

ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

JULY 2025

DIRECTIONS THE CHURCH MOVES

Today I want to talk about what the church does in terms of the different directions we move. We move upward, inward, and outward. There's nothing special about these words, I just think it is a helpful way to lay things out.

Upward

First off, as a church we are oriented towards God. We move towards God. We exist as a people who worship God, who are devoted to God. In our Eucharistic prayer, I say, "lift up your hearts to the Lord." And so that's what we do...

[Continues in Parish News, Page 5.](#)



PRAYER IN SCHOOL DIVIDES AMERICANS AS TEXAS LAW TAKES EFFECT

A [new Texas law](#) mandating that schools set a time for students to pray will likely be popular with many residents of the Lone Star State.

A [new report](#) from the Washington, D.C.-based Pew Research Center found that 61% of adults in Texas say they approve of allowing teachers to lead Christian prayers in the classroom. That makes Texas one of 22 states where at least half of the population approves of such prayers, and one of 14 states, mostly in the South, where 60% of the population agrees. Majorities in 12 states oppose teacher-led prayer. In 16 states, the population is split...

[Continues in State News, Page 9.](#)

OMB'S RUSSELL VOUGHT, THE CHRISTIAN 'NATION-IST' DRIVING PROJECT 2025 AND DOGE

As Russell Vought, the director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, testified June 9 before the House Appropriations Committee, U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, a Wisconsin Democrat, asked an unusual question — one that seemed far afield from President Trump's "big, beautiful" budget bill, which Vought had come to Capitol Hill to discuss.

"You identify yourself as a Christian nationalist, correct?" Pocan asked, citing Google search results about Vought. Vought responded that he is an evangelical Christian, but said he did not believe the question was pertinent. When Pocan pressed, Vought referred vaguely to "debates in the think tank world about what..."

[Continues in National News, Page 15.](#)

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.

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.

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

QUIZ QUESTION 1: *(Riddle answers will be on the last page.)*

What book of the Bible was written without explicitly mentioning the name of God?

- A. Songs of Solomon
- B. Esther
- C. Ruth
- D. Haggai

JULY CALENDAR

4th Independence Day

6th Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

13th Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

20th Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

22nd Saint Mary Magdalene

25th Saint James the Apostle

27th Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Sunday

9:30 AM- Christian Education

10:30 AM- Morning Service

Coffee Hour- Following the service

Wednesday

10:30 AM- Bible Study/Coffee hour

5:30 PM- Evening Prayer

Monday thru Thursday

8:30AM- Morning Prayer (In the chapel & on YouTube)

BIRTHDAYS WISHES

4th Gloria Bain

8th David Simpson

11th Paul Ausmus

17th Shirley Beal



MARY MAGDALENE, FIRST WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION- 22 JULY NT

BY JAMES KIEFER

The following article has been taken from [James Kiefer's Christian Biographies](#). This article is to highlight the importance of Saint Mary Magdalene, who we commemorate on July 22. The text has been edited for reading purposes. The picture of St. Mary Magdalene comes from [REVPACMAN](#).

Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the Gospels as being among the women of Galilee who followed Jesus and His disciples, and who was present at His Crucifixion and Burial, and who went to the tomb on Easter Sunday to anoint [sic.] His body. She was the first to see the Risen Lord, and to announce His Resurrection to the apostles. Accordingly, she is referred to in early Christian writings as "the apostle to the apostles."

Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus), and the unnamed penitent woman who anointed [sic.] Jesus's feet (Luke 7:36-48) are sometimes supposed to be the same woman. From this, plus the statement that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2), has risen the tradition that she had been a prostitute before she met Jesus.

Because of the assumption that Mary Magdalene had been a spectacular sinner, and also perhaps because she is described as weeping at the tomb of Jesus on the Resurrection morning, she is often portrayed in art as weeping, or with eyes red from having wept. From

this appearance we derive the English word "maudlin", meaning "effusively or tearfully sentimental." There is a [Magdalen College at Oxford](#), and a [Magdalene College at Cambridge](#) (different spelling), both pronounced "Maudlin."



Prayer (contemporary language)

Almighty God, whose blessed Son restored Mary Magdalene to health of body and mind, and called her to be a witness of his resurrection: Mercifully grant that by your grace we may be healed of all our infirmities and know you in the power of his endless life; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

DIRECTIONS THE CHURCH MOVES

BY FR. CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON

This article has been adapted from Fr. Christopher's Christian Education time on Trinity Sunday. Christian Education time takes place every Sunday at 9:30AM in the chapel. The photo is of Fr. Christopher leading a Holy Eucharist service.

[Continued from front page] You're trying to lift up our hearts to the Lord in our devotion to God. This is primarily in our life of prayer—both corporately and individually. And this you can envision this as the things that happen in the church building—the sanctuary—or in our chapel. This is something, I think, that Anglicans are, if not particularly good at, we are particularly well equipped for, mostly because of our Book of Common Prayer. It is a wonderful, wonderful resource. The “common” in the “book of common prayer” meaning things that we do in common, do together.

Martin Thornton talks about the Anglican tradition's “threefold rule of prayer”: the Eucharist, the Daily Office, and personal devotion. At the center of our life of prayer is the celebration of Holy Eucharist. The celebration of Holy Eucharist is at the heart of who we are as the church. We partake of the body and blood of Christ, and we become the body of Christ. We become the church every week in the Eucharist. One of the early Eucharistic prayers found in the Didache, going back to early 2nd century, says, as the wheat that became this bread was once different ears of wheat on many different fields was

gathered together into one loaf, so we partake who of that Eucharistic loaf are many people that are gathered together, and as we partake of this, we become one body, we become the body of Christ. We also pray together in a regular way through the Daily Office. I'll talk more about the Daily Office and the future. But we also pray individually in our personal devotion—trying to bring ourselves towards God, to live before God, to tune our values towards what God thinks is important, to put Him first. To move “upward” is to be focused on God, not focused on ourselves. In this movement, we're not really focused on becoming better people (that comes later). We're focused on making God the center of our life. We're focused on focusing on Jesus Christ as Lord, submitting to Christ as Lord, loving God.

The great commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. The second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself, but the second is secondary compared to the first. There's no comparative in the first. The second is love as much as yourself—which is a lot! But to love the Lord your God will everything you have, with an absolute devotion, to have what is absolute in reality (God) be what is



absolute within your heart, is what this first commandment and our upward movement is all about. Of course, we fail at that all the time. That's why a central part of prayer is repentance and confession, right? We're always returning to God. Always turning, always returning.

When we look at Acts 2:42, what did the earliest Christians do? And here, in one verse is a nice summary, and it talks about four things: "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." In this first area, we're talking about the breaking of bread (signifying the Eucharist) and the

prayers, and these were central activities for the early church.

Inward

If we continue to look at Acts 2:42, we also see that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." The second movement of the church is an inward movement. We move inward toward one another in the church. We can think of this as what happens in the parish hall. It primarily has to do with our building each other up. In the New Testament, there's lots of "one another's: love one another, care for one another, bear with one another, be patient with one another. The Greek word for church is ekklesia. There are two parts to the word: "ek" which means "out of" and "klesia" which means "called." The church then is those who have been called out of the world and called together. So, we are meant to be distinct from the world, being peculiar. There's something that makes us different. But what makes us different from the world (called out) is also what makes us similar to each other—being called together.

Now what we do with each other is to help each other grow, to build each other up. To actually love someone, to really love someone, is to desire what is good for them. To build them up. When we do this, we are all changing in the same direction and so we're growing together. Another term that's used for

this movement is formation. That we are changing over time in an intentional and guided way so that we are changing in a good direction. We are wanting to change in a good direction. We're wanting to become better people. This is spiritual formation or discipleship. Jesus, when he came to his first disciples, he came to them with just a bold proclamation of authority. And he said, "Follow me. Follow behind me. Come with me, learn from me, do the things that I do, learn this new way of life." And because of their devotion to him, they followed and they changed. Now, when you read the Gospels, they were not good at it, and they were slow learners. And so are we. I don't know if that's discouraging or encouraging, but it's realistic, right? We're trying to grow, trying to become more Christlike, trying to become better together. That is why the early Christians in Acts 2:42 devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship.

And when we are together, we also study the apostles' teaching—primarily as passed down to us in scripture. Part of my job as priest is to teach. This teaching and learning and growing and caring about one another—that's the inward focus. It is important to see that our inward movement is based/founded upon our upward movement. It is because we have a common devotion, a baptized life into Christ, that we are on the same common ground so that we have some idea of some common idea

of what a good life would be. Our devotion to the Father as revealed in Christ and as enabled by the Holy Spirit is what makes us able to relate to each other as brothers and sisters.

Outward

The outward movement is where we are focused toward the world. The traditional word for this is mission. And if the location of this is primarily outside the walls of the church. As we look in scripture there are two prongs or aspects to our mission in the world: evangelism and service,

At the end of Matthew's Gospel—in the 28th chapter—we have what is called the Great Commission (you can see "mission" right in there). The resurrected Lord is there with his 11 disciples and he says, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." Our Lord says "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." These days, sharing the good news can be hard. You want to make it sound like what it is: good news. But it also entails not being afraid to share, to have something to say about your faith. It could be as simple as "I really like my church at St. Mary's." So many people

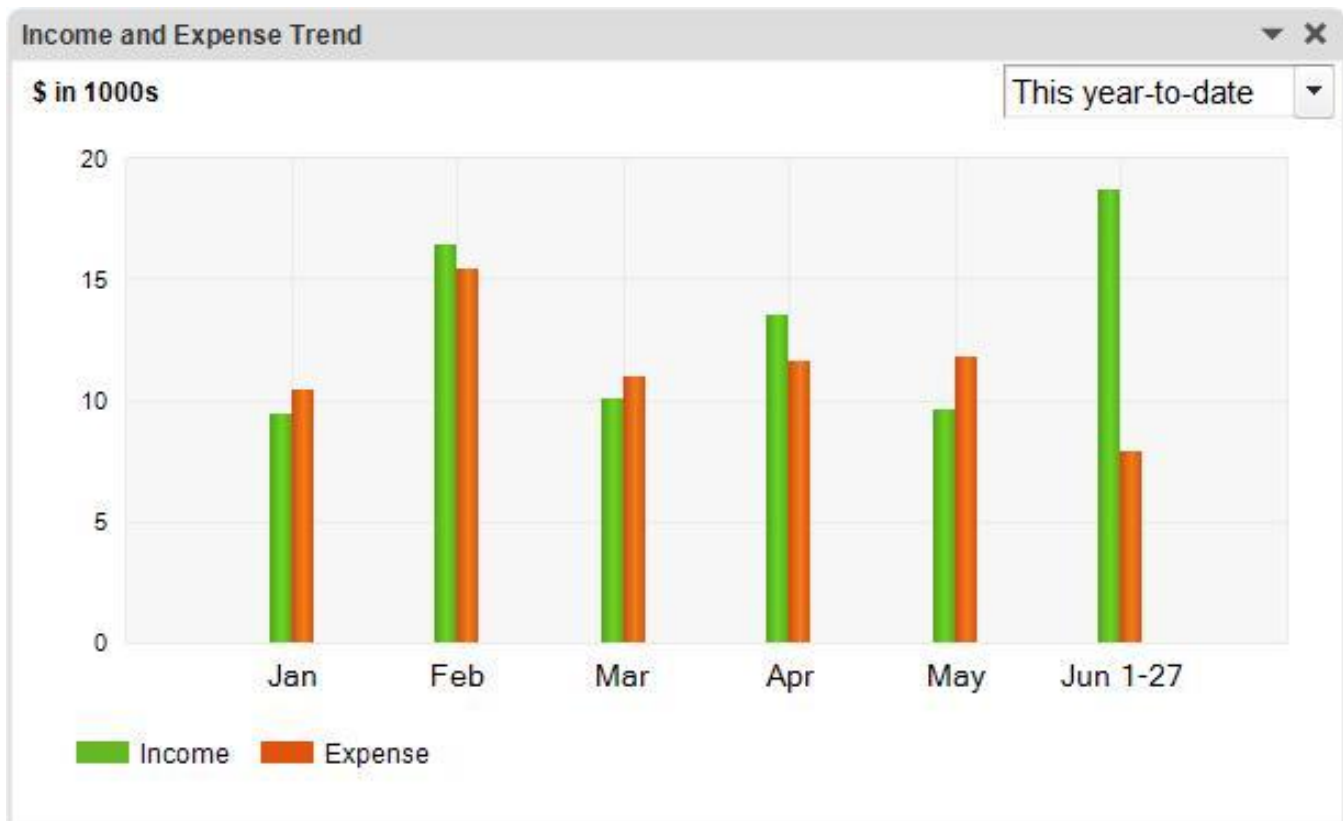
are disconnected from the church, and a simple honest invitation—whatever level that is appropriate and not awkward and works for your relationship with them—could be all it takes.

Service is the other wing of mission. Service is where we might see a need in the community and we have a way of meeting that need in a meaningful way. Now, sometimes we can get overwhelmed--the world is full of needs and problems. But different churches

have different strengths, different abilities. I know that often we all don't have a lot of time or energy to do things, but maybe we can just keep our eyes open. Maybe there's something that we can help out with.

So, there is a little sketch of our life together as a church. Let us strive to move upward toward God in worship and devotion, and then inward toward each other in edification and formation, and then outward toward the world in evangelism and service.

INCOME & EXPENSE REPORT



PRAYER IN SCHOOL DIVIDES AMERICANS AS TEXAS LAW TAKES EFFECT

BY BOB SMIETANA

The following article and picture have been taken from [Religion News Service](#). The picture depicts the opinion of the majority of people in each state in regard to prayer in public school. The Pew Research Center conducted the research and created the chart.

[Continued from front page] Overall, 52% of Americans [approve of](#) Christian prayer in schools, according to a new analysis of data from the most recent Pew Religious Landscape Study, published earlier this year. Forty-six percent disapprove.

“Today, Americans are deeply split on the question of whether to allow Christian prayer in school,” the report says.

That’s not stopping officials in states like Texas from pushing to allow more prayer in schools — although they are not mandating it be Christian.

On Saturday, Texas Governor Greg Abbott [signed a law](#) that requires schools to set aside time for students and staff to take part in voluntary prayer and Scripture reading. Under the law, school

officials are required to “provide students and employees with an

opportunity to participate in a period of prayer and reading of the Bible or other religious text on each school day.” The [same law](#), however, also bars students and staff from participating unless they sign a consent form.

Abbott also [signed a separate law](#) requiring schools to display the

Ten Commandments in classrooms. A federal appeals court [recently ruled](#) a similar law in Louisiana was unconstitutional.

Steven Collis, professor of law and director of the Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center at the University of Texas at Austin, said the Texas law appears to have been written to avoid

Views about Christian prayers in public school, by state

States where more people say they ___ allowing public school teachers to lead their classes in prayers that refer to Jesus

Favor (rather than oppose) **Oppose** (rather than favor) No statistically significant difference in share who say they favor/oppose allowing Christian prayers



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

concerns about coerced prayers and other First Amendment restrictions. The law requires school districts to set up a time for prayer but bars students or school employees from participating unless they've signed a consent form, saying they understand the prayers would be voluntary. Any participant also must agree not to sue the school over prayer.

The bill also [bans prayers](#) over a public address system — as well as prayers or Bible readings where anyone who has not signed a consent form can hear them.

Collis said the law appears to be testing what kind of prayer at schools will be allowed, following a [2022 Supreme Court decision](#) in favor of a former high school football coach who was fired after praying on the field after games.

"I think it's clear to me the legislature drafted this in a way to try to account for current case law," said Collis.

Collis said the law still will likely face challenges in court. What happens, he said, if 95% of the students get consent to take part in prayer — will the remaining students feel pressure to do so as well? Or if teachers end up leading prayers?

The law professor said much will depend on how the new law is implemented.

"To me, it's not an obvious establishment clause violation under current case law," he said.

Collis said he's wary about public polling on prayer in school — saying that while folks may approve of prayer, they also likely only approve of some prayers.

"Everything comes down to how you're defining the phrase prayer in schools," he said. "Nobody wants anyone else's prayers forced upon them."

Rocío Fierro-Pérez, political director of Texas Freedom Network, opposes the new law, calling it "unconstitutional and morally reprehensible."

"No child should be pressured to perform piety to feel safe or accepted in a public school classroom," Fierro-Pérez [said in a statement](#) after the bill was signed into law. "No teacher should have to referee prayer. And no family should have to fear that their beliefs will be marginalized by the institutions meant to educate their children."

Pew's data showed a wide range of views on school prayer by state. In Mississippi, for example, 81% of adults say they approved of Christian prayers in the classroom, followed by 75% in Alabama and Arkansas.

In D.C., by contrast, only 30% of adults approved of Christian prayers in the classroom, followed by 32% in Vermont and 34% in Oregon. States like Alaska, Iowa, Montana, Pennsylvania and

Wisconsin are statistical ties, according to Pew data.

The Religious Landscape Study found earlier this year that the decline of Christianity in America appears to have slowed, though at 62% of the population, the number of American Christians remains considerably lower than two decades ago, when 78% identified as Christian in 2007. Today, 7% percent of Americans identify with a faith other than Christianity, and according to Pew, 29% do not identify with a religion.

As every state in the U.S. has seen religious decline, some states remain much more religious than others. For example, although 73% of adults in Alabama identified as Christian in Pew's

most recent study, only 45% of adults in Vermont say they are Christians.

Overall, the gap between the 10 most religious states in the U.S. and the 10 least religious states is 21 percentage points.

Although the majority of Americans are still religious, more than a few are wary about the public role of religion — 44% of Americans said religion does more good than harm, according to the Religious Landscape report, with 19% saying it does more harm than good. And 35% say religion does equal amounts of harm and good.

Fewer than half of Americans say they pray everyday (44%), according to Pew, down from 58% in 2007.

QUIZ QUESTION 2:

How long did the flood cover the earth?

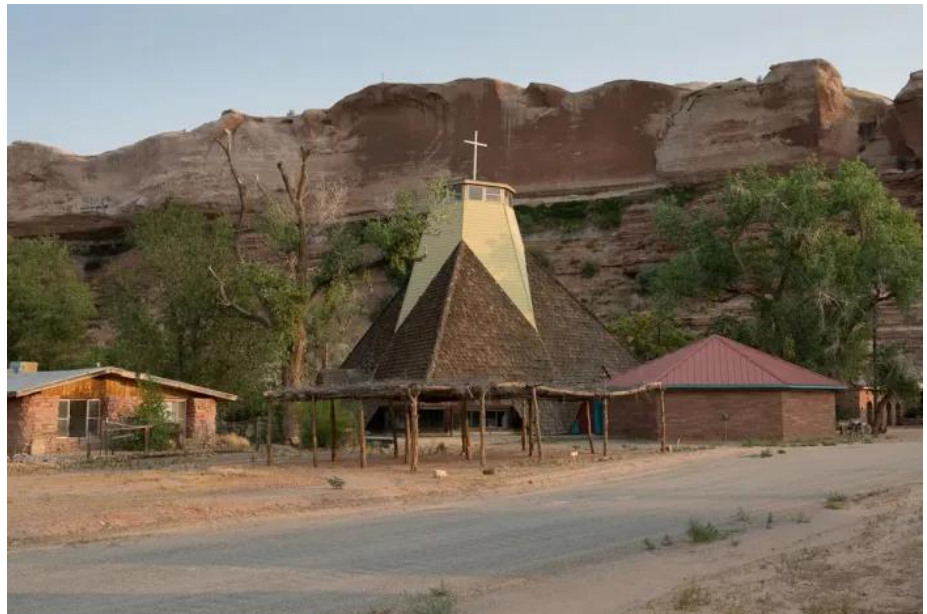
- A.** 19 days
- B.** 150 days
- C.** 50 days
- D.** 15 days

NAVAJOLAND OFFICIALLY BECOMES MISSIONARY DIOCESE WITH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL VOTE ON CONSTITUTION

BY DAVID PAULSEN | JUNE 24, 2025

The following article and photos have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The first photo is of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Bluff, Utah. This church is one of the churches in the Navajoland diocese.

The Episcopal Church welcomed its newest diocese on June 24 – the [Missionary Diocese of Navajoland](#) – though, as Navajo Episcopalians and church leaders noted, the elevation of Navajoland from an Episcopal mission formalizes a reality already felt for years in Navajo Nation communities.



“Navajoland was already living as a missionary diocese in spirit and practice,” GJ Gordy, an Executive Council member from Navajoland, said before the council voted to accept the missionary diocese’s new constitution. “This is not just a structural change. It is recognition of our readiness to lead ourselves.”

Executive Council, [the church’s governing body](#) between the triennial meetings of General Convention, is meeting June 23-35 in suburban Baltimore. Council’s vote was the final step in a process dating back at least to 2022, when General Convention sought to empower Navajo Episcopalians to plan for the future of the mission,

covering a region that includes Navajo congregations in parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

That step responded to their call for self-determination after years of work toward sustainability and dreaming of someday calling their own bishop, which they now are preparing to do as a missionary diocese.

“This has been a long time coming,” the Rev. Cathlena Plummer said during Executive Council’s meeting in suburban Baltimore. “It’s been in the works for years and years and years.”

Plummer and other Navajo clergy and elders joined the meeting via Zoom to share their gratitude to the church for

establishing the new missionary diocese. The Rev. Leon Sampson struggled to speak through tears as he thanked Executive Council.

"This is a wonderful journey," Sampson said. "We thank you for allowing us to be a part of [the church] ... to see us as we are, Episcopalians."

Navajoland was the name given to the area mission created by The Episcopal Church in 1977. Area missions' bishops are appointed to the role by the House of Bishops rather than elected by a local convention. The Rt. Rev. Barry Beisner was the last bishop appointed to the area mission in this way. By becoming a missionary diocese, Navajoland's members can elect their own bishop while continuing to receive financial and other support from the wider church.

In 2022, the 80th General Convention [passed a resolution](#) entrusting Navajoland "to establish its own rules and procedures for a process of discernment for the calling of a bishop that reflects the values, teachings, and traditions of the Diné." Navajoland leaders worked on the plan with the church's Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons, and in January 2024, a special convocation in Navajoland voted [in favor of the request for missionary diocese status](#). Bishops and deputies then [authorized the missionary diocese](#) when they gathered

in June 2024 at the 81st General Convention.

On June 7, Navajoland held its first diocesan convention and approved its new constitution. The preamble, written in English and the Diné language, incorporates Navajoland's mission statement into a document that respects Navajo culture and spiritual practices.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy One, we set out to walk in harmony, seeking forgiveness and wholeness," the preamble says. "Through compassion and service, Love binds us in relationship to all creation. In the Beauty Way all is restored again."

One of the constitution's articles says that the diocese will strive to adhere in its communications and decision-making to "the historic and sacred traditions of the Navajo people as well as the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church."

In its June 24 session, Executive Council voted to accept the constitution with a round of applause.

"I am very grateful for this opportunity for all of us here at Navajoland to be present at Executive Council and witness this historic moment in the life of the church," the Rev. Cornelia Eaton, Navajoland's canon to the ordinary, said on Zoom. "I also want to acknowledge all the hard work that has been put into this over the last few years."



The Navajoland Executive Council meeting in which the new constitution was voted upon (06/24/2025).

Separately, the 2025-27 churchwide budget plan includes a three-year block grant of nearly \$1.5 million to support Navajoland's congregations and ministries. An additional \$800,000 was budgeted over three years for the office and staff of the bishop appointed by the House of Bishops to serve Navajoland,

though it is unclear how much money would support a new diocesan bishop. Gordy said a search committee has been appointed to begin the process of calling the missionary diocese's first bishop.

The Rev. Paula Henson, a priest serving a Navajo congregation in Utah, was among

those joining the meeting via Zoom to thank Executive Council.

"On this day, at this hour, at this second, we live our lives the way our people have lived long ago, by way of our Navajo ways, and we continue to thrive with that," Henson said.

QUIZ QUESTION 3:

How old was Moses when he gave God's message to Pharaoh: "Let my people go"?

- A. 80 years
- B. 18 years
- C. 13 years
- D. 39 years

OMB'S RUSSELL VOUGHT, THE CHRISTIAN 'NATION-IST' DRIVING PROJECT 2025 AND DOGE

BY JACK JENKINS | JUNE 23, 2025

The following article and photos have been taken from [Religion News Service](#). The first photo is of Russell Vought at a hearing for the House of Appropriations that took place on June 4, 2025.

[\[Continued from front page\]](#) it means to be a Christian nation” before the two moved on.

The moment was remarkable both for its awkwardness and for what went unsaid: Vought's reticence before lawmakers notwithstanding, the OMB director has spent years voicing passionate support for Christian nationalism.

“We are a Christian nation,” Vought said in a [2022 address to Intercessors for America](#), a conservative Christian group. “We talk about under God, we are a Christian nation, we were meant to be a Christian nation. We have lost that. That means that, yes, we love religious liberty, but to the extent that

we don't even have Christians that talk about how we're a Christian nation, something's wrong there.”

It's part of a history of religious rhetoric that has gotten relatively little attention since Vought resumed leadership of the OMB, where he has played a subdued but significant role in what may be the largest winnowing of the U.S.

government in history. As Elon Musk made headlines for shuttering USAID and laying off thousands of federal workers, Vought's office has quietly administered mass firings in an apparent attempt to implement Project 2025, a massive policy document produced by the Heritage Foundation that Vought

is [credited with chiefly authoring](#).

But lost in the debate over government cuts is how Christian nationalism provides the ideological foundation for Vought's plan to gut federal government and curtail immigration



through the expansion of executive power. Or, as Vought once put it, implementing a vision for America that insists “Western civilization does not work without the underpinnings of a Judeo-Christian worldview.”

A Connecticut native, Vought graduated from Wheaton College, a prestigious evangelical Christian school in Illinois, in 1998. He came to Washington to study law at George Washington University and began his political rise as a legislative assistant for former Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, a conservative mainstay of the Senate in the 1980s and '90s. After years serving as a functionary on Capitol Hill, Vought joined Heritage Action, the political wing of the Heritage Foundation.

Vought did not respond to multiple interview requests for this story, but has made no secret of his suspicion that the U.S. is becoming hostile to Christianity. Nominated to be deputy budget director in Trump's first administration in 2017, he was grilled by Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont at his confirmation hearing about a blog post he had written defending the firing of a Christian professor at Wheaton who had donned a hijab and said Muslims and Christians “worship the same God.”

When Sanders asked whether parts of the post were Islamophobic, Vought stood firm. “Senator, I wrote a post based on being a Christian and attending a Christian school that has a

statement of faith that speaks clearly in regard to the centrality of Jesus Christ in salvation,” he said.

Vought later framed the exchange as evidence of increasing hostility toward Christians. “It was one of those early indications that the heat is turning up” on religious conservative like himself, Vought later told *Intercrossors for America*.

Vought has said his initial plan was to do a short stint in the Trump administration before leaving to attend seminary and become a pastor. But after Trump lost to Joe Biden in 2020, Vought has said, “God had other plans.” He founded his own think tank, the Center for American Restoration, promptly renaming it the Center for Renewing America, a change he said was inspired by the New Testament's Letter to the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God.”

As a private citizen, he increased his use of religious rhetoric, taking on an apocalyptic tone out of sorts with his image as a buttoned-down bureaucrat. In May 2021 in Dayton, Ohio, he spoke to the Forge Leadership Network, a training program for young conservatives, prompting them to “examine public policy and ethics from a Judeo-Christian worldview.”

Speaking calmly but with unmistakable [*sic.*] passion, he laid out for the

audience a vision of America in decline — a decline, he said, that has befallen the country because “as a people, we have forgotten God.” He lamented that a country “created by God-fearing men” now “denies those who share our values a place in it.”

“We don’t have culture. We don’t have the media. We don’t have the corporations,” Vought said. “In the modern era, conservatives have pretty much one single way to influence public



Russell Vought speaking at a press briefing on March 11, 29.

policy and the culture: It’s through politics and governing. We must pull that lever.”

The key, he argued, was to engage in “soulcraft”: “It’s time to insist that our leaders focus on the cultural fights that they have for so long avoided.”

Meanwhile, writers at Center for Renewing America — whose fellows included Kash Patel, currently director of the FBI — [railed against](#)

[progressive](#) and “postmodern” Christians who “undermine the revealed truth they claim to serve.” The group’s [2022 budget proposal](#) opened with a [reference to the Bible’s First Book of Samuel](#) as part of an argument that “the government itself is increasingly weaponized against the people it is meant to serve.”

Vought, for his part, even blasted fellow conservatives such as New York Times columnist David French, tagging him

the “Colin Kaepernick of the evangelical church.”

Christian nationalism was incorporated into his rationale for decimating the federal government. In 2022, he [tweeted](#), “... if the question is whether Christian Nationalism beats secular globalism &

whether a woke/weaponized administrative state needs to be deconstructed ... the answer is emphatically yes.”

He grew bolder about promoting Christian nationalism in [public appearances](#) and behind closed doors. In a hidden-camera footage [recorded by the Centre for Climate Reporting](#), a British nonprofit, Vought told two men posing as relatives of a wealthy

conservative donor that he believes in “Christian nation-ism” and wants to “rehabilitate Christian nationalism.”

Around this time Vought was often heard using the phrase “Duty is ours; results are God’s,” an axiom quoted by Christian nationalist leaders affiliated with groups such as Wallbuilders, the organization run by activist David Barton. Vought attributed it to “the Founders” and [President John Quincy Adams](#) but, like other dictums [embraced by Christian nationalists](#), the sourcing is dubious: Researchers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, which holds Adams family papers, told RNS they couldn’t find any instance of Adams using the phrase.

It was partly through Christian nationalism that Vought became tied to a group of deeply conservative evangelical Calvinists in the orbit of Doug Wilson, a pastor who has spent decades seeking to build [a Christian nationalist community in northern Idaho](#) and recently emerged as [an influential figure](#) in far-right intellectual circles. In an interview in February, Wilson told RNS he doesn’t know the specifics of Vought’s theology, but said, “I would guess that we’d be on a similar page.”

Vought is also close to William Wolfe, a promoter of [Wilson’s thought](#). A former mid-level Trump administration official and Heritage Action staffer, Wolfe has [referred to Vought](#) as his “political

mentor.” In since-deleted tweets from 2022, Wolfe said Christian nationalism is the only option to combat liberalism, [posting](#), “You can be a Christian nationalist, or a Rainbow Flag nationalist” before adding, “Choose wisely.”

Today Wolfe heads the Center for Baptist Leadership, a project of the American Reformer, a conservative Christian outlet that has [published pieces by Vought](#). Vought, meanwhile, boosts Wolfe’s work on social media often and has [said](#) he is “proud” to work with Wolfe “on scoping out a sound Christian Nationalism.”

Both men are immigration hardliners who see the issue in terms of Christian nationalism. “One of the main drivers of Christian opposition to Christian nationalism,” Wolfe has [argued](#), is “Progressive Christian support for open borders.” In a livestream taped at the 2023 Iowa caucuses, Wolfe [suggested](#) that “favoring Christians in American immigration policy” is something “we should consider.”

In a 2023 [speech](#) titled the “Christian Case for Immigration Restriction,” Vought dismissed evangelicals who have voiced support for refugees and defended the first Trump administration’s family separation policy, arguing the Bible has “principles for thoughtful, limited immigration and

emphasizing assimilation” and questioned whether even legal immigration is “healthy” for the U.S.

“What the nation needs more than anything,” Vought said, “is not Christians getting on their uninformed moral high horse, but Christians insistent on being responsible stewards of a blessing that has been God-given: to live in this land, this particular land.”

Wilson appeared at the same event, under the rubric “The Theology of American Statecraft,” convened by American Moment, a group that advised on Project 2025.

Later at the same event, Wilson and Vought sat together on a [panel moderated by Nate Fischer](#), a venture capitalist who helped found both American Reformer and New Founding, which is tied to a planned [Christian nationalist development in Tennessee](#). According to a [since-deleted tweet](#), Wolfe was also in attendance.

Wilson and his allies grew more publicly supportive of Vought after Trump's reelection in 2024. Speaking on Wilson's podcast earlier this year, Joe Rigney, an associate pastor at Wilson's church who has forwarded the idea that empathy can be a “sin,” celebrated the idea that

Russell Vought during his nomination hearing on January 22, 2025



the new director of the Office of Management and Budget is “actually going to do the things I want.”

Wilson recently announced a new satellite church in D.C., whose address is the same as the Conservative Partnership Institute, a far-right activist group that has extended grants to Vought's Center for Renewing America, according to [tax filings](#).

But even as Vought has found new allies, his leanings have alienated some conservatives — including fellow evangelicals. When Wheaton congratulated him on his confirmation as OMB director on social media, 1,800 of the school's alumni and others signed a petition [condemning the endorsement](#), calling Vought's projects “antithetical to Christian charity.”

Looking to quell the controversy, Wheaton withdrew its congratulations, only to see another letter written by Eric Teetsel — a Wheaton grad who took

over the Center for Renewing America after Vought left to join the administration — signed by 1,400 alumni appear as a counter-protest. The letter called for an end to the school's "current DEI regime."

Even some of his inspirations are challenging his ideas. In his 2021 speech to the Forge Leadership Network, Vought said his use of the term "soulcraft" was taken from conservative columnist George Will's 1983 book "Statecraft as Soulcraft." Will told RNS that while he agrees with the OMB director on several points, Vought misunderstands the concept. Soulcraft,

Will said, is what virtually every government does by passing laws that "encourage or stigmatize or forbid certain behaviors," whereas Vought seems to be calling on the government to engage in "conscious, explicit soulcraft."

"Vought has a more ambitious agenda of soulcraft than I think is healthy or proper for society," Will said.

Of Vought's vision for Christian nationalism, Will said, "If his aspiration is a Christian nation, I'd say, 'Good luck to you ... just keep the government out of it.'"

QUIZ QUESTION 4:

Who restored Paul's sight after the Lord blinded him?

- A. Peter
- B. Luke
- C. Ananias
- D. Matthew

QUIZ QUESTION 5:

What two kings disguised themselves before going into battle, and were both slain by archers?

- A. Ahab and Zedekiah
- B. Enosh and Zedekiah
- C. Japeth and Josiah
- D. Ahab and Josiah

ARCHBISHOP OF JERUSALEM & THE MIDDLE EAST SHARES PASTORAL LETTER ABOUT CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND IRAN

JUNE 19, 2025

The following article and picture have been taken from the [Anglican Communion News Service](#). The photo is of Dr Hosam E Naoum.

The Most Reverend Dr Hosam E Naoum, Primate and President Bishop of the Province of Jerusalem & the Middle East, has issued a pastoral letter in response to conflict between Israel and Iran.

The nations at war, along with those most directly impacted, reside entirely within the boundaries of the Province of Jerusalem & the Middle East. It encompasses three distinct dioceses: Jerusalem, Cyprus & the Gulf, and Iran, with the Diocese of Jerusalem extending its reach beyond Israel and Palestine to include Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

The letter outlines that "many of our church members have endured direct attacks, while a greater number now face the ominous prospect of crossborder escalations."

Acknowledging the pain and difficulty of conflict, the letter calls for peacemaking, bridge building and for the Church to promote "understanding, mutual respect and goodwill."

It also invites Anglicans across the wider Communion to "intercede on our behalf."

The Rt Revd Anthony Poggo, the Secretary-General of the Anglican Communion has supported the letter saying: "I commend the Pastoral Letter shared by Archbishop Hosam. Let us pray for the Church in the region, as it seeks to minister to those impacted by the conflict between Israel and Iran, and in its ongoing response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. I call upon Anglicans around the world to do all that we can to pray, urge for peace and aid the Church in responding to



communities that are suffering. May God sustain his Church.”

Read the Archbishop's Pastoral Letter here:

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you all know, just last Friday, June 13th, Israel launched a sudden attack against Iran. This assault destroyed numerous buildings and installations, claiming dozens of lives-military leaders, scientists, and innocent bystanders, including women and children. Iran swiftly launched a reprisal, which also brought destruction and tragic loss of life in Israel to both Jews and Arabs. Since that time, this terrifying situation has only intensified, with foreign powers now threatening to enter the conflict, further heightening tensions both regionally and across the globe.

These developments are especially painful for us within this part of the Anglican Communion. The nations at war, along with those most directly impacted, reside entirely within the boundaries of our own Province of Jerusalem & the Middle East. As you are likely aware, our province encompasses three distinct dioceses: Jerusalem, Cyprus & the Gulf, and Iran-with the Diocese of Jerusalem extending its reach beyond Israel and Palestine to include Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Consequently, many of our church

members have endured direct attacks, while a greater number now face the ominous prospect of crossborder escalations.

In his Sermon on the Mount, our Lord Jesus Christ boldly exclaimed to the gathered crowds, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt 5:9). Yet peacemaking during war is perhaps one of the most difficult things that we Christians are called to do. Where does one even begin?

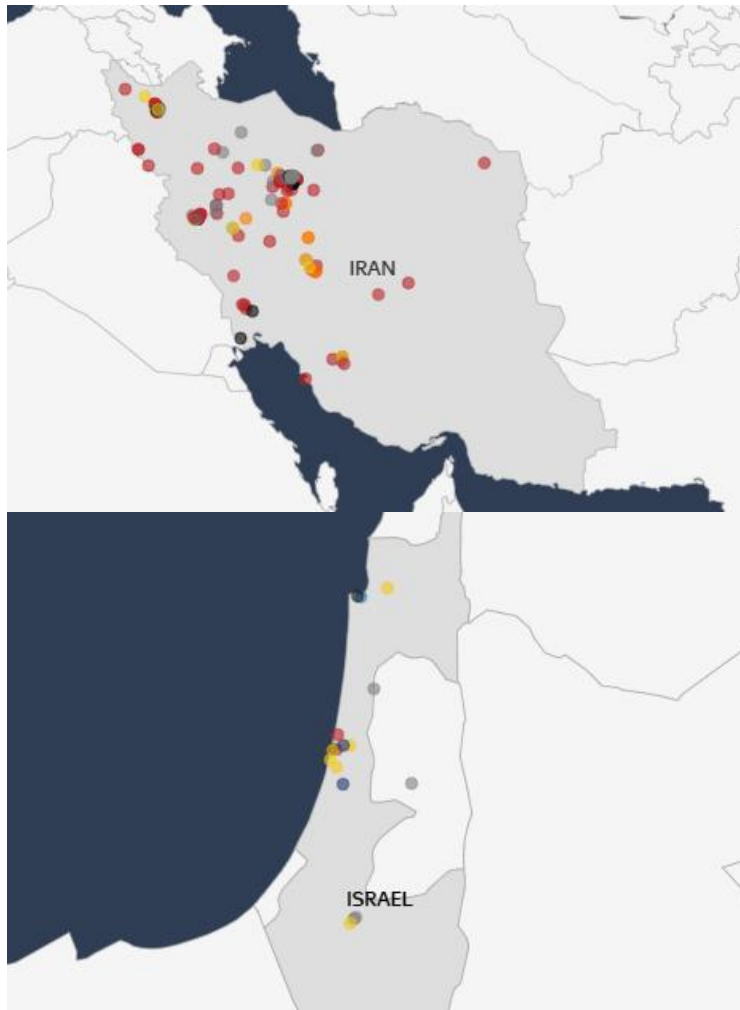
We can first of all lift up each other and the situation in prayer, imploring God to envelop us with His protective care. We can also seek His guidance for the leaders of nations, urging them to bring this violence to a swift conclusion. This would enable the many victims to receive necessary care and allow the warring parties to resolve their differences through peaceful negotiations held in good faith. Secondly, we can offer each other comfort and encouragement, building up each other through reassuring words about our Lord's promise of salvation to his people, precisely as St. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians (1 Thess 5:11). Finally, we can look to the Holy Spirit for empowerment to become bridge builders within our local and regional communities, seeking to promote understanding, mutual respect, and goodwill.

Conversely, in following this path of peace, we must vigilantly guard against yielding to fear and despair. For this, we must again rely profoundly upon the graces of the Holy Spirit to both strengthen and empower us. As the Apostle further reminds us, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim 1:7).

It is with these hope-filled words that I continue to hold each of you in my prayers, earnestly seeking God's sustained blessings upon all members

throughout our Province and, indeed, beyond. Furthermore, I extend and invitation to our fellow Anglicans across the wider Communion, as well as all those of goodwill, to intercede on our behalf, that we might collectively be strengthened to embody the role of peacemakers as mutual [*sic.*] members of the larger Body of Christ.

In Christ,
The Most Reverend Dr Hosam E Naoum
Primate and President Bishop, The
Province of Jerusalem & the Middle East



These maps have been taken from [Sky News](#). The maps depict the recent missile strikes in Israel and Iran. The color of the dots indicates the type of location targeted.

On the map of Iran:

- Red: Military
- Light blue: Airports
- Orange: Nuclear
- Dark blue: Government
- Black: Oil and Gas
- Yellow: Industrial
- Gray: Other

On the map of Israel:

- Dark blue: Education
- Light blue: Energy
- Red: Military
- Yellow: Residential
- Gray: Other

Quiz Answers:

The following questions came from [Word by Word](#).

Question 1: What book of the Bible was written without explicitly mentioning the name of God?

Answer: B. Esther

Verses: [The book of Esther](#)

Question 2: How long did the flood cover the earth?

Answer: B. 150 days

Verse: [Genesis 7:24](#)

Question 3: How old was Moses when he gave God's message to Pharaoh: "Let my people go"?

Answer: A. 80 years

Verse: [Exodus 7:7](#)

Question 4: Who restored Paul's sight after the Lord blinded him?

Answer: C. Ananias

Verses: [Acts 9:17-18](#)

Question 5: What two kings disguised themselves before going into battle, and were both slain by archers?

Answer: D. Ahab and Josiah

Verses: [1 Kings 22:34](#); [2 Chronicles 35:22](#)

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MISSION

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