Passing of the Baton

Many thanks from the Board to Bp. Chuck Gillin, who has served as BFM president since Bishop Grote’s passing. Bishop Chuck had also served a term previously in his career, bringing valuable experience in a time of need. With his new responsibilities as Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, Bishop will pass the baton on January 1, with the appreciation of the whole Reformed Episcopal Church.

Adieu, Canon Bill, and thanks for a job well done

After graduating from Reformed Episcopal Seminary in 1968 and serving a curacy and pastorate at Saint Luke’s REC in Philadelphia, the Rev. Bill and Mrs. Diane Jerdan answered a call to the mission field, serving as church planters in France from 1972 to 2009—steeping themselves and their children completely in French culture, language, education and life.

Upon returning to the States in 2010, their work focused on the worldwide ministry of the REC Board of Foreign Missions (and the necessary parish development behind such ministry) when Presiding Bishop Royal U. Grote appointed Fr. Bill Executive Secretary for the Board. In addition to furthering and fostering REC works around the world, the Jerdans cultivated new missionaries from the REC, promoted greater parish involvement and support and deepened relationships within the Global Anglican Mission Partners, along with utilizing their translation and teaching abilities in Cambodia, West Africa and around the world.

Having already planned to retire (for the second time!) in 2020, Canon Bill is battling cancer and asks for the prayers of God’s people as they “now retire for real.” As lifelong missionaries and for their furtherance of the

Continued on page 5
Missions Roundup:

Wheels up in Germany

Church planters Fr. David and Patricia Ayres, Berlin, and Dcn. Jared and Abbi Wensyel, Frankfurt, have been received by the Board of Foreign Missions and the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders. Fr. David writes from Berlin:

“Up to now, our efforts to establish Christ Church Berlin have been supported financially largely by Patricia through her work as a flight attendant. But flying full time is taking its toll on her and on the ministry of the church in many ways. We truly hope Patricia can begin reducing her flying hours with Lufthansa very soon, so that she can engage more fully in the work in Berlin.”

Hot takes

- In January 2020 Bp. Walter Banek will lead a mission trip to Cuba. Medical supplies may yet be purchased to send along with the group. The REC Women of the Church are leading a 2020 project to provide five electric scooters to pastors of REC Cuba parishes to assist with transportation needs. Related story, page 3.

- A video report on the Reformed Anglican Church in Brazil is available at www.recbfm.org.

- Short term mission trips or particular project participation can be requested through info@recbfm.org.

- The Board of Foreign Missions hosted a presentation from the Singapore delegation at New Wineskins in September on From Status Quo to Healthy Mission Mobilization.

- The 2019 Cycle of Prayer should continue to be used in 2020, pending an update later in the year.

A Prayer for Missions

O GOD, who hast made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and didst send thy blessed Son to preach peace to them that are far off and to them that are nigh; Grant that all men everywhere may seek after thee and find thee. Bring the nations into thy fold, pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten thy kingdom; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Keeping up with the Gressers

The Rev. Canon Robert C. Gresser and Traci have returned from an exploratory trip to Malawi and continue the discernment process regarding the Lord’s call on their lives. Meanwhile, life keeps on happening. Fr. Robert reports:

“A little more about my new job: For all intents and purposes, this is an extended interim position. Traci and I are still open, very open, to serving overseas once I complete my Ph.D. and we are very grateful to our supporters in that openness. Without your support we would never have been exposed to the blessing of serving God’s kingdom among our Malawian brothers and sisters.”
In Cuba, the gospel grows as seminary education flows

Theological training of the Cuban pastors and laity has been a high priority ever since the beginning of the Cuban Mission. However, suitable resources for theological training are limited and not always available in Spanish, especially as it regards Classical Anglicanism. These needs were initially met with a program of Biblical instruction in Spanish. The majority of the Cuban REC clergy have finished this basic course of training. However, there is a need and an interest for further ongoing instruction, especially regarding classical Anglicanism.

In order to further answer this critical need, Cranmer House, REC Seminary in Dallas, has partnered with Bp. Willians in the effort to raise up “La Casa Cranmer,” their own seminary, as a place where their clergy and laity may continue to be instructed with solid biblical and theological training. The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Bernier has been appointed to help gather, translate and facilitate lectures and reading materials.

The seminary facility on the site of the original Moa church is nearing completion but will still need to be furnished and equipped. REC Cuba gives thanks to Dr. Bernier for his experience and dedication and to St. Matthew’s, Abbotsford for their steadfast financial support of this project. Please pray for this essential component of the Cuban mission.

Bless the medical mission on the island with a gift of meds and supplies

The REC in Cuba has set up a well-run medical distribution system which meets during the yearly synod. A group of individuals from all across the island working from centers in Havana, Florida, Holguin and Moa sort out the meds by need in each area and parcel them out to be taken by staff to their stations for distribution locally. Each patient has been seen by a physician and treatment determined and prescribed. The meds program is overseen by Marisol in Havana who has been trained in distribution and has been working in this field for years.

A group organized by REC Canada makes an annual trip to the island, purchasing and delivering desperately needed meds and supplies for relief of suffering in REC parishes and their communities. This group is able to acquire a $7,000 (Can) med pack for $700 (Can). Included are drugs for diabetes, blood pressure and lipid control, antibiotics and topical steroids for skin disorders as well as over-the-counter items such as pain relievers and cough medicine.

The team also delivers bandages, sterile wipes and gloves, surgical-type masks and other supplies. Bp. Walter Banek will lead a U.S. team to Cuba in January. Supplies are needed. Among the other pressing needs is motor scooters, used by pastors to minister to far-flung parishioners and to conduct worship services and Bible studies at multiple venues.
Fr. Bob Hitching reports from Croatia: I Don’t Know How to Say This . . .

. . . BUT I have now completed all the tests, rather invasive I must say, on my heart, lungs, and prostate.

Well, the results have come back that the valve in my heart that was damaged by the heart attack three years ago has now regenerated . . . what to say!!

The COPD in my lungs is now absent and does not exist.

The angiogram in my heart last week now shows despite all the earlier evidence, there is now no blockage anywhere and there is no need for any further implants.

My prostate that was definitely in need of something -- oh how I love to tell the story, it will be my theme in Glory -- my prostate is totally clear and normal.

Fr. Bob and his wife Nancy have been ministering among the Bayash tribe of the Roma people in Central Europe for two decades. Fr. Bob, ordained a presbyter this fall, pastors Holy Cross Church in Kapelna, Croatia, which was planted by Bp. Jasmin Milic.

Fr. Bob and Nancy also conduct extensive outreach to Bayash in Hungary and Serbia as well as Croatia and meet with study groups for both children and adults they have established in various locales.

Among the needs of their ministry is a new roof for the church building in Kapelna. Bp. Jasmin and Fr. Bob also hope to develop a pig farm and a fruit orchard on the church property to bless the parish and the community and to create additional revenue streams for the church.

Fr. Bob will visit the Northeast and the northern Mid-Atlantic States in the U.S. February 3-24 and will be available to speak to any group in any parish venue. To schedule a visit, contact the Rev. Ed Fowler at 918.281.5451 or ewfowler@sbcglobal.net.
Reformed Episcopalians in ministry and service

Convinced that mission is an essential activity of the Church, the Reformed Episcopal Church Board of Foreign Missions encourages the participation of Reformed Episcopalians in ministry and service throughout the world.

The Board challenges every Reformed Episcopalian to take part in ministry and service as you are able, and to pray for and support all who serve Christ throughout the world.

Our website, recbfm.org, focuses on REC mission efforts outside North America. Here are some specific ways you can become involved in supporting the work of the Board of Foreign Missions:

- Learn more about the REC BFM by visiting the "About Us" page and following the links to missionary biographies.
- Sign up to be added to our email list.
- Visit our Donations page, which provides a method for online giving.
- Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter: @RECBFM
- Ask your Rector to appoint a “Mission Advocate” to share BFM news in your parish and have your Mission Advocate sign up for our email list and indicate that he or she is a Mission Advocate.

How to honor the Jerdans

Continued from page 1
Reformed Episcopal mission field, this godly couple deserves honor, tribute and appreciation as a father and mother in Israel.

You can learn more about the Jerdans at www.recbfm.org, and locate “The Jerdan Journal.” Their greatest delight would be for each parish and believer in The Reformed Episcopal Church to adopt a Board of Foreign Missions missionary and to labor fully with them, bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every last kingdom and soul on earth. The Jerdans also invite those who have been generously supporting them financially to maintain their support to the “Mission Mobilization Fund,” which will continue to fund the travel and publications helpful to extending Bp. Grote’s goal: “Every REC parish contributing to the international mission projects of the BFM. Further appreciation: Rev. and Mrs. Bill Jerdan 30W050 Mulberry Ct. Warrensville, IL 60555

The Rev. John Peter Boonzaaijer
BFM President-Elect

Make a friend over here, and then another over there

Circles of Three fosters fellowship among two North American parishes, each from a different diocese, and one overseas congregation. Currently there are 21 completed partner parish friend circles with several in the wings, waiting for additional partners. Two stateside parishes of different dioceses are building friendships with a parish abroad!

PARISHES INVOLVED
Free Church of England: 7
Cuba: 14
Croatia: 4
Germany: 3

REC North America:
Diocese of the Northeast: 12
Diocese of the Central States: 12
Diocese of the South: 12
Diocese of Mid-America: 12

How to develop YOUR Circle of Three:
- Designate a “Circles of Three” bulletin board, and plan how best to share with your new friends, the other two parishes.
- Send pictures of church members, and parish prayer lists to your new friends.
- Include partner Advocates on weekly and monthly news bulletin mailings.
- Invite individual members to become pen pals.
- Encourage members to drop in at the other parishes when traveling.
- Plan a pulpit and home exchange for your clergy.
Americans abroad: A prophetic word for the U.S. church

Three Reformed Episcopalians who minister in Germany returned to the U.S. for the triennial New Wineskins missions conference in North Carolina. They brought along a cautionary tale for the American church.

“Wake up now,” said Deacon Jared Wensyel. “Stop worrying about scarce resources and church politics. The church in Germany argued themselves to death. If American churches put all their resources into reaching out to their neighborhoods they won’t be museums in 50 years.”

Dcn. Jared, a native of Dayton, Ohio, and a graduate of a German seminary who came into Anglicanism from a Protestant denomination recently, is leading a church plant in Frankfurt. He attended New Wineskins, and the REC pre-conference, with his wife, Abbi. Father David Ayres, late of Philadelphia and a graduate of Reformed Episcopal Seminary, also represented the diocese as well as Christ Church Berlin, which he serves as rector. His wife Patricia is German.

They describe a desolate church landscape in their adopted country, a Munchkinland with a Wizard of Oz for a high priest. Post-Christian Europe has outpaced post-Christian America in its flight from gospel truth. These three believe America can still change course – if it will cast its gaze across an ocean and learn from Europe’s mistakes.

The very name “Christ Church,” Fr. David says, is a refutation of the practice of the German free churches (all that are not Lutheran or Roman Catholic) to adopt a denatured name such as “The Berlin Enterprise.” He adds that in those precincts the sacraments are virtually extinct. “With a name like ‘Christ Church,’” he says, “there is no question that we are both Christian and a church!”

They don’t know anything about the Bible.

“When I was not a Christian I knew Christians believe they should wait for marriage to have sex. I hated it. Even when I became a Christian I told my pastor, ‘This is nonsense.’ Before long I came to see that God has a better way. In Germany, not even long-time Christians know that. They say ‘the Bible doesn’t say anything about that’ and ‘that’s repressive.’”

The illusion of Christianity permeates the culture. High school students take religion classes – Christianity for Christians, Islam for Muslims – but, says Dcn. Jared, “Protestants are taught by a Protestant pastor who doesn’t believe in God.”

In politics, says Fr. David, the Christian Democratic Party sings out with the loudest voice but the title is an anachronism. Adds Dcn. Jared, “In Germany, they will say ‘Our democracy is based on Christian values,’ but it’s a lot of not-Christian people talking about Christian values.”

The pell-mell retreat from orthodoxy manifests in ways as disturbing as they are predictable. Many Germans shun such practices as evangelism, church-planting and tithing as “too American,” meaning that they characterize brash and unenlightened practitioners of the faith.

“Americans in general still have an idea of the stories in the Bible,” said Dcn. Jared. “In Europe, you can’t assume anything. Jesus is a guru. The worst thing about Christianity in Germany is that even those who see themselves as Bible-believing may know every song from Hillsong but

Fr. David Ayres, flanked by Abbi and Dcn. Jared Wensyel
Reformation Day October 31, 2019
RE Advent Offering for Foreign Missions

Dear REC Brothers and Sisters:
Greetings in the Name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from Wittenberg, Germany! Susan and I have been visiting our German Bishop Gerhard Meyer and his wife Grace, along with our fellow REC brothers and sisters in Germany. We have also been involved in important meetings about joint theological education with the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and its jurisdiction in Germany. They have seminaries in Germany and England that our students will be able to attend!

How appropriate that I’m able to send this letter on such an historic day for Lutherans and Anglicans. Over five hundred years ago, the great German monk and Doctor of Theology, Martin Luther, posted Ninety-Five Theses on the castle door of the church in the city where we are meeting. These statements listed important areas of theological reform to restore the Western Church to Biblical and catholic teachings on salvation. The rest is history.

Today we are able to meet at this same castle door and join with our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Christ in commemorating this important event. Our Reformed Episcopal Bishop in Croatia, Bishop Jasmin Milic, as well as the Primus of the Free Church of England, Bishop John Fenwick, are also with us. What an extraordinary moment!

Importantly, these meetings reflect part of the expanded international efforts of the Reformed Episcopal Church to spread the Gospel around the world. Our ministry is now not only in Germany but in Cuba, in Croatia and elsewhere. Thanks be to God for hearing our prayers! As African Anglicans like to say, “God is good all the time,” to which the response is, “All the time, God is good!”

This brings me to the purpose for writing you. Each year we have an Advent Offering designated to help the Board of Foreign Missions with various financial needs. This year, we want our offering to go toward bringing our missionaries, as well as our international bishops and their wives from Germany, Croatia, and Cuba, and including lodging for the REC English Bishops, John Fenwick and Paul Hunt, to General Council next summer. When you consider the travel and lodging expenses, the amount will be over $25,000. This is our goal for the Advent Offering this year.

Therefore, I’m asking all of our clergy, laity and their congregations to give generously to provide the resources to help all of these faithful missionaries and servants of the Lord come to our General Council 2020. Please consider what you might be able to give to this end.

Thank you so very much for past support, as well as whatever you might be able to give for this Advent Offering. Thank you as well for your prayers. And especially thank the Lord for hearing our prayers!

In Christ,
The Most Rev. Dr. Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D. Presiding Bishop
A report from the front lines: Is Islam cracking?

The question isn’t exactly new but the answer improves each time it’s asked: Is Islam cracking?

“My best friend in Saudi said to me, ‘Islam is cracking. They’re not becoming Christians wholesale but they’re giving up on Islam. It’s just cracking,” said Fr. Chuck, who serves with his wife Gina in Saudi Arabia.

For Anglican Frontier Missions workers serving in the Muslim world who gathered at the New Wineskins conference and AFM pre-conference near Asheville, N.C., in September, the matter is front and center.

The Rev. Dr. Duane Miller, a scholar-priest who serves in Madrid and has published books on Islam and blogged on this topic, believes the cracks are real and growing wider. “There’s atheism even in Saudi Arabia, and that’s one of the hardest places for a person to renounce Islam,” he says.

“On Twitter people are being very vocal about being ex-Muslims. They usually say they’re atheist or agnostic. There are ex-Muslim councils in the United Kingdom, North America, Canada, France, Australia. The fact that they exist at all is a novelty.”

Among the factors precipitating the fault lines are two in particular that promise to drive the wedge deeper. The first is taking place on college campuses.

“On the academic level,” says Fr. Duane, “there’s a huge development calling into question the fundamental beliefs in Islam. Islamic sources are now being subjected to the same scrutiny as Christianity. Scholars are asking, ‘Was the Quran originally produced wholly in Arabic, or was some of it written in Syriac?’ and, ‘Were the first mosques in Petra rather than Mecca and Medina?’

“Key historical facts regarding Islam are being questioned in a radical way.”

The other factor is taking shape at the grass-roots. “At a pragmatic level,” says Fr. Duane, “It just didn’t work.

“I give thanks to God for ISIS (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). It’s showing people what Islam looks like without its mask on.”

Ever the careful scholar, Fr. Duane cautions that counter-factors mitigate against a significant weakening, at least in the near term.

The first is demographics. As birth rates in many Western nations continue in free fall, Muslims are reproducing as vigorously as ever. Large numbers of them are now doing so in Europe. Another is the fact that the fissures are not showing up yet at the government and political levels.

Fr. Duane cites others: “Governments in Europe are going out of their way to accommodate Islam and to eliminate any speech inimical to Islam. And conservative, orthodox Islam offers something secularism doesn’t. You don’t have to figure out your own values. It offers a clear, structured way of life at a time when much of the Christian church is practicing therapeutic deism, a religion based on feelings in a nefarious, evil world. Finally, there’s the threat of Muslim violence.”

Still, out on the hustings he finds new cracks opening. Even in religiously conservative countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, people are saying out loud, “I am no longer a Muslim.” —

In this issue, The Cry looks in on the Rev. Dr. Duane Miller and others who represent Anglican Frontier Missions, one of our sister agencies in Anglican Global Mission Partners.

There’s the violence, the women’s rights abuses, the rejection of modern science and the fact that all these Muslim countries just plain stink.

The Rev. Dr. Duane Miller Miller lives in Madrid, where he serves on the staff of the Anglican Cathedral and teaches at the Protestant Faculty of Theology. He is also planting an Arabic-language church in Spain’s capital.