



Risen

EPIPHANY 2024

Rhode Island's Source of Episcopal News

Risen

Rhode Island's Source for Episcopal News

RISEN — A periodic publication of The Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island
275 North Main Street
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 274-4500
www.episcopalri.org

Publisher — The Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely,
Bishop of Rhode Island

Editor and Director of Communications —
Kristin Knudson

Copy Editor — Kristin Knudson

Design and Layout — Kenney Knisely

Writers — Kristin Knudson, The Rt.
Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, Rebecca
Wilson, Canticle Communications

Photo Credits

All photos are used by permission.



Subscriptions — RISEN Magazine is a free journal published by and for The Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or need to change your mailing address, send an e-mail with your name and address to:

risen@episcopalri.org.

From the Editor

This issue is a Best Of, catching you up on some of the more interesting stories of the year past, and reviewing the news of Diocesan Convention. This issue will also introduce you to the newest clergy of our Diocese - 3 freshly minted deacons, two of whom will transition to the priesthood in 2024. Enjoy!

-Kristin Knudson

2023 Convention Round-Up



congregation as the people who worship in the building and the parish as the people who live near the building,” he said. “The people who worship are gathered and sent to care for their neighbors, who are part of their parish whether they worship with them or not.

“We serve the community in which we are planted,” he said. “We serve the people who worship in the building, but not because they’re our loyal customers, though we fall into the trap often enough. We serve the people who worship in the building so that they are equipped and consecrated by virtue of their baptism to serve the parish in which we live.”

The budget is informed by an Anglican understanding of what it means to be a parish, Bishop Knisely said, using the \$141,000 contribution from the operating budget to Episcopal Camp and Conference Center a programs more effectively.”

The bishop said he is also eager to find ways to relieve parishes and parish clergy of administrative burdens, perhaps through assistance with bookkeeping, payroll services and assistance in fulfilling legal and canonical responsibilities.

“I want to try to find ways to put you back in the mission field that we ordained you to serve, that we trained you to serve, and that you want to serve,” he told clergy.

“I want you to cultivate that community so that community can cooperate to solve the larger problems we are facing. And if you convert a few people, that would not be such a terrible thing.”

In other business, the diocese elected members to a variety of offices and confirmed appointments made by the bishop.

Delegates also approved the first reading of a constitutional amendment that would give the opportunity to speak, but not vote, at convention to officers of the diocese, members of diocesan commissions and other individuals selected by the bishop and approved by the convention.

A resolution that would have modified the nominating process for diocesan elections—in part by eliminating the requirement that nominees receive the endorsement of three members of the convention—was narrowly defeated. ■



The Rev. Dr. Andrew McGowan, dean of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, preached at the convention Eucharist on the evening October 27 at St. Luke’s Church, East Greenwich. Earlier in the day he gave a presentation on “True Bread: The meals of Jesus and the life of the Church” at St. Luke’s.

The diocesan convention passed a \$4.8 million operating budget that reflects a strong commitment to camp ministry and includes a 15 percent assessment of congregational operating income at its annual meeting on October 28, over Zoom.

In presenting the budget, Jim Segovis, chair of the finance committee, said that diocesan funds and congregational contributions made it possible for the diocese to support “life-saving, life-changing diocesan ministries, including a vibrant camp and conference center; college and young adult ministry; Hispanic ministry; responses to climate change; and ministry to

unhoused people.”

The budget also includes funds to compensate the diocesan staff, furnish grants and loans to congregations, maintain diocesan property, and support “the churchwide and global ministries of the wider Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion,” he said. (Read a budget narrative.)

In his annual address, Bishop Nicholas Knisely urged the convention to consider the word “parish” in the context of the Episcopal Church’s Anglican heritage.

Churches founded by the Church of England “understand their

St. Andrew's by the Sea and St Columba's

How Aging Congregation Thrive



Parish Cook-out at St. Andrews

The last time Bishop Nicholas Knisely visited St. Andrew's, Little Compton, a member of the congregation asked what the parish had to do to attract families with children. The Rev. Virginia Army, the parish's rector, remembers his response well.

"He spoke with warmth, but candor," she recalls, explaining that rising housing prices and the attractiveness of communities such as Little Compton to retirees meant that fewer young families were moving into the diocese, and that some aging congregations did not have the capacity to support children's programs.

"He told them, 'You do not have to have children and youth to be a parish that is worthy and vibrant and serving and glorifying God,'" Army recalls. "I think a lot of the parish kind of took a deep breath and said, 'We are who we are.'"

In numerous communities around the diocese, congregations are having to recognize that decades of declining church attendance coupled with the state's shifting

demographic profile means they are ministering increasingly, and sometimes almost entirely, to people of retirement age or older. The average age of St. Andrew's congregation is 82. "We have children and grandchildren at holidays," Army says. "But that's all."

But an older congregation can still be a vital one, says Army, a cancer survivor who works a 25-hour week. "You have to be good at and committed to what you can do and in recognizing what your neighborhood needs."

St. Andrew's is especially concerned with food insecurity in the three-town area that includes Little Compton, Tiverton and Westport, Massachusetts. Parishioners support two food banks and are planning a charity concert in July by the parish's choir director and pianist, Gayane Darakyan, a classically trained concert pianist, to benefit the food banks.

The parish also supports the Little Compton Circle of Friends, a social group for teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, holds blood drives and recently

co-sponsored a "shred day" with the Little Compton United Church of Christ on which a truck bearing a paper shredder arrived from a local vendor and community members brought documents that needed secure disposal.

St. Andrew's has what Army describes as a "generous mission budget," but the parish also likes to "roll up our sleeves and work together, too" she says.

There are particular challenges an aging congregation faces, and parishes must develop the capacity to face them, Army says. Three times this year, parishioners have collapsed during worship. Members of the congregation are now practiced in what to do on these occasions.

Seven members of the parish are trained to use an automated external defibrillator or attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and on any given Sunday, Army says, at least three or four are present. On each occasion, after the ambulance arrived, members of the parish accompanied the afflicted person's spouse to the hospital, and the community rallied around them, arranging

Ordinand Spotlight: Andrea Hutnak

*ordained at All Saint's Church,
Providence, May 1, 2023*

What called you to ministry?

From back when I was a new Episcopalian I felt our calling to shared service and there was also that still, small (and persistent) voice, or push toward diaconal service: to be a public witness to Christ's love in the world, to participate in the life of the Church in Word and Sacrament in new ways, and to encourage and empower others as we work together to spread God's kingdom - one act of love and service at a time.

Did you attend an Episcopal Church while growing up?

I grew up Roman Catholic and left the Church in my early 20's. One day while driving down Cranston Street I felt moved to pray so I said: "God, I think you might be real, and if you might be real then you might be listening, and if you might be real and also listening then I will say that I would like to know you. Can you work with that?" So began a time of reconstruction and, eventually, the road "home" to the Episcopal Church.

What are you most looking forward to as you develop your ministry?

After ordination I began my first assignment serving as deacon at St. Barnabas Church in Warwick. It's been wonderful getting to know folks there and participating in the welcoming and engaged life of the parish.

What are your interests/hobbies?

I'm a children's librarian at the Warwick Public Library, so I'm thankful to serve within two institutions that welcome all as they are and serve and empower the community with no strings attached. I enjoy swimming, gardening, having friends over for dinner and a fire, reading and watching sci-fi, and learning new things.



meals and transportation when necessary.

"It has been a complete joy for me to serve with them. And I admire their commitment to taking care of each other and their neighbors, whether they know them or not," Army says.

One misconception about older congregations is that they do not receive new members, Army says. "New people will come but they will just likely be older," she says. "There are still people out there, like recent retirees who have moved to the area, who are looking for a warm, welcoming and faithful community who do their best to serve and glorify God. That's where the sustainability can really come from, and there is nobody on the vestry who doesn't understand that this is the challenge of our time."

St. Columba's, Middletown serves a broader demographic than St. Andrew's, but in recent years it has also paid attention to the particular needs of older members of the congregation. In 2017, three years after her husband Art died as the result of a bicycle accident, parishioner Sara Chadwick put together a three-part series that began with a highly personal exploration on aging, death and dying and included one session with a registered nutritionist and another with a staff member of the American Association



of Retired People, who spoke about driving, specifically about convincing older relatives not to, and home safety issues such as getting rid of loose scatter rugs and putting grab bars in showers. At the first session, Chadwick told those gathered that her husband's death had left her without passwords or other essential information for taking care of his unfinished business.

"I talked about what people did for me when Art died, flowers, food and endless support," she says. "And I talked about getting rid of his clothing. And then how I started coping with money matters. Like who is our oil company. Things I'd never paid attention to because he was so good at those things."

Her co-presenter, Lois Rogers, another longtime parishioner at St. Columba's, spoke of the long, slow death of her husband, Ray: how he prepared for his death and how she and her children carried on afterwards.

That first session was raw, Chadwick says, but the congregation was supportive,

and attendance at the sessions grew. In 2018, she organized a four-part series that began with a similar presentation by her and Rogers, followed by a return visit by a local nutritionist, and sessions with a home organizer who gave tips on downsizing and a police officer who spoke about avoiding scammers who target the elderly.

The series was interrupted by the pandemic, but Chadwick says she hopes to relaunch it. St. Columba's has seen "an influx of younger couples" under the Rev. Anne Bolles-Beaven, who became priest-in-charge in 2020 and rector in 2022, Chadwick says. But the parish still relies on the experience and energy of older parishioners in mounting event such as its annual English garden party, held this year on June 10.

"Nobody seems to give a hoot about how old anybody is," Chadwick says. "Nobody says, 'You've done this five times, why don't you let somebody else handle it?' They say 'You've done a good job, why don't you do it again?'" ■

Books Through Bars Finds a Home at St. Barnabas Warwick

Late in 2021, Providence Books Through Bars, an all-volunteer organization that sends books to people in prison all over the country, knew they needed a different space from which to work. For almost a decade, the group had been working out of a volunteer's garage. But lack of heat or access to facilities made the work of sending over 1,000 packages of books to inmates across the US difficult.

Volunteer Therese Zink was worshipping at St. Mark's, Warwick at the time, and asked the Rev. Susan Wrathall whether space might be available in an Episcopal church building. Wrathall suggested St. Barnabas in Warwick where the Rev. Scott Lee, the church's rector, was happy to make room for the program.

Hosting Providence Books Through Bars "extends the congregation's ministry to care for those in prison. It allows us to live into the call to love others as Christ loves us; to care for others in the ways that Jesus makes clear in Matthew 25," Lee says. "It

allows us to acknowledge that this is part of our call as Christians and a simple way to tell people 'you are not forgotten.'"

At St. Barnabas, Books Through Bars moved into a space four times larger than their previous garage home early in 2022. The new "upgraded" space, as Zink calls it, includes ample room for book storage and tables for packaging and labeling. The location, on the first level of the building, allows volunteers to move in and out without carrying bins of packages up or down stairs on their way to the post office.

Dr. Zink, a professor of family medicine at Brown University, says the parish is a great host. "Several vestry members worked with us to find the right space. Having access to internet and cell phone service is critical to our work," she says. "I've ... moved my membership to St. Barnabas because I was so touched by the engagement the vestry and Father Scott exhibited in the possibility of hosting Books Through Bars."

In its new digs, Books Through Bars has dedicated one room to fiction, and another to non-fiction and its mailing operation. The organization maintains a database of inmates' previous choices along with the regulations and restrictions at specific prisons. The group has between 5,000 and 8,000 titles on hand at any one time, and mails approximately 500 books a month in packages of two to four paperbacks each.

Books Through Bars is open to volunteers on Sunday afternoons following worship and coffee hour at St. Barnabas. The congregation has welcomed volunteers to attend coffee hour, and the group has reciprocated by hosting coffee hour for the congregation.

Teens in the congregation find the program a good fit for their community service hours, and two high school volunteers from another part of the city have begun attending the 10:00 service. ■

Ordinand Spotlight: Drake Douglas

*ordained at St Peter's by the Sea
December 9, 2023*

What called you to ministry?

Looking back now I realize I felt a call to ministry as young as middle school. Unprompted, I began to help some of the adults run Sunday School for the younger kids, and as I got older so did the age-group that I ended up serving. I took the somewhat typical hiatus from church in my late teens, but I never could quite shake that call to serve and lead. I guess it goes without saying that it finally caught up with me all these years later...

Did you attend an Episcopal Church while growing up?

I was born into a Pentecostal church but largely raised United Methodist. It wasn't until a deep spiritual emptiness in graduate school that I discovered the Episcopal Church basically by accident, and I was received by the bishop of Vermont at the Easter Vigil 2014.

What are you most looking forward to as you develop your ministry?

I'm excited to approach the great balancing act I see the Church being called to undertake at the moment. By that I mean listening to

people as they tell us what they need from "church", but also balancing that with the deep, rich truth that much of our tradition gifts us. That will require new kinds of translation, teaching, and ministry contexts. It will be messy, but I think it will also be fun and energizing.

What are your interests/hobbies?

I've always loved to sing in choirs (something I hope to get back to after school). Otherwise, I love to cook and entertain with my husband. And we both spend ample time doting on our dog who is truly the most perfect animal God ever created.



Follow where you believe God is calling your heart



The Rev. Jo-Ann Drake, the first woman ordained to the priesthood from the Diocese of Rhode Island, wasn't able to make the luncheon the diocesan chapter of the Episcopal Church Women hosted recently to celebrate the 49th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. But she sent a note.

It read, in part:
On Sunday I had the joy of celebrating the 45th Anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood. When Bishop [Fredrick H.] Belden ordained me, he congratulated me on being the first woman priest in the Diocese. I thanked him then told him that all that really mattered was that I wouldn't be the last.

Your gathering this day demonstrates how resoundingly God answered our prayers and affirmed our call. My thoughts and prayers are with you all and may you have a joyful and Spirit filled day.

Drake found her way into the Episcopal Church through campus ministry programs at Rhode Island College and Brown University. Belden, a staunch

advocate for women's ordination at a time when the diocese was divided on the issue, ordained her to the priesthood on October 1, 1978, at St. Peter's Church in Glenside, Pennsylvania, where she had been serving as a transitional deacon.

She would serve other churches in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire before returning to Rhode Island in 1993 as rector of Church of the Redeemer in Providence. Looking back on her journey, which began in a time of great uncertainty, she said recently that she "wouldn't change a minute of it."

Drake's path to the priesthood began as the Episcopal Church's sometimes fractious discernment of whether women should be ordained to the priesthood was reaching its climax. Such ordinations were not permitted when she entered Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) in the fall of 1974, yet weeks earlier in Philadelphia, three bishops had ordained 11 women in defiance of the church's prohibition.

By the time she graduated from EDS, not only had the church's General Convention

authorized women's ordination to the priesthood, but two of the Philadelphia 11—the Revs. Carter Hayward, Ph.D and Suzanne Hiatt—were members of the seminary's faculty. As the church's discernment progressed, Drake's did, too. She had originally felt called to teach, but her interest in ordained ministry intensified, and Belden encouraged her. "I cannot say one bad word about him," Drake said. "He was so kind and gracious and wanted to ordain a woman in Rhode Island."

Her path "didn't really cross," with Hayward and Hiatt's, Drake said, but she appreciated their example. "I admire their courage and believe they honestly were following God's call," she said. "What they did was grace-filled and holy; a spiritual outpouring of God's will and God's love." While a number of her classmates were involved in women's groups and other activities, Drake said that wasn't for her. "I'm a bookworm and a geek," she said. "I loved having my nose stuck in a book."

"A lot" has changed over the course of her ministry, Drake said, particularly in the



Ordinand Spotlight: Virginia Buckles

*ordained at St George's School, Newport
August 1, 2023*

What called you to ministry?

I have worked in independent schools for a decade, first as a classroom teacher and more recently as a chaplain. I loved those roles and have always felt a calling to work with young people; teenagers are energizing, inspiring, and generally hilarious. It was in the midst of my time as a lay chaplain at St. George's, an Episcopal boarding school, when I began to discern more clearly the call I heard from God to the priesthood.

Did you attend an Episcopal Church while growing up?

Yes, I attended an Episcopal Church growing up. My family moved around a fair amount in my childhood, so there were several wonderful parishes which were my church home throughout the years. Also, my grandfather was an Episcopal priest and school chaplain, and as a child I loved attending worship services with him and peppering him with my theological inquiries. His answers often further piqued my curiosity, and I have always felt at home in the Episcopal Church.

What are you most looking forward to as you develop your ministry?

I am looking forward to continuing my ministry as a school chaplain. I am also excited to become more involved with NAES (The National Association of Episcopal Schools) and getting to know the clergy in our diocese more.

What are your interests/hobbies?

I love being outdoors, especially spending time near the ocean. I dabble in some creative endeavors including watercolor painting, calligraphy, and graphic design. I also love reading fiction novels, watching women's sports, and hanging out with my four-year old and three-month old kiddos.



acceptance of female clergy. While Drake attended chapel regularly at EDS, several of her fellow students and the faculty chose not to attend if Heyward or Hyatt were celebrating. Some bishops would not allow their seminarians to attend.

There have also been significant changes in seminary curriculum, especially around liberation theology, which was just beginning to be studied during her years, she said.

Drake is now retired and associated with St Paul's, Pawtucket where "I do as much for them as I can," running the website, contributing to workshops, programs, and quiet days online, and celebrating the Eucharist on occasion. She does interim and supply work, telling the congregations she visits: "I'm here to share the love of God with you. Let's go." and "When someone hungry in front of you, give them a sandwich, someone lonely in front of you, spend a few minutes."

Guests at the ECW luncheon included the Rt. Rev. GERALYN WOLF, the diocese's former bishop, who was a classmate of Drake's at EDS, and the Rev. Elizabeth Habecker, a member of the Rhode Island Standing Committee, who was the first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Maine. Wolf, the first woman to be elected bishop of the diocese, presided at the Eucharist



ECW Luncheon Celebrating Women in the Presithood

preceding the luncheon, and Habecker was among those who offered reflections on their ministry.

Asked what she would say to women considering seminary and ordination today, Drake responded that she would say the same thing to a woman as to a man: "follow where you believe God is calling your heart. If it's right, God will open the doors. ... Happiness in life is in finding what you discern and believe. Follow what you discern is the best for us – what God wants for us. Pray for that – trust that God is going to bring you there." She concluded by noting, "It's

all about the journey. It's nice to celebrate the goals, but it's the whole journey." ■

Transistions

- Rev. Susan Wrathall has retired from St. Mark's, Warwick. Her last Sunday with them was June 4, 2023.
- The Rev. Meaghan Brower, Executive Director, concluded her ministry at Episcopal Conference Center May 2023, and began serving as Associate Rector, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Portsmouth June 2023.
- The Rev. Andrea Hutnak began serving as Deacon, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Warwick, June 2023.
- The Rev. Sunil Chandy, Rector, Christ Church, Westerly concluded his ministry July 2023 and accepted a call as Canon of the Central Collaborative and Coach for Digital Community at the Dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan August 2023.
- The Rev. Anthony Dinoto, Interim, Christ Church, Westerly beginning August 2023.
- The Rev. Savannah Ponder, Priest-in-Charge, The Chapel of St. John the Divine, Saunderstown, beginning August 2023.
- The Rev. Eddy Lopez, Priest-in-Charge, St. James, North Providence, beginning August 2023.
- The Rev. John Alexander, Interim, St. Mark's, Warwick, beginning November 2023.
- The Rev. Noel Bailey, Associate Rector for Pastoral Care, concluded her ministry at Emmanuel, Cumberland December 2023
- The Rev. Jo-Ann Drake, Priest-in-Charge, concluded her ministry at St. Paul's, Pawtucket December 2023

Deaths

- The Rev. Russell Burchard
- The Rev. Deacon Dorothy (Ricky) Brightman
- The Rt. Rev. David B. Joslin, November
- The Rev. Connie Robinson
- The Rev. James Mauney
- The Rev. Ann Coburn



The Cross is My Anchor

**The Diocese of Rhode Island
275 North Main Street
Providence, RI 02903**

www.episcopalri.org