Perspectives 2018-19

INSIDE

2  New Director, New Directions
3  Stewards: Handing on the Great Tradition
4  Amen and Airborne: The Call to Military Chaplaincy
5  Discerning the Spirit’s Work in Community
6  One Spirit, One Baptism
7  Rethinking Vocation
8  From the Associate Director & Welcoming New Staff
IT IS AN IMMENSE JOY to be joining the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies, especially at this particular moment.

Many have observed that the church of tomorrow demands a new sort of leader. For a whole host of reasons, from rapid changes in American society to the ever-adapting character of the gospel itself, the church of the twenty-first century needs ministers who are not only passionate about bringing the grace of Jesus Christ to diverse cultural situations, but are also adept at finding new ways to do so.

These new Christian leaders—baptized ministers above all, and consequently the pastors who will shepherd them—require a crucial combination of skills. They must be firmly grounded in the Scriptures, Christian tradition, and sound theological reasoning and, at the same time, creatively entrepreneurial about how to shape new communities of disciples and strengthen existing ones.

How, then, can we best prepare tomorrow’s church leaders? The ideal training will provide a robust combination of practical formation and theological study—both of which go to make up what we call “pastoral” ministry—and, most importantly, a lived sense of their integration. Our aim, in other words, is the union of the practical and contemplative lives, as the ancients called them. Experience has shown time and again that the most effective practical ministers are, paradoxically, those who place regular study and prayer at the center of their work habits, and the most substantive theologians are those who speak vividly to and from the church in its practical engagement of contemporary challenges.

Happily, many of us have seen first-hand that Anglican Christianity is thriving in communities across North America. It radiates God’s wisdom and beauty, and it fosters the tangible growth of God’s kingdom. Yet, equally obvious, it is also withering in many places, and it is hindered by schism. In this convoluted moment of serious challenge and great potential, the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies at Duke is poised to make a vital contribution to the strengthening and renewal of our church. A place of traditional Anglican formation situated in an ecumenical divinity school at a world-class research university, the AEHS is blessed with stellar faculty, talented students, and a unique combination of members of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church in North America who teach, learn, pray, and serve together.

It promises to be an adventurous new beginning! There will be many new faces to meet, with fifty current students and numerous alumni and friends, and new initiatives to undertake. As I begin my work of teaching, writing, and shepherding the AEHS, I look forward to celebrating our place in God’s mission and envisioning the shape of our work for tomorrow’s church.

The Rev. Dr. Christopher A. Beeley is the new director of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies, the Jack and Barbara Bovender Professor of Anglican Episcopal Studies and Ministry, and Professor of Theology at Duke Divinity School. He comes to Duke from Yale Divinity School, where taught for the last sixteen years.

Special Thank You

As we welcome new staff and renew old ties, we express our gratitude to those who are stepping down from various positions in the AEHS. Our profound thanks go to Dr. Ellen Davis for faithfully shepherding the House as interim director over the past year, and at several stages before that. We are deeply grateful to Ms. Sonja Tilley (M.Div. ’09), who served as staff specialist for five years, concluding in early January, and who made so many things work well for so many. And our thanks go to the Rev. Lisa Fischbeck, who served as a pastoral associate this past spring. Happily, we say “Thank You” but not farewell to these friends, as Dr. Davis continues as Amos Ragan Kearns Professor of Bible and Practical Theology and a devoted member of the AEHS faculty, Ms. Tilley remains a local resident and a loyal associate of the House, and Rev. Fischbeck continues as vicar of The Episcopal Church of the Advocate in Chapel Hill. We give thanks to God for your ministries, and we look forward to your presence among us in the years to come!
“Hi, I’m Father Mac.” Thus I introduced myself recently to an elderly parishioner at a church where I had been invited to speak. She was not impressed. “You’re too young to be a ‘Father.’” Sensing a playfulness under her feisty challenge, I tried my luck: “Well ma’am, you’re right that I am young and have much to learn. But when I stand at the altar and in the pulpit I’m no longer 30 years old but 2,000 years old, because I’m not speaking for myself but for the Church.”

Though my octogenarian interlocutor was pleased with this response (and even gave me a hug before I left), what I said was entirely unoriginal. I was repeating almost verbatim the words of a young pastor confronted with the same challenge in a story that Dr. Warren Smith told in his church history class during my first semester at Duke Divinity School.

Long before, St. Paul told St. Timothy not to let others despise his youth (1 Tim. 4:12)—and not because young people are the “future of the Church,” as we often say, but because Timothy had been entrusted with the apostolic mantle as a steward of the Great Tradition. He was to “hand on” to the ends of the world the good news of God’s “handing-over” of his Son for the world’s salvation. Studying at Duke through the AEHS gave me the tools to be such a steward, to know how to “nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace” (BCP, 531). I learned that such a vocation necessarily takes hold of one’s entire life: the daily rhythm of the Offices, the feasts and fasts that punctuate the cycle of liturgical time, the collegiality and conversation necessary to sustain the bond of charity.

I also learned that the riches of this Great Tradition are so immeasurable that I could spend a whole lifetime and ministry drawing from their inexhaustible wells. Duke taught me what the Book of Common Prayer has said for centuries in its exhortation to ordinands, that the diligent pastor is to be ever “diligent in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures” and the Tradition that follows them (BCP, 532). As another of my former teachers, Dr. Christopher Beeley, likes to say, the Church needs pulpit-theologians. I have found that being a priest who takes study seriously enables one—regardless of one’s age—to be a truly theological pastor, and to deliver with patient precision and compelling depth what the faithful truly yearn for: the Word of God.

Mac Stewart, M.Div. ’13, is the Assistant Rector for Youth Ministry at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Potomac, Maryland, and a doctoral student in theology at the Catholic University of America.
By Anna Page

Driven by an interest in the human dimension of warfare, I signed a contract committing myself to service as a Commissioned Army Officer upon graduation from Wellesley College. Never did I imagine, however, that after my undergraduate studies I would be serving in the U.S. Army Reserves, attending Duke Divinity School, and in formation for the Episcopal priesthood. Yet, over the years, I gained an intimate understanding of God’s peculiar sense of humor. God took seriously my commitment to service to country, my desire to unite people across cultures, and my passion for people and called me to ordained ministry as an Army Chaplain.

After actively ignoring the Lord, I found myself finally listening in the makeshift chapel of the Basic Airborne Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. Through the story of Gideon, I realized that I had been afraid—a fear not only of jumping from planes but also of my budding sense of call. Then, my fear disappeared. I could no longer ignore God’s call. I accepted the invitation to seek ordination; to offer myself as a constant example of God’s love and light in a world which can be painfully dark.

Through chaplaincy the Lord directed me to both the vocation and the place in which I could most faithfully use my gifts to glorify God. Chaplains uniquely serve as both religious leaders, providing for the free exercise of religion, and religious advisors, offering ethical and religious guidance to the Commander. Duke Divinity School emerged as the institution where I could best learn to effectively serve in this dynamic vocation. Once here—and much to my bishop’s pleasure—I both found a home in the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies for my priestly training and felt empowered by the divinity school to seek courses I would need as an advisor.

Like leaping from an aircraft, accepting God’s call to the priesthood and moving to North Carolina felt like a leap of faith. Paratroopers, however, never jump without a chute. What I learned after my first year at divinity school is that parachutes come in all forms—to include the family of supportive, intelligent, and passionate individuals at Duke Divinity School, the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies, and the larger University. Just as parachutes guide paratroopers safely to their landing zone, so now I experience God guiding me to the right places to serve “pro Deo et patria” as an Episcopal Army Chaplain.

Amen and Airborne,
Anna

Anna Page, M.Div. ’20, is a postulant for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and a Commissioned Officer in the United States Army.
Discerning the Spirit’s Work in Community

BY JUSTIN GROTH

WITH THE RECENT unveiling of the theme for the Lambeth Conference 2020, “God’s Church for God’s World: Walking, Listening and Witnessing Together,” I was reminded that Anglicanism is indeed at its best when its members are committed to walking alongside and listening to one another. AEHS has given us the unique opportunity to live into this calling by participating in a “listening group.” A listening group comprises a handful of students who commit to meeting regularly for group spiritual direction. They are designed to enable students to share one another’s hopes and burdens, to tell the truth in love, and to help one another discern the Spirit’s work and will for their lives.

Sharing
A typical session begins with a person sharing a challenge, struggle, or joy with the group. The presenter is free to speak without fear of interruption, judgment, or accusations of bad faith, with the assurance that the group is attending prayerfully to what she is sharing. Such sharing is an act of humility and trust, whereby the presenter fully opens herself up to the group and to God’s work through them. Mia, a member of our group, emphasizes this very point: “In the academic setting, we are often measured in terms of how much we know...listening group gives me time to listen non-judgmentally and to be heard and recognized.”

Reflecting
After a period of silent prayer, the group is given the opportunity to reflect on the themes, images, and issues at the heart of the presenter’s story. Here, we eschew “advice-giving”; rather, the idea is to reflect back to the presenter what we saw and heard in their story, in order to help them discern the current movement of the Spirit in their lives. If, as the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain said, “Things are opaque to us, and we are opaque to ourselves,” we also might say that the Spirit’s work in our lives is often opaque to us. Thus it requires the help of our community to discern that work.

Responding
Finally, after prayerful silence, the presenter is given the opportunity to respond to the group’s reflections. Here, the presenter begins to tease out their own understanding of God’s work in their life. As Tyler, another member of our group, puts it, “[the group’s] prayerful attentiveness helps me to discern how the Holy Spirit was leading me, reminding me why I came to seminary and helping me to see the way forward.” In listening group, then, we open ourselves to be known by our community, and therefore to know the will of the Lord. As Pope Francis recently reminded us in his apostolic exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate, “We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual.”

Justin Groth, M.Div. ’18, was ordained to the transitional diaconate in the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas in June, and serves as Curate at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Durham, NC.
**One Spirit, One Baptism**

**BY ISAAC LUND**

**MOST OF MY MORNINGS** begin with my siblings in AEHS as we gather to pray the morning office. But unlike other members of the House, I am neither a confirmed Episcopalian, nor am I seeking ordination in the Anglican Communion. I am a Pentecostal, dedicated and baptized by Pentecostal pastors and raised in Pentecostal churches. It was not until my sophomore year at an Assemblies of God university in Seattle that I was formally introduced to Anglicanism. A friend put me in contact with a small ACNA parish in need of a part-time pianist, and since then I have considered Anglicanism my second spiritual home.

After two years of deep involvement with AEHS, I still feel like an anomaly—maybe now more than ever. In worship settings, I look like an Anglican and talk like an Anglican; I am fluent in the liturgy and deeply appreciate it. And yet, there is no confusion. I have not shifted in my loyalty to Pentecostalism or the Assemblies of God. I believe in the gifts of the Spirit as described by Paul, I affirm glossolalia as a practice in which Spirit-filled Christians should participate, I believe that divine healing is a fundamental aspect of Christian ministry, and I trust the roots of Pentecostalism as a Christian tradition.¹ When I first moved to North Carolina to study at Duke Divinity School, I knew that finding a Pentecostal community to call home might prove difficult. Pentecostal communities tend to vary significantly depending on region and denomination. Being familiar with Anglicanism’s liturgical structure, I was confident that I knew, more or less, what I was getting myself into with AEHS. I have not been disappointed. My time with this community has both deepened my appreciation for Anglicanism and made me more confident in my identity as a Pentecostal.

Although I have no intention of becoming either Episcopalian or Anglican, Anglicanism is part of who I am as a Christian. For many, fraternizing with a religious tradition different from their own implies either a fascination with what is unfamiliar or a longing for something lacking in their own community. Worshipping daily alongside Anglicans, I experience neither fascination nor dissatisfaction, but rather love for both these Christian traditions, different though they are, yet each of them uniquely beautiful.

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**Isaac Lund, M.Div. ’19, hopes to obtain ministry credentials with the Assemblies of God and continue his studies with a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible.**

¹ According to Eugene F. Rivers, Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing branch of Christianity. (*Plough* magazine, Spring 2018)
Rethinking Vocation

BY ERICA RIDDERMAN

AT OUR OPENING AEHS retreat last fall, our interim director, Dr. Davis, announced that the year’s theme would be vocation. To be honest, I wasn’t completely thrilled. On the one hand, focused discussions about vocation might be a helpful thing, given that I’d been thinking about (and stressing over) vocational questions since starting divinity school. On the other hand, I was a little exhausted of thinking about it all and wondered what clarity, if any, the year could bring.

Starting at Duke Divinity School, I assumed that all my fellow classmates would have their futures plans in order: some training for parish ministry, some for chaplaincy, some for teaching. To my surprise, however, many more were like me—feeling called to divinity school, but with no clear idea of where this would lead. As an M.Div. student, I have been able to try on a variety of ministerial hats, such as preaching, pastoral care, teaching, prison ministry, and community advocacy, all of which took place at my Episcopal Church field education placement last summer. Yet, despite the wonderful summer experience, my vocational questions still remained. I liked being in the local church, but did I feel called to serve there? I was drawn to the rhythms of the liturgy, but did I feel called to lead it? I loved the people dearly, but did I feel called to pastor them? I know I’m supposed to be following Jesus, but where in the world is he leading me?

Our AEHS programming on vocation did not answer these questions, but the guest speakers (both lay and ordained) gave me varied ways of thinking about them. I’ve often thought that “figuring out my vocation” means “making a definitive decision about my future,” but perhaps discerning vocation is more like deciding where to place my foot in the next step: whether that’s starting parish discernment, applying to further academic programs, trying out CPE, or applying to a myriad of jobs. For me, the next step is serving as the Intern for Discipleship and Spiritual Formation at Good Samaritan Episcopal Church in Brownsburg, Indiana, where I’ll start putting my incredibly rich theological education to practical use. The subsequent steps, of course, are yet to be determined.

This past year in AEHS hasn’t cleared up all my vocational steps, but it has brought me clarity. I’ve often tended to view vocation as an end in itself, as if finding my unique “fit” in the kingdom is the highest Christian calling. But I see more clearly now that as Christians, we have no other end than God, no other calling than to follow our Savior wherever he leads. My own vocational confusion, it turns out, may be a gift. It’s in constantly turning to Christ, who is our life, that I’m slowly learning to hold life’s uncertainties more loosely and taking one step at a time.

Erica Ridderman, M.Div. ’18, began an internship at an Episcopal church plant outside of Indianapolis, Indiana following graduation.
FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

ON A HOT JULY DAY, I found respite in the cool crypt of Canterbury Cathedral. There I found myself gathered around the altar with Christians from all over the world to receive Holy Communion. To encounter the materiality and history of a place where Anglican Christians have worshiped since the 6th century is to encounter at once the church’s enormity and strength across time and place, and, paradoxically, its human frailty and dependence on God’s grace. Even in Canterbury, one must pray.

When the liturgy ended, I lit a votive candle and prayed for the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies.

Having now been associated with the House for eight years, I can testify to the gift it has been to me, to so many students and alumni, and to the wider Anglican family. I am delighted to be continuing in this new season as Associate Director of the House, in which role I will work closely with Dr. Beeley to provide pastoral, liturgical, and administrative support to the House. My prayer and my work will continue to be directed to the flourishing of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies, that our work together would build up the church, such that in all its strength and all its frailty, it would shine the more brightly with the gospel of God’s grace.

The Rev. Joe Carnes Ananias is
Associate Director of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies. Having graduated from Duke Divinity School in 2013, he served as Associate Rector of a parish in the Diocese of South Carolina before returning to Duke to join the staff of the House in 2016.

WE ARE DELIGHTED to welcome Ms. Nohemi Ramirez as the new AEHS Staff Specialist. Nohemi will coordinate all manner of communication, logistics, hospitality, and chapel life for the House. Originally from Los Angeles, Nohemi majored in Communication Studies at Biola University, specializing in interpersonal and rhetorical studies. She is passionate about higher education and event planning, and views her work as a ministerial calling. She is especially excited about helping to grow the life of the AEHS at Duke and beyond. Having been raised Pentecostal, Nohemi has participated in several ecumenical churches and currently attends Duke Chapel. She enjoys spending time doing yoga, watching films, and exploring Durham.