

# ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

MAY 2025

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## PHILIP AND JAMES, APOSTLE

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Today we commemorate two of the Twelve Apostles.

### James

The New Testament mentions at least two persons named James, probably at least three, and perhaps as many as eight...

Currently, most Western Christians commemorate:

1. James the Greater on 25 July,
2. James the Less on 1 May, and
3. James the Just on 25 October.

They identify the others with [James the Just (the brother of the Lord)] or ignore them...

[Continues in Calendar, Page 4.](#)



## CONTROVERSY ERUPTS OVER 2025 TEXAS SENATE BILLS ON RELIGION, DEI, AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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As the new presidential term began, the Texas Senate passed Senate Bills (SBs) 10-13 in March, which have since made their way to the Texas House of Representatives. All four of these bills are striving for significant change within Texas schools. Much controversy has arisen regarding the enacting of these bills. The 2025 Texas SBs 10-13 are as follows:

- SB 10: Requires the display of the Ten Commandments in every elementary or secondary school classroom.
- SB 11: Allows school districts and...

[Continues in State News, Page 8.](#)

## 135 CARDINALS WILL ELECT THE NEXT POPE. FRANCIS PICKED 108 OF THEM.

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Francis, who died April 21 at age 88, stands to have an outsize impact on the vote for his successor.

As more than a billion Catholics mourn the death of Pope Francis, cardinals around the world are preparing to travel to Rome to begin the solemn tradition of choosing a new pontiff.

And when the prelates gather at the Vatican in the coming weeks to elect a new Bishop of Rome, Francis, who died at age 88 on April 21, stands to have an outsize impact on the vote.

That's because, unlike some of his predecessors, Francis has appointed the overwhelming majority of clerics who can cast a ballot in the conclave — namely, members of the College of Cardinals who are under age 80...

[Continues in International News, Page 17.](#)

# **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 the Parish Secretary at [baileys.stmarys@gmail.com](mailto:baileys.stmarys@gmail.com).

## **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!

## **Quiz Question 1:**

**When was the official flag for the Episcopal Church Adopted?**

- A.** 1939
- B.** 1940
- C.** 1942
- D.** 1945

*Quiz answers will be on the last page.*

**MAY CALENDAR**

**1<sup>st</sup>** The Apostles St. Philip &  
St. James

**4<sup>th</sup>** Third Sunday of Easter

**11<sup>th</sup>** Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Mother's Day

**18<sup>th</sup>** Fifth Sunday of Easter

**25<sup>th</sup>** Sixth Sunday of Easter  
Rogation Sunday

**29<sup>th</sup>** Ascension Day

**31<sup>st</sup>** The Visitation of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary



**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



WE HAVE NO BIRTHDAYS OR ANNIVERSARIES IN MAY.

## PHILIP AND JAMES, APOSTLE- MAY 1 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 Saint Philip and Saint James, who we commemorate on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The text has been edited for reading purposes. The first picture is that of St. James from [Saints Catholic](#). The second picture is of St. Philip from the [Episcopal Church](#).

*[Continued from front page]* it is standard (and, I think, reasonable) to identify [James the Writer] with [James the Just], and that leaves three commemorations, which is the current standard in the West, and also (I think) in the East.

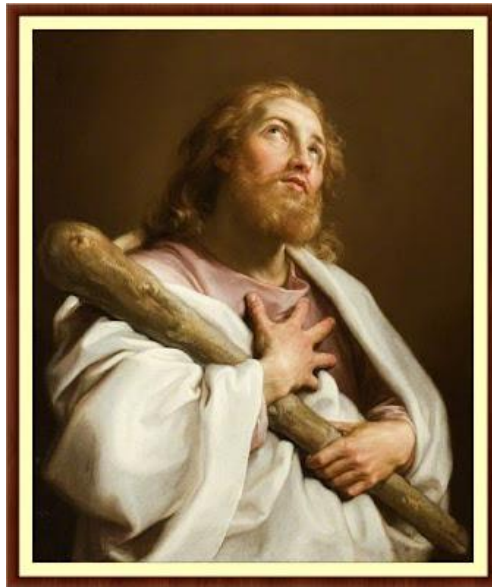
Thus, of James the Less, the son of Alphaeus (2), whom we commemorate today, we know very little from the New Testament, except that his name appears on lists of the Twelve.

Why is the name "James" so popular among Jews in New Testament times? Because it is the name of the ancestor of the people of Israel. The English name "James" is a variant of the name "Jacob." We tend to think of them as two separate, unrelated names. But the distinction between them is post-Biblical and not found in Hebrew or Greek. In Hebrew, the name is Ya'akov. In Greek, it is Iakwbos (W=Omega), with accent on the second syllable from the end. In Latin, it developed two

forms, Jacobus and Jacomus, both accented on the first syllable. From the former, we have the English Jacob and the Spanish Diego and Iago. From the latter, we have the English James, the Scottish Hamish, the Spanish Jaime, and so on. But in many languages, there is only one name, given to the Old Testament Jacob and the New Testament James alike. Even in English, our present distinction has not always been observed. In Shakespeare's play [Measure For Measure](#) (III,ii,204), a child's age is given as "a year and a quarter old, come Philip and Jacob," meaning, "a year and a quarter old on the first of next May, the feast of Philip and James."

### Philip

Philip the Apostle is frequently confused with Philip the Deacon, whom we read of in the Book of Acts, and who is commemorated on 6 June...



Philip the Apostle appears in the Synoptic Gospels and in Acts only as a name on the list of the Twelve, but he appears in several incidents in the Gospel according to John.

He was called early in the ministry of Our Lord, and promptly brought his friend Nathanael to Jesus as well. When some Greeks (or Greek-speaking Jews) wished to speak with Jesus, they began by approaching Philip. At the Last Supper, he said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." To this Jesus answered, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

Before feeding the Five Thousand, Jesus turned to Philip and asked him, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" Philip answered, "It would take more than a year's wages to buy each of them a mouthful."

Some scholars have thought it significant that Jesus asked Philip rather than one of the others. Luke tells us that the Feeding of the Five Thousand took place near Bethsaida, and John tells us that Philip is from Bethsaida. If they were in Philip's home neighborhood, he would be a natural one to ask for directions. (Peter and Andrew were also from Bethsaida, but seem to have moved to Capernaum.) ...This is one reason (not the only one) for regarding

the Gospel of John as the testimony of an eyewitness.

But I digress. That is the limit of what we hear of Philip and James in the New Testament, nor do other sources help much. One story says that Philip preached in Phrygia and died in Hierapolis, and that his remains were brought to Rome and buried in the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles (an ancient inscription shows that this church was formerly dedicated to Philip and James).

### **Prayer** (contemporary language)

Almighty God, who gave to your apostles Philip and James grace and strength to bear witness to the truth: Grant that we, being mindful of their victory of faith, may glorify in life and death the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever



## DR. ANN BARNES: “WE CAN’T FIX HEALTH IN TEXAS BY FOCUSING ONLY ON HEALTH CARE”

APRIL 17, 2025

The following article and photos come from the [Episcopal Health Foundation](#). The pictures are of Dr. Ann Barnes, President and CEO of EHF, at the Future of Healthcare event which was hosted by Greater Houston Partnership.

Episcopal Health Foundation CEO Dr. Ann Barnes shared an urgent message at the Greater Houston Partnership’s “Future of Healthcare” event: Texas faces a perfect storm of cuts, challenges, and missed opportunities to build true health for its communities.

Dr. Barnes opened her remarks by naming two immediate concerns facing the health system in Houston and across Texas: the chronic and continued underfunding of public health efforts and real concerns about primary and preventive care infrastructure.

“If people are not supported in their daily lives around health and if they’re not able to get preventive care or manage their chronic conditions, they are going to come somewhere into the health system with significant illness,”



she says. “And as that increases, it puts incredible strain on our entire health and health care system.”

In order to truly improve health in Houston and beyond, Barnes emphasized the critical need to look beyond the doctor’s office.

*“We can’t fix health in the country, in Texas, in Harris County, with just the health care industry being focused on it.*

*The role of integrating across sectors is vitally important right now.”*

Dr. Barnes pointed out that while health care plays a role in a person’s well-being, it’s just one piece of the puzzle.

“A person’s health is influenced at about the 20% level when it comes to medical care. The other 80% of a



person's health is related to factors outside of the doctor's office."

Those non-medical factors—like safe places to exercise, access to healthy food, transportation, and education—shape whether a person can actually act on medical advice for someone recently diagnosed with a chronic disease like prediabetes.

"If I live in a highly-resourced community with a grocery store on every corner and beautifully laid out walking trails, my ability to act on the doctor's recommendation is going to be a lot easier than if I live in a part of our community where sidewalks are broken, dogs roam the streets, there's no grocery store, and I don't



have transportation," Barnes said. "So addressing those issues are going to be critical for patient A and community A and patient B and community B to be able to live a healthier life."

This philosophy is at the heart of EHF's mission.

*"When EHF was founded— we created one of our big mantras, and you may have seen our tagline—is*

*improving health, not just health care. And the whole point was we've got to change the conversation locally and at the state level. We need to talk about health and those non-medical factors that impact a person's health."*

Barnes also raised serious concerns about state and federal policy shifts that could undo progress and place even more pressure on Texas families and health care providers.

"If Medicaid shrinks, the majority of people on Medicaid in Texas are children, pregnant women, the disabled, and the elderly in nursing facilities. So which of those groups doesn't get care if the pot is smaller?"

*"How much are we going to reduce the level of care for each of those groups so that it's barely care? And Texas will have to decide that."*

Yet another sobering reminder that funding cuts and program changes are not abstract policy debates—they're urgent decisions that affect every part of the health system.

## CONTROVERSY ERUPTS OVER 2025 TEXAS SENATE BILLS ON RELIGION, DEI, AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

BY VISHNU MUTHURAMAN | APRIL 20, 2025

The following article has been taken from the [Horizon](#). The photo is from the [Texas Retired Teachers Association](#), and depicts the bill being presented after it was signed.



- [\[Continued from front page\]](#) charter schools to adopt a policy permitting students and employees to participate in prayers and reading of the Bible or other religious text.
- SB 12: Prohibits Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in K-12 public schools.
- SB 13: Gives parents control over the school district's library materials that are available to students.

SB 10 passed the Texas Senate on Wednesday, March 19 with a 20-11 vote. While some see it as a way of promoting faith in school environments, others see it as an infringement upon the Establishment Clause of the First

Amendment, which establishes freedom of religion. In fact, a case like this was brought to the Supreme Court in *Stone v. Graham* (1980), in which the Supreme Court ruled this law of displaying the Ten Commandments in every public

classroom as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. However, looking at a more recent case in Texas, *Van Orden v. Perry* (2005), the Supreme Court ruled that the depiction of the Ten Commandments in one of Austin's public parks did not violate the Establishment Clause.

"This bill doesn't follow our First Amendment, and the Supremacy Clause in the Constitution says that the federal law is supreme over state law," Government teacher Ms. Virginia Dixon said. "Because of that, the First Amendment is paramount. Posting the Ten Commandments is not honoring all the students' different religious and spiritual beliefs."

Following the passage of SB 10, SB 11 was passed. SB 11 allows prayers in public schools, but takes into account students of different religions by allowing them to opt out. SB 11 was passed with a stronger majority than SB 10, with a vote of 23-7. During debates over the passage of this bill, the decision made in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022) — the Kennedy decision — and the Lemon test were used as foundational arguments. The Kennedy decision deemed that a coach can privately pray after football games, shifting away from the traditional Lemon test. The Lemon test, which is usually a legal guiding principle, prohibits the government from advancing a religion. The Kennedy decision did allow a coach to pray privately and hence was argued to be relevant in terms of allowing prayers in school for anyone.

“Senate Bill 11 sets a dangerous precedent that Christianity is going to be forced on the people,” Brijnandan Saranu '27 said. “It said [the bill] would be a policy requiring Bibles to be distributed and for prayers to be done, which is inherently unsafe because there [are] all sorts of people in America, and there's a lot of people who aren't Christian. This makes it feel like they're being denied their faith, which leads to lower morale, and it's straight up violating their freedom.”

SB 12 was passed by the Texas Senate with a 20-11 vote. This bill prohibiting DEI would apply to hiring and

employment decisions as well as student organizations. For example, student organizations that primarily focus on race, gender or sexual orientation, such as Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) and Black Student Union, could face a complete ban. Debates over how this is going to change schools were intense from opposing sides in the senate.

“The job of the education system is to prepare students for a successful life,” Vedant Desai '26 said. “You're impacting the very future of America [by implementing DEI initiatives]. You have to have the best teachers possible. DEI has its place. You want equity and you want inclusion. Education is not that place.”

Under SB 13, school library advisory councils consisting mainly of parents would be created. The power that librarians currently have would be shifted to parents. These advisory councils would get to choose which books can stay in school libraries and which ones cannot. Library content that contains indecent and profane content would not be allowed in school libraries either under this bill. Another bill that has some relevance to SB 13 was House Bill (HB) 900, which prohibited materials containing sexual content from libraries. HB 900 was enacted in 2024, and this bill faced opposition upon its implementation. Georgetown High School, librarian Ms. Susan Cooper, spoke out against the passage of this bill and refused to remove the more than

150 books that were supposed to go. Georgetown High School threatened to fire her after her refusal to remove the books.

"[SB 13] will hurt morale," Desai said. "It will be very demoralizing if half [of the librarian's] job is gone, because they don't have any decision-making power. A lot of the books that they are banning are against the LGBTQ [community] and against CRT [Critical Race Theory]."

Overall, these bills are sparking controversy. As of April 2025, all these

bills have passed the Texas Senate and have been sent to the Texas House of Representatives. If enacted, the bills would take effect starting in the 2025–2026 school year. Students could see significant changes to their schools environments, such as stricter libraries and fewer DEI programs. Several opposition groups are exploring legal challenges while other opposers are finding ways to voice concerns in their school board meetings. These bills will be very important to watch in the next several months.

### **Quiz Question 2:**

**What does the white field on the Episcopal Church Flag represent?**

- A. The purity of the Christian religion.
- B. The cleansing of sin.
- C. The light of God.
- D. The holiness of God

### **Quiz Question 3:**

**What does the red cross on the Episcopal Church Flag represent?**

- A. The sacrifice of Jesus.
- B. The blood of the martyrs.
- C. Atonement for sins.
- D. All the above.
- E. Both A and B.
- F. Both A and C.
- G. Both B and C.

# MOST PASTORS SAY THEIR CHURCHES WILL SURVIVE – AND FOR NOW, THEY'RE RIGHT

BY BOB SMIETANA | APRIL 17, 2025

*This article has been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#).*

American organized religion is a bit like a scene from “Monty Python and the Holy Grail.” It has been on the decline for decades, but churches aren’t dead yet.

A [new survey](#) from Nashville-based Lifeway Research found that 94% of Protestant pastors believe their church will still be open in 10 years, with 78% strongly agreeing that will be true.

Four percent of pastors say their church will close, with the other 2% saying they don’t know, according to the survey released

April 15. Conducted over the phone, it surveyed 1,003 randomly selected Protestant pastors between Aug. 8 and Sept. 3, 2024.

Those pastors may be right, say researchers who study the American religious landscape. Duke University sociologist Mark Chaves, who runs the National Congregations Study, said past

studies found that about 1 in 100 churches close each year. So, the idea that most churches will be around in 10 years isn’t surprising.

“An interesting thing about churches as organizations is that they have ways of staying alive in a very weakened state,” Chaves said in an email. “Other organizations would close, but weak churches have ways of staying alive.”

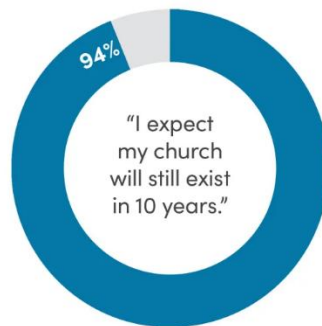
Scott Thumma, director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, said the long-term trends for congregations are

more worrisome. But in the short term, congregations have become more optimistic.

In a 2021 [study](#) of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on congregations, 7% of church respondents reported their existence was threatened, and 5% said their church was in serious financial difficulty. By 2023, 3% of churches

More than 9 in 10 pastors believe their church will still exist in a decade.

*Among U.S. Protestant pastors*



*Notes: 4% disagree and 2% aren't sure.*

**Lifeway research**

LifewayResearch.com

*Table from [Lifeway Research](#) depicting their findings.*

surveyed said they were in serious financial difficulty. That same year, [in a study](#) about how the pandemic has affected churches, 2% of church leaders said they were feeling very negative about their church's future, while 9% were somewhat negative.

Lifeway's findings that few pastors thought their churches would be closing, Thumma said, were "within the ballpark."

He also said small churches that have few staff members and have paid off their building can keep going for a long time. They may have already seen some decline and know how to cope with it. Things are harder, he said, for midsize churches that no longer have enough people or money to sustain themselves.

"Small churches can be resilient for a long time, especially when their building is paid for," said Scott McConnell, director of Lifeway Research.

While many churches may survive the next decade, the 20-year outlook is bleaker.

"People who are in their 70s now won't be gone in 10 years, but they will be gone in 20 years," Thumma said. "That's

### Congregational Decline But Also Growth

2019 to 2021 (Median -12%)	Rates of Change	2015 to 2020 (Median -7%)
35%	Decline -25% or more	27%
22%	Decline btw. -5.0% & -24.9%	25%
15%	Stable btw. -4.9 & +4.9%	14%
11%	Growth btw. +5.0% & +24.9%	11%
18%	Growth +25% or more	23%

Source: Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study, Hartford Institute for Religion Research. [Table](#) depicting the impact COVID had on congregations

where you're going to see the real drop."

Count the Rev. Nic Mather of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Longview, Washington, among the pastors who are optimistic for the future. The church has seen a slow but steady stream of newcomers in the last few years, mostly people who are seeking spiritual meaning and the kind of close-knit community the church offers.

"There's a power of being in community with others," he said, "and that ethos and sense of community is so strong here that it continues to attract people."

Mather said his congregation is aware that people don't come to church in the way they did in the past. That's made it focus more on reaching out to neighbors. The church also allows a number of community groups to use its building, seeing it as a resource for those neighbors.

"We are truly hub for our community. So many people come into our building

for things that aren't church that I can't imagine this place not being here," he said.

Bob Stevenson, pastor of Village Baptist Church in Aurora, Illinois, is also optimistic about his congregation's prospects.

"We're 40 years old and we have weathered quite a bit, and so unless there is some scandal or some major change socioeconomically in our area, I don't see anything changing in terms of the church itself," he said.

Stevenson said the church, which draws about 120 worshippers and is ethnically diverse, has taken steps to "future-proof" itself. That includes paying attention to the integrity of its leadership, something some churches have ignored to their peril. He also said the church has a strong, committed core of members, which will help it continue for the long term. Still, he said, COVID-19 taught him and other church leaders that no one can predict the future.

Ryan Burge, a former pastor and author of "[The American Religious Landscape](#)," said it's hard to know when a church is ready to close. Burge, a political scientist at Eastern Illinois University, was the longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in downstate Mount Vernon, which [closed](#) last summer.

His church, which was more than 150 years old when it closed, had been on the decline for years but rallied more than a few times. Eventually, as older members of the congregation died, there were no young people to take their place.

"All it takes is two or three people to die in close succession, and it's game over for a lot of those churches," he said.

The new [Pew Religious Landscape Study](#) found that 85% of Americans ages 65 and older identify with a religion, and 78% identify as Christian. However, only 54% of Americans under 30 identify with a religion, including 45% who say they are Christian.

Lifeway Research found some indication that the rate of churches closing might have increased. The survey includes a look at data from the Southern Baptist Convention showing that 1.8% of congregations disbanded or closed in 2022, the last year with data available. If that annual percentage were to hold steady over the next decade, it would



First Baptist Church, Burge's former church. The photo is from the [Religion News Service](#).

mean about 18% of churches would close during that time, which is more than than [sic.] pastors surveyed would have predicted.

McConnell also said some of the churches that closed may not have had a pastor, which could explain the difference between how pastors feel and the statistics.

“But if we assume the pastors’ survey is accurately reaching enough churches close to shutting down, then yes, Southern Baptist pastors would seem to be more optimistic than the statistics say they should be,” he said in an email.

Still, Burge said pastors are by nature optimistic about the future – that’s part of the job.

“Revival is always around the corner — if we just get one thing to break our way, things will be better,” he said. “You don’t want to have the mentality that we are going to close.”

And even if pastors know churches will close, they may often believe it will happen to other churches, but not theirs.

“Everyone thinks that churches are going to close,” Amanda Olson, the longtime pastor of Grace Evangelical Covenant Church on Chicago’s North Side, told RNS in 2022, just before the church’s last service. “But nobody thinks it is going to be their church.”

### **Quiz Question 4:**

**What does the blue on the Episcopal Church Flag represent?**

- A.** The virgin Mary.
- B.** The heavens.
- C.** The human nature of Jesus.
- D.** The divinity of Jesus.

## HEARING DELAYED IN DISCIPLINARY CASES AGAINST FORMER FLORIDA BISHOP JOHN HOWARD

BY DAVID PAULSEN | APRIL 25, 2025

*This article and picture have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The photo is of Bp. Howard during a service.*

The disciplinary hearing in two Title IV cases against former Florida Bishop John Howard has been delayed to an unspecified future date, according to [an updated scheduling order](#) detailing the next steps in the cases over the coming four months.



Howard's cases previously had been scheduled for a hearing April 30-May 2. Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe had hoped negotiations with Howard would produce an accord to resolve the matters without a hearing, though those negotiations have yet to produce any public agreement in the cases, which involve allegations of [anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination and financial improprieties](#).

While accord talks continue, both sides must now follow the new timeline

through mid-August for filing documentation and conducting witness depositions in preparation for a hearing. New dates for a hearing "shall be scheduled in a future order," the hearing panel said.

Howard served the Jacksonville-based Diocese of Florida for 20 years until his retirement in October 2023, after reaching the church's mandatory clergy retirement age of 72. One of the two cases filed under the church's Title IV canons alleges that the diocese, under Howard's leadership, engaged in a [pattern of discrimination against LGBTQ+ clergy](#) and

aspirants to ordained ministry, as well as their supporters. Howard, while affirming his conservative theological beliefs, has denied the claims of discrimination.

The second case is unrelated and centers on three financial matters. Howard is accused of improperly benefiting from a home loan provided by his Jacksonville-based diocese that the diocese eventually forgave, and he is accused of spending money from a bishop's discretionary account on home

improvements. The case also details concerns about the transparency and propriety of an arrangement between Howard, an anonymous donor and an independent diocesan foundation to boost the bishop's salary while also fulfilling corresponding pension obligations in the years before his retirement.

Howard, in his written responses to these allegations, affirmed many of the underlying facts but denied all wrongdoing.

Rowe [issued a statement in February](#) explaining that he hoped to reach an accord, or disciplinary agreement, with Howard "that promotes healing, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, justice, amendment of life and reconciliation, in accordance with the values that guide the Title IV process." Such an agreement to resolve the matter, in consultation with the complainants, would be subject to approval by the church's Disciplinary Board for Bishops.

The presiding bishop continues to hope for an accord, and his office will provide

updates when possible, according to a church spokesperson.

Title IV of The Episcopal Church's canons sets out standards of conduct for all ordained people in the church and provides a process for addressing misconduct allegations. Most complaints against bishops do not result in extensive Title IV proceedings; when they do, most details typically remain confidential unless public disclosure is required at the hearing panel stage.

Hearing panels are made up of members of the larger Disciplinary Board for Bishops. On April 7, the hearing panel in Howard's cases met with attorneys for both sides to discuss a new scheduling order in the case. The panel ordered both sides to produce relevant documents by May 30 and complete depositions by July 25.

The church's attorney must identify expert witnesses by July 8, and Howard's attorneys have until July 21 to name their expert witnesses. Deadlines to name rebuttal witness extend into August, and expert depositions must be complete by Aug. 18.

# 135 CARDINALS WILL ELECT THE NEXT POPE. FRANCIS PICKED 108 OF THEM.

BY JACK JENKINS | APRIL 21, 2025

The following articles and photos come from [Religion News](#). The first picture is of Pope Francis leaving the Vatican in 2019.

*[Continued from front page]* He crossed a crucial threshold in September 2023, when he finally appointed enough voting-eligible cardinals over the course of his papacy to constitute [more than two-thirds of voting members in a conclave](#), the margin required to elect a pope under the current rules.

And according to an analysis by Religion News Service, as of April 21, of the 135 members of the College of Cardinals eligible to vote, 108 — 80% — were appointed by Francis. An additional 16.3% were appointed by Pope Benedict, and only 3.7% were tapped by Pope John Paul II.

By comparison, when Francis was elected pope in 2013, 57.9% had been appointed by his recently retired predecessor, Pope Benedict. An additional

42.1% were appointed by Pope John Paul II.

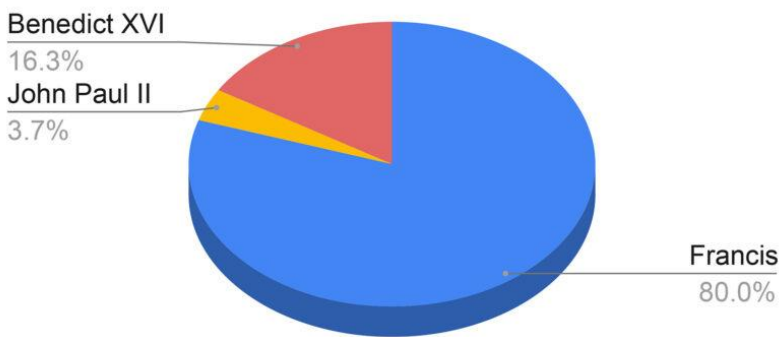
The current electorate is also more geographically diverse than in years past. In 2013, for instance, Italian cardinals alone made up nearly a quarter of voting members at the conclave, but they only constitute 12.6% of those eligible in the coming conclave. Meanwhile, prelates hailing from Asia expanded from 8.8% in 2013 to 17% today, and representatives from Africa have also increased their numbers from 8.8% to 13.3%.

Outside of Italy, Europe has roughly maintained its influence, representing around 28% of the conclave in 2013, compared to around 26.7% today. North America has lost ground, dropping in representation from 17.5% to 14.1%,

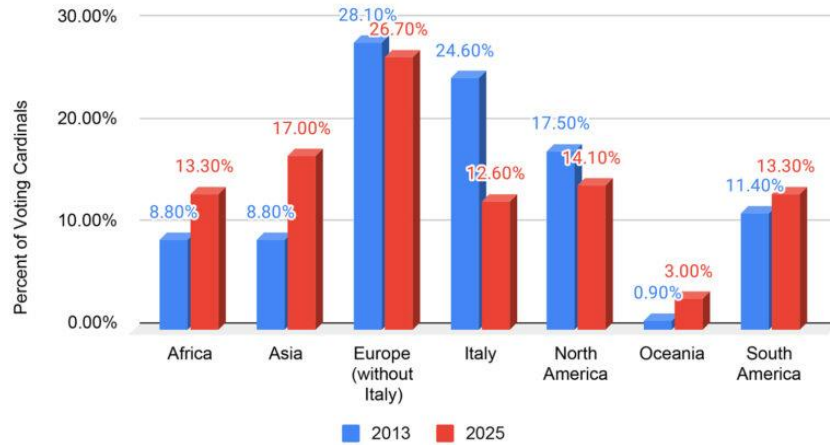
while South American prelates have slightly increased their numbers under Francis, the first Argentinian pope, rising from 11.4% to 13.3%.

How these changes will impact the vote remains to be seen. Francis' 12-year papacy was marked by a focus on the poor,

**College of Cardinals Appointing Pope, 2025**



**Conclave Regional Distribution, 2013 vs. 2025**



immigrants and the effects of climate change, and he has tended to select like-minded cardinals. But cardinals aren't the same as members of Congress with

specific party loyalties, and voting outcomes can sometimes be difficult to predict. It's also possible some of the numbers could shift in small ways before voting begins, as past conclaves have seen some surprise last-minute changes. Even so, whoever becomes the next pope will be chosen by a group largely hand-selected by Pope Francis himself.

**Quiz Question 5:**

**How many white crosslets are on the Episcopal Church Flag?**

- A. 7
- B. 9
- C. 11
- D. 13

**Quiz Question 6:**

**What else does the coloration of the Episcopal Church Flag represent?**

- A. St. George
- B. The American branch of the Anglican Communion.
- C. The story of the Bible
- D. St. Andrew.

## TANZANIAN DIOCESE AIMS TO BECOME SELF-SUPPORTING

BY JESSE MASAI | APRIL 22, 2025

*The following article and pictures have been taken from the [Living Church](#). All of the photos are from the Diocese of Masasi. The first picture is of students at Rondo Junior Seminary.*

Anglicans have been gathering for worship in the Diocese of Masasi, in Southern Tanzania, since the 1850s. They have planted 230 churches, launched two schools and four medical clinics, and they operate



programs with help from local and international agencies that dig wells, plant trees, and feed hungry people across the rural region they serve.

Masasi's Anglicans now face a new challenge: paying their own way.

Since British missionaries from the Anglo-Catholic Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) first came to the area, seminary training, diocese central office operating costs, new construction, mission projects—nearly all the costs of the diocese's work—have been covered by external donations.

The diocese's central office budget is approximately \$10,000 per month, and about 60 percent of this was covered by grants from outside the diocese, mostly from the United Society Partners in the

Gospel, the U.K.-based successor ministry to the UMCA.

Until last year, perhaps another 20 percent was met by a 20 percent assessment on congregational offerings. Salaries went unpaid.

As congregations in the Global North are shrinking, those external funding sources are drying up. But the diocese's bishop, the Rt. Rev. James Almasi, believes that the 40,000 Anglicans under his care, mostly small-scale farmers, are ready for the challenge of giving more.

"We are living through a generational change in our global Church. The traditional expectation of our congregations has been that we will be financially sustained by outsiders. This worked for a long time, as United Kingdom missionary societies and

churches were themselves more prosperous and supported friends throughout the Anglican Communion," Almasi said.

With support from donors in the Church of England and the Episcopal Church, the diocese launched a stewardship campaign in 2024, focused on educating church members about the needs of financial stewardship and inspiring them to rise to the challenge.

The diocese has set a goal for 2025 of raising at least 50 percent of its general income directly from its members. Alongside preaching and teaching about stewardship to raise more in Sunday collections, the diocese aims to make its schools and clinics turn a profit.

"If the Masasi Stewardship Strategy is successful, we would like to share our work more broadly. Our ambition is that the Diocese of Masasi can play a part in meeting the challenges that will shape the future of our church for generations to come," the bishop says.



A member of the church tithing

The challenge of such fundraising is intense. The World Inequality Index [calculates](#) the average income for an adult in Tanzania in 2023 at just over U.S. \$5,000, though rural Tanzanians are generally poorer.

According to a 2020 Anker Research Institute [study](#), 31.3 percent of rural Tanzanian families have incomes below the national poverty line of \$84.51 a month, which the institute says is less than half of a living wage.

"The harsh economic realities notwithstanding, we are encouraged by the rise in overall giving to an average of US \$2,500 per month. We expect this to average US \$5,000 per month by the end of this year," the bishop said.

The diocese partnered with the Rev. Canon Leslie Francis of the [World Religions and Education Research Unit](#) at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln, England, to design a survey for leaders across the diocese. The survey assessed how faith shapes daily life, how

cultural traditions coexist with Christian belief, and how the church can remain a vital force in community life.

It was based on the [Church-24 Survey](#), a longitudinal study of church life in the United Kingdom,

which Francis helped design. The pilot study in December 2024 engaged 165 respondents across 11 parishes, with 15 participants per parish, and included proportionate numbers of men and women. Sixty-five percent of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 50—the demographic core of the diocese's population.

Almasi has begun preaching about financial stewardship during each parish visitation, with some congregations showing sustained interest in the program throughout the liturgical calendar. Special appeals are planned for Mothering Sunday, March 30.

“Periodic surveys will form ongoing part of stewardship, backed with targeted marketing towards underperforming parishes based on insights from our [2024 survey](#), which revealed that while many people's income is seasonal, a monthly tithe of TZS 1,000 (\$0.40) per month is affordable,” he said.

“We think congregations will give generously when they see that they benefit. The challenge has been to sell the idea that individual parishes will benefit over the long term from a financially robust diocese. We also hope to attract donors' generous giving by telling the story of the diocese regularly and by providing reports on stewardship to demonstrate transparency.”

Diocesan officials hope that an increased focus on stewardship will also help them advance toward a series of

centenary goals outlined to guide their ministry as they approach the 100th anniversary of the diocese's founding in 2026.

In addition to greater financial sustainability, these goals include expanding the number of clergy serving the diocese's churches from 55 to at least 75, completing the construction of St. Catherine's, a girls boarding school at Tunduru, and ensuring that all four of the diocese's medical dispensaries have an operating surplus and will not require continued external support.

The diocese also hopes to increase the sustainability of its transformative development arm, which has been partnering with Christian NGO World Vision to introduce financially sustainable poverty alleviation interventions across the diocese.

“Development work is carried out by the Diocese of Masasi Development Organization, which has its own budget but still within the umbrella of the diocese, specifically raised for and dedicated to poverty alleviation under their WASH+ approach,” the bishop



*An example of the water provided through the WASH+ program.*

said. "It is not money that could be diverted to parish work, for example."

He added: "Parish work is managed at the parish level and the diocese is working on improving skills and reporting of parish level finance people. Financial capacity-building at parish level is part of the stewardship strategy."

Survey analysis has revealed that [Rondo Junior Seminary](#), a boys boarding school on the Rondo Plateau founded in 1953 by former bishop and anti-apartheid activist Trevor Huddleston, is especially treasured by the people of the diocese. Rondo's classrooms and dormitories were recently refurbished, and enrollment is up by 60 students, under the leadership of its new rector, the Rev. Linus Buriani, a recent graduate of McGill University in Montreal.

"We are dedicated to holistic education, aiming to develop well-rounded

individuals rather than focusing solely on academics, athletics, or culture," Almasi said. The school's mission is to "help each boy discover his unique path while fostering a supportive environment for growth and exploration."

Philip Stubbings of the Grille Foundation, a longtime partner of the diocese in development, praised the stewardship effort: "The Masasi Survey Project provides a window into this dynamic diocese, revealing not only the challenges faced but the resilience and creativity of faith communities adapting to a changing world.

"By understanding these stories and patterns, the Diocese of Masasi offers insights not only for its leadership but for partner churches, inviting all to see how faith continues to unite, inspire and transform lives."

### **Quiz Question 7:**

**Where was Samuel Seabury, the first American Bishop, consecrated?**

- A.** Aberdeen, Scotland
- B.** Canterbury, UK.
- C.** St. George's, Bermudas
- D.** Dublin, Ireland.

**QUIZ ANSWERS:**

The information for the quiz questions came from the [Episcopal Church Flag and Seal Article](#).

**Question 1:** When was the official flag for the Episcopal Church Adopted?

**Answer: B.** 1940.

On Oct. 16, 1940, the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies adopted an official flag for the Episcopal Church. This was the 251st anniversary of the day the General Convention ratified the Constitution and Canons and adopted the BCP. It was designed by William M. Baldwin (d. 1942), a member of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, Long Island, New York.

**Question 2:** What does the white field on the Episcopal Church Flag represent?

**Answer: A.** The purity of the Christian religion.

**Question 3:** What does the red cross on the Episcopal Church Flag represent?

**Answer: E.** Both A (the sacrifice of Jesus) and B (the blood of the martyrs).

The red cross on a white field is the cross of Saint George, the patron saint of England, indicating our descent from the Church of England.

**Question 4:** What does the blue on the Episcopal Church Flag represent?

**Answer: C.** The human nature of Jesus.

It is called Madonna blue and represents the human nature of our Lord, which he received from his mother.

**Question 5:** How many white crosslets are on the Episcopal Church Flag?

**Answer: B.** 9.

The nine white crosslets on the blue field represent the nine original dioceses of the Episcopal Church in America in 1789: Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and South Carolina.

**Question 6:** What else does the coloration of the Episcopal Church Flag represent?

**Answer: B.** The American branch of the Anglican Communion.

The colors red, white, and blue represent the United States and stand for the American branch of the Anglican Communion.

**Question 7:** Where was Samuel Seabury, the first American Bishop, consecrated?

**Answer: A.** Aberdeen, Scotland.

[The crosslets] are arranged in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross to commemorate the fact Samuel Seabury, the first American bishop, was consecrated in Aberdeen, Scotland, on Nov. 14, 1784.

# **ST. MARY THE VIRGIN EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

ADDRESS: 1001 SOUTH GOLIAD,

BIG SPRING, TX 79720

OFFICE PHONE: 432-267-8201

EMAIL: [STMARYS.PARISHSECRETARY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:STMARYS.PARISHSECRETARY@GMAIL.COM)

WEBSITE: [WWW.STMARYSTEXAS.ORG](http://WWW.STMARYSTEXAS.ORG)

## **STAFF**

Deacon: Connie Fowler

Treasurer: Sherri Anthony

Parish Secretary: Bailey Saffle

Organist: Jeanette Swain

Sexton: Lupe Ortiz

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