

ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

JANUARY 2026

HOLY NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE

Celebration on Jan. 1, the eighth day after the birth of Jesus, when he was named and circumcised. He was "called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Lk 2:21). Under the Law of Moses, all male infants were to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Lv 12:3). It was also customary at this time for family and friends to witness the naming of the child. This major feast is celebrated on Jan. 1, the eighth day of the Christmas season. The designation of the feast in honor of Jesus' Holy Name is new to the 1979 BCP.

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



AFTER LIGHTNING SLASHES HISTORIC CHURCH'S STEEPLE, CONGREGATION RALLIES BEHIND RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

"Act of God," as a commonplace insurance term, may never have been more dramatically applied than to the scarred steeple that, for now, still sits atop [St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church](#) in Pocomoke City, Maryland.

That scar, which slashes diagonally from the middle of the steeple down to the roofline of the church's street-facing bell tower, was inflicted July 8 by a lightning bolt hurled from above. St.

Mary's was one of [at least two churches in the region hit by lightning](#) from a severe storm system that swept across the large ...

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

ARCHAEOLOGISTS UNCOVER INTACT SECTION OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM WALL FROM HANUKKAH ERA

Archaeologists have finished uncovering the longest continuous remains of an ancient wall that encircled Jerusalem, including possible evidence of a 2,100-year-old ceasefire between warring kingdoms.

Last week, archaeologists finished excavating the most complete part ever discovered of the foundations of the walls, which surrounded Jerusalem during the time of the Hasmonean Kingdom, when the story of Hanukkah took place.

In Hebrew, Hanukkah means "dedication," and the holiday marks the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the second century B.C.,

[Continues in International News, Page 14.](#)

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 stmarysbt@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 stmarysbt@gmail.com.

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

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

What's a "commitment to Christian service"?

- A.** When a person wishes to make a special commitment to Christ
- B.** Part of the old, tired stewardship campaign
- C.** Undertaking vows as a monastic
- D.** Confirmation or First Communion

JANUARY CALENDAR

1st The Holy Name of our Lord

2nd Second Sunday after Christmas

6th The Epiphany

11th First Sunday after the Epiphany

11th St. Mary's annual meeting

18th Second Sunday after the Epiphany

19th Confession of Saint Peter the Apostle

25th Third Sunday after the Epiphany

26th Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle

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)

BIRTHDAY WISHES

13th Mary Miller

15th Bob Miller

20th Charla Lewis

20th Michelle Worthy

30th Lyndel Moody

30th Jeb Worthy

Happy birthday!!

ANNIVERSARY WISHES

10th Mike & Sherri Anthony

Happy anniversary!!

HOLY NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE

CHURCH PUBLISHING INC

The following article and picture have been taken from the [Episcopal Church Glossary](#). The picture is of *The Circumcision* painted by Luca Signorelli.

[[Continued from front page](#)] It was traditionally celebrated as the Feast of the Circumcision. Celebration of the Holy Name reflects the significance of the Holy Name of Jesus, and the emphasis of the Gospel of Luke on the naming of Jesus rather than his circumcision.

Liturgical celebration of Jesus' circumcision began in the Gallican Church. The Council of Tours (567) called for Jan. 1 to be observed as a fast day to counter pagan celebrations of the beginning of the new year. This day was also traditionally associated with devotion to the Virgin Mary. Celebration of the Feast of the Name of Jesus dates from the end of the middle ages. In the fifteenth century, the Franciscans Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444) and Giovanni Capistrano (1386-1456) encouraged devotion to the name of Jesus. This celebration was officially granted to the Franciscans in 1530 for observance on Jan. 14. In 1721 Innocent

XIII called for the whole Roman Catholic Church to observe the feast on the Second Sunday after Epiphany. This feast was introduced into England in 1489 and celebrated on Aug. 7. It was included as a black letter day in the Elizabethan Calendar of the church year in 1561.



The name "Jesus" is from the Hebrew Joshua, or Yehoshuah, "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh will save." Devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus is particularly derived from Phil 2:9-11, which states that God highly exalted Jesus "and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven

and on earth and under the earth." This scriptural devotion is paraphrased by the hymn "At the name of Jesus" (Hymn 435) in *The Hymnal* 1982. Other hymns that express devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus include "To the name of our salvation" (Hymns 248-249) and "Jesus! Name of wondrous love!" (Hymn 252).

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY PARISH OFFERS SUPPORT FOR THE LONG HAUL

BY CALEB MAGLAYA GALARAGA | JANUARY 2, 2026

The following article and picture have been taken from the [Living Church](#). The picture is of the rector of St. Peter's Church, the Rev. Bert Baez leading a mass.

The past year was difficult for the people of the Texas Hill Country, where [flooding](#) on July 4, 2025 devastated properties and claimed what was precious and irreplaceable—the lives of more than 100 people, including 25 girls and two counsellors at [Camp Mystic](#), an all-girls Christian summer camp in the town of Hunt. The camp, which will turn a century old in 2026, lies along the banks of the Guadalupe River.

After intense rainfall, the river became a raging torrent that [inundated](#) Kerr County, sweeping homes, cabins, and vehicles from Camp Mystic in Hunt and then into the towns of Ingram, Kerrville, and Center Point.

Renee Marilyn Smajstrlam, an 8-year-old parishioner at [St. Peter's Church](#) in Kerrville, was among the victims. "At the time, Renee was doing what she loved most," [reads](#) a letter about a memorial fund created in her name. During a memorial service held at the parish, attendees were asked to [wear](#) bright colors as a tribute to her colorful personality.

At least six more parishioners [died](#) in the floods, including a husband and wife and their two children, ages 7 and 3.

The Sunday immediately after the calamity, Bishop David Read of West Texas visited St. Peter's to [offer](#) support and sympathy. He also painted an honest picture of what lay ahead: "Rescue and recovery efforts are much like a sprint, and pretty soon it's going to turn into a marathon," he said. "It's going to be long, and we're with you for the long haul."

Six months after the waters receded, the marathon may soon begin for survivors and grieving families of one of the deadliest flooding disasters in United States history.

"We learned early on that it was our job to listen to the needs of the community and be flexible, and respond, and fill the gap as quickly as we could," said Katherine Boyette. A veteran of the nonprofit world, the St. Peter's parishioner was returning from a family trip when she learned of the flooding. "When this disaster happened, I think many people in the parish, including myself, felt called to help in whatever small way they could," Boyette said.

She was invited by the rector, the Rev. Bert Baez, to serve as coordinator of a new ministry called Help and Hope for Hill Country. The coordinated response,

established immediately after July 4, was made possible by donations sent directly to St. Peter's and the Diocese of West Texas. Among the ministry's partners are Episcopal Relief & Development and the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country.



To date, Help and Hope has [provided](#) \$700,000 in immediate assistance to more than 280 individuals and families. It has distributed grocery and clothing cards and supplied the Hunt Fire Department with tools such as coolers, ice, a deep freezer, and a side-by-side ATV—a vehicle used by responders to deliver food in difficult terrain.

The early stage of the response focused on immediate relief and supplies, and helping those whose homes were destroyed find temporary, and eventually more permanent, housing. Boyette and her team, which includes four case managers, also discerned early on that mental health care would be a major long-term need.

The ministry partnered with the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas, which supports children and families who have experienced loss. One result of the collaboration was equipping

the faculty of the parish school as they minister to children affected by the flood.

Help and Hope's case managers handle an average of 20 to 40 cases each. "When you've experienced a disaster like this and lost many things or people in your life, you often need someone to walk alongside you in that process," Boyette said of their significant role in the recovery effort. Case managers assist community members with paperwork (among other things) so they can access aid from partner organizations, including mental health counseling.

If the first six months of recovery focused on helping survivors and grieving families regain stability and a sense of normalcy, the next phase will center more on healing, as the mental health effects of trauma [persist](#).

Boyette noted that mental health care will vary by individual and be tailored to the type of loss experienced. She

emphasized that services remain available whenever individuals are ready, particularly for children who lost friends and family members over the summer.

In downtown Hunt, the ministry purchased two mobile homes and placed them behind the Hunt Store—a beloved grocery and gathering place also damaged by the flood—to provide resident services, including medical assistance. The site also serves as a hub for coordinating volunteers and resources. Consistent with its guiding principles, the purpose of the Help and Hope Recovery Village will continue to evolve.

“We know that we have to be nimble, so the Recovery Village may take several forms to meet the needs of the Hunt community in the aftermath of the flood,” Baez said.

Boyette said the ministry's case management program will last at least the next 18 months. Help and Hope will remain active through 2026 and possibly beyond. What the parish consistently reminds parishioners and community members, however, is this: “We are with them, and we're with them for the long haul. And we're here to heal together and get through this together with God.”

QUIZ QUESTION 2:

How is Rite I different from Rite II?

- A. Rite I is a more formal, "High Mass"-type service
- B. The language is more traditional (think KJV) and penitential in nature
- C. They're pretty much the same
- D. Rite I is only used for certain services

QUIZ QUESTION 3:

How many Eucharistic Prayers are in use?

- A. 8
- B. 2
- C. 4
- D. 6

TEN COMMANDMENTS UPDATE: NEW CLASS-ACTION LAWSUIT

BY TEXAS AFT | DECEMBER 5, 2025

The following text has been taken from [Texas AFT](#).

More parents across Texas are joining the diverse legal effort to stop the implementation of Senate Bill 10, the state law requiring public schools to display the Ten Commandments in every classroom. In the past week, families in multiple public school districts have signed onto a [new class-action lawsuit](#), broadening the challenge and signaling deepening statewide resistance to the mandate.

The new complaint, filed in federal court [on behalf of families from a range of backgrounds and faith traditions](#), asks the San Antonio federal court judge to extend [existing injunctions](#) to every school district in Texas. According to reports, the plaintiffs argue that [forcing religious displays into classrooms violates students' First Amendment rights](#) and exposes districts to potential legal and financial liability.

This latest expansion follows [last month's ruling](#) temporarily blocking SB 10's enforcement in dozens of districts.

With [Attorney General Ken Paxton wading in](#), many districts fear they'll face legal consequences no matter how they implement (or don't implement) the law.

The broadened lawsuit also points out that the law places schools in an impossible position: comply with SB 10 and risk violating the Establishment Clause or refuse and face penalties from the state. [Plaintiffs joining the legal challenge say](#) that these posters send a message to children that "they are outsiders in their school community," and that the only solution is a statewide ruling that permanently blocks the mandate.

Texas AFT will continue monitoring these rapidly developing legal proceedings and provide updates as more districts fight against SB 10's unconstitutional requirements.

AFTER LIGHTNING SLASHES HISTORIC CHURCH'S STEEPLE, CONGREGATION RALLIES BEHIND RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

BY DAVID PAULSEN | DECEMBER 8, 2025

The following article and pictures have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The photos are of the damage done to St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church in Pocomoke City, Maryland.

[\[Continued from front page\]](#) peninsula of land on the Chesapeake Bay that makes up Maryland's Eastern Shore, between Delaware and Virginia.

The lightning didn't just put a gash in St. Mary's steeple. It also rattled the church's foundation and cracked the ancient pipes that connected the church to the city's water main, forcing prompt action by church leaders to address the water seepage.

"At the time, it just seemed catastrophic," Kathi DeSouter, the congregation's senior warden, told Episcopal News Service. In the ensuing months, as she and other parishioners worshipped in their parish hall, the congregation has been able to put the damage into perspective. "It could have been a whole lot worse, and no one got hurt."

Now, the [Diocese of Easton](#) congregation eagerly awaits the day it can resume worship in its [180-year-old church building](#). Crews soon will remove the damaged steeple, and a replacement steeple will be built on the ground nearby, then hoisted for installation — with a new design that the

congregation hopes will minimize future threats from lightning strikes.

"We have a lot of blessings this Christmas, lots of things to be grateful for," the Rev. Stephanie Clayville, St. Mary's rector, told ENS. If all plans align perfectly, worship services [could resume in the church by Christmas](#), though early next year is more likely. At a cost of more than \$500,000, the restoration project wouldn't have been possible without the church's insurance coverage and [donations](#) from the congregation and some of Pocomoke City's 4,300 residents.

"It's truly a resurrection story for us," Clayville said. "We have such deep roots in our community, and it was lovely to see all these folks come together to help us, even people who are not members of the church."

DeSouter remembers the day of the lightning strike vividly, and not only because it happened on her birthday. She recalled receiving a text with pictures of the damage and rushed over to the church to examine it up close. The steeple's wooden structure was mangled at the edges of the gash. The storm had



given the church a natural skylight no one had asked for.

“It was crazy,” she said.

On the other hand, lightning strikes sometimes bring the risk of greater damage from structure fires. “We were so blessed,” Clayville said. “It was raining so heavily that the church didn’t burn down.”

Church leaders met with building experts to conduct full inspections of the structure. They weather-sealed the opening above the bell tower, replaced the broken water pipe and ensured that the steeple was not at risk of toppling over. And the congregation immediately moved its worship services into the parish hall, without missing a Sunday.

“We prayed, we planned, we hoped, we picked up the pieces,” Clayville said.

She means that literally. Although inspectors have ensured the damaged steeple isn’t a public hazard, scraps from

the ragged roof sometimes blow down to the ground. Clayville said the congregation has been collecting the shingles and debris, possibly to incorporate some of it into future projects.

And the parish hall, though not ideal, has been an accommodating space

for worship in the interim. “Even though our building was struck, our faith never wavered, not for a second,” Clayville said.

DeSouter also preferred to accentuate the positives. “We’re a lot closer together” in the parish hall, she said, so parishioners can’t hide in the back pews. The Sunday services typically draw about 50 worshipers.

“We’re making it work,” DeSouter said.

Before building a new steeple, the congregation had to pour a new concrete slab near the church, as a temporary staging ground for construction. A crew will assemble it there so it can be installed in place of the damaged steeple.

The original steeple was part of the wooden structure of the church, which somewhat complicated the restoration project. Under the new design, the bell tower will be capped and the

replacement steeple placed on top, slightly shorter than the old 80-foot-tall steeple, Clayville said. Instead of wood, the new structure will be made of metal with proper grounding, to help prevent future lightning damage.

The congregation will be relieved to have the building repaired but even more

relieved to resume worship inside the historic church.

“A lot of things in life can shake your foundations, but it can't shake your spirit,” Clayville said. “I'm so proud of my church and how resilient they've been.”

QUIZ QUESTION 4:

What elements are included in many Episcopal burial services?

- A. Hymns and anthems, sung congregationally
- B. Readings from the Bible and a sermon
- C. an affirmation of faith and prayers for the departed
- D. A committal service at the graveside or crematorium
- E. Celebration of communion
- F. All of the above except for possibly 1 and 5

QUIZ QUESTION 5:

What elements are included in many Episcopal burial services?

- A. Hymns and anthems, sung congregationally
- B. Readings from the Bible and a sermon
- C. an affirmation of faith and prayers for the departed
- D. A committal service at the graveside or crematorium
- E. Celebration of communion
- F. All of the above except for possibly 1 and 5

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL PASSES \$45 MILLION CHURCHWIDE BUDGET FOR 2026

BY ENS STAFF | DECEMBER 11, 2025

The following article has been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#).

Executive Council, The Episcopal Church's [governing body between meetings of General Convention](#), met online Dec. 11 and adopted a \$45 million budget for 2026 that includes about \$3.5 million in personnel savings compared to previous years while spending about \$1.5 million on new initiatives led by Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe, mostly to support dioceses.

Those new initiatives were possible "without making any cuts to any of the programs that were funded in the triennial budget," Chief Financial Officer Chris Lacovara said in presenting the 2026 budget. It represents a single year of churchwide revenues and expenses as part of the 2025-27 budget plan adopted by the 81st General Convention in 2024.

Most of the church's revenue comes from the payments it collects in assessments on diocesan income, or an estimated \$30 million in 2026, according to Lacovara's presentation. He also noted that the total budget figures for 2026 are mostly unchanged from the 2025 totals.

A public link to the detailed budget was not available before the council's vote or by the time of this story's publication, but it will be added to the story once it is posted by church leaders.

Before the council's vote, members posed numerous questions on a wide range of topics, including a pending shift to more online meetings, assessment waivers granted to a handful of dioceses, changes to services the church provides to Episcopal Relief & Development, the churchwide response to increased federal immigration enforcement and future spending on creation care initiatives.

The budget also anticipates the closure of Saint Augustine's University, a historically Black university that has received the church's financial support in the past but faces the [possible loss of its accreditation and dwindling student enrollment](#). Lacovara said if the university remains open this year, the church will find a way to maintain existing financial support.

The vote occurred despite some members raising concerns that they had not be provided with a complete document with itemized budget lines. The Rev. Molly James, the church's interim General Convention executive officer, acknowledged there had been "a discrepancy in the files" that, when fixed, produced 60 additional pages for the council to review.

Some called for a postponement of the vote, but House of Deputies President Julia Ayala Harris warned that doing so could risk missing the church's deadline for an adopted budget by the end of this year. Rowe echoed that warning.

The budget passed, with 88% in favor. An exact vote total was not provided.

The presiding bishop chairs Executive Council, and the House of Deputies president serves as its vice chair. Its 38 other voting members are a mix of bishops, other clergy and lay leaders. Twenty are elected by General Convention to staggered six-year terms,

or 10 new members every three years. The Episcopal Church's nine provinces elect the other 18 to six-year terms, also staggered.

Executive Council typically meets in person three times a year. No future meeting dates or locations have been [posted to the General Convention Office's website](#), though Rowe mentioned during the Dec. 11 online meeting he expected council to gather next in February for online sessions, with a longer in-person meeting to follow in June.

QUIZ QUESTION 6:

What's the purpose of the 39 articles (Articles of Religion)

- A. They're equal to the Creeds and the primary source of doctrine
- B. Once necessary for clergy to subscribe to, helps clarify Anglican doctrine
- C. A confessional statement binding on all members

QUIZ QUESTION 7:

What is the Apocrypha?

- A. additional books in the old testament that are not used to establish doctrine
- B. Books that never made it into the Biblical canon
- C. both are correct, but used in different contexts

ARCHAEOLOGISTS UNCOVER INTACT SECTION OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM WALL FROM HANUKKAH ERA

BY MELANIE LIDMAN | DECEMBER 11, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the [Religion News Service](#). The photo is of archaeologists at the excavation site.

[Continued from front page] after a small group of Jewish fighters liberated it from occupying foreign forces, and the Hasmonean Kingdom that followed.

Jews celebrate the eight-day holiday, which this year begins on Dec. 14, with the ritual of lighting a nightly candle, in honor of the tiny supply of ritually pure oil that they found in the temple that lasted for eight nights instead of just one. Many also eat fried foods such as potato pancakes, called latkes, to memorialize this miraculously long-lasting oil.

The Hasmonean wall foundation, whose excavation was finished last week in Jerusalem, was likely built a few decades after the story of Hanukkah by the same rulers. It's almost 50 meters (164 feet) long, around half the length of a football field, and

around 5 meters (16 feet) wide. It held walls, which according to estimations and some historical writings, were taller than the current walls surrounding Jerusalem's Old City.

Much of the current walls surrounding Jerusalem's Old City date back hundreds of years to the Ottoman Era.

The Hasmonean walls encircled an area much larger than the current Old City of Jerusalem, with 60 watchtowers along the wall that were more than 10 meters (33 feet) tall, according to ancient writings. The part recently uncovered is one of the longest sections found intact



from the foundation of the Hasmonean walls.

Separation wall and ceasefire

One of the most interesting aspects of the foundation was that the wall above it seems to have been purposefully and uniformly dismantled to a uniform height, not chaotically destroyed by the ravages of time or war, said Dr. Amit Re'em, one of the lead archaeologists for the project from the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Experts wondered why any leader would take apart a perfectly good security wall in an area that was constantly threatened by invasion.

In 132 or 133 B.C., Hellenistic King Antiochus the Seventh, an heir to the Antiochus the Fourth from the story of Hanukkah, laid siege to Jerusalem and the Judean Kingdom, according to ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus.

As the Judean army struggled, Jewish king John Hyrcanus I decided to strike a deal with Antiochus. He raided King David's tomb for 3,000 talents of silver and offered 500 hostages, including his own brother, according to the writings of Josephus.

"Antiochus Sidetes (the Seventh) reached a ceasefire agreement with John Hyrcanus, saying, if you want me to remove my army, you yourself, the Jewish king, must raze to the ground the Hasmonean fortification that you and your father built," Re'em said Monday.

Josephus' writings state that after Antiochus accepted Hyrcanus' deal, they "pulled down the walls encircling the city."

"We just think that we found the archaeological proof for it, so it's pretty amazing, the archaeology and the ancient stories combining together, this is the magic of Jerusalem," Re'em said.

Another hypothesis Re'em posits is that King Herod built his palace over the Hasmonean wall foundations, during his reign in the first-century B.C., as a clear message of his sovereignty over Jewish Jerusalem.

Other archaeologists were intrigued by why this section of the Hasmonean wall seems to have been dismantled.

Orit Peleg-Barkat, the head of classical archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, believes it likely had more to do with King Herod's palace than the ceasefire deal with Antiochus.

Other sections of the Hasmonean wall uncovered in other parts of Jerusalem weren't dismantled, so it could have just been one section that was dismantled, possibly to provide a foundation for Herod's palace, Peleg-Barkat explained. Its unlikely that Jerusalem was left unprotected without any security walls for more than a century, she said.

Wall under a prison

The current section of the wall was uncovered underneath an abandoned

wing of the building known as the Kishleh, which was built in 1830 as a military base. The wing was used as a prison, including by the British up until the 1940s, and the walls were covered with graffiti carved by prisoners in English, Hebrew and Arabic. The remnants of the iron bars of the cells are still visible in the ceiling.

Most of the building is still used by the Israeli police today, but one wing was abandoned and later transferred to the Tower of David Museum. Archaeologists first began excavating this wing of the Kishleh in 1999, but violence in Jerusalem during the Second Intifada, which began in 2000, halted the excavations until two years ago.

Archaeologists removed the equivalent of two Olympic swimming pools worth of dirt and debris by hand over the past two years from the hall. The excavations revealed what they believe are Middle Age-era dye pits, likely for fabric dying, and the long section of the Hasmonean wall foundation.

In the coming years, the Tower of David Museum will install a floating glass floor over the ruins and use the hall as one of its new galleries in the Schulich Wing of Archaeology, Art and Innovation. The renovations of this section are expected to take at least two years, now that the archaeological dig has concluded.

QUIZ QUESTION 8:

Which of the following is NOT a sacrament?

- A.** Communion
- B.** Intercessory Prayer
- C.** Baptism
- D.** Confirmation
- E.** Marriage
- F.** Confession

PUERTO RICO SEMINARY SEEKS ATS ACCREDITATION

BY CALEB MAGLAYA GALARAGA | DECEMBER 29, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from the Living Church. The picture is of Bishop Rafael Morales Maldonado.

[Seminario San Pedro y San Pablo](#) (Saint Peter and Saint Paul Seminary) in Bayamón—16 kilometers west of San Juan, Puerto Rico—is seeking accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Bishop Rafael Morales Maldonado of Puerto Rico said a visit from ATS officials is expected soon, but he did not have a more specific date.

The organization accredits and supports more than 270 graduate theological schools in North America.

Morales, a member of the Episcopal Church's Executive Council, spoke to *The Living Church* through an interpreter in North Carolina after the council's last session in October. He described the diocese's efforts to give the seminary "a new dimension."

"Through the efforts we've been making in the past eight years, we wanted to give our clergy a new opportunity," he said. This includes training clergy, including vocational deacons, in Hispanic-majority



parts of [Province II](#), such as the Diocese of Cuba, as well as clergy "interested in doing Hispanic ministries in the United States."

The seminary, which traces its [roots](#) to the 1930s, currently has 36 students. It offers a Master of Arts in Theological Studies, a certificate for the

diaconate, and an Anglican Studies certificate. The latter is intended for those who are not part of the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Communion, Morales said.

In 2024, the seminary's leadership achieved one of its primary goals: accreditation as a postsecondary institution by the government of Puerto Rico. "We have a certificate in theological studies for those who want to be priests and have not finished college," Morales said.

The seminary also maintains agreements with other Latin American dioceses. The Center for Theological Studies in Cuba is affiliated with Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Discussions continue about training

clergy for the Dioceses of Litoral Ecuador and Colombia.

"We have seen that there is a lot of interest in studying through a blended learning model, where there can be some in-person time and some distance learning," Morales said. He added that the seminary's offerings come from a fully Latino context.

Morales, who was [elected](#) in June as the Episcopal Church's clergy representative to the Anglican Consultative Council, also serves as bishop adviser to the Diocese of the Virgin Islands. He said Latino leaders can help U.S. churches discern how best to support Latino Episcopalians amid current immigration challenges.

"I believe in making known the value that Latinos have and the contributions we make to the church and to the United States," he said.

A 2023 Pew study [revealed](#) that only 3 percent of Episcopalians identified as Latino, making the demographic an important focus and potential source of growth. According to the most recent Parochial Report [released](#) by the General Convention Office, 673 worship services held across the church in a given week are celebrated in Spanish.

The Diocese of Los Angeles, which has a large Latino population, recently [elected](#) the Rev. Dr. Antonio Gallardo as its first Latino bishop.

QUIZ QUESTION 9:

Why is frequent reception of communion necessary?

- A.** Because Jesus specifically commanded it
- B.** It strengthens our union with Christ and His Church
- C.** It's one of many ways for a baptized Christian to live out their faith
- D.** All of the above

QUIZ ANSWERS:

The quiz questions have been taken from [Go To Quiz's Episcopal Church Trivia](#).

Question 1: What's a "commitment to Christian service"?

Answer: A. When a person wishes to make a special commitment to Christ

Question 2: How is Rite I different from Rite II?

Answer: B. The language is more traditional (think KJV) and penitential in nature

Question 3: How many Eucharistic Prayers are in use?

Answer: D. 6

Question 4: What elements are included in many Episcopal burial services?

Answer: F. All of the above except for possibly 1 and 5

Question 5: What is the general policy on the length of time a priest spends at a parish?

Answer: B. It's up to him/her to decide if they'll accept a call from another parish or not

Question 6: What's the purpose of the 39 articles (Articles of Religion)

Answer: B. Once necessary for clergy to subscribe to, helps clarify Anglican doctrine

Question 7: What is the Apocrypha?

Answer: A. additional books in the old testament that are not used to establish doctrine

Question 8: Which of the following is NOT a sacrament?

Answer: B. Intercessory Prayer

Question 9: Why is frequent reception of communion necessary?

Answer: D. All of the above

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PARISH STAFF

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MISSION

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