

ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2025

THE HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S

We at St. Mary's in Big Spring are a traditional Anglican-Episcopal parish joining together the best elements of Catholicism and the Reformation: combining the faithful study of Holy Scripture with the rich symbolism of the Sacraments (like Baptism and Holy Eucharist/Communion) and representing both historical connection with the great common tradition of the Christian faith and a form of worship accessible to people today. Every Sunday we worship using an ancient, reverent, intimate, and beautiful liturgy in the Anglican tradition (from the Book of Common Prayer) ...

[Continues in Parish News, Page 4.](#)



TEXAS JUDGES WON'T FACE SANCTIONS FOR TURNING DOWN SAME-SEX WEDDINGS ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS

Texas judges who decline to perform a wedding ceremony based on a "sincerely held religious belief" do not violate the state's rules on judicial impartiality, according to a comment the Texas Supreme Court [added](#) to the state's judicial conduct code last week.

The high court's comment on Oct. 24, effective immediately, could have statewide implications for gay marriage and potentially play a role in a [federal lawsuit attempting](#) to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized gay marriage.

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

ARIZONA EPISCOPAL CHURCH CONTINUES SERVING UNHOUSED, LOW- INCOME PEOPLE DESPITE LAWSUIT THREATS

For more than 25 years, [Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tucson, Arizona](#), has unconditionally served unhoused and low-income people in its community. The parish offers various social services, showers, a food pantry and a cafeteria for anyone in need.

"Our ministry to unhoused people and to people who have homes but can't make ends meet is a central part of who we are as individuals and as a church," the Rev. Steve Keplinger, Grace St. Paul's rector of 13 years, told Episcopal News Service.

Grace St. Paul's, located in the Blenman-Elm Historic District in Midtown, ...

[Continues in National 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.

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.)

Which of the following is another name for All Saint's Day?

- A. Reformation Day
- B. Remembrance Sunday
- C. Festivus
- D. Halloween

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

1st All Saints' Day

2nd Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

6th Celebration of New Ministry & St. Mary's 140th anniversary

9th Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

16th Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

23rd Last Sunday after Pentecost: Christ the King

27th Thanksgiving Day

30th First Sunday of Advent

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Sunday

9:30 AM- Christian Education

10:30 AM- Morning Service

Coffee Hour- Following the service

Wednesday

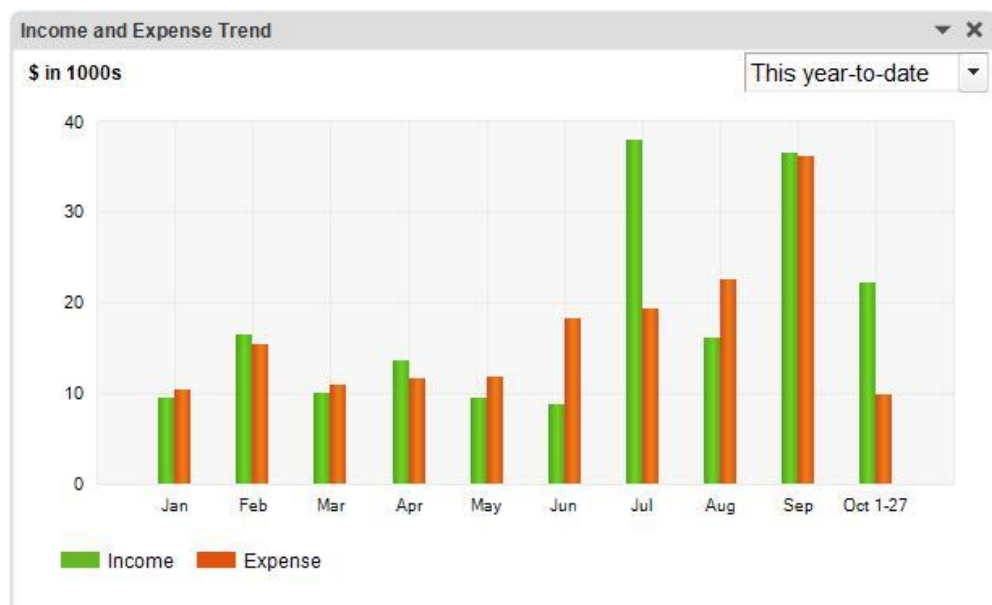
10:30 AM- Bible Study/Coffee hour

5:30 PM- Evening Prayer

Monday thru Thursday

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

INCOME & EXPENSE REPORTS



THE HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S

OCTOBER 2025

The following text was written by Charla Lewis and Bailey Saffle using various articles about the church's history. The article was then edited by Fr. Christopher Simpson. The article was published in the Big Spring Herald to promote the Celebration event taking place on November 6th.

[\[Continued from front page\]](#) that incorporates both Word and Sacrament in a classic form that Christians have used for centuries.

Our history starts in the 1880s on the plains of West Texas which was still the untamed frontier. When St. Mary's was established in Big Spring, Texas, it was the western-most mission in the district of Northern Texas (later the Diocese of Dallas). Bishop Garrett conducted the first Episcopal church service in a school building in March 1885. Following a gift of land from a member family, the church was organized in November 1885. The donation of land that made the church building possible would begin a long history of generous contributions from parishioners that would have a great impact on the church and community.

This first structure was destroyed by a tornado in July 1897, only a year after the cornerstone was laid. But St. Mary's members, then as today, would not give up and the cornerstone for a new building was laid in 1899 with the new church consecrated in July 1900. This building would serve the congregation until the 1950s when, having been given parish status in 1935, St. Mary's found its current building too small to hold the

burgeoning Episcopal population. The town of Big Spring was booming because it was the home of a U.S. Air Force base and the site of oil drilling. A seven-year fund-raising campaign and many generous gifts made possible the uniquely beautiful building still used today, designed by noted Dallas architect Harwell Hamilton Harris and modeled after monasteries of the Middle Ages.

The church was built with thoughtful consideration by Harris and the church's Building Committee. In the words of the 1956-1961 Building Committee "given the sun-drenched brightness of West Texas, the complex should establish a transition to a darker more contemplative atmosphere, so that entry to the church would progress through a courtyard and terminate in the subdued light of the Nave [seating for the congregation] with a brightly lit altar claiming the focus of the journey from the street. [Harris] felt it important that one not enter directly from the street but be forced to walk through an atmosphere less harsh to permit time for composure and preparation for worship."

In 1960 the church started St. Mary's Episcopal School with a kindergarten

program that grew into an elementary school residing until 1981 in the church building complex. Thanks to a parishioner's donation, the school was moved into a separate location where it continued to thrive until the late 1990s. It closed in 2001 for financial reasons.

On August 7, 1966 the present Nave and Sanctuary were dedicated, representing the completion of the original architectural plans. A bell cast in 1899 was moved from the belfry of the old church and installed on the grounds of the current church.

In the 1970s St. Mary's began a major mission for Big Spring in Canterbury Retirement Homes. The non-profit corporation still today provides within its 179 apartment units safe and affordable housing for the elderly and disabled under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Due to the escalation of complicated housing regulations, in 2013 the Canterbury Board of Directors, two-thirds of whom were required to be members of St. Mary's church, made the decision to transfer the property assets of Canterbury to another non-profit, faith-based organization.

The city would see a major demographic shift as the Air Force base closed in 1977; soon the oil boom would turn to "bust" and Big Spring began to lose population. The church members did not escape

some of the turmoil felt by the rest of the town with the airbase and oilfield exodus; this led to a decrease in church attendance.

Throughout the years, St. Mary's parishioners have supported community outreach by celebrating the Blessing of the Animals each year in October, donating time and resources to the Happy Day Humane Society, and participating in the Salvation Army's events during the holiday season. These are just a few of the contributions made by our members.

In the present day, St. Mary's is led by the Rev. Dr. Christopher Simpson, who has brought new energy and ideas. Fr. Christopher was previously the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Lincoln, Illinois. Prior to entering the priesthood, he was a professor of theology and philosophy at Lincoln Christian University (in IL) for fifteen years. Fr. Christopher has also authored several scholarly books.

Every Sunday we welcome everyone—whether you are an Episcopalian, Christian from another tradition, or if you are seeking or just curious—to our 10:30 service at St Mary's (at 1001 S. Goliad—just north of the high school). We welcome all baptized Christians to join us in partaking of Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

FEDERAL APPEALS COURT WILL HEAR ARGUMENTS IN TEXAS' AND LOUISIANA'S TEN COMMANDMENTS CASES IN JANUARY

BY JADEN EDISON, ELEANOR KLIBANOFF, AND ALEJANDRO SERRANO

The following article has been taken from [25 News KXXV](#). The picture is of the bench for the Federal Appeals Court taken from [United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit](#).



A federal appeals court next year will hear Texas' arguments against a ruling that blocked nearly a dozen school districts from displaying posters of the Ten Commandments.

The 17 active judges on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in January [will hear](#) both the Texas case and a similar case happening in Louisiana, which was the first state to pass a requirement to post the Ten Commandments in classrooms.

The video player is currently playing an ad. You can skip the ad in 5 sec with a mouse or keyboard

A federal judge in August found Texas' Ten Commandments law unconstitutional and temporarily blocked it from taking full effect, following an initial lawsuit against 11 school districts. The complaint was brought forth by 16 families of various religious and

nonreligious backgrounds, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas and a coalition of religious freedom organizations. The civil rights groups later sued 14 more districts.

The ruling only applied to the 11 school districts named in the groups' first lawsuit, though attorneys expressed hope in court that other districts would not implement the law. But those lawyers later told the same court in a legal filing that many districts are implementing the new law or have signaled an intent to do so.

In his August decision, U.S. District Judge Fred Biery concluded that the law favors Christianity over other faiths, is not neutral with respect to religion and is likely to interfere with families' "exercise of their sincere religious or nonreligious beliefs in substantial ways."

"There are ways in which students could be taught any relevant history of the Ten

Commandments without the state selecting an official version of scripture, approving it in state law, and then displaying it in every classroom on a permanent basis," Biery wrote in his opinion, adding that the law "crosses the line from exposure to coercion."

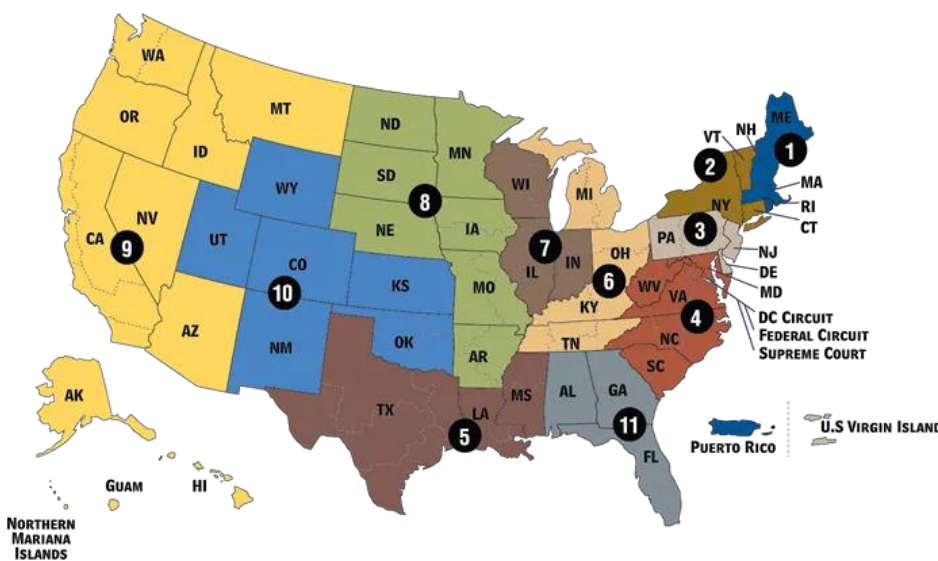
Texas appealed the ruling, sending the case to the same court where a three-judge panel recently blocked Louisiana's Ten Commandments law from taking effect. The state requested that all active judges on the court hear the case, as opposed to a three-judge panel. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asked the court to take up Texas' and Louisiana's appeals together, which it granted in late October.

"The Ten Commandments are a cornerstone of American law, and that fact simply cannot be erased by radical, anti-American groups trying to ignore our moral heritage," Paxton said. "There

is no legal reason to stop Texas from honoring a core ethical foundation of our law, especially not a bogus claim about the 'separation of church and state,' which is a phrase found nowhere in the Constitution."

Oral arguments in the Texas case, Rabbi Nathan v. Alamo Heights Independent School District, concluded in August, several weeks after the 16 families, of various religious backgrounds and represented by the religious freedom organizations, sued the state over what their lawyers called "catastrophically unconstitutional" legislation. Cribbs Ringer v. Comal Independent School District, the latest legal filing, includes more than a dozen new families.

In court, the attorneys argued with a lawyer from the state attorney general's office over the role Founding Fathers like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison played in developing the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment, which protects the freedom of religion. Both parties also debated the influence of the Ten Commandments on the country's legal and educational systems, and whether the



Map of the federal districts for the Court of Appeals from [United States Courts](#)

version of the Ten Commandments required to go up in schools belongs to a particular religious group.

Another group of parents [filed a similar lawsuit](#) in Dallas during the summer.

Texas' Ten Commandments law was one of the [latest measures](#) passed by the Republican-controlled Legislature earlier this year. Critics say the law injects religion into the state's public schools, attended by roughly 5.5 million children.

The background

[Senate Bill 10](#), by Republican Sen. [Phil King](#) of Weatherford, [required](#) the Ten Commandments to be displayed in classrooms on donated posters sized at least 16 by 20 inches. Gov. [Greg Abbott](#) signed the law in late June, the day after the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found a similar law in Louisiana was "plainly unconstitutional." The court ruled that requiring schools to post the Ten Commandments would cause an "irreparable deprivation" of First Amendment rights. An Arkansas judge ruled similarly in a separate case.

Supporters argue that the Ten Commandments and teachings of Christianity broadly are vital to understanding U.S. history, a controversial message that has resurged in recent years as part of a broader national movement to undermine the long-held interpretation of church-state separation. Texas GOP lawmakers have [passed a number of laws](#) in recent

years to further codify their conservative religious views, a trend [encouraged and celebrated by Christian leaders](#).

"This issue is likely to get to the United States Supreme Court," Biery, the judge, told a San Antonio courtroom prior to opening arguments in the Texas case.

Biery's August ruling blocking the law from taking full effect applied to the following school districts: Alamo Heights, North East, Lackland, Northside, Austin, Lake Travis, Dripping Springs, Houston, Fort Bend, Cypress-Fairbanks and Plano.

The latest lawsuit from the ACLU seeks further action in the following districts: Comal, Georgetown, Conroe, Flour Bluff, Fort Worth, Arlington, McKinney, Frisco, Northwest, Azle, Rockwall, Lovejoy, Mansfield, McAllen.

What are the plaintiffs saying

"Posting the Ten Commandments in public schools is un-American and un-Baptist," Griff Martin, a pastor, parent and plaintiff in the first ACLU lawsuit, said in a statement. "S.B. 10 undermines the separation of church and state as a bedrock principle of my family's Baptist heritage. Baptists have long held that the government has no role in religion — so that our faith may remain free and authentic."

In the lawsuit brought by the North Texas parents, the plaintiffs, who identify as Christian, said the law was unconstitutional and violated their right to direct their children's upbringing.

One of them, a Christian minister, said the displays will offer a message of religious intolerance, “implying that anyone who does not believe in the state’s official religious scripture is an outsider and not fully part of the community.” That message, the minister argued, conflicts with the religious, social justice and civil rights beliefs he seeks to teach his kids.



The U.S. Fifth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals taken from [Louisiana Illuminator](#).

Another North Texas plaintiff, a mother of two, is worried she will be “forced” to have sensitive and perhaps premature conversations about topics like adultery with her young children — and also “does not desire that her minor children to be instructed by their school about the biblical conception of adultery,” the suit states.

The plaintiffs in the ACLU suit come from diverse religious backgrounds, including families who are nonreligious. Allison Fitzpatrick said in a statement that she fears her children will think they are violating school rules because they don’t adhere to commandments like honoring the Sabbath.

“The state of Texas has no right to dictate to children how many gods to worship, which gods to worship, or whether to worship any gods at all,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the

Freedom From Religion Foundation, which brought the lawsuit alongside the ACLU.

The attorneys called the version of the Ten Commandments in SB 10 a “state-sponsored Protestant version,” which was corroborated by their witness, constitutional law professor and religious history expert Steven Green. They argued against the notion that the Ten Commandments were central to the development of the country’s legal and educational systems, which Green agreed lacked historical support. The court also found Green’s testimony more persuasive than the state’s.

What the state is saying

The attorney general’s office argued in the August hearing that the Ten Commandments are part of the nation’s history and heritage, and that previous rulings from federal courts and the U.S.

Supreme Court blocking the commandments from going up in classrooms did not examine that historical significance.

Attorneys for the state noted that the Supreme Court recently shot down the test that courts previously relied on to determine when a government had unconstitutionally endorsed or established a religion. And attorneys pointed out a decades-old ruling in a Nebraska case, regarding a Ten Commandments monument on city property, where an appeals court decided in favor of the monument that displayed the same version of the commandments Texas wants to show in public schools. They relied on that ruling to make the case that SB 10 does not favor a particular religious group.

Their viewpoint was supported in court by Mark David Hall, a professor and

author who studies religious liberty and church-state relations. Hall, the state's expert witness, recently wrote a book that considers how "Christian Nationalism Is Not an Existential Threat to America or the Church."

Attorney William Farrell from the attorney general's office described SB 10's requirement as a "passive display on the wall" that does not rise to the level of coercion. The Ten Commandments posters must only go up if they are donated to the school, he further argued, and the law does not specify what would happen if districts choose not to comply. The state views that as evidence that it poses no threat or harm to families.

"SB 10 doesn't restrict anything," Farrell said. "It doesn't exclude anything or specifically require any ... participation by students."

QUIZ QUESTION 2:

In what country, where this day is known as La Toussaint, do people often place chrysanthemums on graves for the holiday?

- A. France
- B. Italy
- C. Bulgaria
- D. Brazil

TEXAS JUDGES WON'T FACE SANCTIONS FOR TURNING DOWN SAME-SEX WEDDINGS ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS

BY TOLUWANI OSIBAMOWO | OCTOBER 29, 2025

The following text and photo have been taken from the [Texas Tribune](#). The photo is of the Jasper County Courthouse.

[Continued from front page] The rule change appears to answer a question of state law that the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals posed to the Texas Supreme Court in April, which was prompted by a [lawsuit](#) challenging the State Commission on Judicial Conduct's now-withdrawn sanction of a [Waco judge](#) who refused to marry gay couples while continuing to marry straight couples. The plaintiff in that suit, a North Texas county judge, sued saying he was afraid he could face the same punishment.

Texas Supreme Court clerk Blake Hawthorne said in an email to KERA News the court cannot comment on the rule change.

"The order speaks for itself, and the Court cannot comment on its connection to pending litigation," Hawthorne said.

The State Commission on Judicial Conduct declined to comment.

The court's clarification amended Canon 4 of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, which prohibits judges from doing things outside their judicial role that would cast doubt on their ability to act impartially or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.



It's the rule the commission accused Waco Justice of the Peace Dianne Hensley of violating when it issued a [public warning](#) against her in 2019, saying her refusal to marry people based on their sexual orientation cast doubt on her ability to appear impartial as a judge.

When the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* legalized gay marriage nationally in 2015, it required judges and justices of the peace — who in Texas are allowed but aren't required to officiate weddings — to either officiate both gay and straight marriages or none at all. Hensley, citing her Christian beliefs, chose not to officiate any weddings following the U.S. Supreme Court decision.

She [then decided](#) to begin performing weddings again in 2016 — but only for straight couples. She referred same-sex

couples to a different judge and other nearby officiants, according to her court filings.

The justice of the peace [told the Waco Tribune-Herald](#) about that decision in a 2017 interview. Once the judicial conduct commission learned of this, it launched an inquiry into Hensley's policy in 2018 and issued the public warning the next year.

Hensley did not appeal the reprimand but instead sued, arguing for protections under the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which states the government can't make restrictions that substantially burden someone's freedom of religion.

The court [ruled last year](#) Hensley had grounds to proceed with her suit even if she didn't go the administrative route first, but it didn't decide her religious freedom claims. The commission eventually [dismissed](#) its sanction a few months after the Texas Supreme Court's decision, noting that none of the commissioners were at the agency when it reprimanded Hensley, and it withdrew the sanction after reviewing the underlying facts.

The Third Court of Appeals in Austin [sided with Hensley](#) in May, allowing the case to move forward in Travis County District Court.

That's the case Jack County Judge [Brian Umphress](#) pointed to in 2020, when he sued the commission over concerns his

decision to only marry straight couples and not gay couples and his belonging to a church that opposed gay marriage would open him up to potential judicial discipline — especially as he planned to campaign in 2022 for reelection and oppose gay marriage as part of his campaign.

Umphress is not a criminal or civil court judge, or a licensed attorney in Texas, but head of the Jack County Commissioners Court. County judges can officiate marriages in Texas.

A North Texas federal judge dismissed that lawsuit and ruled Umphress didn't have standing to sue, but the 5th Circuit revived it upon appeal. The federal appeals court asked the Texas Supreme Court to weigh in, as it deals with state law.

The Texas Supreme Court has yet to directly answer the 5th Circuit's certified question, but Jason Mazzone, a law professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who has [written about the case](#), said the court's comment seems to resolve Umphress' claims.

Someone could, however, challenge a judge's decision not to marry gay couples on constitutional equal protection grounds in the future, Mazzone said.

"One of the claims that I think will be made in response to litigation that is likely is that, 'well, there are other people who can perform the wedding ceremony, so you can't insist that a particular judge do

it," Mazzone said. "But that, of course, is not how equal protection works, and it's not how we expect government officials to operate."

Douglas Lang, one of the attorneys representing the commission in Umphress' case, said he doesn't believe the new comment answers the certified question.

"I wouldn't prejudge what the Supreme Court says," Lang said. "We've suggested in our briefs what we think they oughta say, but that's what makes an appeal."

Hiram Sasser with the First Liberty Institute, the religious freedom legal nonprofit that helped represent Hensley, said the institute is heartened by the Texas Supreme Court's amendment.

"Now going forward, every judge in Texas will enjoy the freedom Judge Hensley has fought so hard for in her case," Sasser said in a statement. "As for her case specifically, this amendment melts away the reasons the Commission relied on to punish Judge Hensley."

KERA News has reached out to the attorneys representing Umphress and will update this story with any response.

Friday's administrative change comes as Chief Justice [Jimmy Blacklock](#) — who was sympathetic to Hensley's case before his appointment as chief justice — heads the court. When Hensley's case made it up to the Texas Supreme Court, Blacklock [questioned](#) how Hensley's decision showed any more bias than

other judges who declined to perform weddings to avoid marrying same-sex couples.

And although the high court didn't touch on Hensley's RFRA claims, Blacklock wrote in a 16-page [concurring opinion](#) the court should have immediately ruled in Hensley's favor on her religious freedom claims, noting that no same-sex couples seem to have complained about Hensley.

"Judge Hensley treated them respectfully," Blacklock wrote. "They got married nearby. They went about their lives. Judge Hensley went back to work, her Christian conscience clean, her knees bent only to her God. Sounds like a win-win."

The opinion also extensively criticized the State Commission on Judicial Conduct's decision-making in Hensley's case.

The high court's update also comes as Texas voters are being asked to weigh in on changes to the makeup of state judicial commissioners during the [Nov. 4 constitutional amendment election](#). Under [Proposition 12](#), the governor would appoint seven members of the public out of the commission's 13 members. The rest would be a variety of state judges and all would need Senate approval.

Two former public members of the commission [alleged](#) they were removed from the commission after how they voted on Hensley's judicial discipline.

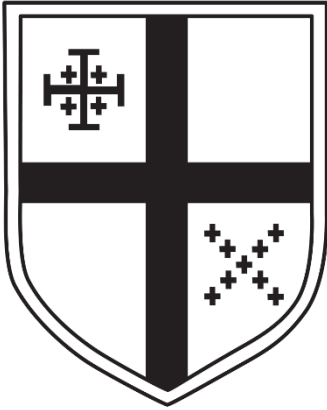
CONTINUING ANGLICANS SPLIT OVER CHURCHMANSHIP

BY GRETA GAFFIN | OCTOBER 22, 2025

The following article has been taken from [the Living Church](#).

Two small continuing Anglican churches have ended a full communion agreement that dates to 2007. They cited differences in churchmanship and the authority of the "[Affirmation of St. Louis](#)," a 1977 text that played a central role in launching the Continuing Anglican movement.

The logo from the United Episcopal Church of North America, taken from the [UECNA](#)



Provocative social-media posts, and the decision of the [United Episcopal Church of North America](#) to

explore fellowship with a conservative German Reformed denomination, heightened tensions with the [Anglican Catholic Church](#).

"I believe you have staked out a position for the UECNA rooted, not in the *Affirmation's* claim to form the interpretive lens for viewing and appropriating Anglican formularies, but rather in what seems to me to be Anglican muddle," wrote Archbishop Mark Haverland of the ACC to Presiding Bishop Peter Robinson of the UECNA in an August 1 letter that appeared in the September/October issue of *The*

Trinitarian, the magazine of the Anglican Catholic Church.

The "Affirmation" was approved by the Congress of St. Louis, a gathering of 2,000 Episcopalians of diverse churchmanship who shared a common opposition to theological liberalism, the ordination of women, and prayer-book revision. The congress authorized the creation of a new Anglican church, to be provisionally known as the Anglican Church in North America (Episcopal).

Four bishops were consecrated for the new church in January 1978, and the Anglican Catholic Church was established in October 1978. Division soon set in over the ACC's predominant Anglo-Catholicism. One of the four original bishops, Charles D.D. Doren, eventually left the ACC's ministry and founded the smaller UECNA, which is mostly broad and low church in ceremonial, in 1981.

In 2007, the two churches set aside their longstanding difference and signed an intercommunion agreement. "We recognize in each other the presence of the essentials of the Christian Faith, Catholic Order, Apostolic Succession, Anglican worship, and Christian morals," Haverland said [at the time](#).

Since then, there have been significant efforts toward greater cooperation and proposals for unification of the two churches. But the relationship began to fray in the last several years, after Robinson began exploring fellowship with the Evangelical and Reformed Synod, a tiny denomination that traces its roots to Calvinist churches established in colonial North America by German immigrants.

The largest of these German churches, the Reformed Church in the United States, experienced a high-church revival in the mid-19th century called the Mercersburg Movement, for the denomination's seminary in Pennsylvania. The Mercersburg Movement was roughly contemporaneous with the Oxford Movement, and was influenced by similar trends. By the mid-20th century, the Evangelical and Reformed Church, as it was then known, had a predominantly liberal ethos, and counted prominent theologians Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich among its leading lights.

In 1957, most of its congregations joined with another merged church, the Congregational Christian Church, to form the United Church of Christ, but some resisted the merger or left the United Church of Christ as it became more progressive, and they formed several small conservative denominations. The [Evangelical and Reformed Synod](#) was among these, claiming the

liturgical and sacramental heritage of the Mercersburg Movement and embracing an episcopal polity.



The symbol of the United Church of Christ taken from the [UCC](#)

In a 2023 [article](#) for the conservative Anglican blog *The North American Anglican*, Robinson described the Evangelical and Reformed Synod as “our German cousins,” citing the influence of the Mercersburg Movement and Lutheran and Reformed influence on the formation of the Book of Common Prayer.

“Overall, the Evangelical and Reformed Liturgy feels very close in theology and atmosphere to the Book of Common Prayer,” Robinson wrote. “Doctrinally, both Evangelical and Reformed Orders of Holy Communion are very close, if not identical to the Book of Common Prayer.” If the Episcopal Church had not wound up with a “liberal Catholic” mindset, he suggested, a union between Anglicans and Reformed churches would seem more logical.

By then, Robinson had already been pursuing such a union for several years, receiving several Reformed pastors and their congregations into fellowship with the UECNA. That action proved to be divisive among his fellow UECNA bishops, and when Robinson's Missionary

Diocese of the East elected the Rev. Aaron Erastus Long, pastor of [Paul's Chapel Reformed Church](#) in Lexington, North Carolina, as a suffragan bishop in 2024, the denomination's House of Bishops refused to ratify the election.

Long's harsh comments on social media about Anglo-Catholicism was likely a concern for some of them. "We must continue to condemn and reject the Anglo Catholics and their papist [Brethren]," Long wrote in a February 2024 Facebook [post](#) in which he also opined that the "Pentecostal/[charismatic] movement is a form of witchcraft same as papism."

After the failed consent, Robinson shifted strategy and agreed to consecrate Long in September 2024 as "Presiding Bishop and President as the Evangelical and Reformed Synod," which Robinson [called](#) "a hopefully temporarily separate body." Long has [described](#) the structure of the synod, which lists 20 churches in the United States, Haiti, Kenya, and Tanzania on its [website](#), as a "bishop in classis model," based on Hungarian Reformed precedents.

"Unfortunately, as Anglicanism in the USA is not given to either forward thinking or rapid action, and is much too inclined to allow personalities to dominate over policy, it was not possible to create a structure within the UECNA within the time available," Robinson [wrote](#) on Facebook after the consecration.

Robinson has also expressed frustration with the "Affirmation of St. Louis," which he thinks overemphasizes Anglo-Catholicism. "The drafting committee was largely Anglo-Catholic, or at least sympathetic to that position, and they seem to have believed that Broad and Low Churchman, rather than Biblical Criticism, societal decay, and liberalism were the origin of the Episcopal Church's [apostasy]," he wrote in a Facebook [post](#), "What Went Wrong with Continuing Anglicanism," on June 30. He wrote that the "Affirmation of St. Louis" expects a belief in seven sacraments, a distinctly Anglo-Catholic position.

All of this was alarming to the ACC, a firmly Anglo-Catholic church. Haverland wrote that at the time of the 2007 communion agreement, Presiding Bishop Stephen Reber said there were no significant theological differences between the two churches and that the UECNA agreed with the "Affirmation of St. Louis."

Haverland said in his statement that ACC bishops gave him the authority to end their intercommunion agreement in 2023, and he finally decided this was necessary. He also wrote that another reason the ACC bishops were unhappy was their belief that



Picture of Archbishop Mark Haverland, taken from the [Anglican Catholic Church](#).

“the UECNA was not careful in fulfilling its freely undertaken obligation not to ‘poach’ our clergy or parishes.”

According to Robinson, “The *Affirmation of St. Louis* was framed with the intent, as one senior Continuing Anglican bishop put it to me, of ensuring that ‘...Anglo-Catholics would never be the minority in the Church again.’ Not only did it succeed in that aim, but it also marginalized other churchmanships, and in combination with some of the personalities involved, helped to divide the post-1977 Continuum into several dozen small competing jurisdictions, the largest of which has approximately 5,500 communicants.”

The UECNA’s website lists 22 parishes and chapels across the United States and Canada, although some of these appear to be private oratories. The Anglican Catholic Church is more widespread, with 40 dioceses around the world, and over 150 parishes in the United States, though some of these also appear to be very small.

In an unrelated development, the ACC nearly doubled in its number of American parishes on October 15, when a smaller Continuing Anglo-Catholic denomination, the [Anglican Church in America](#), officially [merged](#) into it. The [Diocese of the Holy Cross](#), which was formerly independent, merged into the ACC in 2021.

QUIZ QUESTION 3:

What is the most commonly used liturgical color for All Saints' Day in Western Christianity?

- A.** Red
- B.** Purple
- C.** White
- D.** Yellow

ARIZONA EPISCOPAL CHURCH CONTINUES SERVING UNHOUSED, LOW-INCOME PEOPLE DESPITE LAWSUIT THREATS

BY SHIREEN KORKZAN | OCTOBER 30, 2025

The following article and photos have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The first photo is of Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tucson, Arizona. The second photo is of "birthday bags" donated to the church food pantry by a Girl Scout troop in Tucson. The bags contain cake mix and candles along with other nonperishable foods.

[\[Continued from front page\]](#) has operated its ministry with little resistance from its neighbors until the past two and a half years, when Tucson's homeless rates significantly increased. Now, an average 140 people – more than double from previous years – seek assistance every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Neighbors have complained and filed police reports about litter, small fires set for warmth, discarded drug paraphernalia, public defecation and other concerns, and have asked Grace St. Paul's to move or stop its ministry. Those residents have now [threatened to sue](#) the church.

Police have reminded residents during community meetings that Blenman-Elm borders the University of Arizona – which has over 54,000 students – and its football stadium and several fraternity and sorority houses, where it's not uncommon for [parties](#) to get out of control.

Some residents have gone as far as to try to keep unhoused people away. For



example, in 2023 a neighborhood association hired a contractor without requesting a permit to [remove over 50 trees](#) from Navajo Wash, a dry stream bed where unhoused people had camped in the shade. And earlier this year, an appeals court [sided](#) with a neighborhood association holding the city liable for the “public nuisance” the camps create.

Some Blenman-Elm residents first threatened to sue the church in July, when they hired an attorney to send the church a letter demanding that the church discontinue its ministry for

unhoused and low-income people on its property.

The [letter](#) said if the church doesn't stop or move its services, the residents would sue the church "to protect themselves and their property."

Keplinger told ENS the church has no plans to stop serving its clients or move its ministry and that it has retained an attorney in case a lawsuit is filed.

Grace St. Paul's ministry, staffed by about 10 volunteers a day, includes a pantry with free food to go and hot meals on site three days a week. Its social services include assistance with obtaining IDs, birth certificates and other documents, job searches and access to free laundry vouchers nearby. Throughout the year, the church hosts small parties, including a holiday party around Christmas, for unhoused and low-income families to help the children feel a sense of normalcy.

Aileen MacLaren, a parishioner who volunteers at the pantry, called Joseph's Pantry & Café, and social services desk, told ENS on Oct. 29 that she's been worrying about the tens of millions of low-income Americans who are expected to see a [pause](#) in receiving [federal food assistance beginning Nov. 1](#) as the government shutdown continues. This is a "massive example," she said, why food ministries, such as Grace St.

Paul's pantry and café, are "crucial" for communities.

"The services we provide let the wider Tucson community know that we care about them," she said. "For the church, it's a Christian imperative."

To help address some of the neighbors' concerns and to keep the neighborhood clean, Grace St. Paul's volunteers regularly pick up trash, and the church's restrooms are open 24 hours a day.

The church has posted signs saying clients cannot stay on church property past 2 p.m., to appease the neighborhood associations. The rule is not enforced on "extreme" weather days; Tucson's daily summer temperatures [exceed](#) 100 degrees Fahrenheit. On those days, people are permitted to stay sheltered under the church's breezeway away from the sun.

The parish also partners with a mental health care facility and El Rio Health Community Medical Center that regularly set up mobile units on church



property to provide additional services. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs coordinates with the church to reach out directly to unhoused and low-income veterans. (There are at least 32,882 veterans nationwide who are unhoused as of January 2024, [according to](#) the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans).

As of January, about 2,218 people in Pima County, where Tucson is the county seat, are unhoused, according to the county's latest annual Homeless Point-in-Time Count [data summary report](#). Homelessness nearly tripled between 2020 and 2022.

[Keith Bentele](#), an associate research professor at the University of Arizona and a board member of the [Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness](#), told ENS that Tucson's spike in homelessness [reflects](#) a nationwide housing shortage that's worsened due to inflation, rising housing and living costs, job losses, the end of the COVID-19-era eviction moratorium and other reasons.

"Some people manage to get out of homelessness rather quickly, and some people take a little longer. But then we have people who are chronically homeless, and they often have a disability or suffer from mental illness," Bentele said. "It really depends on individuals' circumstances."

Additionally, according to Bentele, unexpected large expenses like a hospital visit or debt accumulated by long-term medical treatment can [force](#) people into homelessness.

MacLaren said that many of the problems leading to and worsening homelessness are systemic rather than "personal irresponsibility."

"There are so many reasons why people lose their housing. Their house could have burned down ... or any other emergency comes up," MacLaren said. "The last thing these people need is to be shamed for their circumstances."

Keplinger said that Grace St. Paul's understands the community's concerns and is willing to continue discussions on how best to maintain its ministry while keeping Blenman-Elm clean and noise-free.

"As a congregation, we're not willing to shut down our program or move out of our neighborhood. ...Unhoused people need to eat, go to the bathroom, shower and drink water, just like everyone else," Keplinger said. "I believe we have a theological and moral obligation to do this work, and, of course, it's in Scripture. We try to pattern everything we do on Jesus."

GSFA LEADER QUESTIONS GAFCON COMMUNIQUÉ

BY MARK MICHAEL | OCTOBER 28, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the [Living Church](#). The photo is of Archbishop Titus Chung.

Archbishop Titus Chung, honorary secretary of the [Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches](#) (GSFA), has become the first major conservative Anglican leader to express concerns about the implications of the [launch](#) of a Global Anglican Communion since it was announced in a GAFCON [communiqué](#) nearly two weeks ago.

A [statement](#) with Chung's signature, issued by the bishops of the Province of the Anglican Church of South East Asia that he leads as primate, acknowledged that the GAFCON announcement marks "an important moment in the ongoing life of the worldwide Anglican family," but the bishops suggest that a lengthy process of discernment will be necessary to evaluate the idea. They also signal a desire to engage further with proposals for restructuring the Anglican Communion that are not due to be acted upon until next summer.

This likely quashes any hopes GAFCON leaders may have had that Chung would participate in the first gathering of the Global Anglican Communion's Council of Primates, which is to convene in Nigeria just over four months from now.



"Significant existential, structural, and ecclesiological questions have been raised by the communiqué—particularly regarding the Instruments of Communion, which require careful study and prayerful discernment, especially in light of ongoing discussions of reform. These matters have serious implications for the unity, governance, faith, order, and the future mission of the Church," the bishops write.

"Accordingly, the Province will act in consultation with its Provincial Synod, Provincial Standing Committee to engage our Dioceses and members, in accordance with due canonical process. The Bishops of the Province are fully committed to maintaining unity and seeking common cause under God, within the teachings of Holy Scripture, together with the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches, of which the Province is a member."

The bishops' message also mentions its agreement with many of the GAFCON communiqué's claims about Anglican faith and order, as well as its firm support for a traditional understanding of marriage.

"We fully understand GAFCON's deep concern for the faithfulness of the Church to the authority of Holy Scripture, and we most certainly affirm the historic Anglican convictions that Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation, that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and that marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman. We maintain a steadfast commitment to these biblical truths, the renewal of Anglican witness globally, and eschew all revisionist teachings that speak against traditional orthodoxy and biblical truths concerning sexuality," the bishops say.

"We call upon all members of our beloved Province to continuously pray for the Anglican Communion—that the Lord will purify His Church, renew her witness, and unite His people in truth and love," they add.

Despite South East Asia's key role in the [launch](#) of Anglican realignment in 2000, the province has pursued a much more cautious course under the leadership of Chung and his predecessor, Archbishop Melter Tais.

The church's bishops firmly [condemned](#) the Church of England's 2023 decision to allow the blessing of same-sex unions, calling it

unbiblical and stating that they found the claim that its doctrine had not changed unconvincing. Yet they also said that they remained in communion with the Church of England, believing that "the unity of the Anglican Communion should not be lightly abandoned."

Though South East Asia has played a leading role in the GSFA since its origins in the 1990s, Tais declined to sign the [Ash Wednesday Statement](#) by ten GSFA primates that responded to the same decision by rejecting Archbishop Justin Welby as the "first among equals leader of the Anglican Communion" because of his support for same-sex blessings. After [becoming primate](#) in October 2023, Chung participated in the [2024 Primates' Meeting](#) convened by Welby (unlike most GSFA primates who signed the Ash Wednesday Statement).

He serves on the [Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith, and Order](#), which developed the [Nairobi-Cairo Proposals](#), the plan for reform of the Anglican Communion's structures mentioned in the bishops' recent statement, which are due to be considered for adoption by the Anglican Consultative Council next summer.

The Anglican Communion's Secretary General, Bishop Anthony Poggo, argued in his [pastoral letter](#) in response to the GAFCON communiqué that the proposals could be a constructive way of addressing some issues raised by the communiqué.

Bishops of the Church of South East Asia were [elected](#) to numerous positions of leadership at the First Assembly of the GSFA's Covenantal Structure in 2024. In addition to Chung's election as one of the Steering Committee's officers, Tais was one of three bishops elected to the Board of the Assembly. Two of the province's other bishops, Stephen Abbarrow of West Malaysia and Danald Jute of Kuching, were chosen to serve with Chung on its Faith and Order Commission,



which could eventually be tasked with preparing a response to GAFCON's proposal (they

are three of seven members of the commission).

The patient, rigorous approach to discernment about the GAFCON proposal outlined by South East Asia's bishops is more characteristic of the GSFA, which has often described itself as an "ecclesial body," as distinguished from the "movement" of GAFCON. A senior GSFA leader recently [told](#) The Living Church that the body had no immediate plans to issue a statement about the Global Anglican Communion launch, as this would involve lengthy consultation.

A familiar modern Anglican maxim holds that GSFA moves on Asian time and GAFCON on American time. The Global Anglican Communion's future could well end up caught between the two.

The logo for GSFA found on their [website](#).

QUIZ QUESTION 4:

A popular processional hymn in Anglican churches on All Saints' Day is "For All the Saints." What Anglican Bishop of Wakefield wrote it?

- A. Thurston Howell
- B. William Walsham How
- C. John Newton
- D. Thomas Becket

HALLOWEEN AND A DECLINING CHRISTIAN TRADITION COEXIST ON ALL SAINTS' DAY IN SPAIN

BY ALICIA LEON AND TERESA MEDRANO | NOVEMBER 3, 2025

The following text has been taken from the [Religious News Service](#).

The sobriety of the Catholic tradition, by which on All Saints' Day graves are cleaned and flowers are brought to cemeteries to spend time with deceased loved ones, has given way in recent years to sweets, fake blood, and spider webs from one of the most iconic holidays in the United States.

Skeletons, ghosts, and monsters of all kinds took to the streets of many cities in Spain at nightfall to celebrate Halloween. The next morning, an older generation flocked to the country's cemeteries to remember their dead.

The sobriety of the Catholic tradition, by which on All Saints' Day graves are cleaned and flowers are brought to cemeteries to spend time with deceased loved ones, has given way in recent years to sweets, fake blood, and spider webs from one of the [most iconic holidays](#) in the United States.

As in many other parts of the world, instead of their own ancestral traditions, younger people have embraced the more commercial side of a celebration that originated from the pagan festival of Samhain, which honored the end of summer and the harvest. And it does not appear that they will follow in the footsteps of their elders.

The cultural change did not happen overnight, but is a consequence of the secularization of societies, explained José Bobadilla, a sociologist specialized in culture and religious diversity.

“Obviously, the process of a new, more Americanized culture has had an influence not only in Europe,” said Bobadilla, who noted that the current celebration, which is spreading throughout the world, “downplays the idea that it is a time to remember those who are no longer with us.”

The Almudena cemetery in Madrid, the largest in Spain with some five million people buried there, began receiving its first visitors early in the morning.

At the main entrance, several flower stalls waited with bouquets ready for those who left the arrangement of the graves to the last minute.

“We always come on (Nov) 1st,” said Alicia Sánchez, a 69-year-old retiree who lamented the loss of tradition due to a lack of interest among younger people.

“I don't like [Halloween](#) because it's not our holiday. But everyone has their traditions, and that should be respected,” she said.

Paz Sánchez visited her husband's grave with his son, as they do on many other days. This time, however, they were surprised to see so few people despite it being the busiest day of the year.

"Maybe they don't feel like getting up early to come to the cemetery," said Sánchez, 87.

A few hours earlier, as in the last decade, Paracuellos de Jarama, a town about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) northeast of Madrid, dressed up for Halloween.

It started with just a few neighbors, but now dozens of houses are decorated with pumpkins and ghosts, there is a haunted passageway, and hundreds of people roam the streets trick-or-treating.

Miguel Izquierdo transformed his family home into a pirate ship with recycled wood for the hull and an old sheet as a sail. The lights, music, and 30 kilos (66 pounds) of candy, which ran out in less than two hours, made it one of the most popular.

After three years, they continue to participate "because of how much fun the children have," said Izquierdo, 42, who runs an audiovisual production company. "We like it because it's a party, because it's a costume party, and because there's candy."

"I don't dislike the party, but I think it's not part of our traditions," said Antonia Martín, 68, who celebrated [Halloween](#) – without costume – for the first time for her grandchildren.

QUIZ QUESTION 5:

In what country do godfathers give their godchildren Allerheiligenstriezel on All Saints' Day?

- A. Canada
- B. Finland
- C. Austria
- D. Russia

QUIZ QUESTION 6:

In which church does All Saints' Day fall on the Sunday after Pentecost?

- A. Anglican
- B. Eastern Orthodox
- C. Methodist
- D. Presbyterian

QUIZ ANSWERS:

The following quiz questions have been taken from [Fun Trivia](#).

Question 1: Which of the following is another name for All Saint's Day?

Answer: D. Hallowmas

Halloween, which falls on October 31, gets its name because it is the eve of All Hallows' Day (also known as Hallowmas or All Saints' Day). The holy day may also be called Feast of All Saints. Reformation Day, which is observed in some Protestant churches, falls on October 31, the day Martin Luther purportedly nailed his 95 theses to the church door. Remembrance Sunday is a UK holiday that falls on the second Sunday in November, near Armistice Day, to remember servicemen.

Question 2: In what country, where this day is known as La Toussaint, do people often place chrysanthemums on graves for the holiday?

Answer: A. France

Belgians also commonly place chrysanthemums on graves on this day, as well as wreaths, candles, or other flowers. The following day, All Souls' Day, is called Le jour des morts in France, which translates to the Day of the Dead.

Question 3: What is the most commonly used liturgical color for All Saints' Day in Western Christianity?

Answer: C. White

White robes are sometimes worn by clergymen when delivering eulogies or performing funeral ceremonies. The color is meant to celebrate and symbolize the life of the deceased. In the Eastern Orthodox church, however, green is worn to represent life.

Question 4: A popular processional hymn in Anglican churches on All Saints' Day is "For All the Saints." What Anglican Bishop of Wakefield wrote it?

Answer: D. William Walsham How

First printed in 1864, the hymn begins:

"For all the saints, who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.
Alleluia, Alleluia!"

The hymn has been set to a variety of melodies, including "Sine Nomine" (Ralph Vaughan Williams), "Engleberg" (Charles Villiers Stanford), and "Sarum" (Joseph Barnby).

Question 5: In what country do godfathers give their godchildren Allerheiligenstriezel on All Saints' Day?

Answer: C. Austria

This is a tradition in Austria and Bavaria. Known as "All Saints' Braid", Allerheiligenstriezel is a braided pastry containing raisins, flour, eggs, yeast, butter, and milk and decorated by either poppy seeds or sugar. A braid is a symbol of mourning because, in ancient times, a woman might express mourning by cutting off her braid of hair.

Question 6: In which church does All Saints' Day fall on the Sunday after Pentecost?

Answer: B. Eastern Orthodox

Eastern Orthodox, some Eastern Catholic, and Byzantine Lutheran churches celebrate All Saints' Day on the first Sunday after Pentecost. Pentecost falls on the seventh Sunday after Easter, which falls later in the Eastern church than in the Western church. In 2020, All Saints' Day fell on June 14 in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

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