



Painter Ron Medley revisits his tobaccoland roots. See gallery on page 3.

## A Youth Sunday Call to the Interdependence of Us All



Today is Youth Sunday, when we give over worship leadership to our children and youth. It's a highlight of our calendar, hearing our youngest voices offer prayers, song and sermons. In another church this could feel like tokenism — but this is a community where on most Sundays some part of worship is led by kids. It's a maxim of modern youth ministry that kids thrive

and grow when they're connected to all the life of the parish — not just the youth group. We're living that out.

And that connection is true for all of us. The women's retreat bore witness to what richness we experience when we cross generations, mix backgrounds and learn from other cultures. Church at its best is life as it should be: "the rainbow people of God," as Bishop Tutu called it. It's a chance to practice what our daily lives often lack, recognizing the interdependence of all kinds of folk in this world. Whether explicit, as in our racial reparations work, or implicit, in our pews and our Saturday Kitchen, we know we all live better when we mix it up together. That's the message of Pentecost for us — the Spirit at work. — *Mother Kate*

## A Reparations Initiative to Mend a Broken History

On Pentecost, Carole O'Connor-Edwards and Gregory Bryant, on behalf of the Reparations Committee, made a momentous announcement in the history of this church: St. Michael's is to fund a scholarship for a local student of African-American descent.

"The spirit guided this congregation into looking at our past and thinking about how we were a part of the history of slavery in this country, this city and this church," Gregory said. "Out of that spirit, the congregation came up with five initiatives and we have established a scholarship."

The committee is partnering with Goddard Riverside, the longstanding human-service organization, and its Options Institute program, which helps New Yorkers get into and pay for college or skill-specific certificate programs.

The committee developed the scholarship criteria: a student of African-American descent who lives north of 96th Street, in the St. Jude's Chapel area.

"We were impressed by the thoughtfulness of the Options scholarship model and of the whole process," Mother Julie says.

On June 12, St. Michael's will award a scholarship fund of \$5,000, to be paid in increments of \$1,250 per year.

"After a year of testing out this program we want to look into providing more scholarships," Gregory said. "So I want to thank you all and thank the Holy Spirit for being with us."

The applause was thunderous and long. Then came a voice from the congregation, "Thanks to the committee." And the applause resumed.



On Pentecost, Carole O'Connor-Edwards and Gregory Bryant were acolytes as well as heralds of the Reparations Committee scholarship plan. Alleluia!

### Reparations Committee

*Co-chairs:* The Rev. Julie Hoplamazian and Gregory Bryant.

Barbara Culmer-Illaw, Meg Parsons, Juanita Pratt, Jeannie Terepka, Ned Boyajian, Jeff Jeffreys and Sam Sue

## The Bishop's Blessing

On May 12, a Pentecost-like whirlwind arrived at St. Michael's when the Rt. Rev. Mathew Heyd, new Bishop of New York, paid a visit, preaching (at 7:45 a.m. and 10 a.m.), confirming, baptizing, blessing, asperging and socializing before dashing to a service in the Bronx. (It was also

Mother's Day.) In a procession through the renovated Parish House, the bishop prayed, "We ask you to bless these spaces to our use, and to the use of our surrounding community, as we open wide our doors to your mission and ministry in this neighborhood."



# On the Camino de Santiago

After 10 days as a tourist in Spain, I arrived in the northern city of Burgos to set about my real purpose — to walk the Camino de Santiago. For at least 1,000 years, pilgrims have trekked across Spain to Santiago de Compostela, where the bones of St James the Apostle are said to be buried.

While many people start in St. Jean-Pied-de-Port in France, covering more than 500 miles, my walk from Burgos will be about 300 miles — a three-week trek.

I wanted it to be a “spiritual” walk but had no idea what to expect. Then the hour I reached Burgos, I mentally transitioned from tourist to pilgrim. An unpredicted, overwhelming tide of emotions swept me onto my Camino.

A line from a song in Spanish says (in effect): “Caminante, there is no path. You make your path by walking it.” And thus I walk, and discover, and see through tears the past, the present and, hopefully, the future.

The Burgos cathedral is a truly mystical place that primes the soul for its journey. Most of the way passes through unblemished

farmland and small towns with ancient buildings. On the 32-mile trail from León to Astorga, I noticed that the local roofing material transitioned from red clay tile to dark gray slate. How am I transitioning?

Since losing my wife Lissa six months ago, my world has shifted. The seismic assessments will continue long after I return from Spain. — *John Avery*



On the Camino



Burgos Cathedral



A candle for my wife Lissa

## A ‘People’s Graduation’ at the Cathedral

“Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” With this message from the Sermon on the Mount, 93-year-old Rev. Herbert Daughtry Sr. addressed hundreds of students, faculty, parents and guests at the People’s Graduation, held at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine May 16 after Columbia University canceled its on-campus commencement. Daughtry offered prayers along with Jewish and Muslim clergy.

A leader of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Daughtry told the students that life becomes meaningful when it is committed to a great cause. He said they should expect to sacrifice, quoting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — “If you haven’t found a cause for which to die, you haven’t found a cause for which to live.”

The Cathedral made its sanctuary available to all — including students who had been



The Rev. Herbert Daughtry Sr. after the People’s Graduation at the Cathedral. He had told the crowd, “They will call you names, but the idea of freedom cannot be destroyed.”

arrested, suspended and evicted for protesting the war in Gaza.

Cathedral Dean Patrick Malloy greeted the gathering, saying the church wanted to welcome a full range of people and opinions. A parade of speakers then lambasted the university for misrepresenting and punishing the protesters — and praised the students for starting a movement that spread around the world.

Lacking the power to hand out degrees or diplomas, the service ended with a song, adapted from the Old Testament Book of Ruth:

“Where you go I will go my friend,  
Where you go I will go —  
your people are my people  
your people are mine  
Your people are my people  
our struggles align.”

— *Tom Phillips*

## The Gilded Age Cycling Craze at St. Michael’s Door

During the 1890s, a cycling craze swept America as men and women bought bicycles and took to the roads.

Central Park became popular for cycling by the mid-1880s, after park rules allowed cyclists to ride on the drives, already busy with carriages and horses. The new Riverside Drive also attracted wheelmen and wheelwomen, as the bicyclists were called.

New York City Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt initiated bicycle policemen. Traffic rules were passed: Bicyclists were to stay to the right in traffic, carry a lantern at night, sound a bell when passing or turning and travel at no more than 8 miles an hour.

Bicycle clubs were popular, at first just for men, and later including a few women; eventually, an all-women’s club

formed. Cycling for women was controversial because it challenged social — and fashion — norms.

Susan B. Anthony said, “I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel ... the picture of free, untrammelled womanhood.”

As bicycling’s popularity grew, religious leaders expressed concern that it was keeping young people from church on Sundays.

The Rev. John Punnett Peters of St. Michael’s Episcopal Church had a different idea, *The New York Times* reported. In June 1896, he arranged for the church to set up a “bicycle check-in,” encouraging people to attend the 7:30 a.m. service.

“People who work hard all the week have need of as much fresh air as they can get on Sundays ...” Peters’ wife Brooke told *The Times*. “They can attend the 7:30 service and have the rest of the day for recreation.”

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**This column is condensed and adapted from a Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group article by Pam Tice, a member of the BNHG and a former executive director of Bike New York. The original article also appeared in the West Side Rag.**



The New York Public Library

During the 1890s a popular cycling route led up Broadway to Grant’s Tomb and the Claremont Inn at West 124th Street. The Rev. John Punnett Peters invited cyclists to worship at the St. Michael’s 7:30 a.m. service on the way.

# Ron Medley's Homage to Tobaccoland Roots

Ron Medley has painted since childhood, and more often after he retired as a New York City attorney. Here his subject is his family in Cunningham, Person County, N.C., on the Virginia border in the Piedmont region, heart of tobacco country. He shares a sampling from his portfolio at [ronmedley.art](http://ronmedley.art).

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Ron Medley

It wasn't until I was well into middle-age that it began to dawn on me just how unusual my mother's family actually was. As first-generation New Yorkers, my brother, sister and I started spending summers on her parents' tobacco farm pretty much from infancy.

These visits, typically one to two weeks, often coincided with the late-summer harvest and everyone was expected to pitch in with whatever work they could do. Mom spent all day helping her mother prepare meals on a wood-burning stove.

Mom's oldest brother, my Uncle Junius, operated a farm of his own and was the closest thing to a foreman in charge of the combined efforts of his father, himself and, at one point, his father's brother and sister.

For the better part of the last half-century, the elephant in the room was how it happened that all of this family land, some 150-200 acres at its height, came to be. The answer is shrouded in oral history and a few anthropological signposts.

We know that in the aftermath of the Civil War, the entire county had been part of a 5,000-acre plantation called Waverly. Its main house and outbuildings (including slave quarters) still stand and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

We also know that by the turn of the 20th century the plantation had been almost entirely sold off in individual lots of between 50 and 100 acres each, the basis for family farms in that portion of North Carolina.

It was generally acknowledged among the members of virtually every Black family that my siblings and I met and spoke with and, especially, listened to with rapt attention, that they had an ancestor who was a slave on the Cunningham plantation. — *Ron Medley*



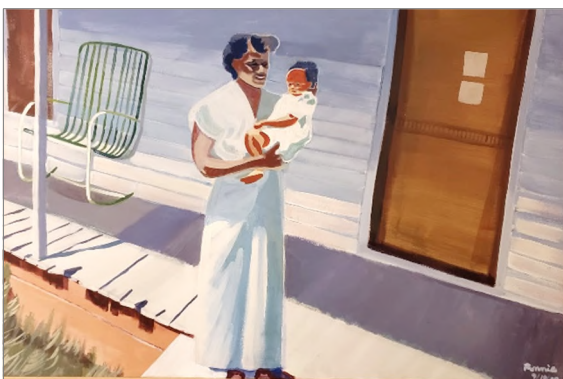
## Sunday After Meeting

After working late on Saturday, everybody would clean up for Sunday meeting at the Chestnut Grove Baptist Church, founded on land donated by my great-great-uncle Jack during the 1890s. Uncle Junius is the man in the bow tie. The woman is my grandmother Nannie. Now our generation — we call ourselves the Cousins — stay in touch via social media. This summer we're having a reunion on home ground.



## Stringing Tobacco

In the middle of August the only cool spot was under the chestnut tree. The kids would take the tobacco leaves brought from the fields by mule and put them on a table for a stringer, usually a woman, who would tie the stems in a tight double row to an 8-foot-long pole that then hung in the stick barn where heat would cure the leaves.



## Artist's Mother

This painting is based on a black-and-white photo taken with a Kodak Brownie camera. I am the babe-in-arms. We're on my grandparents' farm in Cunningham, N.C.



## Uncle Junius

He's taking a break, looking toward that big old chestnut tree. In the left background is my grandmother Nannie. I wanted people to see her as she often was, that stance she'd take, standing straight and tall. She'd put her hands on her hips and survey all the goings-on around her, the whole farm full of activity. She used to boast about having 13 grandchildren. And she loved having us grandchildren visit.