

The Servant



*Richard Edward Helmer at
a California BLM protest*

#256

Summer 2020

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David Benedict has been preparing the brothers for a Zoom Convocation with weekly "Happy Hours."

Founder's Forum

Cloistering

I have often wondered how it feels to enter the cloister for the first time as the door behind closes. I am reminded of the story from the Visitation Nuns about a Sister Amiee who had just arrived in Riverdale. She observed the flowers at the grotto and entering said to the extern sister, "Tomorrow I shall go and pick some of those lovely flowers." The extern sister remained silent; the new arrival would soon learn the meaning of *enclosure*.

This time of being homebound, sheltering in place, and just plain stuck in the house is something like being in the enclosure. But the one thing that makes this difficult is that we are not, most of us, by nature cloistered, but are moving people. We lunch and we dine and we play. We work, we travel, and we shop. I hope, however, that this time of enclosure does one thing: teaching us to cherish what we have and who we have. Perhaps when this involuntary cloistering is over, we will realize that many of the things we thought we must have or do really do not count for much. That is the message: cherish what we have. Sister Amiee would soon realize that while she may miss picking those flowers, she has a new family and home to cherish and to love. We will learn the same.

RTB

Here and there with the Brothers

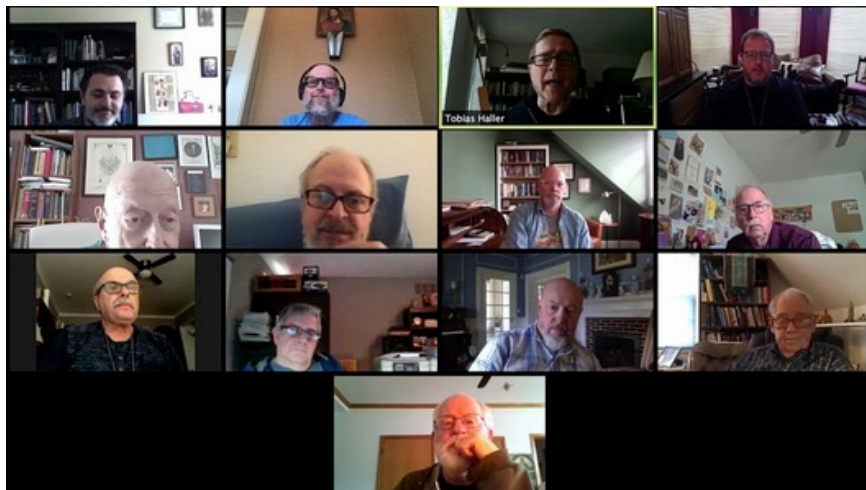
Community Notes

Spring Council of the Brotherhood

Another "casualty" of the COVID-19 virus pandemic was the in-person meeting of the Brotherhood's Council, which was held via Zoom on Saturday April 25th. New business included approving postulant Thomas Burnham (Southwest Florida) for reception into the novitiate. He is scheduled to become a novice at the Brotherhood's first (and we hope only) "virtual Convocation" later this summer, due to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Council also elected a new Director of Education. David Luke Henton (Rio Grande) will complete his current term this summer and, having served in this role since 2014 and with his seminary work toward ordination to the priesthood being as time-requiring as it is, he was unable to stand for re-election. After deliberation, Thomas Bushnell (New York) was enthusiastically elected.

A major feature of each Spring Council Meeting is the annual approval of Brotherhood Outreach Grants. The following charitable organizations received approval for their ministries through grant applications submitted by brothers this year:



Council meets by Zoom.

- ▣ Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, for “The Holy Grill” mobile food ministry which provides a hot breakfast and dinner for the homeless and working poor in northeast Broward County, Tuesday through Thursday each week. Since it’s foundation in 2016 this ministry has served almost 40,000 meals there;
- ▣ Saint John’s United Methodist Church Food Pantry in Hazlet, New Jersey, to assist with the construction of twelve raised garden beds for the purpose of growing fresh produce through the spring and summer. This will provide fresh goods which are not supplied by the county and the supermarkets. Saint John’s Food Pantry is a ministry which provides food to 75 to 80 families or single people from the area;
- ▣ Lazarus Gate in Denver, Colorado, provides shelter to homeless people with terminal illness, so that they may have a stable, appropriate environment for hospice agencies to deliver care;
- ▣ Cooperative Christian Ministry in Middlesboro, Kentucky, a program which provides cost assistance to families struggling to maintain electricity, water and gas at their residences;
- ▣ Rio Grande Borderland Ministries, an agency of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande which provides food, clothing, infant and child care supplies and other services to those in need on both sides of the US-Mexico border;
- ▣ The Rector’s Discretionary Fund of Saint Paul’s Church in Marfa, Texas, helping to respond to the needs of individuals and families in the remote and rural Big Bend region of Texas and the Mexican border communities in the states of Coahuila and Chihuahua; and

- ▣ The Rector's Discretionary Fund of Saint Christopher's Church, El Paso, for emergency aid to people on both sides of the El Paso/Juarez border beyond the capacity and scope of Rio Grande Borderland Ministries.

Through our annual Outreach Grants, the Brotherhood is able to support the ministries of our brothers where they are, and we thank God for the ability provided by our individual tithes to respond to local needs throughout the USA. It is a great pleasure to be able to consider such Outreach Grant applications submitted by our brothers toward ministries they are personally involved in or familiar with. In addition to approving these grants, Council adopted a revised Outreach Grant Application, which should improve our ability to process annual grants.

With the COVID-19 virus still spreading across the country and travel is prohibited in many areas, Council also decided to cancel the face-to-face Annual Convocation this year, which was scheduled to take place at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center on July 13 - 18. A committee headed by the Minister General was established to work on the many details of conducting the Annual Chapter Meeting online via Zoom, and to make decisions about matters relating to the various rites of the Brotherhood, which would normally take place during the Convocation. Other groups, including the individual Provinces, the Education Committee and the Board of Directors of the Brotherhood Benevolent Trust, will also need to gather in other ways as time and opportunity present. This new committee will make every effort to address all of these matters in the coming months.

Council approved the creation of a new province of the Brotherhood, combining those members currently resident in Provinces VI, VII and VIII of The Episcopal Church. This new entity will be known as Province West and William Henry Benefield (West Texas) will serve as Minister Provincial for the time being. His current term as Minister Provincial of Province 7 is due to conclude this summer, so an election of the professed brothers in the new Province West will elect an MP at that time. This structural change came to Council via William Henry and Richard Edward Helmer (California), the outgoing Minister Provincial of Province 8, and the resolution was refined to its final form by Tobias Stanislas Haller (Maryland), with the full agreement of all Council Members.

Lastly, Treasurer James Teets (Maryland) presented the community's Income and Expense Statements as of December 31, 2019 and March 31, 2020, which were received with thanks.

The NÆCC / CAROA Annual Conference

On May 3, 2020 Ronald Augustine Fox (Chicago), BSG's representative to the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NÆCC), attended the virtual joint annual meeting of NÆCC with the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas (CAROA). Over 75 representatives of the various communities attended.

The 2020 gathering of CAROA/NÆCC, originally set for the motherhouse of the Community of the Transfiguration in Cincinnati, became a Zoom conference due to COVID-19. Initially, the entire conference was cancelled, and then leadership of both organizations decided to adapt.

On Monday, April 27, there was a technical test meeting for everyone, especially those who had not used the Zoom platform. The following day the NÆCC members met online for a business meeting lasting two hours. At that meeting, we learned that there could be a future revision of the canon on religious orders and other Christian communities. In 1982, the leaders of the Brotherhood and the Worker Sisters of the Holy Spirit worked to restore the ability for intentionally dispersed (non-monastic) communities such as ours to come under canonical oversight, which had been removed in an earlier canonical revision. In the time since then, the House of Bishops Committee on Religious Communities had implemented a number of requirements for obtaining recognition and oversight.

The Rev Masud Ibn Syedullah TSSF, the NÆCC President, reported that Bishop Todd Ousley of the Presiding Bishop's staff recently noted that some of the emerging communities, and communities such as TSSF — which spans many dioceses, countries, and Anglican Provinces — find it hard to comply with recognition requirements. It is also possible that the presidents of CAROA and NÆCC will be asked to serve on the committee with the bishops. Masud, representing NÆCC, and Sr Faith Margaret CHS, president of CAROA, plan to meet with Bishop Jeff Lee, chair of the bishops' committee.

Other topics of discussion concerned continuing joint meetings of the two organizations, and the possibility of separate gatherings of each with less frequent joint meetings. The 2021 gathering is scheduled for the Siena Retreat Center, Racine WI. NÆCC membership is growing, while CAROA wants to meet at one of its member's convents or monasteries, few of which could accommodate a joint gathering. CAROA has scheduled a meeting for Holy Cross Monastery at West Park NY for 2022.

Masud also reported that on Thursday, both CAROA and NÆCC would have the opportunity to view a pre-recorded video with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, Masud, Faith Margaret, the Rev Dr Ellen Francis OSH, and the Rev David Brinton OGS, General Secretary of CAROA. Initially, the PB was going to meet in person with both groups in Ohio. On Thursday, April 30, the joint session viewed the video with the PB. Faith Margaret said that she was glad the PB made it important to schedule his calendar to be able to meet with CAROA and NÆCC, and said this gave us a "foot in the door." The PB told everyone that religious in the church have been important to him for many years. He said that the presence of religious life in the church is something of which more Episcopalians need to be aware, and he hoped this meeting was the first of many he would have in the future with communities of the church.

On Friday, May 1, there was a joint business meeting of CAROA and NÆCC. Many brothers and sisters offered their thoughts on the PB's talk, with the vast

majority being positive. Brother Jude SSF said that CAROA is thinking about a brochure about religious life that would go to all bishops of the church, and he said it would be good to have input from NÆCC so bishops could see what kinds of religious communities there are in the church. It was suggested that we establish a norm with the House of Bishops Committee on Religious Communities to have representation at our gatherings.

There was considerable discussion about having a “Religious Life Sunday” in The Episcopal Church. Ellen Francis said that a General Convention resolution would be good, but also thinks it would take too long. It was decided that there would be a CAROA/NÆCC task force established to study the possibility of such a Sunday, and what needs to happen for it to become a reality. Ronald Augustine was appointed to serve on this task force.

One participant suggested that all bishop visitors could have a Zoom meeting to discuss the various communities they represent. NÆCC will have new standing committees on communications, General Convention preparation, and the relationship of CAROA and NÆCC with the wider church.

The Rev Canons Andrew Rank and Barnabas Hunt of the Society of Saint Paul now live in assisted living in San Diego. On Friday, Andrew mentioned he was happy to see so many representatives of CAROA and NÆCC on the Zoom meeting, and said it was great that traditional communities and dispersed communities are working so closely together.

The virtual setting of the meeting constrained worship and fellowship, and the community representatives were unable to have the usual round of *lectio divina*, Eucharist, and Evensong, but had time for prayers together on Thursday, and shared in the Litany During a Pandemic on Friday.

A Special Interview

In early May, Bishop Francisco Duque-Gomez of the Episcopal Overseas Diocese of Colombia invited Angel Gabriel Roque (Southeast Florida) to officiate at Morning Prayer online and to be interviewed about the religious life in The Episcopal Church, with an emphasis on the Brotherhood and its history, training program, website, and so on. Angel Gabriel officiated at Morning Prayer in Spanish, according to the Brotherhood’s custom, and a priest from the Diocese of Colombia whom Angel Gabriel had met during the Episcopal Youth Event in 2017 conducted the interview.

Angel Gabriel began by describing his journey from Roman Catholic boy to Episcopal Gregorian friar, living out in the world and guided through life by the Brotherhood’s Rule. Asked how the Brotherhood came into existence, he discussed its founding and some of its history



Rabbi Arnie Samian (Jewish Federation of Broward County) and Angel Gabriel at a BLM protest.

in the church. He also talked about the church positions he holds, and how being a brother influences those positions positively. The two discussed the Brotherhood's informal slogan, "Religious are Dangerous," and the charge to help keep the church awake and accountable, effecting change by example and hospitality.

Angel Gabriel outlined the Brotherhood's application and training processes, and described how the community maintains communication over the course of the year. He also explained the provincial process and the use of Zoom meetings and regular communication to maintain the bonds of affection. They then discussed the vows and how they are lived out daily.

They explored the canonical differences between religious orders and other Christian communities, and how the Brotherhood is closely involved with the development of current understandings; this led to discussion of the House of Bishops Committee on Religious Communities and the accountability required of communities in our church.

Angel Gabriel also talked about the BSG website and what it offers, including the "Daily Office App" now widely used throughout the church.

The interview was shared on Facebook, and was broadcast live on four different Latino/Hispanic ministry pages of The Episcopal Church. Angel Gabriel has received messages of encouragement from all over the Caribbean, Central America, South America, and across the US. He has long known that the church's Latino community is hungry for information about religious life. We hope that this online interview will help spread that word. As Angel Gabriel put it, "Many have a calling to religious life but have no idea how to express it, or even if it is possible to pursue as Anglicans and Episcopalians. Even if they don't necessarily apply to the Brotherhood, at least they know that there is an amazing group of men that reflect Jesus' call to hospitality and love, and they call themselves Gregorians. This is only the beginning."

Province 1

On Saturday, May 16, the brothers of Province 1 met via Zoom for a "Quiet Morning." The day opened with Morning Prayer, and then proceeded with the meditation, led by Christopher Stephen Jenks (Rhode Island). The text chosen for the day was 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, which had been read at Morning Prayer earlier in the week: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

The brothers meditated on each phrase of the text, and then shared thoughts and insights with each other. Christopher Stephen said he felt the call to be aware of all for which he has to be grateful: a place to live that is more than adequate; all that he needs or wants to eat; privacy, which he values especially; a beautiful, secluded courtyard right outside his door, overlooking the cathedral burial ground, which he can visit without having to worry about social distancing or wearing a mask; a community of neighbors and diocesan staff; a Gregorian brother, William Francis Jones, whom he joins for Evening

Prayer and dinner every night. As he said at the retreat, “This is far more than many brothers are getting right now.”

The morning concluded with Noonday Prayer. Getting used to Zoom made for some initial awkwardness, but once things got going, it became easier for all. While it is certainly far more desirable to meet in person, given the circumstances surrounding COVID-19, this was impossible, and Zoom was a more than adequate substitute, given the Brotherhood’s ethos as a physically distant, dispersed community.

Province 3

Palm Sunday was “liturgically distanced” amid the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, as James Teets (Maryland) and Tobias Stanislas Haller (Maryland) helped out at their parish — Church of the Advent, Federal Hill, Baltimore — which had already ordered and received their palm fronds for distribution on that Sunday morning. The senior warden arranged for our brothers to hold the Palm Liturgy on the church steps, for the benefit of the congregation and the neighborhood, since no indoor public worship was permitted in Maryland.



Province 5



Joseph Basil Gauss is a registered nurse serving at the NorthShore University Health Care System, Evanston, Illinois. The hospital’s spiritual care department coordinated an audio only “Service of Comfort, Remembrance and Hope.” This recording was made available to employees through the NorthShore Employee & Physician COVID-19 Online Resource Center, accessible both at work and at home. The goal was to have an accessible service to all since so many of the front-line people, including Joseph Basil, work in 24/7 environments. The collaborators recorded each of their contributions from home or office and submitted them to

the spiritual care department, which then wove the finished offering together. Joseph Basil’s meditation was part of the “Remembering Together” section of the service; he included a meditation by the Rev Greta Crosby, “When the Bottom Falls Out,” offering hope to make the most and the best of the situation in which we find ourselves, however painful: “Loss makes artists of us all as we weave new patterns in the fabric of our lives.”

Province West

On June 5th Steven M Poindexter withdrew from the postulancy of the Brotherhood. We wish him well as he continues his service to God's Holy Church.

Reflections on the State of the World **In Time of Plague and Protest**

On being a religious in a time of crisis

All around us people are desperate for a sense of control. Here are some of the ways:

- They buy toilet paper to last them years
- They buy sardines despite not liking sardines.
- They forward dubious "information" on the internet.
- They offer their own doomsday guesses about the future.
- They offer their own pollyannaish guesses about the future.
- They try and shame anyone who doesn't follow the rules, as they understand them.
- They become cavalier in the face of danger, putting themselves and others at risk.
- They stoke their already-existing political resentments.
- They cling to family and friends like never before.
- They bake loads of bread, and become the home cooks they always wanted to be.
- They pray fervently and constantly.
- They obsessively watch news articles and press conferences and stock tickers.
- They shut all news and press aside and ignore it entirely.

And you can think of more.

Some of these are harmful, and some of these are beneficial, and some of them are simply amusing. But none of them actually provide control! They only provide an illusion of control, and as Tobias Stanislas has reminded us so many times, we have nothing to fear from reality. But we do have plenty to fear from illusion.

There is a line from the TV show "M*A*S*H": "Look, all I know is what they taught me at command school. There are certain rules about a war. And rule number one is young men die. And rule number two is, doctors can't change rule number one." This is advice from Henry Blake to Hawkeye Pierce about dealing with the death of a friend. It's not advice to give up or abandon hope. It's advice to recognize a fundamental lack of control.

War is horrible, and epidemic disease is horrible, but a loss of control? That's not horrible. That's just living in the world. But when our fears get stoked, and our ability to predict the future seems in doubt, we become a little

more acutely aware of our lack of control. This lack of control was always around us.

What can our Brotherhood's Rule offer us? And what can we offer others? Here are my suggestions.

First, *poverty*. From Matthew 6:20: "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." People acquire heaps of possession in an attempt to provide insulation and control against the future, and Jesus tells us that this doesn't work: the future comes, bringing with it moth, rust, and thieves. Now, more than ever, is the time to carry our financial security lightly, saying with Paul, (Philippians 4:12) "I know what it is to have little and I know what it is to have plenty." Our security comes from Christ, not from careful planning, financial stewardship, and getting all our ducks in a row.

Second, *chastity*. Our Rule calls us to be free to love others without trying to possess or control. And we usually hear those words, and we think, "Without trying to possess *others* or control *others*," but the words of our Rule are bigger than that. They apply to trying to possess or control the future, the situation, our own anxieties. And, of course, the behavior — good or bad — of those around us. The salvation of the world does not depend on our ability to get everyone properly in line.

And third, *obedience*. Because *we* should be in line. Without turning into a statist, I will say that I think obedience here does mean taking *extremely seriously* as a matter of personal religious discipline the instructions from public health authorities. In my opinion (and I'm not a pastoral official, so it's just my opinion), violating the instructions of public health authorities at a time such as this is a serious and profound violation of our Rule.

Finally, *witness*. "A brother must endeavor to witness to our Redeemer's love with quietness, patience, humility, charity, courage and prayer." We can be quiet. Our witness does not need to be in a flurry of internet posts, forwards, "spreading information," and all the rest. Some are indeed called to that, especially those who are leaders in their context. I think of Bishop John Taylor (in Los Angeles) and his new facebook series tagged #holydistancing.

We can be calm. Patience means letting God work in God's time, which can be agonizingly slow ("How long, O Lord, how long?") and frustrating. But we have our eyes on the horizon and we know how the story ends, and it ends in goodness and glory and love and humanity. By bringing patience instead of anxiety we help everyone who is caught up in their own loss of control — even if they do not share our hope.

We can be humble. My own actions do not change the world; it is enough to change myself. And my local actions are mostly pretty small. Reducing trips to the grocery. Trying my part to help local businesses stay afloat. Washing my hands. Letting go my desire to hug my friends or even be in the same room with them. Those all seem like such little actions, but they are sufficient for the day.

We can be charitable. Some people will do the wrong things, some people will be careless and callous. For some, events seem to bring out the worst in them. We can be gentle with them, not seizing this as the moment to shout, “Ah-hah!” but instead working to recognize their own turmoil and fear rather than to triumph over them.

We can be courageous. This does not call us to deny danger, but to carry on our lives doing our best in the face of danger, neither being catatonic in inaction, nor being panicked in action. We can look beyond ourselves and our own psyche and do what needs to be done.

We can pray. For this is always the Christian response to feelings of uncertainty and lack of control. Prayer starts from a lack of control and moves to a recognition that God is in control, and that the God who is in control is a loving and gracious God, whose will for all is health and salvation. Prayer can seem so *terribly small* at a time like this. But our God is a God who works with the small and the little, with the quiet and the humble.

I love you all my brothers. Be well, be beacons, be witnesses. We have nothing to fear from reality.

Thomas Bushnell

The Empty Church
March 23rd, 2020

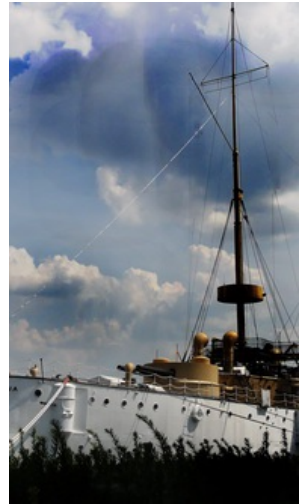
The old vessel:
sails of gathered hymns furled
her sacramental engine still
bells silent
the pipes cool and quiet.

This strange sabbath rest,
her motley crew scattered ashore
in a spring leave unbounded by plans or orders.

And in the Captain’s window
burns the solitary candle —
but does it mean the Captain is aboard?
Or out and about? Or both?

And so she rests,
that old boat,
her hatches battened,
washed up on this strange shore,
her graces storied and screened
by waiting hearts gathered round
family and friendly and solitary table.

She waits the return of her beloved
children of grace
who, while scattered abroad,



keep the fires of her engines candlelit
close to hearth and home
and shining into streets and hearts dark with fear.

Her crew they know their mission now,
this unsettled Lent laid bare,
and so the Captain's light burns with hope:
Can't you see it in their eyes?

Richard Edward Helmer

Praying Hard

While saying Evening Prayer on Monday I was praying hard; not that I hadn't been praying hard before that. During the prior week, and especially over the past weekend, Chicago and the surrounding areas, and many other cities across the country, had seen protests, arson, looting and other reactions to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. One of my Gregorian brothers, Joseph Basil Gauss, grew up in Minneapolis and his mom still lives there. There was good reason for praying hard.

That evening, while delivering a forceful statement from the beautiful White House Rose Garden, President Trump had vowed to put an end to the violent protests by deploying US military forces against our own citizens. There was good reason for praying hard.

At the same time, Washington law enforcement officers were firing tear-gas and rubber bullets into crowds of protesters gathering blocks away at the historic Saint John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square, across from the White House. There was good reason for praying hard. Closer to home, there was a protest rally and parade beginning at the Belmont Red Line station. They would march down Halsted, just one-half block from my apartment, and continue toward Chicago's Uptown area. Would there be violence associated with this event? There were police and TV news helicopters flying overhead. And their respective officers and reporters had "boots on the ground" very nearby. There was good reason for praying hard.

There were police cars with sirens blaring outside my open apartment windows. There was good reason for praying hard.

So what could I do? I prayed hard!

But here's an irony. The Evening Office was a commemoration of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, having been transferred from May 31st because of Pentecost. In her commentary on the portion of Luke's Gospel designated for that day (1:39-49), the Rev Judith Jones writes

Having learned from the angel that she will give birth to the Son of God, Mary hurries to visit her pregnant relative Elizabeth in the hill country. The intimate conversation that follows portrays Jesus as more important than John. It also shows God already at work to overturn the world's structures and expectations. The spotlight shines on Mary and Elizabeth,

two lowly and shamed ones through whom God has chosen to begin the transformation of the world.

Complete stop!

After reading those last two sentences, I couldn't get my mind off of worldly expectations and Godly transformation. I kept focusing on the question, "Where is the spotlight shining now?" (Or maybe the question is, "On whom?") Well, that evening the spotlights all seemed to be focused on property damage, on city and state police law enforcement, on a presidential press conference or on a soon-to-come presidential photo op with Bible in hand at Saint John's Church, and last, but certainly not least, on parading protesters one-half block away.

I sat there pondering the spotlight of worldly expectation focused and shining on us. Are we today's versions of Mary and Elizabeth? Aren't we the ones who are shamed? Aren't we shamed by racism, bigotry, and indifference, whether realized or unrealized? But, lest you stop reading too soon, aren't we also the ones through whom God is still continually working, continually transforming? In Psalm 102, the Psalmist writes that we shall perish, but God will endure; we all shall wear out like a garment; as clothing God will change us, and we shall be changed. But God is always the same, whose years will never end. (Ps. 102:26-27) So then, if we focus our spotlights on our never-changing and ever-present God, I guess there is still enough time for our own transformations and the transformation of the world.

There is another good reason for praying (and working) hard!

Nathanael Deward Rahm

Youth Show the Way

Together with the Young Adult Ministry Council of my diocese, I have worked to create "The YAM Happy Hour" where we can discuss issues that affect young adults directly. I will be moderating a series of digital "Happy Hours" dedicated to discussing the crisis with police brutality, systemic racism, and the Black Lives Matter movement. The sessions have grown and the format has been opened to people of other ages beyond the original 18-35 (which is what the church considers young adults). The discussions were opened to other ages because it can heal the disconnection that different generations have when discussing these important subjects, even though they affect us all, one way or another. The conversation is moderated in a very organized, respectful, and uplifting way. The YAM Council wants to make sure that such difficult but necessary subjects are discussed with respect to everyone's background and way of thinking.

Our next topic will be, "What is an ally?" Each Thursday evening we will have a different session breaking down what we believe makes an ally in the cause of justice and peace. The sessions are organized by theme:



Y A M @ Zoom

- 1) Acknowledgment
- 2) Owning/Accountability
- 3) Educating Yourself
- 4) Are you the victim/Is it about you?
- 5) Using your privilege for good.

We believe that by having a conversation and getting to know our stories we can thrive and love each other more genuinely. We are called to love in action.

Angel Gabriel Roque



David Luke Henton at the BLM protest in Cloudcroft NM