

A Convention Proclaims a New Vision

Our diocese came together for its convention Nov. 8-9 at a hotel in White Plains. As a church that is both hierarchical and democratic, clergy and lay delegates make decisions together at convention that direct the ministry of the wider church. Our diocese comprises Episcopal churches from Staten Island north through Ulster and Dutchess Counties, churches large and small, urban and rural, now led by our Bishop Matthew Heyd.

I serve as Secretary of Convention, working to pull all the pieces together into a coherent process — and one that begins and ends on time! Our new Bishop brought a desire to return to real conversation and debate on the floor of convention, which we accomplished beautifully (with the help of Roger's Rules of Order). The church is at its best when we disagree carefully, truthfully and lovingly — something that we can teach the world in our time.

Among our actions in those two days: We elected to diocesan positions, including our own Kris Ishibashi to the Standing Committee. We honored recipients of the Bishop's Cross awards, including Ana Hernandez, musician and wife of our interim associate Mo. Michelle. We heard rousing preaching

and presentations from our three bishops, including Bishop Heyd's address, where he outlined the vision of church renewal and a diocese reoriented toward congregations, and gently introduced the changes that will entail in our structures.

We passed resolutions ranging from minimum clergy compensation (a surprisingly long discussion) to two resolutions on socially responsible investing, including divesting from companies profiting from the military occupation in Palestine (a surprisingly short discussion). We designated our diocese as a Sanctuary Diocese for migrants and asylum seekers, and affirmed our advocacy and

protection of LGBTQ+ people. Real stuff on real issues, in other words, with real implications for our finances and ministries. And we danced, attended workshops, ate and worshiped together.

I'm grateful to our own clergy and our delegates Kris Ishibashi, Anne O'Loughlin and Gayle Robinson, who attended; and I applaud the amazing work of our Arlene Bullard, who serves as executive assistant to Bishop Heyd. St. Michael's was well represented. — *Mother Kate*



Homework Help: Monday Night Lights



One of the liveliest St. Michael's ministries takes place in the sanctuary on Monday at 6 p.m.: Homework Help.

There 14 children, from third graders to high schoolers, meet with volunteer tutors — parishioners and others — for informal help with their studies. That's the first 45 minutes. For the last 15 minutes they play Uno and other games.

Some children Zoom with remote tutors. The virtual extension was the program's lifeline during Covid.

Meanwhile, in the back of the church, parents can take it easy. And at the St. Jude's altar, Stephanie Braxton leads a conversation group for parents who want to polish their English.

The program, initiated by Kris Ishibashi in 2018 and modeled on a program at St. Paul and St. Andrew, attracts students from our neighboring schools and elsewhere. Three students have moved up with Homework Help from grade school to high school. "I'm thrilled that we put the church to use on a weekday night," Mary Nash says. "Love is in action. The connections we share — tutor and student, parent and tutor, so many people joining together — are an expression of the Holy Spirit. And you don't have to be religious to feel it." Mary co-administers with Kris. Donna Humphrey was the program's co-administrator for six years.

The budget is modest, aided by a \$1,500 grant from Episcopal Charities.

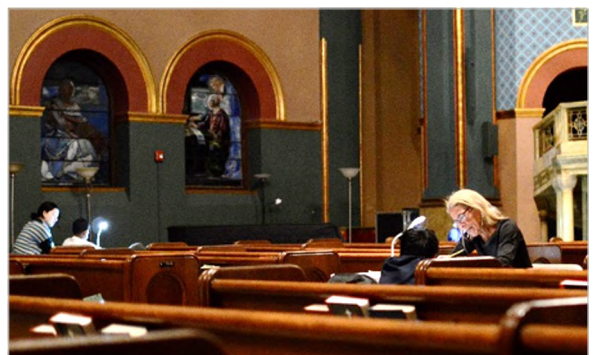
Kris, Mary and online administrators Rebecca Dalton and Meg Parsons monitor a team of 20 tutors, either in person or online, including Laura Boylan, Rick Hamlin, John Kneiling, Catherine Lam, Daniel Lam, Patrick Littell, Oliver Stotz and Kathleen Toner Talbot. One volunteer tutor beams in from Albany.

"We call it kitchen table homework help," Kris says. "You don't need to be a teacher. We're not Kumon. We're there to walk with the kids, as adults who aren't their parents or teachers. We don't teach religion but we want to make the students feel like they're beloved children of God."

A handy resource: When a math problem stumps the in-person tutor, help is available. High-schooler Catherine Lam and father Daniel stand by virtually to consult.

Kris acknowledges the high-school volunteers who pioneered the program: Rhian Jeffreys, Allison Okimoto and Arianna Steadman. Daisy Thomas, Catherine Lam and Oliver Stotz have carried on the tradition.

The Holy Spirit and Homework Help welcome volunteers!



Homework helpers, from the top: Kathleen Toner Talbot; Grace Dawn and Nicole Levin; and Caroline Bynum.



Welcome Wendy Cañas, Our Seminarian

Wendy Cañas comes to St. Michael's via St. Ann's in the Bronx. She's studying in a special hybrid program at the California Divinity School of the Pacific (which happens to be Mother Kate's alma mater).

The program is "what I need because I have a full-time job, I'm a full-time mother and I'm a full-time wife," Wendy says.

Born and raised in Honduras, she came to New York in 2001 with her family. Her husband Manuel works at Hunts Point Produce Market. Son Audiel, age 12, attends a charter school in Harlem.

Wendy, a teacher by training with degrees from Lehman College and CUNY, supervises St. Ann's after-school and summer programs for children ages 5 to 12.

"What we're doing as Christians is the work of the Lord," Wendy says. "When we reaffirm our baptismal vows we promise to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves and also to fight injustice."

In 2008, as a student, she was hired as a summer-school teacher. "St. Ann's shaped me to understand that God was calling me to a vocation," she says.

Her after-school program includes undocumented families. "They're very scared about deportation," Wendy says. "When will it start?" She notes that this month at convention the New York diocese resolved to be a sanctuary for migrants under threat.

"The day after the presidential election, my son asked me who won, and I told him," she says. "He was disappointed. I said, 'Why are you asking me that question?' He said, 'A friend of mine in school was talking about it and he's afraid that his



On Sept. 8, Welcome Back Sunday, our new seminarian Wendy Cañas, second from left, joined the altar team.

family will be deported."

A seminarian picks a church for what's called field education. "I remember looking at the St. Michael's website and seeing the diversity of the parish and the programs like Saturday Kitchen, Homework Help and the children's choirs," she says. She visited and observed.

"If you are here you feel welcome," Wendy says. "There's room for everybody. This parish is very intentional in how you are showing love inside the parish and outside in the community."

A Bishop's Visitation



Bp Nedi Rivera, second from right, gathers with friends at the Vigil for the Healing of the World at the cathedral on Nov. 6.

This fall St. Michael's played host to Bishop Nedi Rivera, who has served in that capacity in Olympia (western Washington), Eastern Oregon and Southern Ohio.

Nedi was the first Latina Bishop in the Episcopal Church. The daughter of a bishop, she grew up in Visalia, Calif., got her bachelor's from Wheaton College (in physics!), and her M.Div. at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific — 20 years before Mother Kate also studied there.

Nedi was the rector of St. Aidan's Church in San Francisco where Kate served as a seminarian. Nedi hosted Kate's ordination to the priesthood at St. Aidan's.

Nedi preached at Kate's installation as rector at St. Michael's in May 2015. At one point she illustrated her sermon by holding up one of those neon-colored marshmallow candies called Peeps. Back in the day, when Nedi and Kate were thinking about how to celebrate the upcoming Holy Week, they were studying the readings, including Jesus's words, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under wings ..." Kate declared "Peeps." Peeps? Yes, why didn't they celebrate with Peeps?

On Palm Sunday, when they processed in the neighborhood, in addition to waving palms, they also carried "garden sticks," as Nedi recalls, "with ribbons crowned by Peeps," a treat for the kids.

Nedi, grandmother of five, is now retired and living in Cincinnati. She came to New York to help Kate, not just in the sanctuary but also in the rectory, walking Gabriel a couple of times a day — sometimes four. — *Rick Hamlin*

A St. Michael's Missionary in China

THEN & NOW

When the Rt. Rev. Alfred Alonzo Gilman (1878-1966) was still in his early 20's, he served as St. Michael's "missionary priest" in Changsha, capital of Hunan Province,

China, from 1909 to 1911. Later he became a missionary bishop.

Born in Nebraska, Gilman received his seminary training at the Philadelphia Divinity School, alma mater of St. Michael's then-rector the Rev. John Punnett Peters. The Episcopal Church Mission Board assigned Gilman to St. Michael's as their missionary "on staff."

China then was in the throes of a revolution against the ancient Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) with regional strife, famine and epidemics.

Gilman and his wife Gertrude wrote monthly letters to St. Michael's, excerpts of which were published in *The Messenger*, describing daily life during the revolution, the progress of the Changsha church schoolchildren and the construction of Trinity Church there, which Gilman designed. The church still stands today.

In gratitude for one of the many boxes of gifts that the St. Michael's congregation and Sunday school sent to the Gilman family and the Changsha mission, Gilman wrote in the December 1911 *Messenger*, "Working as a branch of St. Michael's, our work is doubly effective."

— *Jean Ballard Terepka*



The Rt. Rev. Alfred Alonzo Gilman, St. Michael's "missionary priest" in China during the early 20th century, became a missionary bishop.