to TPEC business, and I should be completely caught up shortly.

Blessings and Peace,  
+Thurlow

## *Welcome, new clergy!*

The Progressive Episcopal Church welcomes by Incardination the Rev. Errol Montgomery-Robertson of Pass Christian, Mississippi. He is a former Episcopal priest and received his training at Nashotah House [seminary]. He left ECUSA in order to accept a call with a Missouri Synod Lutheran church, which regretfully ended when he married his partner of many years.

Rev. Montgomery-Robertson's incardination date is August 6, the Feast of the

Transfiguration; he will be canonically resident in the Diocese of the Delta (+Varga). He is the founding pastor of Lighthouse Community Church in Biloxi, Mississippi. They are an all inclusive, LGBTQ affirming, ecumenical and progressive worship community. Their liturgy follows Anglican models, and the Holy Eucharist is celebrated weekly. He is assisted by a Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister and a former Roman Catholic priest, both whom share in preaching.

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We have also received two formal inquiries from individuals seeking a Diaconal Ministry within TPEC, and are working with them for discernment.

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On May 22, Bishop Daniel Varga was approved for the rank of Colonel of the Army Chaplain Corps, and has been assigned as the Deputy Chief of Chaplains for the United States Volunteer Joint Service Command. He carries formal endorsement from the Progressive Episcopal Church.

In addition to being the Ordinary of the Diocese of the Delta, Bishop Varga also heads TPEC's Chaplaincy Ordinariate. To learn more about the Ordinariate, please visit the website

<http://chaplainservices.weebly.com/>

The United States Volunteers - Joint Services Command (USV-JSC™) Chaplain Corps is composed of military chaplains, active and retired; and qualified civilian clergy. The USV-JSC™ chaplains are disciplined, trained and loyal uniformed volunteers that serve locally and stand ready to serve nationally our nation's veterans under the Department of Defense's AP3 Program. The primary mission of the USV-JSC is to provide proper burial honours for deceased veterans. Far too many of our soldiers are buried without final honours.

[USV-JSC Chaplain Corps](#)

## **Splinters and Beams** -- *A reflection on the murder of Fr. Jacques Hamel.*

*This reflection does not necessarily reflect the views of the Progressive Episcopal Church. This is a personal reflection of Rt. Rev'd Thurlow B. Weed, Bishop of the Diocese of the West.*



The recent killing of a French priest during Mass at the hands of Islamic radicals has naturally evoked reactions of outrage, anger, and sadness, among others. From a human standpoint, there is no question that this was a barbaric act. As humans, we are all created in the image of God, and this basic concept of humans as God-images exists throughout the greater number of the 4,000 religions that exist around the world today.

What I find troublesome (and to be perfectly honest, laughable in a very sad & frustrating way) is that Christians and collective Church are denouncing this barbaric act against a priest while saying Mass. It is troublesome because Christians – historically – are guilty of the same identical barbarity, and worse.

In 2010 in Jos, Nigeria several young Christian men beheaded an Imam while he was praying in a mosque. In December 2015 in central Africa, a group of Christians systematically decapitated a group of about two dozen Muslim men and women by sawing through their necks with a large knife, and dumping their bodies into an open pit. Both Christians and Muslims are guilty of the *identical* barbarity against each other. And ***both*** religions have been engaging in this barbarity against each other for some 1,500 years!

It is arrogant (among many other adjectives I can use) to denounce another person's or religion's barbarity when your own religion is engaged in the very same barbarity. It is the most pristine example of the pot calling the kettle black I think I've ever encountered.

From a human perspective, the death of Father Jacques Hamel is terrible, horrible, despicable, and any other adjective you may care to use here; it is all of those. But when we look at it from a religious perspective -- through the lens of religion -- it is very sadly a routine thing. Both Christianity and Islam have the blood of hundreds of millions of innocents on their hands, and that blood has been gathering for one and a half millennia. All of it in the name of God and religion. Christians often tend to do such things in the name of Jesus as well, which is ironic, considering that Jesus denounced such things.

As I reflect upon these things, it occurs to me that it seems the more fervently people become Christian, they stray farther and farther away from their humanity. Why? What is it that leads us away from the teachings of Jesus? And his parables about doing good to all people? And his indiscriminate healings of Jews, Gentiles, and Pagans? And his Beatitudes? And his Great Commandment?

I wish I had an answer. For reasons I do not understand, Christians (particularly conservatives) tend to buy into the mistaken notion that the Christian religion is somehow superior to all the other religions of the world (remember, there are over 4,000 of them). And news headlines and stories reveal the same about conservative Muslims regarding Islam. And there are some conservative Jews who fall into the same boat.

When we think this way, we fail God in the worst way. God has no religion. God (by whatever name in whatever language) is God over all people. No religion has dibs on God. Yet many try to claim God as their own, and in the process they subsequently abandons their religion's humanity.

It is worth noting that a great majority of the world's religions share this same teaching: that we love God and our neighbour, and that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. It must be a very important message indeed if hundreds (if not thousands) of the world's religions have the same teaching. And each religion had its messenger to teach this message. For those who would call themselves Christian, that messenger was Jesus. That Jesus-messenger/teacher also made it very clear to us that our sins are forgiven by God only so far as we forgive those who sin against us.

Jesus said, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." There is also his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about beams and splinters in our eyes, which shares the identical message, but elaborates on it. In Jewish teachings, "splinter" was proverbially used to denote small infirmities, while "beam" was used to denote gross palpable faults. Thus, we must not be so prideful, arrogant, and self-righteous that we ignore our own faults and sins, while condemning others who have committed the same offences as we ourselves have committed. As Christians (collectively) we should not be judging others until we have judged ourselves first.



The Sermon on the Mount

Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of heaven is within each of us. He also taught us the way to discovering that kingdom and living within it. But the journey is entirely up to us; it is our choice. Jesus also taught us the consequences of our possible choices in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

Although we may call ourselves Christians, we are first and foremost humans. If we allow our religion to override our humanity, then we have failed as humans. Religion is what teaches us to kill each other in God's name. Humanity does the opposite. Humanity teaches us to love one another, as Jesus (and so many others) taught. It is worth noting that despite our various religious persuasions, it is for the most part our humanity that is crying out when we denounce this murder. And it is this humanity that speaks first and loudest

as it seeks to transcend religion. Please, please, please ..... do not sacrifice your humanity for the sake of your religion. I rather think that Jesus was intending for our humanity to be our religion.

Let us live and act accordingly. But first let us remove the beams from our own eyes. Islamic history – especially in the present day – is bathed in human blood. But so is ours – also in the present day as well. And it has been this way for one thousand five hundred years ..... and counting. So long as there are people who believe their own religion is superior to anyone else's, human blood will continue to be shed as we continue to ignore and reject our humanity and the religionless nature of God.

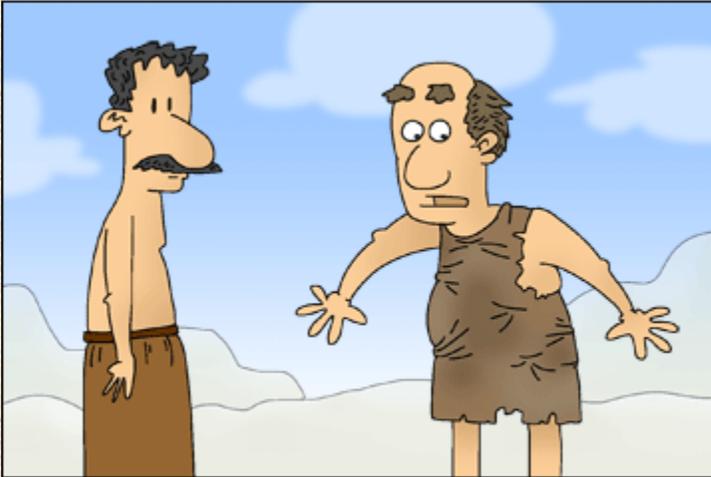
Let us take to heart what Jesus taught about loving our neighbour. Jesus never discriminated based on religion. If we are to follow him, we must also refuse to discriminate based on religion. I also think Jesus would likely encourage us to keep in mind always what the prophet Micah taught: Seek justice; love mercy; and walk humbly with your God.

*Amen.*

		<h1>August 2016</h1>						
Copr. 2015, Ashby Co., Erie, Pa.							Churchman's Ordo Edition	
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday		
<b>READINGS</b> Mass — Year C Office — Year Two  Weekday Eucharistic Readings for use throughout the year are found in LFE, pages 498-528.  See Notes on Reverse [ ] - In some Places	Joseph of Arimathea [St. Peter's Chains - Lammass Day]  <b>1</b>  Prf. Dead [Glo. Cr. Prf. Ap.]	FERIA  <b>2</b>  Proper 13	[Nicodemus, A Teacher of Israel, Martyr, 1st Cent.]  <b>3</b>  [Common of a Martyr III, Glo. Prf. St. 3]	[Jean-Baptiste Vianney (John Vianney), Cure d'Ars, 1859]  <b>4</b>  [Common of a Pastor I, Glo. Prf. St. 1]	[Oswald, King of Northumbria, Martyr, 642] ✱  <b>5</b>  [Common of a Martyr II, Glo. Prf. St. 3]	THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST  <b>6</b>  NOTE Glo. Cr. Prf. Epi.		
The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost  <b>7</b>  Proper 14 Glo. Cr. Prf. L.D.	Dominic, Priest and Friar, 1221  <b>8</b>  Glo. Prf. St. 2	FERIA  <b>9</b>  Proper 13	Laurence, Deacon and Martyr at Rome, 258  <b>10</b>  Glo. Prf. St. 3	Clare, Abbess at Assisi, 1253  <b>11</b>  Glo. Prf. St. 2	[Hippolytus, Priest and Martyr, 235] ✱  <b>12</b>  [Common of a Martyr I, Glo. Prf. St. 3]	Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore, 1667  <b>13</b>  Glo. Cr. Prf. St. 1		
The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  <b>14</b>  Proper 15 Glo. Cr. Prf. L.D.	SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN [B.V.M. in Glory (or the Assumption)]  <b>15</b>  Glo. Cr. Prf. Inc. or BVM (TASB)	[Stephen of Hungary, King and Confessor, 1038]  <b>16</b>  [Common of a Saint I, Glo. Prf. St. 1]	FERIA  <b>17</b>  Glo. Prf. St. 3	William Porcher DuBose, Priest, 1918 [Helena, Queen and Widow, 330]  <b>18</b>  Glo. Prf. Epi. [Common of a Saint I, Glo. Prf. St. 1]	FERIA ✱  <b>19</b>  Glo. Prf. St. 3	Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, 1153  <b>20</b>  Glo. Cr. Prf. St. 1		
The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  <b>21</b>  Proper 16 Glo. Cr. Prf. L.D.	[Queenship of the BVM]  <b>22</b>  [Propers for May 31 Glo. Cr. Prf. Inc. or BVM (TASB)]	[Rose of Lima, 1617]  <b>23</b>  [Common of a Saint I, Glo. Cr. Prf. St. 1]	SAINT BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE  <b>24</b>  Glo. Cr. Prf. Ap.	Louis, King of France, 1270  <b>25</b>  Glo. Prf. Bap.	FERIA ✱  <b>26</b>  Glo. Prf. St. 3	Thomas Gallaudet, and Henry Winter Syle, 1902, 1890  <b>27</b>  Glo. Prf. Pen.		
The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  <b>28</b>  Proper 17 Glo. Cr. Prf. L.D.	[The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist]  <b>29</b>  [See Propers for Jun. 24, Glo. Prf. Adv.]	[Charles Chapman Grafton, Bishop, 1912]  <b>30</b>  [Common of a Pastor I, Glo. Prf. St. 1]	Aidan, Bishop of Lindesfarne, 651  <b>31</b>  Glo. Prf. Ap.	Glo.—Gloria Cr.—Creed Prf.—Proper Preface of Adv.—Advent Inc.—Incarnation Epi.—Epiphany H.Wk.—Holy Week Eas.—Easter Asc.—Ascension	Pen.—Pentecost Tri.—Trinity Sunday A.S.—All Saints St.—Saint Ap.—Apostles Ded.—Dedication Bap.—Baptism L.D.—Lord's Day	Days of Special Devotion are noted with ✱  NOTE The Transfiguration is the feast of title of churches dedicated to the "Savior" or called "Christ Church".		

July Birthdays (belated)	
Rev. Mark Bowen	7
Rev. Amanda Alley	23
Rev. Cn. Rick Ward-Harder	26
August Birthdays	
Min. Claudia Hall	11
Rev. James Clifton	25
Rev. Ed Holm	26
Rt. Rev. Mani Gilmore	31

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10-03-2014

OH MAN ... THIS SACKCLOTH TOTALLY FIT ME THE LAST TIME I WORE IT



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... BECOME A HUMAN BEING  
INSTEAD OF JUST A HUMAN  
DOING.  
-- RICHARD ROHR

