

ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2025

JAMES OF JERUSALEM,

James of Jerusalem is referred to in the New Testament as the brother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was for many years the leader of the Christian congregation in Jerusalem, and is generally supposed to be the author of the Epistle of James, although the Epistle itself does not state this explicitly.

James is mentioned briefly in connection with Jesus' visit to Nazareth (M 13:55; P 6:3).

We are told that Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him (J 7:2-5), and from this, and from references in early Christian writers, it is inferred that James was not a disciple of the Lord until after the Resurrection.

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

FROM SEEDS TO SOULS: HOW A GARDEN IS GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM

Sitting on a 100 square foot plot in a small city about 15 minutes from Raleigh, North Carolina, the body of Christ is hard at work: digging, weeding, planting, harvesting – bringing both bounty and beauty to vulnerable people in its midst.

Tree of Life Anglican is a small church of about 75, planted during the “wild” year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. With their community garden about a mile from their worship space, the volunteers – ranging in age from 2 to 80 – are a living image of the body of Christ.

“Everyone has a job,” Sara Hillegass, the garden's director, explains with a smile.

[Continues in
State News,
Page 10.](#)

SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES PLEADS FOR DIALOGUE AND PEACE

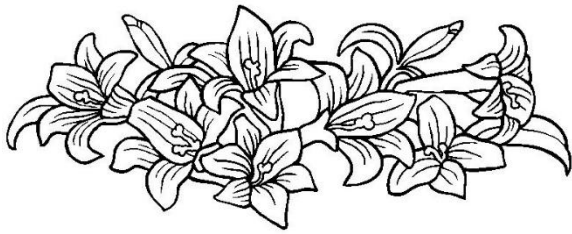
The Episcopal Church of South Sudan is in a country experiencing political upheaval, instability and prolonged periods of violence over many years, even after South Sudan became an independent nation in 2011.

Despite ongoing reconciliation dialogues being encouraged by international bodies, a sustainable and peaceful remedy has not yet been reached in South Sudan. At this time of ‘political deadlock’, the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), an ecumenical group of South Sudanese church leaders, including Catholic, Episcopal, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Presbyterian and Reformed churches, has released a statement advocating for dialogue in pursuit of peace.

[Continues in Internation
News, Page 18.](#)



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: (Quiz answers will be on the last page.)

Several of Jesus Christ's apostles shared names with each other: there were two Jameses, two Judases, and two Simons. One Simon was later renamed Peter; the other, a passionate man celebrated on October 28, had what nickname?

- A. The Sinner
- B. The Prodigal Disciple
- C. The Fisher of Men
- D. The Zealot

OCTOBER CALENDAR

5th Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

12th Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

18th Saint Luke the Evangelist

19th Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

23rd Saint James of Jerusalem: Brother of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Martyr

26th Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

28th Saint Simon and Saint Jude, Apostles

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)

ANNIVERSARY WISHES

1st Charlie & Charla Lewis

11th Bill & Jeri Stockton

13th Roy & Michelle Worthy

17th Bob & Mary Miller

Happy anniversary!!

JAMES OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP AND MARTYR - 23 OCTOBER 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 James of Jerusalem, who we commemorate on October 23rd. The text has been edited for reading purposes. The photo of St. James comes from the [Episcopal Church](#).

[Continued from front page]

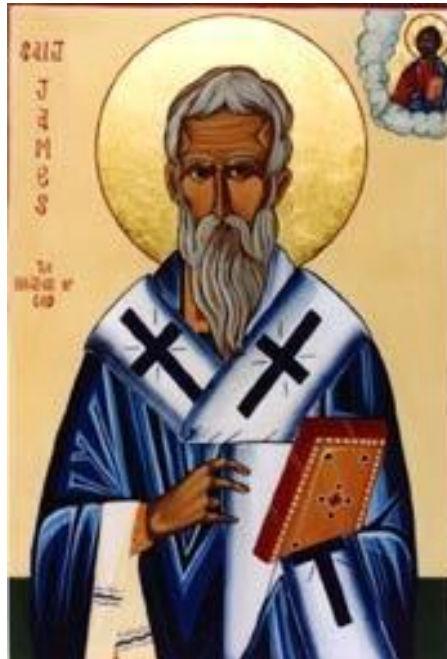
Paul, listing appearances of the Risen Lord (1 Cor 15:3-8), includes an appearance to James.

Peter, about to leave Jerusalem after escaping from Herod, leaves a message for James and the Apostles (A 12:17).

When a council meets at Jerusalem to consider what rules Gentile Christians should be required to keep, James formulates the final consensus (A 15:13-21).

Paul speaks of going to Jerusalem three years after his conversion and conferring there with Peter and James (G 1:18-19), and speaks again of a later visit (perhaps the one described in A 15) on which Peter, James, and John, "the pillars," placed their stamp of approval on the mission to the Gentiles (G 2:9).

A few verses later (G 2:11-14), he says that messengers from James coming to Antioch discouraged Jewish Christians there from eating with Gentile Christians.



(If this refers to [sic.] the same event as A 15:1-2, then Paul takes a step back chronologically in his narration at G 2:11, which is not improbable, since he is dictating and mentioning arguments and events that count as evidence for his side as they occur to him.)

On his last recorded visit to Jerusalem, Paul visits James (others are present, but no other names are given) and speaks of his ministry to the Gentiles (A 21:18).

Outside the New Testament, James is mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus, who calls him "the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ," and reports that he was much respected even by the Pharisees for his piety and strict observance of the Law, but that his enemies took advantage of an interval between Roman governors in 62 AD to have him put to death. His death is also reported by the second-century Christian writer Hegesippus.

Numerous references in early Christian documents show the esteem in which he was held in the early Church.

There appear to be at least three persons named James mentioned in the New Testament, and possibly as many as eight. For an attempt to sort them out, see the Biography of [Philip and James \(1 May\)](#).

Prayers (contemporary language)

Lord Jesus Christ, who set your brother James on the throne of your church in Jerusalem: Grant that as he continually interceded for the sins of your people, and worked to reconcile in one body both Jew and Gentile; so your Church

may give itself continually to prayer and to the reconciliation of all who are at variance and enmity, and may ever be an effectual witness for the salvation of all mankind. Grant this, O Son of Man, who are on the right hand of the Father, in the unity of the Spirit, now and ever.

Grant, O God, that following the example of your servant James the Just, brother of our Lord, your Church may give itself continually to prayer and to the reconciliation of all who are at variance and enmity; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever.

QUIZ QUESTION 2:

During a liturgy or Mass, the Gifts, or materials prior to their consecration as Holy Communion, will be brought to the altar. What is the name for the sacramentals used to contain the wine as it is carried to the altar?

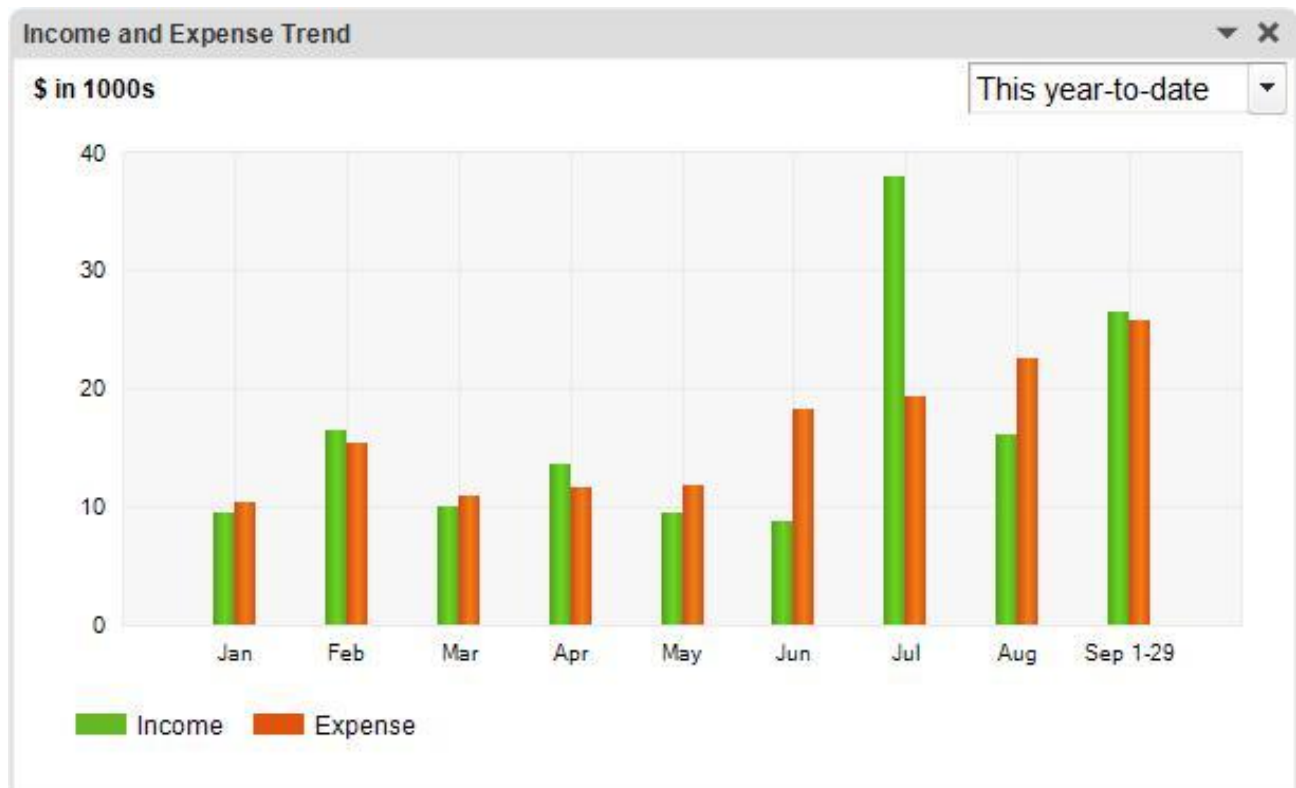
- A. Chalices
- B. Vials
- C. Cruets
- D. Beakers

ST. MARY'S CELEBRATION!

Saint Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church will be celebrating our 140th anniversary as a parish and the beginning of the new ministry in Big Spring of our priest and rector, Father Christopher Simpson. This special event will take place at the church on Thursday, November 6th at 6pm. We will be joined by Bishop Scott Mayer and priests and deacons from all over the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas.

There will be a service followed by a meal where food will be provided. With that being said, the Celebration Committee is asking for donations for the food. We would love for you to be a part of making this celebration happen! If you would like to donate, please speak to Jeri Stockton or Gloria Bain. Any and all donation would be greatly appreciated. We hope to see you at the celebration!

INCOME & EXPENSE REPORT



TEXAS FAMILIES FILE NEW LAWSUIT TO STOP PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS FROM DISPLAYING TEN COMMANDMENTS

SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

The following article has been taken from [ACLU Texas](#). The picture has been taken from [Silberman Law Firm](#).

A group of 15 multifaith and nonreligious Texas families filed a [new lawsuit](#) in federal court today to stop their public school districts from displaying the Ten Commandments in classrooms pursuant to Texas law [Senate Bill 10](#). The new complaint comes in response to school districts that have or are about to display Ten Commandments posters, despite a federal court's [recent ruling](#) that S.B. 10 is a clear violation of students' and families' religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

The plaintiffs in [Cribbs Ringer v. Comal Independent School District](#) also plan to file a motion for a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction, asking the court to require the defendant school districts to remove any Ten Commandments displays currently posted and to refrain from hanging new displays pending the resolution of the litigation.

The school districts named as defendants in today's lawsuit include: Comal ISD, Georgetown ISD, Conroe ISD, Flour Bluff ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Arlington ISD, McKinney ISD, Frisco ISD, Northwest ISD, Azle ISD, Rockwall ISD, Lovejoy ISD, Mansfield ISD, and McAllen ISD.

The complaint, filed in a San Antonio federal court, points to the court's recent decision in *Rabbi Nathan v. Alamo Heights Independent School District*, which held that S.B. 10's provisions requiring the display a Protestant version of the Ten Commandments in every public school classroom are "plainly unconstitutional" under the First Amendment. The plaintiffs in both cases are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, the ACLU, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP serving as pro bono counsel.

"As a devout Christian and a Lutheran pastor, the spiritual formation of my children is a privilege I take more seriously than anything else in my life," said Rev. Kristin Klade (she/her), plaintiff. "The mandated Ten 10 Commandments displayed in my children's public school impedes my ability to 'train up my child in the way he should go' (Proverbs 22:6). I address questions about God and faith with great care, and I emphatically reject the notion that the state would do this for me."

“Forcing religion, any religion, on others violates my Jewish faith,” said Lenee Bien-Willner (she/her), plaintiff. “It troubles me greatly to have Christian displays imposed on my children. Not only is the text not aligned with Judaism, but the commandments should be taught in the context of a person's faith tradition. State-sponsored religion, however, does not belong in the public classroom.”

“S.B. 10 is a calculated step to erode the separation of church and state and the right for my family to exercise our nonreligious beliefs,” said Nichole Manning (she/her), plaintiff. “I am compelled to advocate for my children, for these basic freedoms upon which this country was founded.”

Following the Nathan ruling, counsel in the case [sent a letter](#) to all Texas school districts warning them not to implement S.B. 10 because it would violate the First Amendment.

“Texas families from religious and nonreligious backgrounds are once again coming together to challenge this blatantly unconstitutional law,” said Chloe Kempf (she/her), staff attorney at the ACLU of Texas. “This lawsuit is a continuation of our work to defend the First Amendment and ensure that

government officials stay out of personal family decisions. All students — regardless of their race or religious background — should feel accepted and free to be themselves in Texas public schools.”

“A federal court has already made clear that school districts violate the First Amendment when they post the Ten Commandments in classrooms under S.B. 10,” said Heather L. Weaver (she/her), senior counsel for the ACLU's



Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief. “School districts must respect students’ and parents’ constitutional rights, and we will continue to hold school districts accountable when they flout this obligation.”

“Our Constitution’s guarantee of church-state separation means that families — not politicians — get to decide when and how public-school children engage with religion,” said Rachel Laser (she/her), president and CEO of Americans United

for Separation of Church and State. “Multiple federal courts, including in Texas, have been clear: Ten Commandments displays in public schools violate students’ and families’ religious freedom. These displays must be removed.”

“We are determined to keep on fighting for the rights of Texas students and their families,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor (she/her), co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. “The secular foundation of our country’s public school system is nonnegotiable.”

“This lawsuit, brought on behalf of a new group of Texas families, underscores a critical principle: public schools across the state must uphold — not undermine — the constitutional protections afforded to every student,” said Jon Youngwood (he/him), global co-chair of the Litigation Department at Simpson Thacher. “As multiple courts have reaffirmed, the First Amendment safeguards the rights of individuals to choose whether and how they engage with religion, and that protection extends to every classroom.”

QUIZ QUESTION 3:

Sacramentals may also include gestures or physical practices used during worship. In Catholic and Anglican churches, one may see members of the congregation carry out a genuflection. What is this?

- A. Opening the small bench or kneeler next to the pew
- B. Touching one knee to the floor
- C. Standing up during the recitation of the Nicene Creed
- D. Handing out copies of the hymnal

FROM SEEDS TO SOULS: HOW A GARDEN IS GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM

SEPTEMBER 12, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from [Anglican Church in North America](#). The photo is of a box of flowers gifted by the church.

[Continued from front page] “There’s no way just one single person could do it all – tilling the soil, harvesting the vegetables, watering the flowers, or dealing with bugs. Yet every single person who comes into the garden is a valuable and needed member of this work. Everyone contributes in their own way to the [garden’s] flourishing.”

And flourishing it is! At the halfway point of this year, the church’s garden has given away over 400 lbs. of produce – the hot peppers are a favorite – and has gifted over 100 bouquets of flowers, some



to individuals experiencing food insecurity, and some to local nursing homes, all for free.

And, like the flowers that bloom slowly or the vegetables that take time to ripen, the kingdom work of loving others is unfolding as well. This love is not hurried, but is on the steady and sure timeline of God’s plan.

“We’ve learned that the work we do in the garden is just like the work Jesus does in his church,” Pastor Patrick Dominguez reflects. “So often we want the results to be fast. ‘What levers can I pull to get an immediate outcome?’ But the work of the garden is hard and slow, and when we put in the time, we reap the literal fruits of this labor.”

The transformation happening in the garden isn’t reserved to the seeds that sprout into salad-makings – it’s happening among the people as well. Patrick+ and Sara shared the story of one woman who comes to the garden every Tuesday to help with the flower harvest.

“She’s typically more reserved, a bit quiet, but feels safe in the garden. One day, she opened up and shared some prayer needs.” Sara recalled. “Through her willingness to be prayed for in the

garden, more people began offering prayers for one another, and it led to a special prayer time. The garden is creating space for intimacy, authenticity, and connection, and for a sacred space for the Spirit to work. I'm not sure we could have had this level of openness and vulnerability without the garden."

At Tree of Life's community garden, we're reminded that the work of contending for shalom with Jesus, the great Gardner, includes growing nourishing food *and* beautiful flowers: food for the body and food for the soul. This work is often slow when it comes to mending lives—all our lives. Every person brings something valuable to the table.

QUIZ QUESTION 4:

The 18th of October is set aside for St. Luke the Evangelist, credited with writing two major books of the New Testament: the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. What other activity does the Bible say St. Luke engaged in after becoming a Christian?

- A.** Resistance against the Romans
- B.** Missionary trips
- C.** Meditation in the desert, as a hermit
- D.** Founding hospitals and leper colonies

'RITE 4'? NOT YET, BUT EPISCOPAL CHURCH ENCOURAGES EXPERIMENTATION WITH NEW LITURGIES

BY DAVID PAULSEN | POSTED SEP 18, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The photo is of St. Stephen & the Incarnation in Washington, D.C.

A quick Episcopal liturgical quiz: How many rites for Holy Eucharist are contained in the Book of Common Prayer?

If you said four, you'd be wrong – the prayer book offers the traditional Rite One, the contemporary Rite Two and a third liturgical order available for special circumstances – but a liturgy known as “Rite 4” does exist, if only at one congregation, [St. Stephen & the Incarnation Episcopal Church](#) in Washington, D.C.

Rite 4 is the name given by James Frazer, a parishioner at St. Stephen & the Incarnation, to a liturgical project he took on a few years ago. Frazer's objective was to write a new liturgy for Holy Eucharist that blends some of the poetry he loves from Rite One with the more conversational phrasings of Rite Two. “I was trying to do something in the middle of that,” Frazer told Episcopal News Service in a phone interview.

“At first I called it Rite 1.5,” Frazer said. “It's basically a personal obsession.” He also incorporated a wider range of descriptions of the divine, generally avoiding gendered language. With permission from Washington Bishop

Mariann Budde, St. Stephen & the Incarnation tested out Frazer's new liturgy in its Sunday services over the summer.

Although Frazer's liturgy is still a long way from ever making it into the Book of Common Prayer, The Episcopal Church in recent years has encouraged liturgical experimentation by local congregations like St. Stephen & the Incarnation as part of the ongoing churchwide process of prayer book revision. Some of those experimental liturgies never make it to worship services beyond their originating congregations. Others, if there is wider interest, might be proposed for review and revision by the church's [Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music](#).

Ultimately, it is up to General Convention, the church's primary governing body, to decide which liturgies will be accepted for churchwide use, whether as part of the prayer book or as an addition to the growing list of alternative and trial-use liturgies. The full list can be found at [episcopalcommonprayer.org](#).

If a liturgy has not yet been authorized by General Convention, Episcopalians

interested in trying it out must follow an essential rule: Ask the bishop first.

That rule underscores the importance of the church's central liturgical text, the Book of Common Prayer. "It is the common worship experience for all Episcopal churches," the Rev. Cynthia Black, chair of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, told ENS. "When it is not used at the primary service on Sunday, it absolutely has to have the permission of the bishop."

Black was not familiar with Frazer's so-called "Rite 4" liturgy, but she said the church generally encourages such experimentation as long as it is locally authorized by the bishop and follows General Convention resolutions encouraging the development of new liturgical texts. She pointed to resolutions adopted in [2018](#) and [2022](#) that established "[Principles to Guide the Development of Liturgical Texts](#)." General Convention also approved in 2022 "[Guidelines for Expansive and Inclusive Language](#)."

"The way that the church considers new liturgies is for local communities to develop them within their context, and then at some point in time to commend them to the General Convention," Black said. "At that point, it becomes the work of the General Convention and the SCLM and the House of Bishops and theology committees."

Not all of those new liturgies can clear the procedural hurdles to be offered for

churchwide use. Even those that receive authorization typically end up looking different from how they were first proposed, after undergoing rounds of scrutiny and further revision by churchwide bodies, Black said.

That said, the process originates with individuals and congregations interested in developing liturgies that speak to their local contexts. "Any congregation theoretically can do that," Black said.

Frazer, a New Jersey native who grew up in the Presbyterian Church, said he was drawn to The Episcopal Church later in life partly by the beauty of its liturgy. He initially attended Rite One worship services at another church in Washington and later joined St. Stephen & the Incarnation, where he became familiar with the congregation's Rite Two services.

After retiring from a career as a banking regulatory lawyer in 2019, he was inspired to take up liturgical revision after reading an article about General Convention's call for local experimentation. He's not a poet or a writer, he said, but "I can read closely and edit things."

After several years of reading and editing the Book of Common Prayer's liturgies for Holy Eucharist, he had produced a variation that blended the two primary rites while adding new language. He

developed a modular structure with both a base text and contemporary text, so a liturgist can “mix and match” for the worship service.

“I realized you can't really come up with a perfect comprise between contemporary language and traditional language because everybody draws the line at a different place,” Frazer said.

He presented the text to the Rev. Yoimel Gonzalez Hernandez, St. Stephen & the Incarnation's rector, asking if the congregation would be open to trying the liturgy in its Sunday services. After offering feedback and reviewing further revisions, Hernandez sought authorization from the bishop to use the liturgy “for a season,” from Pentecost to the end of the summer.

“Just to see how the text passes the proof of being a liturgical text and to try it with the congregation,” Hernandez told ENS. “In general, the response has been good.”

Frazer also [posted the liturgy online](#) for others to review. A [news release in June](#) drove quite a bit of traffic to that website, Frazer said, though he has only received a few direct inquiries from



Episcopalians interested in learning more about his “Rite 4” liturgy.

Black told ENS she had some concerns about calling the liturgy “Rite 4,” because it might create the false assumption that the liturgy has already been adopted into the Book of Common Prayer.

“Obviously, it hasn't,” she said, but she welcomed the efforts of congregations and individuals to develop liturgies that respond to the needs of their communities, regardless of whether those liturgies ever rise to the level of prayer book authorization.

“It's why community is so important,” Black said. “A community developing a liturgy that's consistent with who they are is so important.”

And, as always, don't forget to ask the bishop.

WESTERN LOUISIANA CHURCH TO BUILD WATER FILLING STATION IN CITY WITH FAILING MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

BY DAVID PAULSEN | SEPTEMBER 24, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The picture is a conceptual rendering of the filling station.

The Rev. Laurent De Prins, rector of Epiphany Opelousas in the Diocese of Western Louisiana, had just finished speaking by phone with Episcopal News Service about the clean water crisis affecting his community when he received an alert underscoring just how severe that crisis has become.

De Prins and other Opelousas residents have become accustomed to frequent boil water advisories. Minutes after his Sept. 22 interview with ENS, he spotted a notice on social media that the city again was advising residents to boil their water before drinking or cooking with it.

“Thanks for your patience and cooperation,” the city’s advisory said.

Even after the city lifts its boil water advisory, many residents still consider the municipal water undrinkable, De Prins said. For years, Opelousas’ tap water – ranging from yellow to brown – has been found to be filled with contaminants and “may pose a health risk over an extended period of time,” according to a 2023 state report. Many residents opt out of the dilapidated water system entirely by buying bottled water or filling larger jugs for a fee at consumer filling stations, while

city officials pursue a costly long-term fix for the failing infrastructure.

Any permanent municipal solution is still years away, so the Epiphany congregation decided to help with a temporary remedy. With a \$82,000 grant awarded this year by The Episcopal Church’s United Thank Offering, the congregation plans to purchase and install a water filtration and filling station on church grounds. Once installed, residents will be able to fill up on clean, safe water – free of charge.

The congregation initially considered buying individual water filters to distribute to residents but concluded that option was not financially feasible, De Prins said. “Doing one centralized water filling station made the most sense.”

The church is centrally located in Opelousas, and the congregation envisions building a kind of shed to house the filling station, with two vending windows to accommodate residents who bring their own jugs. The system would use reverse osmosis technology to remove any impurities in the city water and an additional layer of UV filtration to kill bacteria.

De Prins is hopeful that the filling station will be up and running by spring 2026. The congregation has been supportive of the project as a way to follow the Christian call “to meet the needs of our neighbor to love our neighbors as ourselves,” he said.

The church also will benefit. Its own drinking water often comes out of the tap looking dingy and unappetizing, De Prins said.

Opelousas is a city of 15,000 people about a half hour north of Lafayette and an hour west of the state capital, Baton Rouge. Census records show 34% of residents live below the



poverty level, a rate nearly twice as high as the statewide poverty average and nearly three times the national average.

That means many city residents may struggle to afford bottled water after still being expected to pay their municipal water bills in support of an unreliable, potentially hazardous public system, De Prins said.

For years, studies have shown that public system to be deficient, a fact residents could see with their own eyes. “The

water is brown everywhere,” Kyedric Parker told KLFY-TV in 2022. “We don’t want to be bathing or drinking or cooking with this water. We need it fixed now.”

At that time, city officials blamed a water main break for the brown water. “It is something we address immediately and as fast as we can possibly get somebody on-site at that time,” Mayor Julius Alsandor told KLFY.

But the ongoing scope of the problem is extensive and has not improved. In 2023,

a teenage Opelousas resident, Nyla Belton, told the news website Capital B that the poor water quality was contributing to a local environment

where she fears for her health and safety.

“It makes me feel unsafe and unsanitary and that everything is dirty,” Belton said. “The water companies and the government don’t really care.”

In 2024, when a city engineer presented the state’s latest analysis of the water system to the Opelousas City Council, the outlook was bleak.

“Every well has some issues that need to be addressed,” engineer William Jarrell

told city leaders. "Your water treatment facility has to be upgraded or rehabilitated. Your distribution system has an excessive number of leaks and your storage facilities, all of them, need work. So pretty much everything in your system."

The city has sought outside funding to assist in its pending overhaul of the entire water and sewer system, a fix that is expected to take years to complete.

"There's just a huge plethora of water issues," De Prins told ENS. In the meantime, his congregation is working with engineers and contractors to get its water filling station installed and running.

Epiphany's was one of 27 projects included in a more than \$1 million award in June from the United Thank Offering. This round of UTO grants was focused on projects providing water access, sanitation and education.

Most of Epiphany's grant will be spent on installing the filling station. The design is still being finalized, and De Prins would welcome a design that would allow the church to move the filling station to another community in need, once Opelousas' public water crisis ends. Until then, the church will also need to pay for the water distributed from its filling station. Epiphany will accept donations but will not charge anyone to fill up their water jugs, De Prins said.

"If we can keep construction costs down to what we had budgeted or less, that provides us more funding [from the UTO grant] to offset the cost of the water," he added.

De Prins doesn't know how many people will take advantage of the filling station or what the usage costs will be for the church, but the congregation is eager to get it up and running.

QUIZ QUESTION 5:

In the Anglican Church, sacramentals may be used in personal devotions.

Which of the following objects is such a sacramental?

- A.** A votive candle
- B.** A pew in a church
- C.** A bookmark placed in a Bible
- D.** A decorative sign placed over a church entrance

SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES PLEADS FOR DIALOGUE AND PEACE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the [Anglican Communion News Service](#). The photo is of members of the South Sudan Council of Churches.

[\[Continued from front page\]](#)

Representatives from the ten member churches of the SSCC met between September 9 and 13 in Kenya to discuss the ongoing situation in the country. A statement was then shared as a result of those discussions, signed by representatives of several South Sudanese Christian traditions, including the Most Revd Justin Badi Arama, Archbishop and Primate of the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan & Bishop of Juba.

Statement on the situation in South Sudan and the proposed way forward

Quoting Isaiah 1:18, the statement begins: 'Let us dialogue and live in Peace!'

'We, the Heads of Churches, come to you with a message of hope, encouragement and peace. As a body committed to the spiritual and moral guidance of our nation, we remain steadfast in our support for a peaceful and prosperous South Sudan.'

'Cognizant that South Sudan continues to grapple with a profound political and humanitarian crisis, persistent delays in the implementation of R-ARCSS,

ongoing sub-national violence, severe economic hardships and deep erosion of public trust. All these have left the peace process fragile and the population in a state of enduring suffering.

The statement goes on to acknowledge the 'need for a critical and timely intervention aimed at breaking the political deadlock that threatens the fragile peace in South Sudan' and highlight the need for 'safe spaces for country-wide genuine dialogue and... a tangible pathway to lasting peace for conflict-fatigued South Sudanese.'

The statement remarks 'that the nation stands at a perilous crossroads where stagnation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement risks undoing sustained efforts towards cultivating peace in South Sudan' and goes on to say that after reflection and prayer and inspired by the church's calling and prophetic Ministry of peace and reconciliation, the Council agree to the following:

1. The Church shall assert its divine mandate to minister peace and reconciliation as urged by the South Sudanese people.

2. Articulate the voice of the suffering South Sudanese people and serve as the independent conscience of the nation.
3. Act as a trusted, neutral bridge between conflicting South Sudanese parties and as an instrument of transformation/reconstruction of South Sudan.
4. Establish a mechanism for dialogue through a Church Initiative for National Healing and Reconciliation (CINHR).
5. Urge political leaders to move from mere rhetoric to actionable commitments for peace and dialogue.
6. Call for general amnesty and national forgiveness, including those in detention, and those who have taken up arms against the state.

7. Exert considerable moral and spiritual influence over South Sudanese leaders to encourage compliance and good-faith negotiation.
8. Commit to advocating against proxy interferences and present a coherent, unified regional stance on South Sudan.
9. Champion Church Initiative for National Healing and Reconciliation (CINHR) process at the Local, and National. And urge the Regional and International Forums like the AACC, WCC, EAC, AU, Peace and Security Council, IGAD and the UN to support the Church led initiative.
10. Encourage respective allies within South Sudan to engage constructively with the Church-led process.

The statement concluded 'With prayers and steadfast love'.



REPORT ON SOUL SURVIVOR CALLS FOR 'HEALTHY SCEPTICISM' ABOUT SIGNS AND WONDERS

MADELEINE DAVIES | SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the [Church Times](#). The photo is of Mike Pilavachi speaking at the Soul Survivor festival in 2019. The Church Times is a British news service, therefore some spellings will differ from American spelling.

Claims about the presence and work of God should be accompanied by a "healthy scepticism", a new report on [Soul Survivor](#) suggests. Churches should help people to "dwell with the fallibility and provisionality of their identifications of and feelings about God's presence, however intense".

The recommendation features in [Resetting the Balance: Listening to testimonies of harm in the Mike Pilavachi case](#), a report by researchers at Durham University. Professor Mike Higton worked alongside Dr Jonas Kurlberg and Dr Nina Kurlberg, two theologians who engaged in the project as both researchers and participants (their experiences with Mr Pilavachi "occurred on different occasions and do not overlap", the report says).

It is now two years since the Church of England's [National Safeguarding Team](#) concluded that allegations about Mr Pilavachi, the founder and leader of Soul Survivor, were substantiated, reporting that he had "used his spiritual authority to control people", and that his "coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and

massaging of young male interns" ([News, 7 September 2023](#)).

The new Durham report is presented as an attempt to centre the voices and perspectives of survivors and victims, which, it says, "have not received sufficient attention thus far". It draws on interviews with eight people. Their testimonies make up the bulk of the report, which includes analysis of the theological context operative at Soul Survivor. "Many believed that [Pilavachi] was anointed and, as such, had privileged access to God," it says.

The report frames its recommendations for use within Charismatic contexts, making reference to the strengths of this movement and to the ways in which this heritage was "betrayed" at Soul Survivor.

Noting the part played by prophecy and invocations of the Holy Spirit, it advises: "It might be important, without undercutting the expectation that God will work, or the trust that God is now working, to cultivate also a certain provisionality, a certain quality of waiting, in relation to our discernments of where and how God is in fact at work.



“Our discernments are always fallible, however compelling they seem to us at the time, and they always concern people and situations that are complex mixes of the helpful and the harmful. In that light, we need communities and practices that enable us to keep on paying attention, to keep on looking for the fruit that emerges over time, and always to be ready to pay attention when we see signs that tell us when something is deeply amiss.”

It also recommends that Church leaders develop “a literacy in power”. The report says: “They need to be alert not just to the overt ways in which someone in a position of power can try to enforce compliance and quash dissent, but to the less visible forms that emotional, psychological and spiritual manipulation can take, and the ways in which people and institutions can end up colluding with such manipulation without necessarily seeing what they are doing.”

It observes: “The more intimately people share about themselves in worship and fellowship, the more vulnerable they are, and the more safeguards need to be in place.” Young adults, who “fall outside the remit of typical safeguarding policies”, are “in a

uniquely vulnerable position that comes, amongst other things, from being in a transitional stage of life”.

Those interviewed expressed disappointment about the apparent lack of repentance shown by former leaders at Soul Survivor. The presence of older leaders had played a part in “legitimising and normalising” Mr Pilavachi’s behaviour, the reports concludes.

“I would just like them to say, I wish I’d done more, like I knew that Mike was hurting people and I tried, but I didn’t do enough,” one man said. He recalled how the Revd Bob Yule (now deceased) and his wife had been brought in as pastors, and would “basically pick up pieces, like they would find the people Mike had hurt, love them, encourage them. And, you know, in a way that was like very sweet and genuine, and, like, caring. But what it did was perpetuate the abuse over a long period of time.”

QUIZ ANSWERS:

The following questions come from Fun Trivia [October Saints Trivia Quiz](#) and [Sacramentals Trivia Quiz](#).

Question 1: Several of Jesus Christ's apostles shared names with each other: there were two Jameses, two Judases, and two Simons. One Simon was later renamed Peter; the other, a passionate man celebrated on October 28, had what nickname?

Answer D. The Zealot

Not much is known about St. Simon the Zealot. In fact, even his nickname initially caused confusion: "Kananaios" ("Zealot") was often mistaken for "Kanaïos" (from Cana), leading to a legend that he was from the town where Jesus performed His first miracle. Other legends sprang up about his death; he is usually said to have been martyred, but no one can agree on where. (Guesses range from Persia to Spain to Great Britain.) Nor is it known what, precisely, St. Simon was so zealous about. (Presumably, zeal for Christianity would not have differentiated him from St. Simon Peter.) Personally, when I think of St. Simon Zealot, I think of the scene in "Jesus Christ Superstar" wherein the saint's rock-opera counterpart unsuccessfully urges Christ to go to war against Rome and thereby rule the world.

Question 2: During a liturgy or Mass, the Gifts, or materials prior to their consecration as Holy Communion, will be brought to the altar. What is the name for the sacramentals used to contain the wine as it is carried to the altar?

Answer: C. Cruets

Cruets are most commonly used in the Catholic and Anglican churches. They are usually made of glass. Metal may also be used. As part of the preparation for distribution of the Eucharist, the wine is transferred from the cruet into the chalice.

Question 3: Sacramentals may also include gestures or physical practices used during worship. In Catholic and Anglican churches, one may see members of the congregation carry out a genuflection. What is this?

Answer: B. Touching one knee to the floor

Genuflection is often accompanied by making the Sign of the Cross. It may be done upon entering or leaving the church, and after receiving Communion. It is a sign of respect to the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist.

Question 4: The 18th of October is set aside for St. Luke the Evangelist, credited with writing two major books of the New Testament: the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. What other activity does the Bible say St. Luke engaged in after becoming a Christian?

Answer: B. Missionary trips

St. Luke, whom tradition holds to have been a doctor from Syria, had a busy life in the first century. In addition to his writings (a Gospel meant to spread the Christian message to non-Jews, and an account of the early development of the Church), he seems to have traveled far and wide with St. Paul as one of Christianity's first missionaries. They went together from Troas to Philippi (Acts 16:10-17) and from Philippi to Jerusalem (Acts 20:5-24); later, they went to Rome (Colossians 4:14), where St. Paul was imprisoned.

Question 5: In the Anglican Church, sacramentals may be used in personal devotions. Which of the following objects is such a sacramental?

Answer: A. A votive candle

Votive candles often take the form of small candles such as "tea lights." They may be lit while a person is at prayer.

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ADDRESS: 1001 SOUTH GOLIAD,

BIG SPRING, TX 79720

OFFICE PHONE: 432-267-8201

EMAIL: STMARYSBST@GMAIL.COM

WEBSITE: WWW.STMARYSTEXAS.ORG

PARISH STAFF

Rector: Fr. Christopher Simpson

Deacon: Connie Fowler

Treasurer: Sherri Anthony

Secretary: Bailey Saffle

Organist: Jeanette Swain

Sexton: Lupe Ortiz

VESTRY

Sr. Warden: Bob Miller

Jr. Warden: Bryan Beal

Deacon: Connie Fowler

Members:

Jeri Stockton, John Moody,

Jocelyn Carrillo, Lyndell Moody.

MISSION

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