

August 30, 2018

**“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”**

There will be one service  
On Sunday, September 2

—9 am Holy Eucharist.

—10:15 Coffee Hour

— Mo. DeLellis will be  
our Celebrant & Preacher

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at St Mary’s flyer

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held at Ascension flyer

—Meetings, Events and  
Church Service sched-  
ules for the next few  
weeks

— Richmond Episco-  
pal Clergy Rota for  
September

**God loves you.  
No exceptions.**



The Episcopal Church Welcomes You. [www.dohio.org](http://www.dohio.org)

# Ascension This Week

## Lament As Prayer Deacon Bill Baker



“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?”

Psalm 22:1

On Sunday, another mass shooter took the lives of innocent people at a gaming tournament in Florida. I sat on my bed, as I listened to the news of the shooting and I said, “Oh God, how could this happen?” In essence, this was my lament. I could not comprehend what I heard and turned to God to do the only thing that made sense at the moment; to lament.

The Bible is filled with laments. Whether they are individual laments like Jeremiah, Isaiah or Habakkuk or for a group of people, like in some of the Psalms or the book of Lamentations, laments contain sorrow about what is happening in the world and often questions if God has completely forgotten us. Laments are faithful people’s response to death, destruction and turmoil.

But how can questioning God be okay for us? Laments are prayers to God. It says that even when we feel lost or despondent, we still acknowledge that God is with us. In turning to God in sorrow, anger and even in question, we turn back to our creator and say that only hope comes through the cross of Jesus and the love of God. We might not understand the pain we feel, but we know that God is still with us through it all.

Laments do contain some heavy questions. The writer of Psalm 22 actually starts by asking why God has forsaken them. Of the 150 Psalms more than 50 of them contain laments. However, the second part of Psalm 22 is a song of praise to God. It seems clear that the writer knows pain and feels far from God, but it also seems clear from the second half of the Psalm that the writer knows that God’s worthiness to be praised.

Sometimes our laments represent our gut reaction to something, but it does not mean that we will be stuck there forever. For me, acknowledging that I have some anger, sadness or fear about something is just a first step. But I need to acknowledge that the taking of another human life is unacceptable to me as a Christian, and I do not understand how a loving God could allow it to happen. In working through some of my questions, I turn my cares and my life back to God.

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This year the Episcopal Diocese of New York is commemorating “A Year of Lamentation”. The diocesan year specifically focuses on lamenting the Episcopal Church’s response “to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its aftermath of segregation and discrimination.” As part of commemoration of the year the diocese has sponsored programs and events. The next one will be on September 23, 2018 from 2:00pm-3:30 at St. Philips Church in Harlem. The event is entitled, “A Theatrical Presentation: A New York Lament.” This is part of series that are happening all year.

In addition to the theatrical presentations, the diocese placed Stations of the Cross exhibits around the diocese for Lent. I am well acquainted with one of the exhibits. The 8<sup>th</sup> Station, “Lamentations for the Forsaken” is a digital depiction of a Shroud of Turin. At a distance, the work looks like Jesus after he has been laid in his tomb, but when you view the artwork up close, the piece is made of individual pictures of victims of the civil war in Syria.

The piece intends to evoke strong emotions from the viewer. Hundreds of thousands Syrians have died since civil war broke out there 8 years ago and millions more have been displaced due to the conflict. Why does God allow this to happen? My belief is that God does not want this to happen, but imperfect humans do this to each other. God stands ready to cradle the dead and broken in heaven and on earth.

Lament seems to me the appropriate response to such shocking cruelty. “My God, why have you allowed this to happen? Why have you forsaken the people of Syria?” However, after our lament, we must stand ready to take action. Once we cry and cry out to God, our tears need to turn into prayers. We need to recognize that God remains with us in the toughest of times. Then we need to try and offer whatever love and healing that we can to those who suffer in the world.

Blessings,  
Deacon Bill

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### **Save the Date: Meetings and Church Services for the next few weeks –**

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**Saturday, September 8:** Wine & cheese, & soiree at Christ Church. 5PM to 8PM. RSVP to Nikki Johns, 347-322-7348 by August 31.

**Sunday, September 9:** Confirmation Course begins at St Mary’s. See flyer.

Deacon Bill will be ordained a priest on **Saturday, September 15, 2018.**

A Church Picnic will be held on **Sunday, September 16th**, in honor of Deacon Bill’s installation after a 10:00 mass. Please bring a dish or a dessert.

**Saturday, September 22:** Fund-raising dinner at St Paul’s.

**Saturday, October 20:** Congregational Development Workshop, held at Ascension. 9AM–1PM. See flyer.

You can always look at the church calendar on the website ([Ascensionsi.org](http://Ascensionsi.org)) for day-to-day listings of what is scheduled at Ascension.

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~ Save the date and register now! ~

## I Want My Church to Grow: What is Congregational Development?

Saturday, October 20, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

*(Check-in & breakfast opens at 8:00 a.m.)*

Church of the Ascension

1 Kingsley Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10314

This special training event is for:

- ✓ Laypeople and clergy who want to grow a vital church
- ✓ Those who want to join God in doing a new thing
- ✓ Leadership teams working on evangelism, church growth, spiritual development

### Workshops

- ❖ Evangelism 101: Using Community Organizing Tools for Church Growth
- ❖ We Need More Money: Best Practices for Your Stewardship Campaign

Plenary: "What is Congregational Development?" — *The Rev. Canon Altagracia Pérez-Bullard, PhD,*  
*Canon for Congregational Vitality*

Cost: 1-2 people: \$10 each

Group rate: 3 or more \$25 We encourage congregations to bring teams of 3 or more people!

Continental breakfast and snacks provided

To register, mail in your name, payment, and number of people attending to: The Church of the Ascension, 1 Kingsley Ave., Staten Island, NY 10314, Attn: Beth Brown. Checks payable to Church of the Ascension.

### Questions?

The Rev. Canon Altagracia Pérez-Bullard, PhD, Canon for Congregational Vitality

212-316-7433 or [aperez-bullard@dioceseny.org](mailto:aperez-bullard@dioceseny.org)

Or contact Beth Brown: 908-672-0765

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### What is Congregational Vitality in the Diocese of New York?

- Latinx Ministry
- Consulting with Congregations
- Renewal Works (2018)
- Congregational Development Commission
  - Developing/Identifying/Providing Resources [Resourcing]
  - Diocesan Training Events [Equipping Leaders]
  - Planting and redeveloping churches [(re)Development]
  - Grant Programs



The  
Episcopal Diocese  
of New York

# THE JESUS MOVEMENT

*Justice • Communion • Community*



A 6 week confirmation course beginning on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> open to all Middle and High Schoolers that will equip young members of Christ's body to live out the gospel of radical Love in their day to day lives. We will cover the basic teachings and creeds of The Episcopal Church with a focus on the Baptismal Covenant found in the Book of Common Prayer and how it calls us to justice and compassion as a Eucharistic community.

**SEPTEMBER 2018 ~ St. Mary's Episcopal Church ~ Sundays 8:45 – 9:30 am.**

September Ascension	September St. John's
2 Mother DeLellis (9AM)	2 Fr. Cole and Deacon Bill Baker
9 Fr. Cole and Deacon Bill Baker	9 Fr. Mark Brown
16 Fr. Bill Baker and Fr. Cole	16 Fr. Mark Brown
23 Fr. Bill Baker (8AM) and Mother DeLellis (10AM)	23 Fr. Cole (8AM) and Fr Bill Baker (10AM)
(Saturday – no service)	29 <sup>th</sup> 175 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Bishop Glasspool Celebrant and Preacher
30 Fr. Bill Baker (8AM & 10AM)	30 Fr. Cole and Deacon Geri Swanson (175 Anniversary Weekend)

1 Kingsley Ave, Staten Island, NY 718.442.4187

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Visit us on the web at  
<http://www.ascensionsi.org/>