

Real Episcopal



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Summer 2021



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Above: On the first indoor Sunday worship of 2021, the St. Luke's congregation in Atascadero "aggressively hums" a fitting hymn.

Cover: The Rev. David Starr at Holy Family Episcopal Church in San Jose, May 2, 2021. *Two photos, Elrond Lawrence*

Real Episcopal

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A Message from Bishop Lucinda Ashby



Dear People of El Camino Real,

Welcome to our summer edition of *Real Episcopal*, our diocesan magazine! This has been an important pilgrimage year of discovery, with an emphasis on traveling light. Inside this issue, you will read about different explorations and the fruits of our experiences as a diocese.

This edition includes a preview of the opportunities which lie ahead. The Leadership Initiative has been expanded to include not only our School for Ministry, which is a bi-lingual formation program, but also the ECR Community Trailblazer positions that we plan to fund with our Bishop's Appeal.

The Community Trailblazers are recent graduates of seminaries or local formation programs who come to us to work with parishes and communities to develop connection, dream and find new opportunities for partnership. In a post-pandemic world, as we move into becoming New Church, the Trailblazers will work to forge paths and find creative ways for the church to engage in new and meaningful ways.

I hope you will pay special attention to our "Storied Pilgrimage with Race" article. This curriculum is based on video interviews with different people across our diocese. The design team that developed the curriculum has met every Wednesday for the past year to create the stages of the pilgrimage and locate formation materials, action items, and ideas for reflection to go with each stage. Using the team's own words, the article tells a bit of the group experience as we gathered to engage in this joyful, thoughtful work.

Don Fennell adds his own story to our magazine, as he explains why he believes in the mission of our diocese. Don is a cheerful giver in time, talent, and treasure, and his story inspires our readers to consider their own gifts and dreams. Don is a gifted leader and we are grateful for his work in our rich mission field.

Finally, the leadership of the diocese is thankful to have a gifted photojournalist in Elrond Lawrence. As you peruse the pages of the magazine, I hope you will spend time enjoying Elrond's photos and his writings. Thank you, Elrond.

Faithfully,



Faithful Ways, Fresh Vistas



“It is wonderful to see you here, in church.”

So said The Rev. Merritt Greenwood, interim rector at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Atascadero. The day was May 23, 2021 -- Pentecost Sunday – but more importantly, it was the first Sunday of in-person worship since March of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic changed life across the world.

The applause that came from the socially distant congregation was spontaneous and filled with joy and relief -- but it was also clear that the church has embraced a new world. A large flatscreen monitor stood next to Greenwood filled with friendly congregation faces arranged in the familiar pattern of a Zoom video call. A trio of carefully placed cameras were livestreaming the service to the rest of St. Luke’s congregation, as well as friends and family across the country. Turning toward the screen, he added, “It is wonderful to see you all out in the world, on the Internet.”

After 14 months of COVID, St. Luke’s attendance has actually increased. Thanks to virtual worshippers, its services and gatherings are now viewed by people in Washington state, Palm Springs, Texas, Florida, and even the UK. Even though the church has shifted into a hybrid of in-person and virtual

attendance, the “Zoomers” are very much a part of the interactive service, to the point that they are invited to offer prayers in real time.

Greenwood says the congregation has done a great job for a smaller church with an average Sunday attendance of 31-32 and a median age in the mid-60s. “They have come to understand that the answer to the question of ‘what could possibly go wrong’ is ‘everything,’” he says with a laugh, “and to just roll with it.”

During his Pentecost sermon, Greenwood seemed to speak for all of the Diocese of El Camino Real as it emerges from this long era of pandemic into a time of transformation. “This is a Pentecost like no other Pentecost Sunday I have ever experienced. This has been a time of anticipation, with moments of terror and moments of awe and wonder. Part of the wonder is that we are entering into a new world, into a new church. Fourteen months ago, who would have dreamed that we would be here wearing masks, being socially distant, alternatingly comforted and aggravated by all of the ever-changing protocols?”

“For those of us who are of more mature years,” he contin-



ued, "this internet business is scary and intimidating. For those of us who are of not-quite so many years, this is something new and wonderful and easy to adjust to ... we are being equipped to do amazing, astonishing, outrageous, unthinkable things."

Turn the page to visit other churches and read the words of others who are poised to do amazing things in an era of New Church.

Photos: Scenes from Pentecost Sunday at St. Luke's, Atascadero.



When *Real Episcopal* visited Holy Family Episcopal Church in San Jose on May 2, in-person worship was not yet a reality. Sunday worship was held outdoors with a top-notch technical team handling the livestream to those watching online. While keeping social distance and following COVID-19 protocols, Holy Family members managed to convey love, warmth, and community while sharing worship on a sunny spring day.

“We used to think of the church as immune to disaster,” explains The Rev. Ruth Casipit Paguio (below), rector of Holy



Family. “The pandemic has taught us that this is not so. All of us at the church were as vulnerable to infection as the rest. We have to recognize the knowledge, expertise, and authority of our health officials and scientists. The church, in this instance, is called to participate in curbing the problem... to be part of the solution.”

“But compliance does not mean we give up our most basic task of connecting our members for fellowship, mutual encouragement, prayer and intercession,” she continues. “During crises the need to be present for one another is greatest. We had to discover creative and innovative ways to connect without breaking government-sanctioned health protocols. We have learned that technology and social media can be an important resource for the church. Going forward means keeping our best practices without being rigid and backward. We continually evolve and adapt to changes.”

“Our hybrid services are a sign we at Holy Family are moving into being the New Church,” added The Rev. David Starr, associate rector at Holy Family. “The pandemic rattled us awake to the realization we can no longer go on being church as we were in the past. We must develop and experiment with new ways of spreading the Good News of God’s Kingdom. Broadcasting our services while attending in person is just one way.”



Surrounding photos: *Holy Family's hybrid Sunday service on May 6 with COVID-19 protocols and live streaming.*

“We are better and stronger in collaboration,” shares The Rev. Julia McCray-Goldsmith, priest in charge of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in downtown San Jose, five miles away from Holy Family. “For Trinity, that’s meant a lot of musical collaboration, especially in support of our Spanish-speaking congregation. We lost our music director just before the quarantine, and one of the leaders of our Spanish band died of COVID. Amidst the grief, we needed our music more than ever. We are especially grateful to the many digital collaborations that we were able to do with our friends at the (bilingual) Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis. There is an enormous wealth of resources for worship and learning and among our communities, once the infrastructure for sharing is built.”



“It has been enlightening and freeing to know that “church” is not the building, structure or even tradition,” said Janet Mize, parishioner at St. Francis’ Episcopal Church, also in San Jose. “While I have “visited” many different church services during COVID, I have seen Christ honored in many ways. I see “church” more focused on people, within and without its boundaries, with compassion. It has been a year of many efforts toward healing racial inequities, long overdue in the church and the world.”





Lower left: Drive-through Communion was a common sight at St. Dunstan's, Carmel Valley, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two photos by Peter Coote

Above and upper left: A week after St. Dunstan's returned to in-person worship, the May 30 Sunday service continued to livestream with masks, sanitizing, and social distancing for those inside the sanctuary.

"I see Christ's spirit as leading us into loving action more than sitting in a church sanctuary," Mize adds, "which seems cold by comparison to being out in the community serving the underserved. When I drive past a homeless encampment, I cry, and my heart yearns to know how to help God's children who are left as dregs in a most unequal society. What can the church do to bring more love and equity into our communities? How can we get people out of the pews and into the streets?"

When in-person worship returned on Pentecost Sunday, central coast TV news station KSBW covered the happy service at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Carmel Valley. They interviewed senior warden Georgia Byrne, who said she had been counting the days: sixty-one Sundays, two Easters, one Christmas, and several parishioner birthdays. "We've dreamed of this day and it's finally here," she said.

The Rev. Laurel Coote, rector of St. Dunstan's, described the day as "life-giving and exciting" and said the church would begin to step into the "ministry of serving our neighbors."

"The church had to put on its creative thinking cap," she recalls, "imagining and discovering new ways to connect both to members and to the greater community. We also learned a new way of welcoming, through things like virtual coffee hour on Zoom. I believe the church's role has transformed

and expanded in ways we might not have, had we not faced this time of separation."

"As things open up," she continues, "our greater call is to reach out and connect with our local neighbors, businesses and schools to invite dialogue and connection, so we can discern together the needs of our communities and how the church might respond to those needs. Rather than building it and assume folks will come, we are called to be proactive in reaching out to ask what is needed, and then to prayerfully discern how we might offer support and partnership. It is this community relationship and engagement that I believe will keep the church vital, relevant, and a place of support and belonging."

Looking ahead to the next chapter of worship and new church, the words of Greenwood on a Pentecost Sunday in Atascadero ring out:

"There is a part of me that wants to go back to doing things the way they have always been done. I want those seven last words of the church: 'We have always done it that way.' I also know that we have new words: 'We've never done it – let's try it, and see what happens!'"

"I don't think we've begun to get creative yet."

A pilgrimage with race



The power of storytelling and the human connection lie at the heart of El Camino Real's unique and personal "Storied Pilgrimage with Race" curriculum, a unique and compelling series of video interviews that explore race in the diocese.

Described as a "holy offering", the pilgrimage features interviews with a diverse mix of people who share stories about their lives, their experiences with race, and their family histories, and how they deal with perceptions, stereotypes, and racism. The videos can be accessed at realepiscopal.org, ranging in length from 15 to 30 minutes, and are supported by education materials, action items, and questions for reflection. Discussion groups and individuals are taking the pilgrimage, which offers eight stages as of July 2021 with four more to complete by summer's end. Completion of this 12-stage pilgrimage fulfills the requirement for anti-racism training in the diocese.

The group behind the pilgrimage is equally unique. It was June of 2020 when Bishop Lucinda Ashby assembled an anti-racism team in the wake of George Floyd's murder, a simmering racial divide, and a pandemic with no end in sight.

Through it all the team has met weekly, with only a few exceptions, for more than a year via Zoom. It is a team that is vulnerable, honest, and not afraid to ponder a thought for long moments of silence. They laugh, cry, exchange teasing, eat chocolate, and praise the joys of eating Cheetos with chopsticks. In addition to Bishop Lucinda, the team includes The Rev. Karen Cuffie, Timothy Gee, Elrond Lawrence, The Rev. Salying Wong, The Rev. Jani Wild and Brett Wormley.

Storytelling and video interviews were chosen as the best approach to connect people and learn about each other's unique history. In the beginning, some team members interviewed each other and then widened the stories to people across the diocese representing as many cultures, geographical areas, and age groups as possible. The interviews are captured live on zoom and are edited by Lawrence for time and clarity.

Recently *Real Episcopal* hosted a group interview with the El Camino Real team for a personal reflection that looks back at how the pilgrimage curriculum was born, and how its meaning and impact has evolved over the past year. Quotes have been edited for space and clarity.

HOW IT BEGAN

Bishop Lucinda Ashby: We felt that we had the opportunity to go forward [instead of traditional anti-racism curriculum], but we didn't know what it was going to look like ... what do we want to do? What do we want to come up with? We just brainstormed ... trying to figure out what would be real and authentic and what would be inviting to people.

Elrond Lawrence: I think that the idea of telling stories came up early. We wanted to share stories about people because that's the one connection we can make where people don't put up their defenses.

Karen Cuffie: And then it wasn't just story, but it was our stories, our dialogue, the stories in our diocese.

Brett Wormley: I remember the moment then when we were brainstorming who to invite, to tell their stories and then it flipped and we decided to tell our own stories first

+Lucinda: How did we get you to go first, Salying?

Salying Wong: Oh, I volunteered. I usually volunteer for hard things to get them over with! In terms of even the way we talk about “anti-racism” work, even that title can be loaded with whatever we project onto it. But to hear a story is a vulnerable enterprise ... for the one who speaks, but also for the one who listens, and when one is open to the story.

Tim Gee: We all have our own story. And I think by having us be the first ones to be interviewed, it sparks something within you as to your own story, that you probably wouldn't have thought of otherwise.

+Lucinda: I remember when we were constructing the questions for the interviews and spent so much time on them, trying to make sure that the questions were respectful and they weren't loaded ... we spent a lot of time trying to figure out what the curriculum could work look like beyond the videos. We came up with a plan and it really translated into aspects of liberation theology, the action-reflection cycle, and how that worked. And it was so interesting.

USING ZOOM

Salying: And it's been kind of an interesting thing to work in the pandemic, right. To think of these action reflection cycles and the context, within these constraints ... we've had to be pretty creative.

+Lucinda: We didn't worry too much about the technology ... we just did it on Zoom, even though sometimes the quality is

grainy or it's jumpy or whatever ... these are just interviews of people, you know?

Elrond: If we hadn't had COVID, we probably would made these nice, polished interviews, but there's an authenticity that comes from doing it on Zoom that you can't capture in any other way there are some moments that are raw.

At this point the group laughs over Brett Wormley's Pilgrimage interview, where his cat walks behind him on camera during a discussion of “micro-aggressions.”

Brett: I had no idea she had that good a sense of timing!

Tim: It's like a living room conversation. We can pull up a chair and start talking. Like you said, Bishop, the forming questions are just keys to the door that opens that conversation. Wherever that conversation goes is what leads us down that path.

Brett: One thing that our group has done wonderfully is how sensitive we've been in mothering the product through and coming up with a friendly interview...

+Lucinda: I would say midwifing really ... are we honoring that person's story with the path that we're taking or are we maybe judging the person's story? And also accepting the different styles of the people that we were interviewing. Every one of these stories is a story about courage and it shows up in different ways, in different stories.

Brett: Of the impact it's made on me, it's made me realize that the depth of the stories, the interviews that we've had, bring out the kind of things you hear about people at their memorial service when it's too late. It's really caused me to think about people's personal stories and not waiting until the memorial service to find out who they really are.

Capturing stories: Bishop Lucinda interviewed Brett Wormley (upper left), while Tim Gee spoke with Rita Welsh (right).





Tim: It goes back to what you said, Bishop, about posting the videos and having the program online: people throughout the country are accessing it and realizing that this is a new way to approach anti-racism awareness ... it's not the traditional curriculum, it's bringing you into a conversation and hopefully opening yourself up to making your own pilgrimage.

+Lucinda: I love the way that the different stories connect, but they're not direct connections. There are pieces that just kind of weave through the whole pilgrimage and join the stories together in ways that are amazing. It's a tapestry.

ABOUT THE TEAM AND TRUST

Brett: It's been a safe zone ... what we've discussed in these weekly meetings have been very open. And what happens in this one hour on Wednesday afternoon stays within us. And we felt comfortable to open ourselves up. What's more important is how much time we spent in deciding what goes into those slots for each of the stories: the action item, the question, the reflection... so that we're authentic to what is being said, but yet being insightful enough to encourage people to take a journey and open their minds.

THE PILGRIMAGE'S IMPACT

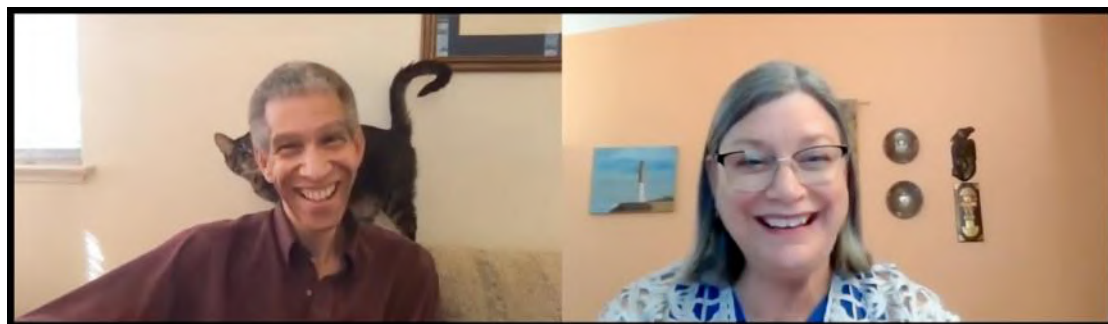
Karen: In the past, anti-racism training started and ended within a day or two. My hope is that this doesn't end for people, since we've already set up this framework of the things you can do in response. Because sometimes I think people just have no idea what to do and where to start. This gives people, me included, a framework to hear people's stories and the tools to take that journey of discovery.

Tim: And that's the closing to the introduction [*a video located on the Pilgrimage web page*]. We pray that you'll continue in your pilgrimage. So this is not the end. It's only the beginning.

Salying: What I'm thinking about these stories in these interviews is that I really believe people who watch them will be blessed. It's like the mustard seed, you know.

+Lucinda: We have taken these stories and held them up because they're holy. They've been stories that have had brokenness and vulnerability, and we're giving them forth. It's very Eucharistic.

Microaggressions: Brett's kitty makes a cameo appearance during his video interview, with impeccable timing.



Blazing new trails

for El Camino Real's future

During 2020, despite a time of COVID-19, your gifts to the **Bishop's Annual Appeal** remained generous and constant. Many donations were directed to the COVID & wildfire relief fund, as diocese leaders worked quickly to respond to the basic needs of communities and parishioners—work that is ongoing and essential and continues today.

In 2021, gifts to the Appeal will help the diocese begin to build a solid financial foundation for its Leadership Initiative Fund, an outgrowth of the Leadership Innovation Fund.

"As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, we are a changed people," says Bishop Lucinda Ashby. "We have gained a new sense of what we can be as a church and as a diocese. We have been more creative and nimbler than we ever imagined."

This time of transformation brings an exciting new opportunity: the **El Camino Real Community Trailblazers**. One to three Trailblazer positions will be made available to recent seminary graduates to return to El Camino Real and work with either a parish, a group of parishes, or a region, to help churches to connect with their communities in new and vital ways. This endeavor will help provide recent graduates with a funded

opportunity to engage in creative ministry, while parishes and communities will gain a person with new ideas to help walk the path toward being New Church.

The diocese also continues to raise funds for local, bilingual formation for ordained ministry. **The School for Ministry** will be ready to open in January of 2022, in partnership with the Diocese of Northern California. A team is in place to work on curriculum and prepare for this new adventure, which will also help develop future Community Trailblazers.

Designating a gift to this fund will ensure that El Camino Real continues to attract and develop the leadership we will need over the next five to 25 years and beyond. Half of the funding will come from interest earned from the Leadership Initiative Fund, while the other half will be matched by parishes or groups of parishes.

The goal for 2021 is to raise at least \$200,000, to ensure the Leadership Initiative Fund has enough funding for at least one Trailblazer in June of 2022. Thank you for your support and commitment to our ministry!

Leave a *Real* Legacy: Help build the emerging church

Is the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of El Camino Real enriching your life? Do you want to make a difference in advancing the Jesus Movement and help develop the emerging church in our diocese? How many times have you said, "I wish I could do more" to support work you believe in?

Legacy gifts provide an opportunity to designate a more significant future gift than might be possible through your annual contributions. Consider making a *Real Legacy* commitment to the Diocese. Common approaches include:

Bequests: Designate a percentage of your estate after making provisions for family and friends; leave a specified sum of money; or leave a particular piece of property.

Beneficiary Designations: Name the diocese as one of the beneficiaries of your retirement fund or life insurance policy.

During your lifetime, you can make qualified charitable distributions (QCD) from your IRA directly to the diocese if you are at least 70½ years old.

Please discuss with a qualified financial advisor.

If you choose to designate a legacy gift, or if you already have done so, please inform the diocese of your plans. We would like to include and recognize you, if agreeable, as a member of our *Real Legacy* society to help inspire others.

For more information or conversation, please contact Kirstin Nielsen, Bishop's Assistant & Diocesan Coordinator, at kirstin@realepiscopal.org or 831-394-4465.

Making IRA qualified charitable distributions

Please remember that there is a tax benefit to making charitable contributions directly from your IRA account if you are 72 years old (or 70½ if you reached 70½ before January 2020). Your qualified charitable distributions can satisfy all or part of the amount of your required minimum distribution from your IRA, without being taxable to you.

For more information, visit www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/retirement-plans-faqs-regarding-iras-distributions-withdrawals

The Bishop's Annual Appeal

Thank you to our donors

Your generosity helps the Diocese of El Camino Real to support parishes and communities, and to carry out the vision of new church described in this issue. Below we've recognized all who have given to the Bishop's Annual Appeal since January 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021. Please forgive any errors or inadvertent omissions; if your name was omitted, please contact Kirstin Nielsen at kirstin@realepiscopal.org or call 831-394-4465.

We are deeply grateful to those who have given anonymously. Thank you all for your gifts!

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Donor Profile: Don Fennell

How long have you been part of El Camino Real?

"I have been part of ECR for 20-plus years as a member of St. Mary's in Pacific Grove, though I never thought much about it until I was a delegate to convention. Like so many, the workings of the diocese were a remote mystery to me until I could see it in person."

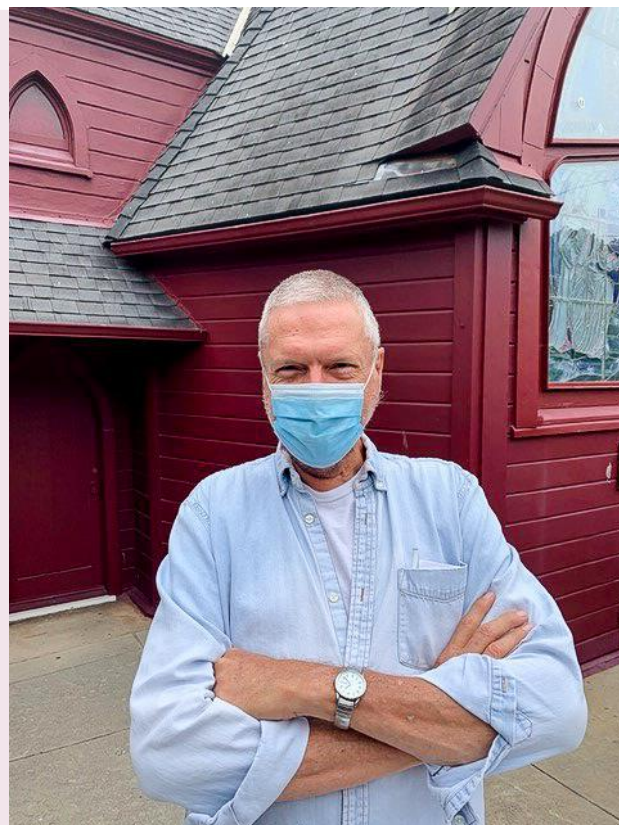
What sparked your interest in becoming active with the diocese?

"As with some others, it was by invitation — first to be a delegate, then to serve on the Commission on Ministry. Though hesitant at first to be on the Commission, it has turned out to be an interesting and gratifying experience. I have found everyone who serves there to care deeply about the persons in process and the importance of the work."

Why do you believe in supporting our diocese?

"I enjoy the friendships I have made at COM and convention. I have come to understand the many things that happen within the diocese beyond administrative work -- especially the recent diocesan assistance to those in need during COVID, funneled through individual churches ... and also the plans for formation of both lay and ordained ministry outside of on-site seminaries, in particular fostering persons who by life circumstances or language barriers could not attend traditional programs."

The future of the diocese has everything to do with communication, especially the articles that explain what the diocese does for parishes and communities. It helps people see the diocese as relevant to their spiritual lives and growth. There are things to be excited about."

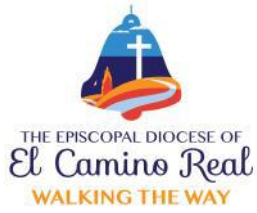


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**Given in appreciation for their "Conversations with Race" series.*



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Pentecost Sunday 2021

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atascadero

Diocesan Convention is November 6, 2021

Visit the diocesan website for important dates and deadlines.

[*www.realepiscopal.org*](http://www.realepiscopal.org)

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