

## Easter Letter from Bishop Rob

To proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in 2021 seems to me utterly different than at any other time in my life as a preacher. This year, the venerable icon of what is known as the ‘harrowing of hell’ has perhaps more power than at any other time I can remember. The ancient account, asserted in the Apostles’ Creed, tells how Jesus “... descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.” Therein is the hope of how each of us are going to be re-gathered from our own tombs, symbolic and otherwise, into glorious life together.

For Christians, the rising of the crucified Jesus from the dead has never been the story about one individual. Resurrection is known not only by one isolated man of a particular family and history — even though it is that. The triumph of life over death, of love over hatred, of hope over fear, is a reality that is communicated to all humankind, indeed all creation, in a community of love. The images the early church gives us of Jesus rising are never of a lone ranger, but of a human being encountering others. No one is unchanged once they experience Jesus after Easter.

Here we are. I write this in the heart of Lent — as some have said, “the Lentiest Lent that has ever Lented.” The weekly exhilaration and thrill of visiting the churches in person has had to give way to the two-dimensional depictions available on our electronic screens, depriving us of something of our essence. Our faith has always been about the Body... seeing and listening and feeding and singing with our physical presence. It is through a human body after all, that God chose to enter the world in Jesus to save us. So, yes, we sense that the scattering of the past year has taken a toll on our souls. It has been a kind of death.

This year, though, I feel more than ever — and I pray mightily that it’s true! — God’s entering into our sorry condition will also involve a re-gathering, in person, of the Body of Christ, so that we may experience the victory of life in a new and special way this year. I wish I could say when exactly, but I pray our Easter-tide will be the pivot, the period of time when we will see the stone roll away from the tomb. We will encounter the Risen Christ again in our gardens, at our tables and altars, even in our sanctuaries.

In the meantime, we do not lose hope. Though we are surrounded with death and grief on so many levels, and in so many spheres of our lives, God’s fierce love and justice is stronger than death. Robust conversations about how the Church, even in New Hampshire, will join God’s mission to repair the persistent effects of oppression among Blacks, Indigenous people, and people of color are signs of Jesus coming out of the tomb. This topic, long dismissed as impracticable and even frivolous by the privileged and entitled, are now taken seriously as an effective means by which true and deep healing — indeed God’s mission of reconciliation and healing — will be furthered. Healing past wounds is how a true economy — literally, a household — is managed in God’s Realm.

Within our church house, we are ordaining new talented deacons and priests for ministries that will extend well beyond the usual four walls of an aging church building. And we see more people turning to God in Jesus Christ to address that hunger for purpose and community that our social distress and this enduring pandemic has intensified in us all.

Sometimes we, like Thomas of John’s Gospel, need evidence of Christ’s rising. I look to these phenomena and movements in our midst. Jesus invites Thomas not to shun the wounds we inflict and absorb in life, but actually

*“Letter from Bishop Rob” continued inside...*

# The Diocese Pledges to Move Forward on **Reconciliation** and **Reparations**

**At the 218th Convention of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire the important work of racial reconciliation moved forward in a significant way.**

The convention opened with worship and an inspiring sermon from guest preacher the Rt. Rev. Shannon MacVean-Brown, Bishop of Vermont. Bishop Shannon shared her experience of learning about her family history and tracing her family to enslaved peoples living on a plantation southeast of Columbia, South Carolina. She spoke of discipleship, the way of love, and the need for racial reconciliation and reparation, and what that means for us all. The following day, *A Resolution for the Study of and Actions Leading to Reparations* was approved by the convention.



“Many people tend to think of New Hampshire as a ‘white state,’ and as a northern state, having nothing to do with enslaved peoples” said the Rev. Canon Gail Avery, Canon for

Transition and Community Engagement for the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire. “However, slavery did exist in New Hampshire — well into the 1800’s — and our black forbearers had a significant impact on the state. Their history has simply not been included in our written histories and official narratives. They’ve been an occasional footnote, and in some cases, their story has been expunged over time.”

“We must address current issues surrounding institutional racism as well,” said Canon Gail. “New Hampshire is not immune. These issues cross urban and rural, and all states, and are embedded in our contemporary culture and society. The disproportionate impact of COVID on people of color,\*\* mass incarceration, and equity gaps in local education are just a few examples of biases within our social and economic systems that create unfairness and injustice.”

Canon Gail credits The Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire ([blackheritagetrailnh.org](http://blackheritagetrailnh.org)) with making incredible contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the black community in New Hampshire. Beginning in Portsmouth, the Black Heritage Trail has expanded with stories all across the state.

“Reconciliation is about restoring people’s humanity,” noted Canon Gail. “Racism, bigotry, and stereotyping strip away an individual’s humanity. Historically, we’ve never really considered or acknowledged African-Americans, Indigenous peoples, Asian-Americans, and others as fully human. From a Christian perspective, we’re working to acknowledge their full citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Reconciliation seeks to repair and return that essential humanness in all people.”

In 2018, the church in New Hampshire collaborated with the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire to tell 40 stories and offer 40 prayers about the Black community in our state during Lent. These were then collected in a book, *How the Light Gets In: A Lenten Project*. 40 Stories collected by Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire for the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire.



The book seeks to work for social justice and is an invitation to pause and reflect on our journey toward reconciliation and healing. It is available to purchase on the Black Heritage Trail of NH website, <http://blackheritagetrailnh.org/books/>.

The resolution seeks to carry out the Episcopal Church’s Presiding Officers’ efforts to follow “the Way of Love” in order to act in accordance with our baptismal vows, in particular as it pertains to racial justice in the history and actions of our state and church. The resolution calls all congregations and Episcopal schools in New Hampshire:

- ☪ To a covenant with each other that commits to consistent and long-term actions toward racial reconciliation throughout our communities.
- ☪ To affirm their Baptismal vows of seeking to serve Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of every human being; and follow the *Becoming the Beloved Community* long-

term framework of telling the truth, proclaiming the dream, practicing the Way of Love, and repairing the breach as described in the Episcopal Church resource *Becoming Beloved Community...Where You Are*.

- ☺ To commit to the study of actions that lead to reparations and reconciliation in New Hampshire addressing legislation, education, access to healthcare, housing, economics, and other areas as appropriate.

According to Canon Gail, “Reconciliation and reparation seeks to ‘repair the breach’ and can take many forms. Some efforts might be very specific — creating trusts or scholarship funds, financial restitution for lands taken, waiving fees to help create greater and fairer opportunity, or passing legislation to assure equality, access, and recognition for groups who have suffered from persecution and prejudice.”

Other ways to work toward reconciliation may be more symbolic — formal apologies, naming buildings, and recognition. For example, as of this writing, the NH Legislature



is considering HB283, which would recognize April 11 as “Wentworth Cheswill Day.” Cheswill, a man of color, was born on April 11, 1746 in Newmarket, NH and is believed to be the first African-American elected official in the United States. He was a Revolutionary War veteran and an elected Newmarket town official — serving the town in several elected town offices from 1768 until his death in 1817. In 1801, Cheswill was among the founders of the first free library in Newmarket and provided in his will for public access to his personal library.

Reconciliation is not exclusively about the Black community. We need to address the Indigenous community and all people of color as well. Canon Gail noted that the diocese’s Reconciliation Commission supports a proposal to help the Abenaki people of Odanak reclaim the history of their tribal lands and retain their language and understanding of their culture and traditions. The Abenaki language’s words surround us in New Hampshire: Winnepesaukee, Pemigewasset, Amoskeag, Kancamagus, and Piscataqua among many others.

## Get Involved!

In passing the resolution for the *Study of and Actions Leading to Reparations*, Bishop Rob emphasized that the intent is not to simply put a check-mark next to reconciliation and reparations and move on, but to make a commitment to do the work. Here are a few ways you can get involved, take action, and be part of the movement forward.

1. Start a Sacred Ground group at your church — or join if one has already been started. Created by The Episcopal Church, Sacred Ground is a film- and readings-based dialogue series on race, grounded in faith ([episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground](http://episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground)). Canon Gail adds that, “Participating in Sacred Ground has been really powerful. In the last year it has grown from 100 groups to over 1,400 nationally,” and notes that it has brought people together and is effectively building community within our parishes.
2. Engage with a program called “Be the Bridge” ([bethethebridge.com](http://bethethebridge.com)). Be the Bridge is working toward a vision that “people and organizations are aware and responding to the racial brokenness and systemic injustice in our world. People are no longer conditioned by a racialized society but grounded in truth. All are equipped to flourish.”
3. A state-wide reparations conference is scheduled for May 11, at 7:00 p.m. The Reconciliation Commission is working

with James McKim, of the diocese’s Reconciliation Commission and a member of St. Matthew’s, Goffstown, who is leading the planning effort. So, save the date: May 11, 2021. **Racial Reconciliation and Reparations Digital Dialogue**. More to come!

4. Let your legislative representatives know that you support legislation which seeks to reconcile our past and address institutional racism today. Improved access and information on the internet make it easier than ever to review proposed legislation and let your representatives know how you feel. Locally, explore NH legislation via three resources:

- Access to the NH State Legislature: [gencourt.state.nh.us](http://gencourt.state.nh.us).
- An easy-to-use legislative database: [legiscan.com/NH](http://legiscan.com/NH).
- Sign-up for updates on NH legislation that relates to social justice and environmental issues from the NH American Friends Service Committee: [afsc.org/office/concord-nh](http://afsc.org/office/concord-nh).

For more about how you can become involved in the work of reconciliation, visit [nhepiscopal.org/beloved-community](http://nhepiscopal.org/beloved-community), or contact the Rev. Canon Gail Avery, Canon for Transition and Community Engagement at [gavery@nhepiscopal.org](mailto:gavery@nhepiscopal.org).

\*\* For more about COVID and equity in New Hampshire, read the *Initial Report and Recommendations* of the Governor’s COVID-19 Equity Response Team. [governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/equity-response-team.pdf](http://governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/equity-response-team.pdf).

# Envisioning Digital Ministry in New

“In seminary there was a lot of discussion about how the church was changing and what we were going to do about it,” said the Rev. Alanna Van Antwerpen. “Yet today, the church **has** changed. So what is our calling to reach out to people now?”

The Rev. Alanna is engaged in the early stages of discernment, working through this question and the many that relate to changing demographics, changing technology and access, and a “new normal” in our post-pandemic world.

Under a discernment grant through the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church on behalf of the Task Force for Church Planting and Congregation Redevelopment (called the Genesis Project) the Rev. Alanna’s work began as a conventional church planting for the diocese. Quickly, however, her path in exploring new worship communities is taking her toward digital ministry and outreach — discerning what that means, what it looks like, and how it serves the spiritual needs of people throughout the state.

The heart of the ministry is to reach out to people who may be disengaged, disaffected or have had a negative experience with the church. Digital is the platform, the tool. As Rev. Alanna notes, “Over the last twenty years the mission field has shifted. This is the mission field that has presented itself in New Hampshire — the least ‘religious’ state in the country,” (according to the Pew Research Center).

Rev. Alanna asks, “What does it mean to be a minister of the church, as someone who is called to care for souls? Is it souls who show up at a specific place, at a specific time, on Sundays only? Or, is the balance shifting? Perhaps the church

needs to get into spaces that might be a little uncomfortable for us in order to help care for those on their spiritual journey — supporting them, walking with them, and making space for them no matter where their journey takes them.”

Rev. Alanna is discerning priorities for the mission and exploring three primary paths for a broad digital ministry.

## Communicating Across Differences.

Rev. Alanna is working to create a space to host dialogue across differences. “There are places that are doing that in New Hampshire,” explains Rev. Alanna, “But we are exploring a more consistent and deeper commitment to spiritual and faithful conversations as followers of Christ. Difficult conversations have to do with the whole body of our life. It’s Important to have a place to do that.”

“...the church **has** changed. So what is our calling to reach out to people **now**?”

The Rev. Alanna Van Antwerpen



She says that the diocesan commissions are doing wonderful and important work, focusing on specific issues, and that a starting point for digital ministry would be to partner with them to more widely and deeply engage in dialogue across differences. “Getting the word out and having a platform to

## Ministry Transition Updates: The following transitions and celebratory events are dynamic, and always seeking to discern

❁ **Retirement: Lynn Eaton**, Bishop Hirschfeld’s Executive Assistant, retired March 31st. We had a wonderful Farewell Gathering March 23, sending Lynn off with our love and thanksgiving for her years of service and care.

❁ **Retirement: The Rev. David (Chip) Robinson**, Vicar of the shared ministry of Christ Church Portsmouth and Trinity Hampton, announced his retirement effective June 1.

*In the words of John O’Donohue: Lynn and Chip, “Now is the time to enjoy your heart’s desire, to live the dreams you’ve waited for, to awaken the depths beyond your work and enter into your infinite source.”*

❁ **Ordinations: The Rev. Gregory Baker** was ordained to the priesthood February 24 at Church of the Good Shepherd Nashua where Greg is serving as curate. **The Rev. Deacon Christopher Potter** was ordained to the diaconate March 19th at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church Manchester and will continue serving St. Andrew’s as their deacon. **The Rev. Katherine (Kathy) Boss** was ordained to the priesthood March 20th at All Saint’s Littleton. Kathy is serving as chaplain at the White Mountain School Bethlehem NH and as curate at All Saint’s Littleton.

# Hampshire

have these conversations is a way to witness our faith and offer ourselves as partners in our communities.”

## Digital Worship.

The Diocese of New Hampshire has no cathedral. No gothic-inspired vaulted spaces. No soaring bell towers. However, the diocese has led the way in digital worship early in the pandemic, and sees a role for itself in offerings, direction, and as a resource to congregations throughout the state.

“Digital worship is a part of the ministry that is emerging,” notes Rev. Alanna. “We are working on developing a consistent presence going forward, and offering a digital space for worship, contemplation, reflection, and prayer.”

## Engaging the Spiritually Curious.

A significant aspect of her discernment process has been in conversation with people in ministry who are spiritually curious, but for whom traditional church is not a place where they feel comfortable. “It can be a steep climb for some,” she says. “I see evangelism as that central piece of caring for souls, and helping people wrestle with their questions.”

Rev. Alanna’s journey began in a different religious tradition. “That sense of spiritual curiosity is really important to engage. That’s what brought me to the Episcopal Church — it’s a community that not only says it’s OK to have questions, but can offer compassionate conversation and companionship following the Spirit on the road.”

“How do we witness our faith in a post-colonial evangelism?” she asks. The church needs to reach out those disaffected from the church or have had a bad experience,

but are looking for purpose and meaning in their lives. “This may be the easiest aspect of digital mission to overlook because the others are already manifest in some way,” she says. “Yet, engaging the spiritually curious is an area I’m very drawn to.”

## Ongoing Discernment and Next Steps

The elements of digital ministry feed into each other. A person interested in a dialogue across difference may be invited to contemplative worship, or explore their spirituality further — digital ministry seeks to create a space for them to ask what’s on their minds and in their hearts.

Rev. Alanna adds that “The process has been very interesting for me — the ambiguity has been a challenge. We make plans and God laughs!” A self-described “church geek,” she observes that, “For me, worship is the fountain from which everything flows. Church is where I have always been nourished and refreshed.”

Through this summer, Rev. Alanna plans to meet with the diocese’ six regional convocations, conduct a variety of church-wide conversations throughout the state, support lay and clergy leadership through the pandemic, continue to offer diocesan online worship, assist in hosting a forum on racial reconciliation and reparations, and develop educational offerings and other dialogues.

There is much to do, and Rev. Alanna is excited about the future. “It’s still church and ministry and the word of Jesus. While this is a new endeavor for us, it’s also an ancient one. Digital ministry is simply a new platform — a tool to be used to blaze a different path to God.”

ations are joyful reminders that the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire is vibrant, cover and follow God’s path.

❁ **Shelli Gay** joins Diocesan staff. Shelli has worked 14 years at St. Paul’s School as the assistant to the Director of the Development Office and thus brings years of administrative experience to her new role as Bishop’s Hirschfeld’s Executive Assistant. Please join in warmly welcoming Shelli.

❁ **The Rev. Canon Gail Avery**, Canon for Transition and Community Engagement, will be on clergy refresher leave from April 15 - July 15, 2021. Please feel free to reach out to Canon Gail until that time. After April 15th,

please forward all transition and community engagement inquiries to the Bishop’s new Executive Assistant, Shelli Gay, at Diocesan House at [sgay@nehiscopal.org](mailto:sgay@nehiscopal.org).

If you are interested in learning more, or happen to know of someone seeking a new call, please contact the Bishop’s new Executive Assistant, Shelli Gay, at Diocesan House at [sgay@nehiscopal.org](mailto:sgay@nehiscopal.org) while **the Rev. Canon Gail Avery**, Canon for Transition and Community Engagement is on refresher leave.

# Calls Bring to Light Future Ordained Leaders



The Commission on Ministry consists of six clergy and six confirmed communicants. They assist the Bishop on matters relating to discernment and formation of Candidates for Holy Orders and Lay Ministry. The Commission monitors and oversees the progress of all persons in the process for ordination at any given time, and tracks the requirements of each person in the process to insure the necessary steps are completed for each phase.

Typically, the Commission does its critically important work quietly. This has been a busy period, and it is encouraging to see so many people discerning a call to holy orders — the future clergy of the Church! We'd like to briefly highlight those individuals recently ordained and those "in process."

**Greg Baker (February 24, 2021):  
Ordained to the Priesthood**

**Chris Potter (March 19, 2021):  
Ordained to the Diaconate**

**Kathy Boss (March 20, 2021):  
Ordained to the Priesthood**

**Elizabeth Preysner: Candidate for Priesthood**

**Elizabeth DeNauw: Candidate for the Priesthood**

**Stephen Rugg: Candidate for the Priesthood**

**Fred Chisolm: Postulant for the Priesthood**

**AshleyJane Boots: Postulant for the Priesthood**

**Joseph Rose: Postulant for the Priesthood**

**Aaron Jenkyn: Postulant for the Priesthood**

**Michael Reinke: Postulant for the Priesthood**

**Edward Frost: Postulant for the Priesthood**



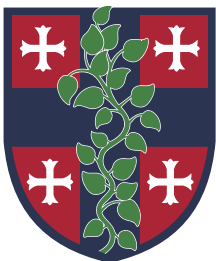
Photos: The Ordination of the Rev. Greg Baker, Church of the Good Shepherd, Nashua.

## WATCH RECENT ORDINATION CEREMONIES ON YOUTUBE!

📺 The Rev. Greg Baker (February 24, 2021). Church of the Good Shepherd Channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/CGSNashua>

📺 The Rev. Deacon Christopher Potter (March 19, 2021):  
Ordained to the Diaconate:  
Visit the diocese's YouTube channel, [NHEpiscopal](#)

📺 The Rev. Kathy Boss (March 20, 2021): Ordained to the Priesthood:  
Link unavailable at time of publication



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# Renovations at St. Paul's, Concord, Take Advantage of "Exile"

If there is a silver lining in the pandemic exile from in-person worship in our beloved churches, St. Paul's, Concord, has found it.

With the church building unavailable, St. Paul's took advantage of the moment to undertake significant renovation and repair work throughout the building, including the main worship space. Work began this past December and was completed in February 2021.

The biggest project involved replacing the lighting system in the main worship space. The new lighting provides a number of benefits. The new lights generate a higher quality of light, making it easier to see throughout the nave and chancel — and easier to read your BCP and hymnals! The lights operate more efficiently and will reduce St. Paul's electric bill. Importantly, that efficiency also means the new lighting system will reduce St. Paul's carbon footprint, a significant aspect of the parish's long-term commitment to Creation Care.



New lights even make the music better! Lighting and music may seem unrelated, however, in improving efficiency, the lights use technology that greatly reduces the heat generated by a conventional lighting fixture. Heat — and temperature fluctuations — can damage an organ. St. Paul's often had to use fans to try to cool things down in the choir pews and keep things safe for their beautiful organ. The new lighting system will create a safer, much more stable environment for the organ — and its wonderful sound.

Of course, with the extensive scaffolding required, doing this work in "normal" times would have been virtually impossible. The pandemic created a pause that allowed St. Paul's to move ahead with the needed renovations at full-speed.

The project was funded in part with an Environmental Sustainability grant from the diocese. It was a congregation-wide effort, and everyone is looking forward to the day when in-person worship can again be held inside the now brighter, more environmentally-friendly historic church on Park Street.

*"Letter from Bishop Rob" continued from front page:*

to enter them. The risen Christ does this not out of some macabre ghoulishness, but rather to display just how persistent and unrelenting God's love for us is.

May we behold God in all the ways Jesus is rising, continually within us, among us, and in the entire world of his creating, liberating, and renewing again in Jesus Christ.

Until the day when we will again together sing "Alleluia!," I remain,

Faithfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by the initials 'RH' in a stylized, cursive script.

*The Rt. Rev. Robert Hirschfeld*



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