



Vital Practices

for leading congregations

LEADERSHIP IN A
TIME OF CRISIS

IN THIS ISSUE:

Resiliency

1

Crisis
Communications:
Managing In

5

Finding God in the
Raging Storm

8

Sawu Bona... I See
You, I Hear You

11

Resiliency

BY WILLIAM V. (BILL) LIVINGSTON

August 17, 1969 and August 29, 2005 brought two incredibly destructive hurricanes to the Mississippi Gulf Coast destroying the Christ Church Sanctuary and buildings on those two dates. But the courage and love of God remains in the Body of Christ Church, the people. Christ Church remains in Bay St. Louis as a symbol of God's indestructible spirit within congregation. On May 30, 2010, the parishioners of Christ Episcopal Church, Bay St. Louis gathered to consecrate and dedicate their new church and parish hall. It was beyond a joyful experience to see the brand new pews filled with church members, their families, and friends of the parish who have supported Christ Church in the aftermath of Katrina.

As much as we would like to think that it will never happen to us, every parish has the potential of a devastating disaster: a hurricane, tornado, flood, forest fire,

earthquake, or having the largest employer in the community close, decimating the local economy as well as the parish budget. While we can only minimally prevent them, we can prepare for them.

Following Hurricane Katrina, I served as Pastor-Missioner for the Diocese of Mississippi supporting clergy and clergy families and consulting with 11 parishes, six of whose churches were leveled to their concrete slabs by this storm. From the worst natural disaster to strike the US we learned a lot that can help parishes prepare for and respond to disasters. While I include an overview of such preparation and response, the resources listed provide more details about each.

Planning

Planning includes assessing potential risks, inventorying and documenting assets, and having

plans to protect buildings and remove valuables, computers, important documents, etc. from harm's way. Of course a plan is successful only if followed. The litany I frequently heard was, "We had sent our Eucharist vessels and vestments to safety during every hurricane warning only to have nothing happen. We just assumed the same would happen with Katrina, and, so, we left everything in the building, only to return and find no building." Planning also includes having an evacuation plan and assisting members to develop one, knowing where members will be during an evacuation and how to contact them, how to access buildings and members should access be limited to emergency personnel, and how to communicate with members and the diocese when telephone service is not operable. Finally, planning includes disaster recovery participation.

Recovery

Recovery begins as a disaster occurs and continues many years after. New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast continue rebuilding almost eight years after Katrina. Parishes can provide immediate assistance by partnering with Red Cross and other disaster response groups allowing building use as shelters, food and water distribution, or an orga-

nization site for volunteers. As the recovery shifts from immediate crisis response to long-term recovery, parishes can assist the most vulnerable. Episcopal Relief and Development provides guidance and grants to assist dioceses and parishes partner with others to identify unmet needs and creates plan to address them. While parishes may assist in the immediate and in the long-term recovery, churches offer something no other entities offer: a theological understanding and assistance with emotional and spiritual recovery. Victims struggle with why it happened, why they fared better or worse than others, and why God allowed/caused this. And they get bombarded with terrible explanations. When Katrina hit I lived 275 miles north of the Gulf Coast in a community that had hundreds of evacuees staying in shelters. The Saturday after Katrina, the newspaper religious editor, a local pastor, wrote "God sent Katrina" because of the coastal casinos and our Nation's acceptance of homosexuality and had wrought vengeance on the most deserving. Clergy and parishes can assist victims, instead, to see God in the midst of the volunteers and neighbors bonding together.

Emotional and Spiritual Resilience

Emotional and spiritual resilience requires tapping into strengths, developing coping skills, and finding meaning and purpose. The religious community serves as the best resource for this. With the beauty of its liturgy, Episcopal parishes can offer worship experiences that bring victims, survivors, and volunteers together to struggle with the questions of why and identify where God's grace abounds even in the midst of the disaster. When the pain and suffering of the world seems overwhelming we offer the promise of the Good Friday Liturgy, "... let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made. . ."

When disasters victimize parishes, parishioners, and clergy, it creates unique challenges. Katrina leveled six parishes to the ground and destroyed or damaged homes of 50% or more of members of some parishes and some of the clergy. What I observed is that parishes healthy before the disaster recover better than those with preexisting conflict. Thus, more diocesan involvement is warranted in parishes that had issues before the disaster. The risk of clergy burnout drastically

increases in disaster areas and self-care becomes extremely important.

Many clergy of parishes with destroyed buildings responded to the members' laments saying, "The building is not the Church, the people are the Church." While I understand and agree with this theology, and the members need to understand this, what I fear the clergy failed to honor was the grief for the loss of a *thin place*: where they married, had a loved one buried and their children baptized, had been nourished in the sacraments, or had gone for individual prayer during times of great need. Those congregations that did not address this sense of loss well suffered the most conflict over the location and design of the new building.

Thus, parish leaders do well to anticipate and respond to such grief, especially if a disaster has also harmed them personally. Incorporating something from the old structure into the new, even if it has to be salvaged and put to a different use, proves helpful. I saw a beautiful processional cross, created from salvaged wood with embedded shards of stained glass. Christ Church, Bay St. Louis, uncovered its brass altar cross in the sand and debris after Katrina. While they polished and straightened its arms and could

have done the same to the badly misshaped base, they did not. Instead a parishioner crafted a beautiful wooden stand the top of which holds the cross erect by contouring to its wounded base. Now, standing behind the Altar of their new, attractive worship space, this altar cross serves as an outward and visible sign of a people whose story includes having passed through the worst natural disaster to strike our nation.

Bill Livingston lives in Brevard, North Carolina. A retired priest, he is often called on to do interim work in special need situations as well as parish and vestry consultation relating to disaster/conflict, mutual ministry review, and strategic planning. Bill serves as a faculty member for CREDO, Journey Partners (a 2-year course for training spiritual directors) and as a member of Partners in Response (a post-disaster team for Episcopal Relief and Development).

Resources

- Advance Planning Resource by Bill Livingston <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/disaster-prep-before-during-after/>
- Clergy Self-care after a Disaster by Bill Livingston <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/disaster-prep-before-during-after/>

- Crisis Preparedness: Making a Plan <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/crisis-preparedness-making-a-plan/>
- Emergency Preparedness Plan for Parishes, Diocese of Texas <http://www.epicenter.org/emergency-preparedness/>
- Emotional and Spiritual Resilience after a Disaster by Bill Livingston <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/disaster-prep-before-during-after/>
- Episcopal Relief & Development US Disaster Program resources: <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program>
- Good Friday Liturgy, Book of Common Prayer <http://www.bcponline.org/SpecialDays/friday.html>
- Long-term and Emotional Recovery by Bill Livingston <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/disaster-prep-before-during-after/>
- Phases of or Life-Cycles of Disasters and Parish Involvement by Bill Livingston <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/disaster-prep-before-during-after/>

Editor's Letter

When I began working on the May Vestry Papers – focusing on leadership during a time of crisis - it never occurred to me how timely this issue might be. The recent tragedies in Boston and West, Texas, as well as the continuing violence and natural disasters that affect our communities large and small, all impact our faith communities and test our ability to fulfill our role of providing a place of sanctuary and understanding that God is with us even in the midst of a terrible tragedy.

As I worked with our contributors, a common theme emerged: vital and healthy congregations recover more quickly. In each article, you'll find practical advice and resources developed by congregational leaders in response to crisis situations.

Our articles this month:

- "Resiliency" by Bill Livingston helps congregations consider the potential impact of a devastating disaster, looking beyond the immediate physical needs and issues related to long term recovery, to the church's unique role of offering a theological understanding and

assistance with emotional and spiritual recovery.

- "Crisis Communications: Managing In" by Linda Hanick and Nathan Brockman offers congregations practical recommendations for managing the sometimes overlooked aspect of crisis communications: how and when you communicate within your own organization.
- "Finding God in the Raging Storm" by Frank Wade invites congregations to reflect on their readiness to provide emotional and spiritual stability to their members and their communities in times of crisis and offers tools to help congregational leaders ensure their church is well-equipped to take on that role.
- "Sawu Bona... I See You, I Hear You" by Kay Collier McLaughlin introduces 'Holy Conversations,' a process developed in the Episcopal Diocese of Lexington to help congregations paralyzed by conflict, anger, grief, and/or fear begin the healing process necessary for them to live fully into their ministry.

Our four June articles share a slightly different theme: resurrection. For each congregation, external or internal situations forced congregational leaders to act. In each case, the congregations chose courageous change, resulting in new energy - and new life. These stories include:

- When the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth split apart, many continuing Episcopal congregations, including St. Alban's Church in Arlington were shut out of the church buildings they had worshipped in for years. In "After the Storm," Melanie Barnett Wright, writing during a recent tornado watch, reflects on how the choices made following the split have helped St. Alban's grow and thrive.
- With churches often seen as places of sanctuary and safety, the May 2012 shooting at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City, Maryland was devastating. For the families of the three people killed, the congregation, and the community, their grief and shock at this senseless, terrible act, united them in mourning. Together, they asked: How can we

recover from this? How can we make these senseless deaths somehow have a deeper meaning? How can we overcome this tragedy? A year later, Katherine Schnorrenberg reports on the congregation's commitment to "Becoming a Resurrection People."

■ Emmanuel Church in Moorefield, West Virginia is a tiny church with an older congregation, unable to support even a half-time rector. Yet each week for over five years, in response to significant and increasing unemployment in their community, this congregation has provided a free lunch to people who are hungry. In "Leap of Faith," Jack Hauber shares the secret of how this small congregation sustains its own loaves and fishes story.

■ The sense of powerlessness that sets in following a crisis can be paralyzing. At St. Luke and St. Matthew Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, the fire not only caused significant damage, having been ruled

arson, it also threatened to engender fear. "From the Ashes" by Michael Sniffen relates the congregation's decision to embrace rather than fear their neighbors, choosing to stand in the prophetic line of faithful communities who have given themselves up in service to the Gospel.

Following each article is a list of resources offering additional information and/or practical tools.

If someone shared this copy of *Vestry Papers* with you I invite you to consider subscribing to *ECF Vital Practices* and *Vestry Papers*. Visit www.ecfvp.org and click on Register, located on the upper right corner of the page. Complete the registration form to have *Vestry Papers* and *ECF Vital Practices* content delivered twice a month to your email inbox.

Faithfully,

Nancy

Nancy Davidge

PS: To make it easier for congregational leaders to find the resources offered through *ECF Vital Practices*, please consider adding a link to ECF Vital Practices to your website. Here's how: Using your websites 'add a link' tool, insert our full URL – <http://www.ecfvp.org/>.

PPS: Do you live in an area with limited Internet access? If you have a smart phone, consider browsing ECF Vital Practices from your mobile device; the site has been optimized for smart phones which makes it easier to search for content.

Crisis Communications: Managing In

BY LINDA HANICK & NATHAN BROCKMAN

Every congregation will endure the challenge of communicating during a stressful time in which it feels as though the eyes of the world are scrutinizing your community. The cause of the crisis may vary: Part of the church masonry has fallen off and injured a passerby. An unidentified mold is making preschool children sick. Clergy are being accused of misappropriating funds. Or there's widespread anger and resentment over the closing of a beloved ministry.

When people talk about managing the messaging during a crisis, they usually mean the external message: what you say to reporters, what you say on your public website, and what you say on your social media platforms. Often overlooked is the importance of internal communication. But in a crisis, how and when you communicate within your own organization can be enormously helpful in enhancing your institution's ability to communicate clearly and effectively.

Below are some specific actions and guidelines that we've found helpful at Trinity Wall Street.

Forming a Response Team

One of the hardest things to do in a crisis is to keep things in perspective. Even the most experienced communications person would have a hard time doing this on his or her own. You need to have someone you trust to bounce ideas off, to share things you never would have thought of, and to remind you that all will be well.

So form a small team—three is a good number – looking for diversity in skills, temperament, and experience. When the situation is particularly demanding, check in daily. Make sure everyone knows that it's okay to have a bad idea, and that it's okay to say you think something is a bad idea. Trust each other. There is nothing like a daily check-in meeting when the goals for a team are clear to help build trust.

Importantly, make sure everyone on your team is clear on internal authority and decision-making process. Generally speaking, communications staff can influence decisions, but they do not make the decisions. We counsel on the impact or potential risks of a decision, and then we communicate the decision strategically. Included in

this category of authority is making sure a media policy is in place and understood. No one should be speaking "on behalf" of the institution except those designated. Finally, having a team helps you to resist falling into a bunker mentality. It's not you versus the world, and having other people around who you are checking in with can help you remember this.

The Heat is Hottest Closest to the Flame

The people freaking out the most are the people inside the organization. You might even be one of them (so form a team -- see above). Your internal stakeholders think the whole world is reading all the bad press. Vestry, rector, congregation, friends of the parish think everyone is talking about it. How do you calm everyone down?

It's a good idea to practice a calm and measured response to the questions below. If people are criticizing your institution, you can be assured that people who care about your institution will ask at least once:

"Why isn't the media reporting

all the wonderful things we are doing?”

And:

“Why aren’t we getting our great stories out there?”

Remember that people will get a little crazy around these issues. It’s your job to keep cool and remember that there is no such thing as over-communicating internally during a crisis.

Don’t Resist the List

You can get ahead of things by making a list of who the “internal” folks are. (Usually—vestry, clergy, ministry leadership, congregation, staff, ministry partners, bishops, “influencers,” friends of the parish.) Do not resist using this list. If you’re having the thought, “this is a piece of news people should know,” call your list up and get the world out.

This is especially true for bad news. Give people a “heads up” when you know that a damaging article is coming. If you know a story is being written, send a short note: I just want to give you a heads up that there may be an article in the XXX that is going to be unpleasant for the institution. When articles appear, send your list a link to that article as soon as possible. People who care about

your ministries do not want outsiders passing the articles to them before you do. They want to be prepared and not surprised.

Be Accessible

Get on the phone. Talk to the vestry and other leaders, listen to their anxiety, and spend time with them. Engage with the complainers and the critics – you never know what you’re going to learn. Try to make sure the person demonizing you really knows what’s going on and that they know the facts. This will make you fluent in all sides of the story.

It is always a good idea to try to understand where a critic is coming from. Even though you are in charge of making sure your message (or angle, or side) is getting out, empathizing with those who disagree with you will make your message less defensive, clearer, and smarter. It also chips away at the “You just never listen” argument. People are sometimes surprised to have someone take their call, and listening can be a powerful tool.

There Is No Such Thing as Purely External Communication

And there’s also no such thing as purely internal communication – more on that in a second.

Keep telling your own story. You come to realize during times of crisis that there is really no such thing as purely external communication. Meaning, every story you put out there to the outside world has an internal impact. Tell your own story on your website even if it’s repetitive. People inside your organization will see it and it helps people feel better.

Make sure everyone sees any “good” mentions in the press, as well -- even if it’s just a simple listing of an event or a service. It’s not a “story” but it says that life is still going on.

Finally, when crafting your internal communications – emails, speech drafts, memos – remember that in this day and age just about everything can and will go public. So craft carefully. Assume that your position paper will find a life outside the conference room, and that the pastoral letter to the congregation will be quoted in your local paper. Sometimes, that can even work in your favor. You’ll find more tips on crisis communications below, but keep in mind that in the event of a crisis in your institution, your internal audience becomes extremely important. Sometimes we get focused on churning out the external material and messaging. That is still ultimately what you will be judged on, but paying attention to

communication will always be worth the time and effort.

Linda Hanick is the chief communications officer for Trinity Wall Street. She is a member of the senior executive team and oversees the communications and marketing for the parish ministries and business enterprises.

Nathan Brockman is the director of communication for Trinity Wall Street. He is the editor of Trinity News, trinitywallstreet.org, and provides editorial direction for Trinity's digital and social media platforms.

Resources

- "A church crisis requires a communications plan" by Liz Applegate, United Methodist Reporter <http://www.print-friendly.com/print/v2?url=http://www.united-methodistreporter.com/2013/03/a-church-crisis-requires-a-communication-plan/>
- "Communications Tune-up" by Bob Williams <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/communications-tried-true-new/communication-tune-up/>
- Crisis Communications Plan: A PR Blueprint <http://www3.niu.edu/newsplace/crisis.html>

Finding God in the Raging Storms

BY FRANK WADE

The April 2013 events in Boston and West, Texas have again attuned our minds to the reality of crises in our lives. These focusing experiences, powerful as they may be, are but two of the many forms a crisis might take. Gun violence, plant closings, fires, and the all-too-frequent car crash are all manifestations of the same fact. We live in a dangerous world and sometimes that danger becomes real in dramatic ways.

Our word 'crisis' comes from the Latin word for 'sifting', as one sifts flour. While I do not know all of the reasons for that root becoming our modern word, individuals and communities are shaken by moments of crisis. Our assumptions, our hopes, our reliance on a stable foundation are all disturbed and, in some cases, destroyed.

Grabbing Something Solid

In a crisis people turn instinctively to the church in the same way a stumbling person will reach for a handrail. We want to be able to grab something solid while everything else seems to be shaking, sifting, and falling. That instinct provides the first premise

of spiritual leadership in a time of crisis. People are looking for hope that is a match for their fears and faith that is deeply rooted and grounded. Our first task is to see that they do not turn to us in vain.

While the canons are clear that vestry responsibility is temporal, vestries and clergy both share leadership in the faith community. Well-balanced leadership will have substantial interplay between clergy and vestry. The question of what members of the community will seek from the church and what they will find there in crisis is essential. The purpose of this article is to set forth some tools for raising and addressing those important issues. The time for talking about these things is well before the crisis strikes.

Do You Measure Up?

One might begin by wondering if people would turn to your congregation in a crisis:

- Is your congregation known as a place where guidance and support are available in the routine ups and downs of life?

- Is your church a place where beliefs and hopes are regularly affirmed but questions and fears are allowed?
- Is the church accessible and welcoming physically and spiritually?

If the energy of the congregation's leadership is devoted to issues of control, survival, or any of the other lower rungs of Jacob's Ladder, it is unlikely that the community within it will see that church as a resource in times of trouble.

One way to assess that quality of congregational life is to consider whether the church is such a resource now:

- When the oncologist's report is not as good as one hoped; when a fairy tale marriage becomes an illusion; when the burdens of life exceed our natural strength; when a small child meets the reality of death through the mortality of a hamster, is your church a resource?
- • Would you turn to your church at such a time? Please

note that the question is “turn to the church” not just “turn to the clergy.” We all have a role in responding to one another in such times. The principle here is the same as in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). When we are faithful with little things, people will trust us with great things.

Staying Lit When All Else is Dark

Another perhaps more difficult question: Is the knowledge and love of God obvious at the center of congregational life? Buildings have exit signs lit so that they will not go out in a time of crisis and panic bars on the doors so that they are easily opened when the need arises. Is the love of God like that in your congregation? Will it stay lit when all else goes dark and can you access it with even the clumsiest of efforts?

Spiritual leadership in a time of crisis grows directly from the spiritual development of the congregation between crises. The good news is that we have wonderful spiritual resources that have stood the test of countless siftings over the centuries. Our liturgies, psalms and collects are able to shine words of clarity and hope on the raging storms of our lives. Education programs can help people to tap these rich

resources. The generosity of God in sharing the strengthening power of the Spirit is abundant. When the leadership team of a congregation consciously develops these resources, the church can be the beacon of hope and ultimate triumph it was created to be in crisis and in between.

Editor’s note: This article was first published in the Vestry Papers issue on Leadership in Times of Crisis (January 2002).

The Rev. Dr. Francis H. Wade has served as an Episcopal priest since 1966. After serving congregations in his native West Virginia for seventeen years, he was called as Rector of St. Alban’s Parish on the grounds of the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. until his retirement in 2005 and as interim dean of Washington National Cathedral in 2012. He continues to serve as a consultant to a variety of congregations and church institutions and is a frequent contributor to Forward Movement publications including Forward Day by Day.

Resources

- Burial of the Dead, The Book of Common Prayer, <http://www.bcponline.org/PastoralOffices/BurialII.htm>
- No More Parking Lot Conversations by Nancy

Davidge <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/caring-for-each-other/no-more-parking-lot-conversations/>

- Prayers in Times of Disaster <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/worship-resources/prayers-and-liturgies#disaster>
- Sermons and videos by Frank Wade offered through Day 1 Radio http://day1.org/203-the_rev_dr_francis_h_wade
- The Art of Being Together: Common Sense About Life Long Relationships by Frank Wade - Book on tape and CD available through the Episcopal Media Center <http://episcopalmarketplace.org/Products/Best-Sellers/The-Art-of-Being-Together>
- Transforming Scripture by Frank Wade, Church Publishing Company <https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=product&productID=3618>
- What Fresh Hell is This? by Sam Portaro <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/liturgy-music-leadership/what-fresh-hell-is-this/>

SAWU BONA... I See You, I Hear You

BY KAY COLLIER MCLAUGHLIN

It's an all-American, bootstrapping response to tough times: We're fine. We're over it. We've moved on. Even when, especially when, the wounds are still there, just covered with a light scab for disguise. Except, the congregation isn't fine.

There was anger at St. George's, lots of it. And underneath the anger, deep grief, accompanied by fear. Every usual means of managing the conflict in the congregation had been exhausted by an equally exhausted bishop, canon to the ordinary, and vestry. It was time, the bishop concluded, for a different kind of intervention, which might get to the heart of the matter, and allow real healing to begin.

Belief in process and building on potential rather than focus on negativity led to the next step: Working with a design consultant to create a way that people might listen to each other's deepest concerns, rather than hurling verbal and non-verbal bombs at each other across pews and parish hall.

A process was born. It's name: "Holy Conversations." It has roots in the Zulu greeting Sawu Bona, "I see you, I hear you" and is a

reminder to slow down and take the time to find out how someone is really doing rather accept the casual "I'm fine," often offered when we are anything but.

Its premises:

- **A reminder** that we are all people of the same story-the Greatest Story Ever Told – and have each had important experiences that have connected us to that story in this one particular place. Our experiences may be very different, despite having occurred in the same place.
- **An awareness** that each person has been hurt or disappointed in some way in this community. Just as the positive experiences differ, so do the ways people have been hurt or disappointed. No amount of defensiveness, arguing, or trying to change someone's mind is going to wipe away or change those individual experiences: they need to be heard and honored, and then left in God's hands. We cannot move forward while we are hanging on to and defending our pain because it has not been recog-

nized and validated.

- **Whenever we gather** as brothers and sisters of the living God, it is a holy time, a sacred space, and we need to agree to honor how we will approach each other in this time and space.
- **Within any family** – whether nuclear or church family - we fall into patterns of interaction that we can't get out of without some outside help. Trained facilitators for small groups who don't have emotional ties to the parish could be helpful.

A script was written for four evening sessions, and the St. George's congregation was invited to come together and participate in small groups led by facilitators from across the Diocese of Lexington. Individuals trained as EFM (Education for Ministry) mentors and with other group process backgrounds were quickly trained around the script and session themes:

- #1. "Things I Value at St. George's"

#2. “Times I have been hurt or disappointed in my Church”

#3. “When change is coming...”

#4. “Wishes, hopes, and dreams for the next chapter in the life of St. George’s”

Gathered in seven circles, the facilitators invited participants to share their stories, using open ended questions related to the evening’s theme. “This was a time I felt most engaged....” “I was so hurt when....”

Facilitators listened and wrote the qualities that had impacted the individuals on newsprint. Each circle’s responses were then shared with the entire group. Following the second session, a Liturgy of Healing and Reconciliation was held. Participants were invited to place their hurts and disappointment papers on the altar as they went forward for healing, and exchanged the peace with each other. It was the beginning of a time of healing for St. George’s... not the end. A time for learning a new way of approaching each other, and all who would come, as members or as leaders.

Out of the struggle of this one parish and its bishop, a gift was given.

The process of Holy Conversations

has led to:

- A diocesan leadership team trained to assist in processing issues of grief, conflict, or difficult discussions around any content matter, with new facilitators trained in each region of the diocese each year.
- The regular use of the Holy Conversation process for data gathering for transitions, situations of conflict, loss, or difficult discussions - and a design team ready to adapt current scripts or create new ones as needed.

Holy Conversations is not magic: Like all human families, we forget how to really listen to each other, how to make space to honor and acknowledge feelings. The Holy Conversations to date have taken us through 13 back-to-back parish transitions, a bishop’s election, a clergy suicide, parishes attempting to have difficult conversations around changing their worship services, around finances, untimely departure of a rector...the issues may change; the process and the teamwork continue to evolve. Following data analysis of the conversations, a leadership team member is available to work with the vestry on “next steps.” It might be a session on congregational size and appropriate leadership style. Always a session on anxiety behaviors and their impact, and how

leadership, recognizing both behavior and impact can change things for the good.

“Do we have to stop talking to each other like this now that we have a new rector?” a member of one parish asked their leadership team. “Absolutely not! We hope it will be your new way of being together forever,” the team member answered.

It’s all about SAWU BONA—“I see you; I hear you.” As we give this gift to each other, what we are really saying is you no longer have to defend your truth against mine. I see you. I hear you. I honor both your story and our story, and know you honor mine. And so we join together as members of one family, one story to write our next chapter in the Greatest Story Ever Told.

*St. George’s is an alias.

Kay Collier McLaughlin is Deputy for Leadership Development and Transition Ministries in the Diocese of Lexington and author of the forthcoming Church Publishing Inc Morehouse Book *Becoming the Transformative Church: Beyond Sacred Cows Fantasies and Fears* (Aug. 2013) where a more complete description of the Holy Conversation process can be found.

Resources

- *Becoming the Transformative Church: Beyond Sacred Cows Fantasies and Fears*, Church Publishing Inc Morehouse Book (Aug. 2013)
- Diocese of Lexington's Network for Pastoral Leadership and Healthy Congregations <http://diolex.org/?s=Holy+Conversations>
- Education for Ministry <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/>
- "Entrenched" by Miguel Angel Escobar <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/entrenched/>
- Liturgy of Healing and Reconciliation, Episcopal Diocese of Lexington <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/a-ritual-of-reconciliation/>
- "Making Room" by Nancy Davidge <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/making-room/>

After the Storm

BY MELANIE BARNETT WRIGHT

Here I sit, watching as the last of the rain drips slowly from the gutters on the roof. The sunlight has begun to filter through the grey clouds that are lifting. Another half hour and the tornado watch will be over—looks like the storm will pass us by -- this time.

But I find my mind wondering back about a year ago when the tornadoes tore through Arlington [Texas] and I watched as on the news one after another of the neighborhoods where the people in my congregation live were visited by those twisting clouds of destruction. My eyes were filled with tears and I fell to my knees in prayer, “Lord protect your children. Save them from the Storm.”

As the initial shock wore off there was only one thing on my mind—was anybody hurt? Was everyone ok?

I contacted my husband: He and my children were safe—a little rattled from the storm drill at school but no damage there. Next I tried to reach the families with young children, and the elderly parishioners who live alone—two places where fear might take its greatest

toll. Some were all right—others were not answering their phones.

There were 90 households to reach - too many people for me to call in a timely way. Then it dawned on me: I could ask the St. Alban’s vestry to help. I had a parish directory stored on my phone. I quickly divided it into nine sections and sent emails out to each vestry member with instructions:

“Keep working to reach these people until you know how they are. Then report back your findings. If there are those we have not reached within 24 hours, we’ll take other measures.”

I called the chair of our lay pastoral care team and shared my plan. Although she was in her home’s tornado shelter as the alarms were still sounding, she had reached her husband by phone and knew he was okay, so she started to call the members of the congregation who are elderly and I finished the calls to the young families. Everyone was okay.

Within nine hours we knew that all our regular parishioners were safe. By morning we had heard back

from even our fringe members. Out of 152 members, no one was injured. No homes had taken damage. One car was touched—but nothing significant. All was well...

Or was it?

Next Steps

Now able to breathe and think again my mind began to clear. People in our congregation had been spared...how might we reach out to others who might need our help? Within 24 hours a letter was sent to all parishioners sharing that everyone was all right—and asking how we might serve the community around us that was hurting.

The next day I visited what was left of Arlington’s Methodist Church. It was Holy Week and they no longer had a building to worship in. St. Alban’s has no space to offer: We worship in the Theater Arlington – our congregation would almost fill all the seats on Easter morning—and then it would be time for the theater’s afternoon matinee.

Knowing what it is like to lose a

building (we lost ours during the schism in the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth), I wanted to offer what support I could. Visiting with some Methodist leaders at their site, I learned they would hold their board meeting at Applebee's that night. The nearby high school was letting them use the cafeteria for Sundays. But Easter Sunrise service would be on the church lawn.

I remembered our own beginning staff meetings at the Blue Cow Diner, pastoral visitations at Starbucks, and committees and Bible studies meeting in people's homes.

Looking across the parking lot, I recognized another Methodist pastor, a friend of mine from across town. She is a trained UMCOR volunteer –the disaster branch of the Methodist church--and she was there in her baseball cap and work gloves moving debris off the driving paths to make way for the work vehicles to move around.

She was beaming as we greeted on another. "Guess what I just learned?" she said, "the youth from this church have put out a call to the entire church to show up on Saturday here at the church parking lot in jeans and work boots, with shovels and work

gloves in hand with this message: 'We're going into the neighborhoods around the church to help the families whose houses were destroyed by these storms.'"

And my heart melted, and I wept with my friend as I remembered that this is also how we had survived our own storm just a few years before.

Our Story

When the storms of dissension that had been brewing in our diocese for so long finally erupted in a schism that tore our church apart--we gathered with others and we took the challenge of our Presiding Bishop to heart when she said, "do not turn your focus inward at the pain you have borne. It will tear you apart. Turn instead your focus outward to the world around and help to heal a hurting world."

And so at St. Alban's we opened our eyes to see who it was that was in need nearby. We adopted this mission statement: "We are called to be the hands of the Lord in this place, open to all, reaching out to the community and the world." We looked for ways to serve in a low-income elementary school, at the nearby homeless shelter, and at the local food pantries. And we committed at least

10% of our pledged income to go towards outreach projects—that way even if times were lean we would always be able to give.

Four years later, we still have no building, but our congregation has grown, our budget has grown, and our outreach ministries have grown with it. Outreach is still the heart of our parish, and now that we have children and youth, we are exploring ways to pass that vision on to them—or in reality to be inspired anew by their own generous hearts, as we seek to serve a hurting world together.

As I pulled out of the driveway of the Methodist Church that day, I saw a handwritten sign on a large piece of cardboard that I had missed when I first came in. It said,

"The Building may be down, but the Church is still standing!"

And I found my heart spontaneously responding,

"Amen! Thanks be to God!
Amen."

Summary of our Response to Crisis?

1. Pray.
2. Touch base with everyone quickly, sharing responsibility

with many leaders.
3. Turn your focus outward to
heal a hurting world.

But, what about the buildings?

One day we may be called to care
for a building again—but for now,
we've got our hands full just car-
ing for the church, and the world.

Melanie Barnett Wright is the
Priest in Charge of St. Alban's
Episcopal Church in the Diocese
of Fort Worth, Texas, a congre-
gation that has been meeting in
the Theater Arlington since the
split in 2008. Visit their Facebook
[[https://www.facebook.com/
StAlbansArlington](https://www.facebook.com/StAlbansArlington)
] page to learn more about this
vibrant congregation

Wright on St. Alban's Ministries
http://youtu.be/TWU1t0_6Nus

- St. Alban's Episcopal Church
<http://www.saintalbansarlington.org>
- St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/
StAlbansArlington](https://www.facebook.com/StAlbansArlington)
- Theater Arlington <http://www.theatrearlington.org/index.php>
- "Wisdom Gathered, Lessons Learned," by Loren Mead, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/uncertain-times/wisdom-gathered-lessons-learned/>

Resources

- Church Planting and Redevelopment Five Marks of Mission blog <http://5marks.org>
- Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth <http://episcopaldiocese-fortworth.org>
- In Case of Disaster <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/in-case-of-disaster/>
- Phoenix Rising video: Melanie

Becoming a Resurrection People

BY KATHERINE SCHNORRENBERG

For 172 years, people of all ages and from all walks of life have gathered at St. Peter's Church in Ellicott City, Maryland to praise, worship and give thanks to God.

For 172 years, this community of faith came together for fellowship, extending hospitality to the community, and welcoming all to enjoy bountiful food and fun.

For 172 years, these people, inspired by Jesus Christ's instructions to Peter, whose name they bear, to "tend my sheep, feed my lambs," reached out into the community to feed the hungry, provide help to the needy and advocate for social justice.

Then on May 3, 2012, tragedy struck. Entering the office where he often came to get food from the pantry the church operated, Douglas Jones, a confused and mentally ill homeless man who used the nearby woods for shelter, shot and killed two women who had often reached out to him: Mary-Marguerite Kohn, a co-rector, and Brenda Brewington, the parish secretary, before killing himself — three senseless, terrible deaths.

The next day, reeling from the shock, members and former members gathered in Starr Hall, the fellowship space for the church, to mourn as we grieved with and for the Brewington, Kohn, and Jones families. As people shared their memories and fears, we all pondered the questions: How can we recover from this? How can we make these senseless deaths somehow have a deeper meaning? How can we overcome this tragedy?

First Steps

In the weeks and months that followed St. Peter's determined to be a resurrection people. With tentative, but then bold steps, the congregation under the direction of its warden Craig Stuart-Paul and the Bishop's Ministry Team determined both to honor the lives lost and to redeem this terrible tragedy. Rather than overcoming the tragedy, the congregation determined to transform it by letting it be the inspiration for new life and labors. In his last conversation with his beloved disciple Peter, Jesus has urged him to "feed my lambs... tend my sheep." That message inspired our resurrection efforts.

Resurrection took several forms. First and foremost, St. Peter's continued its 172-year practice of gathering for worship and thanksgiving. On May 6, just days after the shootings, the congregation came together for its usual services of worship and praise. Hearts were heavy as we gathered around the table to share Eucharist. But we did gather, worship, and give thanks, especially for the life and ministries of Brenda and Mary-Marguerite as well as the other blessings in our lives.

Renewing Commitments

The church also renewed its commitment to St. Peter's Preschool, an important ministry to families in our community. Over the summer, our preschool director worked tirelessly to reassure parents and to recruit new students. The community support was heartening. Our classes grew and we were able to continue to offer families a loving and nurturing program for their little ones.

Although distributing food from the church office was no longer possible, the congregation determined to continue its outreach to people

who are homeless and hungry in our community. On May 7, 2012, as on many first Mondays before and on every first Monday since, church members prepared and served an abundant meal of roast turkey, au gratin potatoes, salad, broccoli, and desserts to homeless men and women at the Route 1 Day Resource Center, part of the Grassroots Crisis Intervention Project. They brought nonperishable food to be distributed at that center as well as supplies for the Lazarus Caucus program that offers food and shelter to the homeless.

This year saw the beginning of new outreach efforts: we provided underwear and pajamas for children at St. Agnes Hospital and we explored how we could become part of the Winter Shelter Program, an interdenominational effort. Volunteers devoted thousands of hours to renovating a duplex on the church property so that it could become low-cost housing for a family striving to move forward with its hopes and dreams for the future. Refusing to retreat from its mission, we at St. Peter's, a resurrection people, expanded our efforts to "feed my lambs. . . tend my sheep." (John 21: 15-16).

Resurrection has occurred in the very space where the tragedy happened. After extended renovations and enhanced security, on Jan. 6, 2013, St. Peter's re-dedicated part

of that space as a small chapel, St. Luke's Chapel, to provide an area for quiet contemplation, small services, and spiritual groups. Since July 2012, Morning Prayer has been offered in that chapel Monday through Thursday at 8:30 am and a midweek Eucharist and Bible Study are held each Wednesday evening. That tragic space has become sacred space through the efforts of a resurrection people.

A Year Later

The 172-year legacy of hospitality and fellowship has continued unabated. During this past year we have welcomed our members and others in the community to a crab feast, a pig roast, a fried chicken/silent movie night, Sunday in the Park, and a festive quiche and champagne celebration at the Easter Vigil. We have done some renovations in our kitchen to enable us to continue to extend hospitality and welcome.

Of course, we have not done this alone. Members of the community, other churches, friends, and family have supported and encouraged us on this journey. To celebrate our successes and to express our gratitude for the life and ministry of Brenda and Mary-Marguerite, whose dedication and lives continue to inspire us, the St. Peter's community gathered at the one year anniversary for an ice cream

social followed by a liturgy of Resurrection Lessons and Carols to celebrate new life, resurrection life as a community of faith and as a part of the Ellicott City community.

Katherine Schnorrenberg is junior warden at St. Peter's Episcopal Church Ellicott City, Maryland.

This Vestry Papers article is adapted from an article originally published by Episcopal News Service on May 3, 2013. It is reprinted with permission.

Resources

- "Avoiding the Quick Fix," by Peggy Treadwell, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/uncertain-times/avoiding-the-quick-fix/>
- Characteristics of Vital Congregations developed by the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts <http://www.ang-md.org/clergy-resources/vital-characteristics.pdf>
- "Conflict and Controversy: Elephant in the Sanctuary," by Ward Richards, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/conflict-and-controversy/elephants-in-the-sanctuary/>

- “Doing the Advance Work,” by Tilly-Jo Emerson, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/leadership-in-times-of-crisis/doing-the-advance-work/>

- St. Peter’s Episcopal Church <http://www.stpetersec.ang-md.org>

- St. Peter’s Episcopal Church Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Peters-Episcopal-Church-at-Ellicott-Mills/101580759899263>

- The Sunday After a Disaster, Episcopal Relief and Development <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploads/EducationFileModel/56/file/Sunday-After-Disaster.pdf>

- Working with Children After a Disaster or Act of Violence, Episcopal Relief and Development <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploads/EducationFileModel/99/file/Working-with-Children-After-a-Disaster.pdf>

Leap of Faith

BY JACK HAUBEA

As unemployment in Moorefield, West Virginia doubled in recent years, the fortunes of Emmanuel Episcopal Church went in the opposite direction. In 2008, an anonymous donation of \$20,000 plus other contributions allowed us to complete \$30,000 of renovations to Emmanuel's kitchen. Our tiny congregation responded with a huge expansion in our community ministry. As our then priest, the Rev. Dr. Michael Simon pointed out, "With great blessings come great responsibilities." Rev. Simon said "God wanted more of us than to have a nicer coffee hour after church."

Moorefield, a small community located two and a half hours from Washington, historically has been relatively well off compared to the rest of West Virginia.

Manufacturing has been the largest sector in Moorefield, but the number of jobs in the town fell 14% from January 2008 to June 2009. Pilgrim's Pride, a chicken processor, went through bankruptcy. American Woodmark, which makes cabinets, was hard hit by the housing crisis and closed one of its three plants in Moorefield: 30 families in town had both the husband and

wife working at this plant.

The vestry discussed the situation and decided to respond by sharing our blessings and offering the community a weekly, free offering lunch. Starting with a \$1000 gift from the bishop and a core of volunteers, Emmanuel has served lunch on Wednesday since September 2009.

Early on, a parishioner preached about the new ministry. "She asked, Why are we doing this? To make ourselves feel good or because God is telling us to? That was pretty much the instruction: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked. This should be our baptismal ministry. If people are asking themselves the question, Why are we doing this? then almost by definition there is a spiritual process taking place."

The parish organized four teams of three people to cover each week of the month: cooking, setting up, and cleaning.

A flyer was developed with the invitation "Open Community Lunch, Every Wednesday, 11-1. Be our guest if you want good fel-

lowship, good food, to visit with your neighbors, or to meet and greet new friends." The parish sent letters about the lunch to a dozen other churches in town and posted flyers in the food pantry, senior center, courthouse, stores, and local newspaper.

With most of the food donated by parishioners or the local grocery store and supplies purchased with the free will offerings, \$910 of the bishop's gift remains 'for a rainy day.'

In April 2012 American Woodwork closed the second of its three plants; the parish now serves anywhere from 50 to 70 people per week. With the need for food assistance increasing, Emmanuel Episcopal has expanded the program to reach more people:

■ By offering people who come to Emmanuel for lunch the opportunity to 'give back' by delivering lunches to people who are homebound, the Open Community Lunch program is able to serve an audience that can often be forgotten or difficult to reach.

■ As a member of the Mountaineer Food Bank, on Mondays volunteers from Emmanuel Episcopal pick up 40-50 pounds of produce and bakery items from the local Food Lion grocery store and bring it to a local low-income housing development for distribution. On Tuesdays they return to Food Lion for another load, bringing this food to the church to be used as part of Wednesday's lunch with unused food left available for lunch guests to take home.

For Emmanuel, a congregation too small to afford more than a third-time priest – the vestry's call is clear: Continue the food ministry as long as there is a need and interest in the community.

Before the unemployment crisis, one or two of our congregants would be involved in outreach. Now, of the members who are able to participate (not working during the day and not too elderly), we have 100% participation in the effort, either in greeting, preparing, or cleaning.

Part of the explanation is that the church is growing and changing. There are several people who retired here from the Washington, DC area. When Rev. Simon first arrived, some

Sundays there were only four people. In the last five years, average Sunday attendance has gone from 10 to 25. There is more energy. For a church of this size to take on such a major new ministry has been daunting, but the vestry is proceeding in faith that the resources they need will come through.

And they have, because the vestry is comfortable asking for help – and in letting go. Over the years, the Moorefield Presbyterian Church, Duffey United Methodist Church, and most recently the Epiphany Catholic Church have partnered with Emmanuel, each taking responsibility for providing the lunch at Emmanuel one week a month.

Nine years ago, Rev. Simon asked the vestry, "If Emmanuel closed its doors would anybody notice?" Today, we can confidently respond, yes.

Jack Hauber is senior warden at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Moorefield, West Virginia. An earlier version of this article appeared in The Episcopal Church's publication Hope and Action Abundant Small Congregations (2012) Jack updated and expanded the original version for ECF Vital Practices.

Resources

- Bread for the World <http://www.bread.org>
- Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Moorefield, WV <http://www.emmanuelmoorefield.org/HomePage.html>
- Hungering for Hope: Hunger and Economic Opportunity Program for Youth <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploaded/files/Church-In-Action/Youth/ActOut-Hunger.pdf>
- Feeding America <http://feedingamerica.org>
- "Harvesters BackSnack Ministry," by Fran Wheeler, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/mis-sion-the-churchs-heartbeat/harvesters-backsnack-ministry/>
- National Council of Churches: Domestic Hunger Resources <http://www.nccendpoverty.org/hunger/domestic%20hunger%20resources.html>
- "Tips for Parishes Considering a Food Pantry Garden," by Timothy Goldman, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/tips-for-parishes-considering-a-food-pantry-garden/>

From the Ashes

BY MICHAEL SNIFFEN

On December 23, 2012, The Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew suffered a serious fire as the result of an arson attack. An unknown person poured gasoline across the entrances of the church and set fire to them in the early hours of the morning. The portico, narthex, several offices, and the back of the nave were severely damaged. Smoke damaged almost every other room in the building.

The fire came on the heels of a major hurricane relief effort undertaken by the congregation and community known as "Occupy Sandy." For nearly two months, the church served as home base for the largest grass-roots hurricane relief effort in the City of New York. Over 60,000 volunteers were trained in the church in less than 8 weeks. Millions of pounds of donated items were distributed. The nave and sanctuary became a holy warehouse stocked with love and fueled by faith. FEMA, the Red Cross, and The White House Office of Faith Based Initiatives referred to the effort as "a miracle."

The recovery work was miraculous and the community was exhausted as we moved into Christmas. The

fire just about burned up the last bit of oxygen we had left.

Arriving in front of a charred church to find weeping parishioners, water pouring out of the entrances, and every media outlet in the city perched across the street was not what I had in mind for the 4th Sunday in Advent.

As the community gathered, it was clear that we could not enter the church for worship. We decided to walk around the corner and pray with our Baptist brothers and sisters. They were having their Christmas service a day early -which was just what we needed!

After an uplifting time of prayer and a lengthy conversation with the building inspector, it was decided that we could enter the church the following day for Christmas Eve services. Word spread via social media. Neighbors and friends from everywhere began arriving with decorations- many folks unknown to us. As it got close to the start of the 10:00 pm service, I was still welcoming people in a burned-out hallway, making sure visitors could find the alternate route into the nave. Before I knew it, the proces-

sion was beginning and I found myself in the midst of a church filled with candlelight and the largest Christmas Eve attendance in 20 years.

It was a resurrection moment for many of us. Many tears were shed. We remembered our baptisms. We lit the new fire. We gave thanks for the spirit. It was Christmas Eve and The Great Vigil of Easter and Pentecost all rolled into one.

Christmas was followed by many meetings with Church Insurance, questions about restoration, and inevitably questions about the parish's purpose and mission. The fire seemed to refine our sense of vision and collective passion for the gospel. If the fire was a consequence of our unprecedented relief efforts, what should we do? Certainly not retreat in fear!

The Wardens and vestry modeled the openness to the Spirit needed at the moment. Rather than giving into panic mode, they asked "what does this mean for us and our ministry in this neighborhood and this city." It was the right question and our ministries and building are emerging stronger after the fire in

large part due to their willingness to see God in the flames and and smoke.

As I prepared for our annual meeting early in the new year, I knew it could not be the usual rigmarole of financial reports, guild updates, elections, and potluck. Of course we did all that (as efficiently as possible), but I felt the need to do things differently. It seemed the appropriate moment to engage in the hallowed practice of story telling.

Two days before the meeting I heard a story on NPR's *This American Life with Ira Glass* that moved me. The story was told by the father of a four-year-old girl. He recounted the moment that his daughter asked him what Christmas meant. He explained to her that it was the celebration of the birth of Jesus and she wanted to know more about it. So, he bought her a kid's Bible and they would read it at night. The daughter loved the stories. The two talked about the stories each night and about Jesus teaching to love your neighbor as yourself. One day as they were driving pas

t a big church, the daughter saw an enormous crucifix and said, "Who is that?!" The father realized that he had never really told her that part of the story, so he said, "Yeah, well, that's Jesus and

I forgot to tell you the ending and yeah, you know, he ran afoul of the Roman government. This message that he had was so radical and unnerving to the prevailing authorities of the time that they had to kill him. They came to the conclusion that he would have to die. That message was too troublesome."

Later in the month, the daughter's preschool was closed for Martin Luther King Day. The father was sitting at the kitchen table with his daughter when he plopped down the arts section of the local newspaper. There was a huge drawing of Martin Luther King by a ten year-old kid from a local school. His daughter asked, "Who's that?" The father said, "Well, as it happens, that is Martin Luther King, and he's why you're not in school today, because we're celebrating his birthday." And she said, "So who is he?" And the father said, "Well, he was a preacher." She looks up to him and says, "For Jesus?" And the father says, "Yeah, well, actually he was. But there was another thing that he was really famous for, which is that he had a message." And she says, "What was his message?"

The father says, "Well, he said that you should treat everybody the same, no matter what they look like." The daughter thought about

that for a minute and she said, "Well, that's what Jesus said." And the father says, "Yeah, I guess it is. I never thought of it that way, but yeah. That is sort of like love your neighbor as yourself." She thought for a minute and looked up at her father and said, "Did they kill him too?"

We will never know why someone torched our church the night before Christmas Eve. But the experience of adversity in the midst of life-giving ministry was an invitation for our congregation to stand in the prophetic line of faithful communities who have given themselves up in service to the Gospel. We left internal bureaucracy behind in favor of common narrative. It turned out that storytelling was the right focus for our annual meeting. It led to new levels of commitment throughout the congregation. People wanted passersby to look up and see us rebuilding and connect the dots from church, to historic change-agents, to prophets, to the living God in our midst. The fire we suffered ignited a passion for justice and peace that is burning brightly in emergent ministries, renewed faith, a restored building, and an understanding that resurrection must be preceded by some kind of death. Our responsibility is to tell the story in hope of setting others ablaze.

As far as the building goes, church insurance has been fantastic to work with. Our restoration is on track to be completed by December 2013 and we look forward to a big community celebration next Christmas Eve.

Michael Sniffen is rector of *The Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew* in Brooklyn, NY. He is also a PhD candidate (ABD in Liturgical Studies and Homiletics) at Drew Theological School in Madison, NJ.

Resources

- The Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew <http://stlukeandst-matthew.org>
- “Church Builds Community Through Post Sandy Relief Work,” ENS, <http://episcopal-digitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/11/19/church-builds-community-through-post-sandy-relief-work/>
- Episcopal Church Building Fund <http://www.ecbf.org/index.html>
- “Flames and Faith” by Judy Hoover, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/buildings-and-grounds-2/flames-and-faith/>
- NPR’s *This American Life* with Ira Glass <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/>
- Occupy Sandy <http://occupysandy.net>
- Parish Inventory Workbook <https://www.cpg.org/linkservid/0AE81272-0E6C-6702-9C768B4DFAFAC9A3/showMeta/0/?label=CIC-Parish%20Inventory%20Workbook>
- Property & Casualty Resources from Church Insurance <https://www.cpg.org/administrators/insurance/property-and-casualty/overview/> and <https://www.cpg.org/forms-and-publications/publications/property-and-casualty-insurance/>
- Public Narratives <http://diomassleads.org/resource/ldi-public-narratives/>
- “Suspicious Fire Chars Part of Brooklyn Church,” *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/24/nyregion/fire-damages-church-of-st-luke-and-st-matthew-in-brooklyn.html?_r=0