

April 26, 2020

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish  
276 S. College Ave Newark, DE  
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weekly newsletter

# The Carpenter's Helper

*This Week... we continue our Easter celebration!*

## Virtual Easter Choir

<https://episcopalchurch.org/virtual-choir>



As Christians turned to virtual services on Easter, Washington National Cathedral celebrated in a memorable way. The cathedral livestreamed its Easter service on Sunday, April 12 and included a choir and orchestra with more than 600 participants.

A little over halfway through the service, the Episcopal Church Virtual Choir and Orchestra joined the livestream to perform the Easter hymn "The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done." Members sang or performed their instruments at home through video technology. Hundreds of faces appeared at once several times in the video, and some members got time in the spotlight.

*Check out the recording at this link, and look for more projects like this one in the future!*

### Online Worship Services for the week of April 26th

Online services will be updated as the information becomes available. Please check the DE Episcopal Diocese website for a list of online worship opportunities.

<https://delaware.church/worship-and-pray-with-us/>

#### Holy Eucharist with Bishop Brown St. Albans Center

11:00am

Facebook LIVE

downloadable service leaflet available

#### Sts Nicholas & Thomas

9:00am

YouTube LIVE

downloadable service leaflet available

#### Washington National Cathedral

11:15 am

YouTube and Facebook Live.

### Let Us Pray

Please visit our website  
for news and information.

Under the category "News and Sermons",  
you will find resources such as:

- online resources for prayer
- Christian blogs
- Christian literary journals

<http://stthomasparish.org/let-us-pray/>

### Public Health Information

The Episcopal Church encourages everyone to adhere to the Centers for Disease Control's recommendations to prevent the spread of this virus to not unintentionally harm neighbors at home, at school, at work, or others in the community. Please check in with the DE Dept of Health and Social Services for updates.

<https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/>

# ONE CHURCH'S TALE OF TWO PANDEMICS, 100 YEARS APART

*-This is an excerpt. For the full article, visit [episcopalnewsservice.org](https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org)*

At the height of the influenza pandemic in 1918, the Rev. John Misao Yamazaki stopped holding services at St. Mary's Japanese Mission, the Episcopal church in Los Angeles he helped found more than a decade prior. Before mandatory quarantines were enacted, Yamazaki began visiting homes to pray for sick children and families. More than a century later, in the midst of another global pandemic, the Rev. Laurel Coote, Yamazaki's successor at what is now St. Mary's Episcopal Church, stands in the quiet sanctuary livestreaming images of its empty pews and stained glass windows to her congregation via Facebook.

"I felt compelled to come into the sanctuary so that I could sit in its beauty and its silence and stillness. And I know that you're missing it too, and so I thought, let me share it with you today," Coote says in the video. "Christ is alive in this holy place."

Historical records unearthed by the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles show scenes of quarantine in the winter of 1918 and 1919 similar to the ones unfolding today: church doors shuttered, congregants in masks, clerics visiting sick patients. The experiences of older, traditional churches like St. Mary's, logged in yellowed histories and faded black-and-white photographs, show how American religious institutions once weathered a crisis strikingly similar to this one.

"The example that was set by congregations and individuals during the 1918 pandemic has been a source of encouragement in the present time," said Canon Robert Williams, the historian for The Episcopal Church's Diocese of Los Angeles. "A number of our great-grandparents withstood the influenza outbreak, and their example shows us that we can withstand the challenges of the present day."

Church records cite the home visits made by Yamazaki — a Japanese immigrant himself — as an important part of the church's foundation. Many of the Japanese American families he visited had never met a Christian priest before the pandemic, but his willingness to pray with them convinced some to join the congregation. Two decades later, the mission would go on to help local families weather Japanese internment during World War II. And amid the coronavirus pandemic, St. Mary's Church has again expanded its community outreach. To assist the community's large homeless population, Coote has extended the hours of a "safe parking" program in the church lot for people living in their vehicles from overnight to 24 hours. The church staff has also raised a special discretionary fund to help its most affected congregants pay bills.

"Both then and now, it's a case of neighbors helping neighbors and congregations abiding by the requirements for closures and social distancing," Williams said. But as churches move on from Holy Week and Easter, Yamazaki's home visits have been replaced by Coote's internet-born videos. Before coronavirus, only 22 percent of Protestant churches said they livestreamed entire services, according to polling from LifeWay Research. Now, 4 out of 5 churches are adjusting the way they do ministry and 45 percent planned to livestream Easter services, a recent Barna poll shows. As faith communities around the country close their physical doors, many are turning to social media and streams to connect with their congregations. Heidi Campbell, vice president of the International Society for Media, Religion and Culture, has watched 20 different church livestreams a week since the closures began. She sees a consistent theme in churches' strategies going digital.

"Right now, people want relationships, they want connection," Campbell said. The online shift, Coote believes, could change the way faith is practiced moving forward. "I don't believe that we'll ever return to the way that it was," said Coote. "St. Mary's had never been a digital church, and this has opened up a new way of expressing."

The move to the internet has allowed Coote to begin holding Wednesday night prayer services over Zoom and Facebook Live, which she says has given St. Mary's the opportunity to move from a "Sunday church" to an "all week" church. "People are rediscovering the Daily Office of prayer and realizing that they can be in touch with their people every day," said Taylor.

Coote said she doubts her congregation will emerge from quarantine the same congregation that went in. "Part of what the community is involved in is asking who they are. There's no better time for fostering this exploration," Coote said. "For many people the sanctuary, the building, the environment is all what makes church, church. This experience of COVID-19 is causing us to realize that we are the church beyond the walls."

*This story is an excerpt, and is part of a collaboration between Religion News Service and The GroundTruth Project exploring how faith communities around the world are adapting to COVID-19, produced with support from the Henry Luce Foundation.*