

# ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

MARCH 2025

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## JOSEPH GUARDIAN OF OUR LORD

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All that we know of Joseph we learn from the first two chapters of Matthew and of Luke. Otherwise he is mentioned only in passing in Luke 3:23; John 1:45; John 6:42 as the supposed father of Jesus. (Mark does not mention him at all.)

In the face of circumstances where a man of lesser character might have reacted very differently, Joseph graciously assumed the role of Jesus' father. He is well remembered in Christian tradition for the love he showed to the boy Jesus, and for his tender affection and care for Mary, during the twelve years and more that he was their protector.

*Continues in Calendar, Page 4.*

## PRESIDING BISHOP SEAN ROWE ON EPISCOPAL CHURCH STAFF REALIGNMENT

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Dear People of God in The Episcopal Church:

On the day I was elected presiding bishop in June 2024, I told the General Convention:

It's time to reorient our churchwide resources—budgets and staff—to support dioceses and congregations on the ground where ministry happens. To build on what dioceses and diocesan partnerships already do better than the churchwide structure and use churchwide resources to strengthen those ministries.

*Continues in National News,  
Page 8.*

## ANGLICAN BISHOP DESCRIBES TERROR IN GOMA AND ISSUES THE INTERNATIONAL "GOMA CALL FOR PEACE"

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The Anglican Bishop of Goma has said people are "terrified in their homes" as fighting in the DRC city continues to escalate.

The Rt Revd Martin Gordon, who has recently evacuated Goma along with other peacekeepers, has shared "*The Goma Call for Peace*" urging the international community to act immediately and decisively for peace in Eastern DRC.

*Continues in International  
News, Page 20.*



# ATTENTION ALL CHURCH MEMBERS!

## ALTAR FLOWERS

If anyone is interested in furnishing the altar flowers,  
please call the church office at 432-267-8201  
or email me at [baileys.stmarys@gmail.com](mailto:baileys.stmarys@gmail.com).

*\*Please note there will not be any altar flowers during lent season.*

## SERVING SIGNUP

At this time, we are looking for people who are willing to volunteer to serve during the Sunday morning service. There are several positions available for anyone who would like to help.

The positions are:

- Chalice- Serves the cup of wine.
- Lector- Reads the lessons and the psalms, and the Gospel during Morning Prayer.
- Acolyte- Carries the cross and the Gospel, and guards the front.
- Ushers- Welcomes people and direct them as needed

If you are interested, please call the church office or email the Parish Secretary at [baileys.stmarys@gmail.com](mailto:baileys.stmarys@gmail.com).

The church would also like to thank everyone who does volunteer!

**RIDDLE 1:** What do you call a church that's always on time?

*Riddle answers will be on the last page.*

**MARCH CALENDAR**

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Last Sunday after the Epiphany

**5<sup>th</sup>** Ash Wednesday

**9<sup>th</sup>** First Sunday in Lent

**16<sup>th</sup>** Second Sunday in Lent

**19<sup>th</sup>** Saint Joseph

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Third Sunday in Lent

**25<sup>th</sup>** Annunciation of Our Lord

**30<sup>th</sup>** Fourth Sunday in Lent



**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Sunday**

10:30 AM- Morning Service

Coffee Hour- Following the service

**Wednesday**

10:30 AM- Bible Study/Coffee hour

5:30 PM- Evening Prayer



**ANNIVERSARY WISHES**

**4<sup>th</sup>** Jim & Lea Faulks

**12<sup>th</sup>** Dennis & Mary Dingus

*Congratulations on your anniversary!!*

**BIRTHDAYS WISHES**

**25<sup>th</sup>** Nancy Manusos

**30<sup>th</sup>** Jeri Stockton

*Happy Birthday!!*

## CALENDAR OF THE CHURCH YEAR- LENT

FROM THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*The following text has been taken from [The Episcopal Church](#). This article has been added in honor of the beginning of Lent season. The picture comes from the [National Shrine of St. Jude](#).*

Early Christians observed “a season of penitence and fasting” in preparation for the Paschal feast, or Pascha (BCP, pp. 264-265). The season now known as Lent (from an Old English word meaning “spring,” the time of lengthening days) has a long history. Originally, in places where Pascha was celebrated on a Sunday, the Paschal feast followed a fast of up to two days. In the third century this fast was lengthened to six days. Eventually this fast became attached to, or overlapped, another fast of forty days, in imitation of Christ’s fasting in the wilderness. The forty-day fast was especially important for converts to the faith who were



preparing for baptism, and for those guilty of notorious sins who were being restored to the Christian assembly. In the western church the forty days of Lent extend from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday, omitting Sundays. The last three days of Lent are the sacred Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Today Lent has reacquired its significance as the final preparation of adult candidates for baptism.

Joining with them, all Christians are invited “to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word” (BCP, p. 265).

**RIDDLE 2:** Why did the church choir always carry a ladder?

## JOSEPH, GUARDIAN OF OUR LORD-19 MARCH N.T.

BY JAMES KIEFER

*The following article has been taken from [James Kiefer's Christian Biographies](#). This article is to highlight the importance of the Joseph, who we commemorate on March 19<sup>th</sup>. The text has been edited for reading purposes.*

Joseph was a pious Jew, a descendant of David, and a carpenter by trade. (The Gospels use the Greek word TEKTON, which means "builder," as in "architect." It has been suggested that he may have been a mason or a metalworker, or a building contractor...) Because of the silence of the Gospels, and because Jesus entrusted Mary to the care of John, it is generally believed that Joseph died a natural death after the visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve (Luke 2:41-51), but before the Baptism of Jesus when He was thirty. Joseph's influence during those early years must have been tremendous. When Jesus spoke of God as being like a loving Father, He was

using a word that he had first learned as a child to apply to Joseph. Joseph stands as a testimony to the value of simple everyday human things, and especially that human thing called "fatherhood."

### **Prayers** (contemporary language)

O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

O God, who called your servant Joseph to be the faithful guardian of your incarnate Son, and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to follow his example in constant worship of you and obedience to your commands, that our homes may be sanctified by your presence, and our children nurtured in your fear and love, through the same your son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.



*Saint Joseph* by Guido Reni

## HARRIS, HARWELL HAMILTON (1903-1990)

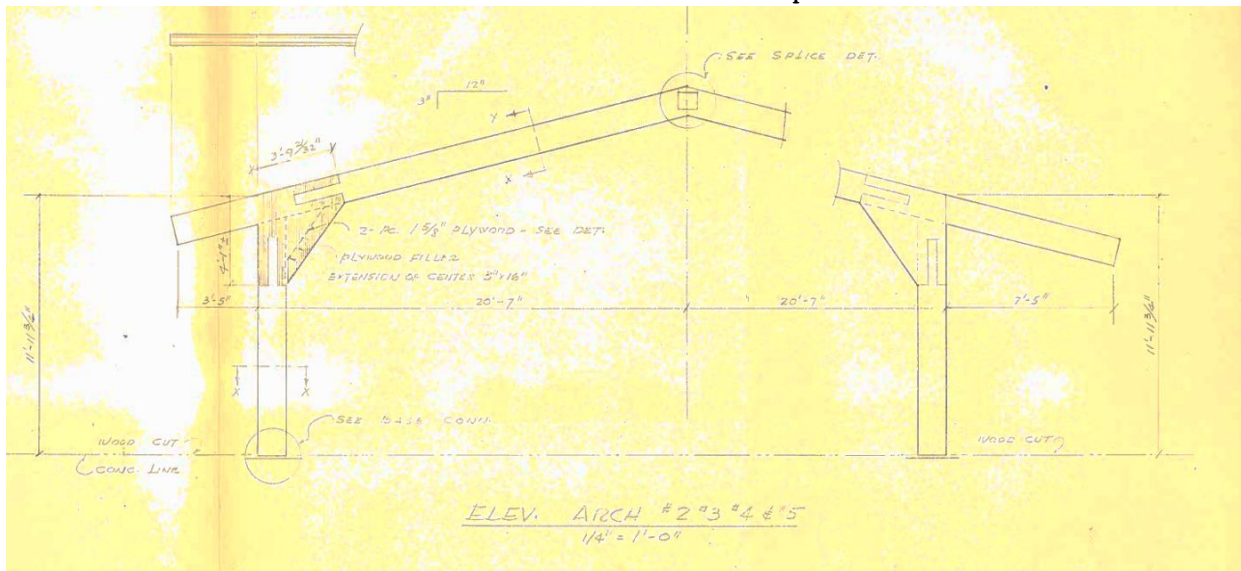
BY LISA GERMANY

The following article comes from Lisa Germany's biography on Harwell Hamilton Harris, founded on the [Texas State Historical Association](#). Harris was a well-known modern architect who created the designs for the building of St. Mary's in 1960. The photos mixed into the article are some of the designs submitted for the church by Harris.

Harwell Hamilton Harris, architect, son of Frederick Thomas and May Julia (Hamilton) Harris, was born at Redlands, California, on July 2, 1903. Although his father was an architect of some local repute, Harris, who later became one of the most influential architects of his generation, initially spurned architecture. He began his studies at Pomona College but later

an architect, he went to work for the Viennese émigré architect Richard Neutra, who put him to work on one of the monuments of modernism in this country, the machine-inspired Lovell Health House in Los Angeles.

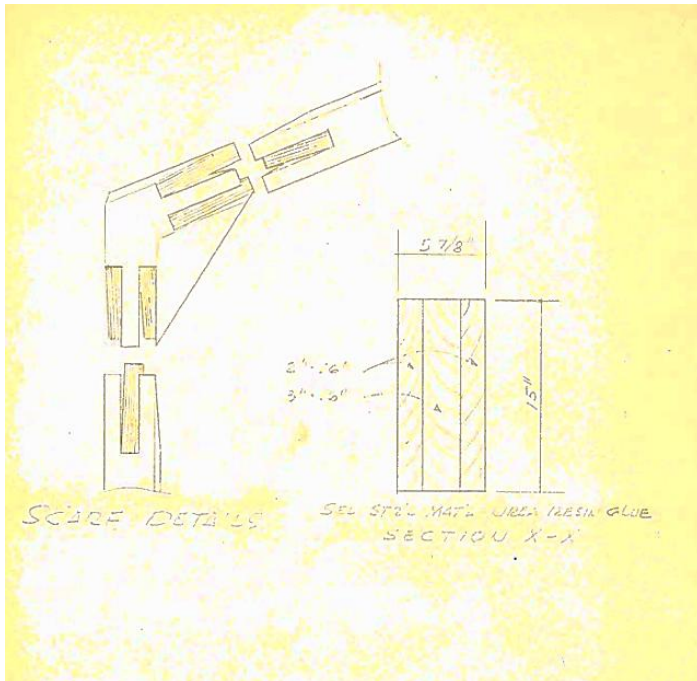
On his own in the early 1930s, Harris made a reputation with small homes for artists and intellectuals that combined the sculptural and natural elements he



dropped out to study sculpture at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. When a fellow student there encouraged him to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's house built for Aline Barnsdale in Hollywood (1917–21), Harris saw and was deeply moved by the sculptural possibilities of architecture. After deciding to become

had admired in Wright with an appreciation, learned from Neutra, for machine-made, prefabricated modern materials. These were his underlying influences, but his sensibility grew out of his love of the landscape and a feeling for the simple delicacy of spirit in the Japanese structures he had grown up

around in southern California. His work was characterized also by a sensitive use of wood, in which structural details were frankly celebrated, and by a conviction that a floor plan should follow, support, and inspire the patterns of his client's lives. After receiving critical acclaim with his first house, the 1934 Pauline Lowe residence, he met Jean Murray



Bangs, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley who was doing social work in Los Angeles. They were married in 1937 and lived in one of Harris's most admired residences, the Fellowship Park house of 1935, which was little more than a pavilion in the woods. In 1940–41 Harris designed his masterpiece, the Weston Havens house, a dramatic geometric form of inverted gables hovering above San Francisco Bay. Later, Jean Harris, who had become a gourmet cook and writer about food for *House Beautiful*, was

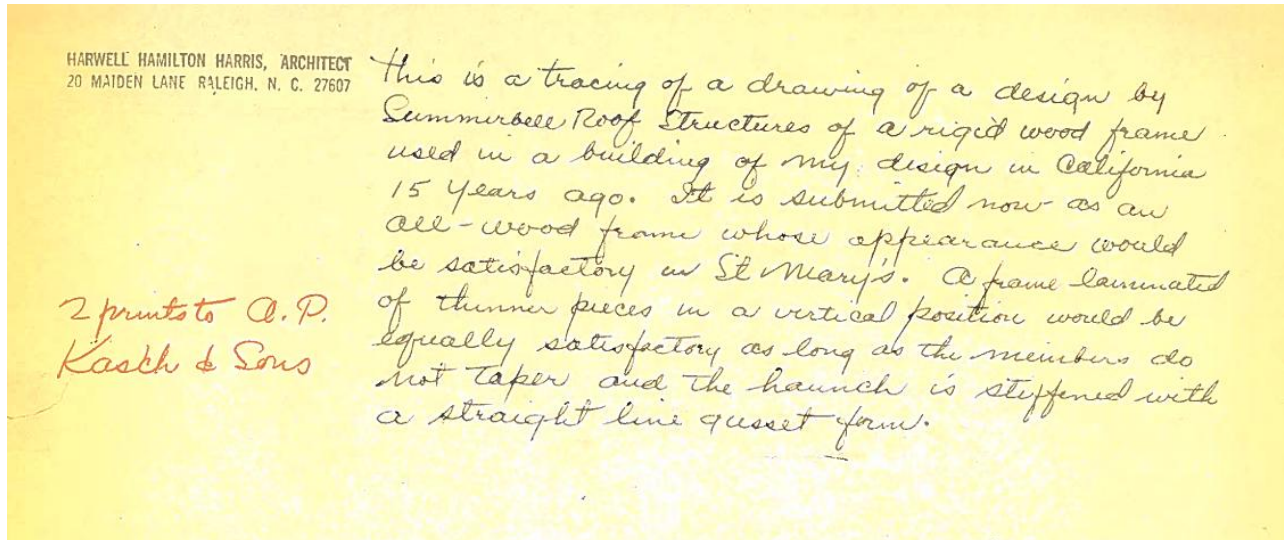
responsible for rediscovering and popularizing, through an assortment of magazine articles, three of California's most important and beloved architects, Charles and Henry Greene and Bernard Maybeck. Afterwards, Harris's natural affinity with the work of Greene and Greene found increased expression in such designs as that of his Ralph Johnson house of 1948.

Harris was something of a celebrity when in 1951 he became the first director of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas in Austin, which had just been separated from the College of Engineering. By 1955 he had hired teachers and shaped the curriculum, but perhaps even more significant was his local work. The House Beautiful Pace Setter house, exhibited at the [State Fair of Texas](#) in 1954, involved student participation; less-publicized work in Austin, such as the homes for University of Texas professor Thomas Cranfill and David Barrow, Sr. (both built in 1952), also made an impact on young Texas architects.

After leaving the University of Texas, Harris practiced in Fort Worth and in Dallas before leaving Texas in 1962 to teach at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. His most significant and representative work in Texas includes the 1956 [Ruth Carter Stevenson](#) house and Greenwood Mausoleum in Fort Worth; the Dr. Seymour and Jean Eisenberg residence (1957), the Trade

Unitarian Church (1961–63) in Dallas; and, in West Texas, the 1960 St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Big Spring, the 1959 residences of Dr. and Mrs. J. M. Woodall and Dr. and Mrs. Milton Talbot in Big Spring, and the home for John

Treanor in Abilene, also in 1958–59. Harris retired from teaching in 1975 but continued to practice architecture until just before his death at his studio-home in Raleigh, North Carolina, on November 18, 1990.



*This picture is a note made by Harris found on the designs that reads "this is a tracing of a drawing from a design by Summerbell Roof Structures of a rigid wood frame used in a building of my design in California 15 years ago. It is submitted now as an all-wood frame whose appearance would be satisfactory on St. Mary's. A frame laminated of thinner pieces in a vertical position would be equally satisfactory as long as the members do not taper and the haunch is stiffened with a straight line gusset form."*

**RIDDLE 3:** What do you call a religious person who loves to play cards?

## PRESIDING BISHOP SEAN ROWE ON EPISCOPAL CHURCH STAFF REALIGNMENT

BY REV. SEAN W. ROWE | FEBRUARY 20, 2025

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*This letter has been taken from the [Episcopal Church](#). This is a letter from the presiding Bishop to the people of the Episcopal Church.*

We must reform our structure and governance so that our essential polity, in which laypeople, clergy, and bishops—all of us together—share authority, does not collapse under its own weight.

Today I am announcing the first major milestone toward achieving these goals: a realignment of the church center staff that will position us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ more effectively in the world that we see emerging.

Any change of this magnitude requires difficult decisions. Earlier today, we said goodbye to 14 colleagues whose positions have been eliminated. Please know that we have offered each of them a generous severance package and substantial outplacement program to support them as they discern their next vocational steps. I am grateful for them and their service to the church center.

As you may know, the realignment was [directed by Executive Council](#) in 2023 and incorporated in the 2025-2027 General Convention budget, which requires us to reduce staff costs by \$3.6 million over the triennium.

Our goal with the realignment, however, is not solely financial. By

identifying priorities for our work as a staff and restructuring the staff to support dioceses more fully, we believe that we can help The Episcopal Church make an even stronger and more effective witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To realize this vision, we will have to change some of our core staff priorities. In some areas, we will pivot to focusing on investing in strong diocesan programs and initiatives and making them available to the entire church. In other areas, we will be trying some experiments to see what might work in today's church, learning from what we try, and building on what succeeds.

Here are some other details about this phase of the realignment and other changes now unfolding in our ministry as a staff:

- Sixteen colleagues have chosen to participate in a retirement incentive program, which was made available to employees who are at least 65 years old, or who will turn 65 in 2025. Those employees will be retiring on various dates in the coming months.

- In addition to today's departures, 13 vacant staff positions will not be filled.
- Although I expect this to be the most significant phase of the realignment, we will continue to study the structure and organization of departments as some were not involved in this initial realignment study. We are seeking outside advice to assist those departments in defining their priorities.
- Seventeen colleagues will be invited to participate in a new cohort-based program we are developing to invest in early and mid-career staff as they take on new roles or responsibilities. This is one way we hope to develop talent throughout the organization to build capacity for leadership in the years ahead.

Several church center functions are being reorganized:

- Evangelism and the formation of new Christians is central to our vision and the tenets of our faith. In this realigned structure, we will pilot new ways to invest in strong formation and evangelism resources developed by dioceses. We are also anticipating an active partnership with Forward Movement that will make our collective witness across The Episcopal Church even stronger.



*Bishop Sean Rowe during his investiture service, Nov. 2, 2024.*

*Photo taken by David Rider, from the [Episcopal Church website](https://www.episcopalchurch.org/).*

- The essential work previously done by the Offices of Transition Ministry and Pastoral Development is being retooled and restructured, and will now be handled in a new leadership development department that will be formed in the coming weeks.
- Our commitment to church planting and redevelopment is undiminished, and in the months to come, we will be reorganizing this ministry and the ways it supports and serves our dioceses.

I want to be clear that none of these changes indicate a lack of commitment to the ministries that are being reorganized. On the contrary, the data we collected over the past months from staff, Executive Council, and bishops indicate that these areas of ministry are high priorities, and we want to devote resources and time to new models and opportunities to achieve our priorities.

Today I am also announcing several changes on our senior team:

- I am pleased to announce that Rebecca Blachly, who has led the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations since 2016, has agreed to join the senior team as chief of public policy and witness. In this new role, she will continue to oversee the Office of Government Relations and The Episcopal Church's presence at the United Nations. She also will assume responsibility for Episcopal Migration Ministries, global partnerships, and ecumenical and interreligious relations, coordinating our public witness across all the contexts in which we advocate.
- I am grateful to share the news that the Rev. Canon Chuck Robertson, who has been part of the church center staff since 2007, has agreed to serve as canon and senior advisor to the presiding bishop. In this new role, he will lead our work with theological seminaries in The Episcopal Church and across the Anglican Communion; coordinate the work of our staff and governing bodies to assist the Diocese of Haiti and its ministries; design new models for development and fundraising to support our dioceses and church center ministries; and support me in my

ministry in the Anglican Communion.

- Our realignment process has indicated that, at this time, we do not need to fill the role of chief operating officer. I am glad to say that Jane Cislucis has agreed to remain on the staff as senior director of operations, with responsibility for information technology, human resources, archives, and building services.

We live in turbulent times, and it is unfortunate that this necessary reorganization is taking place during a period of wrenching upheaval in civil society. In the church as in society, people of good faith can disagree.

But when we remember that we belong to God—when we refuse to succumb to division and deceit and rely instead on this Christian community—we can find the face of Christ in one another, extending grace and understanding even when we are on opposite sides of debates or deliberations.

As we pursue the difficult work of change in The Episcopal Church, it will be all too easy to let disagreement lapse into conflict. I pray that all of us can be guided by the words of the prophet Micah, who reminds us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

May God bless and keep each of you as we continue this journey together.

## MONTECEDRO EPISCOPAL ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY LEAVES 100-YEAR-OLD RESIDENT AND ANOTHER PERSON BEHIND AS FIRE RAGES

FEBRUARY 9, 2025

The following article and pictures have been taken from the [Anglican Watch](#).

A 100-year-old assisted living facility resident, Jean Bruce Poole, and her neighbor were inadvertently left to their fates by [MonteCedro](#), a non-profit retirement community run by Episcopal Communities & Services, as the Eaton, California wildfires raged nearby. The organization running the facility is associated with the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles.

Local [news media](#) reports that staff hurriedly evacuated other residents in the middle of the night as the flames approached the facility, cutting power to the facility and leaving it filled with smoke. Reports suggest the evacuation was chaotic and exacerbated by poor communication from local officials, who delayed ordering evacuations even though the fire had already destroyed much of the surrounding community.

Poole, who had gotten up and made breakfast that morning, was found by local sheriff's deputies as she struggled to find the way through the building with her walker. Officials found another resident and her dog on the third floor of the property.

MonteCedro officials acknowledge their mistake and have contracted with a life safety services firm to understand how they overlooked the residents during the evacuation.

Family members and healthcare industry professionals were deeply critical of the situation, saying that the facility should have prepared sooner for evacuation and had protocols in place to ensure that all patients would be located and evacuated in an emergency.

The facility is undergoing air quality testing and remediation to address soot and contamination from the fires.

Jean Bruce Poole. Photo courtesy of John Ward.



## MIXED VIEW OF THE US LINE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

BY ABIGAIL FRYMAN ROUCH | FEBRUARY 14, 2025

The following article and picture have been taken from the [Church Times](#).

ADVOCATES of [religious freedom](#) have played down an apparent shift of emphasis by the [United States](#) on issues relating to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB).

[President Trump](#) and Vice-President J. D. Vance last week appeared to distance themselves from defending forms of non-belief as part of upholding religious freedom.



*President Trump participates in a prayer with Paula White-Cain at the National Prayer Breakfast in the Washington Hilton, on Thursday of last week*

President Trump told an event at the Capitol connected to a National Prayer Breakfast on Thursday of last week: “We have to bring religion back. We have to bring it back much stronger.” He said that “religious liberty” was a “fundamental freedom” that should be protected “with absolute devotion”.

Since the attempt on his life last July ([News, 19 July 2024](#)), he felt “much more strongly” about believing in God, he said.

At a separate prayer breakfast on the same day in the Washington Hilton hotel, the President announced the creation of a presidential commission on religious liberty. “In recent years, we’ve seen this sacred liberty threatened like never before,” he

said. He would sign an executive order to create a task force to eradicate “anti-Christian bias”, which would “immediately halt all forms of anti-Christian targeting and discrimination within the federal government” and “prosecute anti-Christian violence and vandalism in our society”.

The new commission is to be led by the televangelist Paula White-Cain, a long-term spiritual adviser to Mr Trump. On Friday, some [Evangelical](#) Christians publicly criticized [*sic*] the appointment on social media, referring to concerns about both her integrity and her style of ministry.

Vice-President Vance struck a similar tone to that of President Trump, when addressing religious leaders and campaigners at an

International Religious Freedom (IRF) summit at the Hilton earlier last week. Representing the UK at the summit were the newly appointed UK Special Envoy for FoRB, David Smith MP, and senior FCDO officials. The [Bishop of Winchester](#), the Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, who has raised FoRB issues in the [House of Lords](#), attended the summit, and hosted a prayer breakfast at which he and Mr Smith spoke.

Vice-President Vance said: "Our administration believes we must stand for religious freedom, not just as a legal principle as important as that is, but as a lived reality. . . How did America get to the point where we're sending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars abroad to NGOs that are dedicated to spreading atheism all over the globe?"

Several religious figures disagreed with the Roman Catholic Vice-President's speech. The executive director of the charity Churches for Middle East Peace, the Revd Dr Mae Elise Cannon, told the Religion News Service (RNS) that the speech gave lip service to international religious freedom and liberty for all, but that its "subtext" included "deeply disturbing assumptions about the superiority of Christianity and the idea that only the 'right kind of people' should have complete freedom and human rights".

The religious-freedom ambassador at the World Evangelical Alliance, Godfrey Yogarajah, told RNS: "Freedom of religion or belief also gives people a right not to believe."

Mr Smith spoke as part of a panel discussion, "Building on the Successes of the Global IRF Movement". He welcomed the Vice-President's comments about religious freedom as a lived experience, and said that governments and civil society had to work together "to be reaffirming our commitment to human rights and, within that, freedom of religion and belief".

Bishop Mounstephen, asked whether the Vice-President's comments about atheism suggested that the US was no longer on the same page as the UK on FoRB, said that he believed that FoRB was an area in which the US and the UK "could make common cause", and that the US's considerable apparatus around promoting religious freedom "is statutory".

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) describes itself as monitoring "the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad", and the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom says that it "promotes universal respect for freedom of religion or belief for all as a core objective of US foreign policy".

Stephen Schneck, who chairs the USCIRF, told the *Church Times*: "Speaking in my personal capacity, and not as a Commissioner, I'm pleased to see the new administration's concern for freedom of religion or belief. For me, personally, I do not see any potential change to the Commission's mandate."

**RIDDLE 4:** What's a church's favorite type of exercise?

## SYNOD REJECTS BISHOPS' 'POWER GRAB' ON EPISCOPAL ELECTIONS

BY MARK MICHAEL | FEBRUARY 14, 2025

The following article and picture have been taken from [The Living Church](#).

After contentious debate on February 13 that extended more than two hours beyond the allotted time, the Church of England's General Synod defeated three proposals to change the rules by which Crown Nominations Commissions (CNC) would select future bishops, including the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

The proposals, which were developed by an advisory group chaired by Bishop Sarah Mullaly of London and endorsed by the House of Bishops, would have removed the secret ballot, lowered the threshold for election from two-thirds to 60 percent, and given the archbishop chairing a CNC the power to cast an extra vote to break a deadlock. Though the Synod's House of Bishops backed two of the three proposals, all were voted down by its House of Laity.

Tensions between the synod and the increasingly progressive body of bishops that have been exacerbated by the

Living in Love and Faith process surfaced in debate. [Allegations](#) that coercion was applied by senior bishops within the CNC that elected the recently disgraced Bishop of Liverpool were also raised.

Mullaly introduced the proposals, which were considered separately, explaining that the failure of the CNCs to nominate to the sees of Carlisle and Ely in 2023 and 2024 had led to calls for reforming



*Bishop Sarah Mullaly introduces proposals to General Synod*

the process. Last September, she also [claimed](#) that the processes' "pre-judgments, tribalism, or politics" were spreading fear among women and minority candidates for the senior posts.

Bishop Andrew Watson of Guildford, a prominent conservative, was not

convinced. Describing what he called a “significant shift in power” in the proposals, he said the church could use “three sledgehammers or three nutcrackers to tackle what is a relatively crackable nut.”

Several of the “central members” of the CNC, who are elected by General Synod, expressed frustration that they had not been consulted by the bishops on the proposals. In a preliminary debate on February 12, the Rev. Lis Goddard claimed that the proposals amounted to “a massive shift in how we operate, shifting the power dramatically to those who already hold the majority of power.”

“These changes will undermine diocesan members ... making it much easier for them to be pressured into particular decisions and compromise the integrity of what is a carefully balanced voting system. We need to pay attention to power, and particularly in the CNC system at this time,” she added.

The Rev. Charlie Bell of Southwark, a prominent LGBT activist, argued for lowering the threshold for election to 60 percent: “LLF is being weaponized in the wider CNC process. We seem suddenly determined to crush vocation in this chamber. We need to get real. Pass this amendment and let the CNC do its job as intended to do.”

Alison Coulter, a lay member from Winchester, spoke in support of abolishing the secret ballot. “If you’re

elected to CNC, you’ve been invited into a leadership role within the church. We need to have courage. There should be no fear in the process.”

The Rev. Canon John Dunnett of Chelmsford, national director of the Church of England Evangelical Council, countered that the secret ballot prevents coercion and intimidation by activists, which is why it had been required by Britain’s Trades Union Act of 1984.

The final proposal debated by Synod, which would have given the archbishop a second vote to break deadlocks, proved less controversial.

“Agreeing to this proposal would mean setting up the Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury to increased scrutiny — look what happened in Liverpool,” said the Rev. Mark Miller of Durham.

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, who has denied applying pressure on the Liverpool CNC, also argued against the proposal: “I don’t want this added power, and if you vote for it, Synod, I will choose not to use it.”

Several uncontroversial changes to the CNC process, including expanded flexibility in substituting for members who could not attend, and allowing for interpreters to be present when necessary, passed handily.

The synod also approved a major revision of the Church’s Clergy Discipline Measure on February 12,

completing a multi-year reform project, aiming to address criticisms that the system had become overly legalistic, slow, and burdensome for both complainants and accused clergy.

The new system will have a tiered approach, with minor grievances addressed locally, while case assessors will investigate more serious charges. The most serious cases will be handled by an independent Investigation and Tribunals Team.

There will be a dedicated system to handle vexatious complaints, and officers will be empowered to impose restraining orders for those who harass clergy. The most serious sentence of deposition from Holy Orders, which had been removed in 2003, is now reintroduced for cases of grave misconduct.



Members gathering for opening worship on the first morning of the General Synod in London 2025. Photo taken from the [Church Times](#).

**RIDDLE 5:** What kind of person was Boaz before he got married?

## BISHOP OF LONDON: SAFEGUARDING CRISIS SHOULD NOT BE SEEN IN ISOLATION

BY SARAH MULLALLY | FEBRUARY 10, 2025

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*This following article has been taken from the [Anglican Watch](#). Sarah Mullally is the Bishop of London in the Church of England. In this article Mullally comments on the current structure of the Church of England.*

IN THE story of Christ's presentation in the Temple, the words that always catch my breath are Simeon's to Mary: "And a sword will pierce your own soul, too."

At Candlemas this year, a preacher described a stained glass window depicting Mary cradling the church, her eyes turned to Christ's face. He asked what this might be saying to our present context. And my soul was pierced.

The last six months has seen the publication of the [Makin](#) and [Scolding](#) reports, laying

bare a string of shocking [safeguarding](#) failures, fostered in unhealthy cultures in the Church of England. Lives have been devastated — and hurt and damage continues to be done.

A sword pierces my soul when I reflect on my part in that: what I have failed to do to prevent this hurt?

I am deeply grateful for the work of parish safeguarding officers, diocesan safeguarding advisers, and the National Safeguarding Team. They have all



*The church of England. Photo taken from [Charisma Magazine](#).*

undoubtedly contributed to improvements in our policies and practices, and are shaping the culture which a safer Church requires.

In addition to their work, and in order to create the right climate for all safeguarding to be as consistent, effective, and as trusted as possible, we need also to implement independent safeguarding and mandatory reporting.

But we cannot see this as a safeguarding crisis in isolation. There are wider, structural problems within the Church of England which have brought us to this point, concerning accountability, proper process, and appropriate management, and, without addressing those fundamental issues, change will be slow — or it may not come at all.

FIRST, accountability. We cannot hide behind the easy line that we are accountable to God alone. This is an abdication of responsibility. In the [NHS](#), I was clear to whom and for what I was accountable, and I was supported, challenged, and appraised by them. This was essential for my good and the good of those in my care.

I have tried to find this same accountability in the Church, but it does not seem to exist. I have sworn an oath of canonical obedience, but common tenure is an insufficient framework to ensure the well-being of the Church as a whole or the individuals in it, lay and ordained.

In recent times, we have seen the *de facto* distancing of churches from dioceses and the appointment of overseers through opaque means and without clarity of whom they are overseeing. Following on from the Scolding report, how do we address the attendant risks?

Second, proper process. The issues here lie particularly around appointments and in the handling of concerns and complaints. Robust and transparent appointments processes are vital to the health of any institution. Proposals regarding the appointment of diocesan bishops will be brought to this week's session of the [General Synod](#). They arise from concerns that what was designed as a confidential process has become perceived as covert and secret, leading to a lack of transparency. The General Synod has an opportunity to address this vital issue.

Proposals are also being brought to the Synod relating to the handling of complaints against clergy. They are an improvement — but are they enough? Do they take account of individuals who struggle, for a multiplicity of reasons, to engage with process? Do they recognise [*sic*] the reality of the imbalance of power between clergy colleagues, or laity and clergy? How do we ensure that these better processes are genuinely and consistently accompanied by good pastoral care for everybody involved?

Improvements in handling safeguarding complaints have revealed other shortcomings. When the complaint does not meet the safeguarding threshold, do we have processes which nevertheless address the misconduct which may have occurred? I am not confident that we do.

FINALLY, to management. I hear and understand the reasons for criticism of over-management in a top-down church. I worked at every level, from nurse to Chief Nursing Officer, in the complex organisations [sic] that are the NHS and the Civil Service. I have gazed into the heart of the Church of England and found, at its core, incoherent governance structures, in which a number of bodies which need desperately to be joined up are free-floating.

While there are governance proposals coming to the General Synod this week, they fail to resolve how the functions of the [Archbishops' Council](#), the [Church Commissioners](#), the national church institutions, and the [House of Bishops](#) relate to one another. This is not primarily about individuals, but about how they operate. In all of these places, good people are caught up in institutional impotence, resulting from a sheer lack of clarity when the individual parts are unable to relate effectively as a whole.

**RIDDLE 6:** What kind of car does Jesus drive?

Without clarity of accountability, process, and management, the people who are Christ's body on earth do not fall through the cracks in the system: they free-fall into voids. The longer we take to address all of this, the more people we will continue to fail, hurt, and damage the people who serve the Church and the people the Church is here to serve.

Over the past ten years as a bishop, I have sought to roll up my clerical sleeves and put myself to the work of making the Church safer. I know that, at times, I have failed, and for that I am profoundly sorry. I know that here I have raised many more questions than I have provided answers. Change always starts with us, but it requires the whole Church to participate. It requires a reset, not just in safeguarding but in the way we do all these things.

The revelations of the past two months have made me lament the Church in which I am called to serve the world. It is the Church which was won by the shedding of the blood of Christ, whose pain pierced the heart of Mary.

For that pain, and the pain caused by the Church, we must do better, and do it much faster. If not now, then how much more pain can be borne?

## ANGLICAN BISHOP DESCRIBES TERROR IN GOMA AND ISSUES THE INTERNATIONAL "GOMA CALL FOR PEACE"

JANUARY 29, 2025

*This article and pictures have been taken from the [Anglican Communion New Service](#). The picture shows people displaced by fighting in Goma flee the city.*



Bishop Martin has described the situation in the city of Goma as having "... no power and many areas no water. The M23 seems to have control of large parts of the city. The Congolese army are resisting in other areas. Civilians are being caught in the crossfire. Bodies are lying in the streets.

*"4000 prisoners have escaped. The IDP camps have emptied as people flee to the city centre and churches are filling as*

*places of refuge. Hospitals are overwhelmed. The price of basic food has doubled. Most people are terrified in their homes. Many are asking why they are being forgotten. The region is at a turning point and needs the international community to act immediately and decisively."*

The Rt Revd Martin Gordon, an ordained Church of England priest, has been serving as the bishop for the

Diocese of Goma, in the Anglican Church of the Congo (Province de L'Eglise Anglicane Du Congo). He became bishop of Goma in 2023, and his family relocated to Goma after serving in the UK for many years. During his ministry, Bishop Martin has been working on peace and reconciliation work with other faith groups and UN bodies.

In recent days, Bishop Martin – like other peace workers in the region – has evacuated Goma, as fighting in the city has escalated. Rebels from the Rwanda-backed M23 have been fighting for control and captured much of the eastern city of Goma. Conflict between the M23 and DR Congo's army has intensified since the start of the year, with rebels taking control of more territory and Rwandan Defence Forces increasingly involved.

This week, Bishop Martin issued *"The Goma Call To Peace"* to the International Community, urging for people to pray for Goma and the ongoing peace work on the ground, to see an immediate cessation of fighting and for there to be a rapid humanitarian response.

**The Call is backed by the Most Revd Ande Georges Titre, the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of the Congo who said:** *"I pray incessantly for our brothers and sisters in Goma who know so well the pain of*

*conflict. With Bishop Martin, I call for the international community to act and I add my support the Goma Call for Peace. Immediate aid is desperately needed for those suffering most and our cries for peace need finally to be heard and acted upon. We have suffered for far too long. We put our hope in Christ and trust in the swift response of the international community."*

**The Archbishop of Southern Africa, The Most Revd Thabo Makgoba has backed the call for peace**

**saying:** *"We are at a moment when we can choose to come together in the pursuit of peace or the international community can turn away and allow the suffering of the innocent. I join my brothers and sisters in supporting the Goma call for Peace."*

**The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion Office, The Rt Revd Anthony Poggio said:** *"The rising conflict in Goma is causing a growing humanitarian crisis, causing loss of life, violence and trauma. We pray for all those affected by the conflict and for the work of the church and other peace keeping agencies in the region. May the churches of the Anglican Communion around the world do all that we can to respond and urge our international leaders to work for peace and stability."*

At the time of writing, there have reportedly been at least 17 foreign peacekeepers have been killed in GOMA. Thousands have been newly

displaced in the last few days.

The fighting is occurring against a backdrop of conflict in the mineral-rich region over the last 30 years. Various armed groups have competed with the central authorities for power and control of the potential fortune in this vast nation.

This conflict has already taken over 6 million lives, created 1 million refugees, 6.5 million displaced, and inflicted unimaginable suffering on thousands of women through sexual violence.

**The Goma Call for Peace issued on January 28 reads:**

“Call from the Bishop of Goma for the international community to act immediately and decisively for peace in eastern DRC. With the escalation of the conflict in eastern DRC following Sunday’s incursion of Rwandan troops into Congolese sovereign territory on the Goma/Rubavu border, and mindful of the subsequent humanitarian and security risks in the region, the international community must act now.

In solidarity with those suffering in Goma and across eastern DRC, we call for:

1. The immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and respect of the existing ceasefire agreement.

2. The protection of the civilian population and an urgent humanitarian response including the restoration of power and water to the city.

3. The withdrawal of those external forces from DRC soil which are in clear violation of DRC’s territorial sovereignty. This includes the M23 and the RDF.

4. A resumption of dialogue in good faith between Kigali and Kinshasa believing that peaceful and diplomatic means are the only way to end the conflict which has already caused untold suffering.

5. The international community to invest every effort and to consider using all possible means to bring peace to eastern DRC.

People in the region want only peace.”

*The Rt Revd Martin Gordon is the Anglican bishop of Goma. He has issued 'The Goma Call for Peace'.*

*Pictured here as part of his work with The Church Mission Society.*

*Photo credit: Church Mission Society.*



**RIDDLE 7:** Why couldn't Cain please God with his offering?

**VALENTINE QUIZ ANSWERS** (FROM FEBRUARY 2025 EDITION)

The questions, answers, and explanations come from [The Bible-Science Guy's "2021 Valentine Quiz Answer."](#)

**Question 1:** How did Protestant Reformer Martin Luther meet his wife Katharina in the 1500s?

**Answer: A.** She was a nun that he helped escape from a convent.

Reformer [Martin Luther](#) (1483-1546) met [Katharina von Bora](#) (1499–1552) in April 1523. She was one of 12 nuns he helped escape from a convent by smuggling them out in fish barrels used for herring. Within two years, Luther had arranged homes, marriages, or employment for all the nuns except Katharina. She told Luther's close friend and fellow reformer [Nikolaus von Amsdorf](#) that she would marry no one except Luther or von Amsdorf.

In 1525 at age 41, Luther began a happy marriage to 26-year-old Katharina. Luther had long condemned on Biblical grounds the celibacy vows required for priests by the Roman Catholic Church. His wedding defied the Catholic Church and served as a strong endorsement of clerical marriage. Luther wrote, "Suddenly, and while I was occupied with far different thoughts, the Lord has plunged me into marriage." He also said, "My Katie is in all things so obliging and pleasing to me that I would not exchange my poverty for the riches of Croesus." Katharina bore Luther six children and respectfully called him "Sir Doctor" throughout her life.

Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation on October 31, 1517, by posting his [95 Theses](#) on the Wittenberg church door.

**Question 2:** Who stayed married to the same woman for at least 130 years?

**Answer: A.** Adam

Adam and Eve had their son Seth when they were 130 years old ([Genesis 4:25; 5:3](#)). See [How Long Did Adam Live](#) and [How Many Children Did Adam Have?](#)

Nothing is said in Scripture about Mrs. Methuseleh [sic]. Noah had three sons starting at age 500. He entered the ark with them and their wives and Mrs. Noah at age 600, but nothing is said about how long he and Mrs. Noah were married ([Genesis 5:32; 7:6-7](#)). Abraham's wife Sarah died at age 127 ([Genesis 23:1-2](#)).

**Question 3:** What did Adam say when he first saw Eve?

**Answer: E.** B ("This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.") and C. ("She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.")

When Adam first saw Eve, he said the quotes in B and C in that order. Later he named her Eve after they had sinned by eating the forbidden fruit ([Genesis 3:20](#)).

**RIDDLE ANSWERS:**

The following riddles came from [Riddles Academy](#).

**Riddle 1:** What do you call a church that's always on time?

**Answer 1:** A punctual Parish.

**Riddle 2:** Why did the church choir always carry a ladder?

**Answer 2:** To reach the high notes.

**Riddle 3:** What do you call a religious person who loves to play cards?

**Answer 3:** A holy roller

**Riddle 4:** What's a church's favorite type of exercise?

**Answer 4:** Cross-fit.

**Riddle 5:** What kind of person was Boaz before he got married?

**Answer 5:** Ruth-less.

**Riddle 6:** What kind of car does Jesus drive?

**Answer 6:** A Chrysler.

**Riddle 7:** Why couldn't Cain please God with his offering?

**Answer 7:** Because he wasn't Abel.

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**MISSION**

Reaching out in Christ's love to our community and all God's creation  
through faith, worship, and service.