

(Cont. from Pg. 2)

passing through New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut before emptying into Long Island Sound. Paddling the length of the river isn't unusual, and a speedy paddler could cover its 410 miles in about a week. But Hirschfeld sees this as a unique faith-based journey, offering a slower, more contemplative experience.



The choice of 40 days was intentional – think Noah's 40 days and nights of rain, or Jesus in the desert. Organizers also wanted to challenge the notion that Christian pilgrimages must lead to traditional destinations, like the Holy Land.

“Why is it that we've never considered doing such things at home in our own sacred landscape, the places we actually live?” asked the Rev. Stephen Blackmer of Church of the Woods, Canterbury, NH. He has worked closely with Hirschfeld and Jo Brooks, their logistical coordinator, in planning the River of Life pilgrimage.

“Part of the joy for me of exploring this is to say we can have similar experiences ... right here,” Blackmer said. “And in that, we both bring ourselves closer to God and we restore our connections with the very places we live.”

Blackmer, who began canoeing as a child, said he had about 30 years of experience in environmental advocacy before being called to the priesthood a few years ago, around the same time Hirschfeld was being considered for bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire.

In 2011, Hirschfeld was serving as rector at Grace Episcopal Church in Amherst, Massachusetts, when he got a letter inviting him to interview for New Hampshire bishop. A veteran of rowing teams in high school and college, Hirschfeld needed to reflect on that invitation, so he got out his one-man sculling boat and headed down to the Connecticut River.

Rowing upstream, the idea came to him of a Christian pilgrimage on the river that would incorporate references to its natural history, human history and cultural history.

For several years, that idea remained just an idea. He was elected bishop coadjutor in 2012 and took the reins of the diocese the following January. Then, in 2015, while attending an annual Advent retreat with all the bishops from Province I, he remembered the river pilgrimage and

mentioned the idea to the other bishops.

“They immediately got excited about it,” Hirschfeld told ENS. “It was like lightning had struck. ... Even those not interested in kayaking or canoeing, they just saw a value to this as a way of doing public liturgy, as a way of bearing witness to the health of water.”

Blackmer, one of the first new priests Hirschfeld ordained in New Hampshire, has been at the forefront of the diocese's environmental ministries, including through weekly outdoor worship services at Church of the Woods, on 106 acres of woods and wetlands in Canterbury.

“Steve makes things happen,” Hirschfeld said. Blackmer became an integral partner in developing the River of Life pilgrimage.

“When people ask me what they can do for the environment, the first thing I say is, go outside,” Blackmer said.

Each day, prayers will be read from the pilgrimage's prayer book, but “the large part of each day will be in silence, to reflect that part of it is simply being there,” Blackmer said.

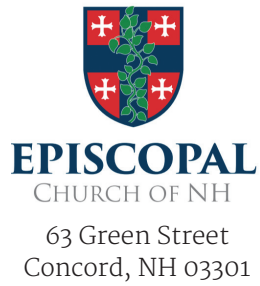
They also have scheduled stops along the journey where community events will be held, typically on weekends. A list of events and day paddles is available at <http://kairosearth.org/river/events/>.

And by the time the journey reaches Essex, Connecticut, on July 8 for a concluding celebration, “who knows, we may have a flotilla of canoes and kayaks,” Blackmer said. The pilgrimage officially ends the next day, July 9, with a final six-mile paddle to Long Island Sound.

After that, any river in America could be ripe for the next pilgrimage, if another diocese wants to pick up the New England dioceses' trailblazing oar.

“We're taking extensive notes as we go through this,” Hirschfeld said. “It would be wonderful if other dioceses and other spiritual organizations could replicate this.”

David Paulsen is an editor and reporter for the Episcopal News Service. He can be reached at dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org. Thank you to ENS for this article.



Cover Art: *Following the Thread of Life*, by The Rev. Canon Hannah Anderson

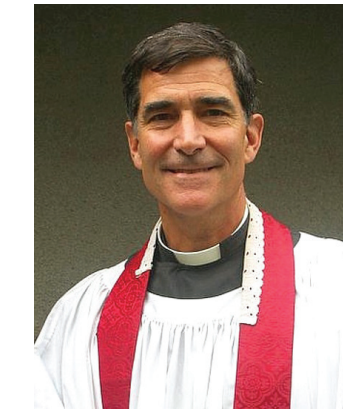


News From The Vine

A Publication From The Episcopal Church of NH



Letter From Bishop Rob



A Pastoral Letter: Extending The Peace of Christ

*He is the Way.
Follow him through the Land of Unlikeness;
You will see rare beasts and have unique adventures.*

*He is the Truth.
Seek him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;
You will come to a great city that has expected your return for years.*

*He is the Life.
Love him in the World of the Flesh;
And at your marriage all its occasions shall dance for joy.*

*W.H. Auden, For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio.
Hymn # 463, Hymnal 198)*

Chokecherry. Starflower. Ostrich Fern. Trillium. Loon. Wood Mallard. Black Fly.

These are some of the not-so-rare creatures that we encountered on the border of the U.S. and Canada as we began the River of Life Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage is an intentionally unhurried and prayerful procession of faithful people in canoes and kayaks making their way from the source of the Connecticut River to its emptying out into Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. It's an adjustment to be in silence with others, to put aside for a time whatever we have to say to each other about our unique stories and perspectives, our high-church, low-church, no-church, liberal, conservative preferences, in order to walk or paddle together simply as human beings, beings who have come from the humus, the earth, and who are returning to the earth, just as the waters will return to the sea. I have to admit confronting an inner revolt and anxiety in not being able to use my cell phone or laptop to check in on the latest developments in the world or home. Though we've been planning this Pilgrimage for almost two years with so many meetings and voices, finding myself in a canoe at the tip of the River felt so sudden as to be a shock.

Overhearing our knowledgeable guides, Mark and Lisa Kutolowski, utter the names of the diverse species of flora and fauna, I felt very much out of my usual element, among unfamiliar fellow creatures, each dissimilar to the other. The sound of the Auden poem, (set to music in Hymn 463 in Hymnal 1982) started humming in my soul. We were following Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, in the Land of Unlikeness.

This is Church. Whether we are on a river, lake, on a trail, in our work or marketplaces, or in Church on Sunday. Jesus's own ministry took him through the Land of Unlikeness, where people were not always like him. His early life began as a refugee in Egypt. He started his ministry in the wilderness. He traveled in areas of strangeness, of anxiety, of unfamiliarity. Think of his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, or the woman from Syria, his constant encounters with people whom he did not know, or even agree with, but whom he called his family, children of the same God. Moving through various spaces, he created community in the land of Unlikeness, the Kingdom of Anxiety, the World of the Flesh. The name we give to the communities He continues among us? The name we give to that ever-resilient, ever changing, ever colliding, ever interweaving relationship of

(Cont. on Pg. 2)

(Bishop Rob's Letter, cont.)

justice, love, worship, and life? Church.

Our Presiding Bishop is encouraging us to imagine the Church as Becoming The Beloved Community, which he describes as not so much a set of programs but a pilgrimage, a journey together where our relationships with one another are grounded in reconciling love, justice, and healing in Christ. There's something freeing and powerful about imagining Church, the Beloved Community, not as a fixed place, but as a journey, a pilgrimage together, a becoming.

Chokecherry. Starflower. Ostrich Fern. Trillium. Loon. Wood Mallard. Black Fly.

These are species we encountered on the River of Life Pilgrimage. Some are stunningly beautiful. Some are a little bothersome-- did you know that the presence of a black fly actually indicates that the nearby water is healthy? (I will let the reader make the connection with parish life, even in The Beloved Community!). If you were not on this

'River of Life' Pilgrimage Down The Connecticut River

By David Paulsen, excerpted from Episcopal News Service



New Hampshire Bishop Robert Hirschfeld has rowed on the Connecticut River for years. It once was a sort of industrial "sewer" but has since been cleaned up and restored to "a place of stunning beauty," he said. Hirschfeld intends to show it also can be a place of worship and an inspiration for prayer.

The bishop is preparing to lead a 40-day pilgrimage on the river, from source to ocean. In our sound-bite culture, Hirschfeld's message can be reduced to this: Put down that cellphone, and pick up a paddle.

"This is a way to experience God's love for us, God's grace, God's desire to flow in us and around us," Hirschfeld told

particular river pilgrimage, I invite you to imagine that you are on a pilgrimage with Jesus wherever you are. The Spirit seems to have driven us, like the Spirit quite literally hurled Jesus into the wilderness, a deserted place where he encountered his absolute dependence on God. This is where we are as a Church these days—this time of reformation, of renewal, of re-introduction to our God and teacher Jesus. Though it may not always be very comfortable, it's a beautiful and sacred place to be. Truth be told, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, page 840)

Your Fellow Pilgrim,
+Rob

Episcopal News Service in a phone interview. "And in our forming a community of pilgrims, my desire was to slow down and put aside our electronic devices, all the busy-ness of our life, and just be fully present with God and each other in the midst of God's creation."

The River of Life Pilgrimage, which launched May 31 near the Canadian border, is a collaboration of all Episcopal dioceses in New England, as well as the

New England synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and several conservation groups. More than 50 people signed up in advance to canoe or kayak multi-day segments, camping overnight, and others are invited to join the group for day paddles. Daily segments average 10 to 12 miles.

Pilgrims without a paddle or who live far from the Connecticut River still are encouraged to participate in the pilgrimage by following along as a "pilgrim in prayer" with the River of Life prayer book (available at <http://kairosearth.org/river/pilgrim-in-prayer/>).

The Connecticut River is New England's longest river,
(Cont. on Pg.5)

Episcopal Service Corps Launch—Welcoming our First Cohort of Fellows

The Episcopal Service Corps is a national network of yearlong service programs dedicated to forming young adult leaders. Assisi Program, a project of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, is the first ever Episcopal Service Corps site in Northern New England. Four Fellows have been chosen to come to New Hampshire for our first ever cohort of the Assisi Program, in the fall of 2017 (program year is September – August). These Fellows, ages 21–29, from all faiths and diverse backgrounds, will work for justice, live in intentional community, grow in leadership, and serve others.

Assisi Program offers a challenging, inspiring Fellowship, individual and group discernment, living expenses and a monthly stipend. The former Trinity Episcopal Church in Tilton, NH, is being renovated to accommodate our Fellows. They will live in new rooms built in the undercroft of Trinity. The Town of Tilton has been supportive and welcoming of this change of use for the building, and community leaders will continue to participate in the development of our Assisi Program Fellows. The location of downtown Tilton, and proximity to Franklin, allows for service project opportunities and immersion of the Fellows in these communities.

Fellowship placements will be at NH nonprofits, which share our diocesan goals of social justice, upholding human dignity, respect for creation and peace. Our 2017–2018 placements are Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy, Granite State Organizing Project, New Hampshire Legal Assistance and Second Start. Fellows will be matched with a placement site and serve as volunteers at these nonprofits



for 32 hours each week.

Our first cohort is made up of four women from around the United States.

Niambi Mercardo is a 2017 graduate of Antioch New England with a Master's Degree in Environmental Studies and Sustainability, and has an undergraduate degree from Union College in Maine. She has experience advocating and organizing for issues of wildlife protection, sustainability, faith, end of life, and voting rights. She is currently a member of the St. James choir in Keene, NH. She is originally from New Jersey. Joining Niambi will be her grey tabby cat, Trinket.

Sandy Milien is from Miami, born in the Dominican Republic. She is a 2017 graduate of Sewanee the University of the South, majoring in International and Global Studies with French Studies and Spanish minors. She is a sacristan at Sewanee and a member of several dance teams. She has served at the Universities' Children Center for four years assisting the teachers with lesson plans and afterschool care. Spanish is her first language.

Anna Moore is a 2011 graduate of Lewis & Clark College. Since then, Anna has worked as a tutor and caregiver to seniors. Her faith journey has taken her on domestic and international service trips and to residencies at monasteries, including the Society of St. John the Evangelist. She speaks Spanish and uses her voice and hands to make sacred art through singing and crafts. She is living outside of Portland, OR, and is looking forward to the outdoor opportunities of NH.

(Cont. on Pg.4)

Transition Ministry Update

- The Rev. Reed Loy was called as Rector of St. Andrew's, Hopkinton. Reed+ comes back to the Episcopal Church of NH where he was ordained in 2016 after having served as Assistant to the Rector at St. Alban's in Cape Elizabeth, Maine and St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Portland, Maine.
- The opening for a full-time Rector at St. Matthew's, Goffstown, has been posted. Their Parish Profile is available on their website and our diocesan website. Applicants may apply for the position through The Rev. Canon Hannah Anderson, our Transition Ministry Officer.

Required documents are listed on our diocesan website under Clergy Transitions.

- Two new Curates have been hired in our diocese. St. John's, Portsmouth, has called The Rev. Nathan Bourne, and Church of the Good Shepherd, Nashua, has called The Rev. Kate Harmon Siberine.
- The Rev. Canon Hannah Anderson is serving as the temporary Vicar at St. Christopher's, Hampstead, for this summer.

Grant Money for Our Kids From Van Otterloo

The Our Kids Commission is grateful to have received a grant from the Van Otterloo Family Foundation for \$30,000. This is the second year that the Van Otterloo Family Foundation has partnered with the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire to invest in increasing educational opportunities for all "our kids." This grant will benefit the work of our churches to partner with schools and community agencies to provide educational enrichment for children who would otherwise not have access to opportunities like tutoring and homework help, literacy activities, mentoring, music or art lessons, and summer camp. The Van Otterloo Family Foundation's mission is to: "To provide support for educational enterprises that demonstrate innovation and excellence in teaching and learning while placing emphasis on the potential of all individuals, target unmet educational needs, or provide an exemplary educational program".

(Cont. from Pg.3)

Bailey Pischke is a 2017 graduate of, St. Norbert College, a Catholic liberal arts college in Wisconsin, with a dual degree in Sociology and Human Services. She was born and raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin with her twin sister, Rachel. She has worked in community organizing and early childhood development, as well as outdoor recreation. She has a passion for working with the homeless, and has served on mission trips to shelters in Washington, DC. She speaks Spanish.

The Assisi Program community will strive to bring joy and hope to others through their individual and collective efforts. We look forward to introducing you to Anna, Bailey, Niambi and Sandy this fall!

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Bishop Rob Hirschfeld