

MY DEAR THEOPHILUS

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Prayer and communion linked with anniversary of moon landing

As people and churches around the world celebrated 50 years since the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969, facts about the first ever “extra-terrestrial communion” have come to light. The Church of England’s Director of Churches and Cathedrals, Becky Clark, said that US astronaut, Buzz Aldrin, who was one of Apollo 11 crew and among the first to set foot on the moon’s surface, had taken something special with him on the journey.



Dear Parish Family:

The Presbyterian pastor, Tim Keller, writes: “If you say: I believed in God, I trusted in God, and he didn’t come through, then you only trusted God to meet your agenda.”

Dr. Stanley Jones, a Methodist missionary in the 20th century wrote: “Prayer is surrender—surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boathook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.” This is the way that Jesus prayed and the way that He taught us to pray: “Not my will, but Your will be done” (Luke 22:42).

Prayer like this demands humility and persistence; it demands listening to God and His

Word. To pray is to take your relationship with God seriously, and more specifically, to pray is to take the Gospel seriously.

And so we ask, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Luke 11:1.

Your servant in Christ,

The Rev. Chester J. Makowski, Rector



The period after receiving Holy Communion is a time for quiet prayer and reflection. It is a time for being with Jesus in the consecrated elements.



*FEATURED HOLY PERSON OF
THE MONTH
JOHN CASSIAN*

ABBOT AT MARSEILLES (23 JULY)

By James Kiefer

Saint John Cassian (ca. 360 – 435) (Latin: Jo(h)annes Eremita Cassianus, Joannus Cassianus, or Joannes Massiliensis), John the Ascetic, or John Cassian the Roman, is a Christian theologian celebrated in both the Western and Eastern Churches for his mystical writings. He is known both as one of the “Scythian monks” and as one of the “Desert Fathers.”

John Cassian was born around 360 probably in the region of Scythia Minor (now Dobruja in modern-day Romania), although some scholars assume a Gallic origin.

He was involved in a disputation concerning the Patriarch of Constantinople (St. John Chrysostom), and, when the Patriarch was forced into exile from Constantinople in 404, the Latin-speaking John Cassian was sent to Rome to plead his cause before Pope Innocent I.

While he was in Rome John Cassian accepted the invitation to found an Egyptian style monastery in southern Gaul, near Marseille. His foundation, the Abbey of St Victor, a complex of monasteries for both men and women, was one of the first such institutes in the west, and served as a model for later monastic development. Cassian's abbey and writings influenced St. Benedict, who incorporated many of the same principles into his monastic rule. Since Benedict's rule is still used by Benedictine, Cistercian, and Trappist monks, the thought of John Cassian still guides the spiritual lives of thousands of men and women in the Western Church.

John Cassian wrote two major spiritual works, the Institutions and Conferences. In these, he codified and transmitted the wisdom of the Desert Fathers of Egypt. The Institutes (Latin: "De institutis coenobiorum") deal with the external organization of monastic communities, while the Conferences (Latin: "Collationes") deal with "the training of the inner man and the perfection of the heart."

The spiritual traditions of John Cassian had an immeasurable effect on Western Europe. Many different western spiritualities, from that of Saint Benedict to that of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, owe their basic ideas to John Cassian.

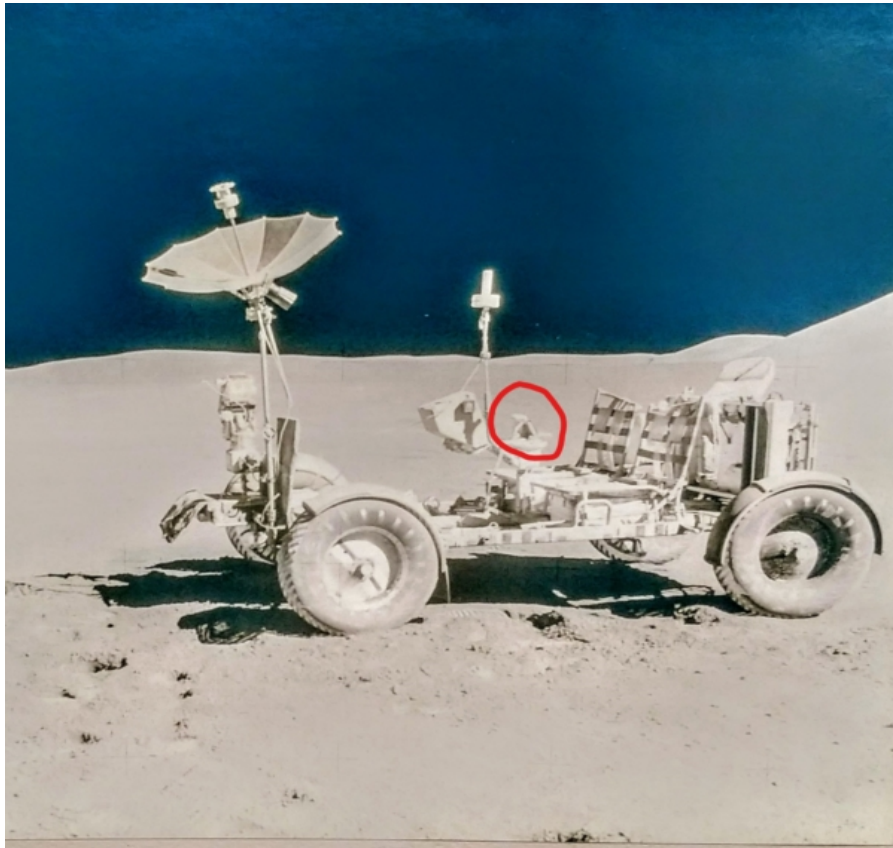
THE ONLY BIBLE ON THE MOON WAS LEFT THERE BY AN EPISCOPALIAN ON BEHALF OF HIS PARISH

By Egan Millard (July 19, 2019)

In 1971, St. Christopher Episcopal Church in League City, Texas, gave a Bible to a parishioner, David Scott, to take with him on a business trip. To this day, the congregation still has not gotten it back.

That's because he left it on the moon.

As the world commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing on July 20, the parish southeast of Houston is remembering its own small part in the history of space exploration. The Bible they presented to Scott appears to be the only one ever left on the Moon, and perhaps the only Bible outside Earth today.



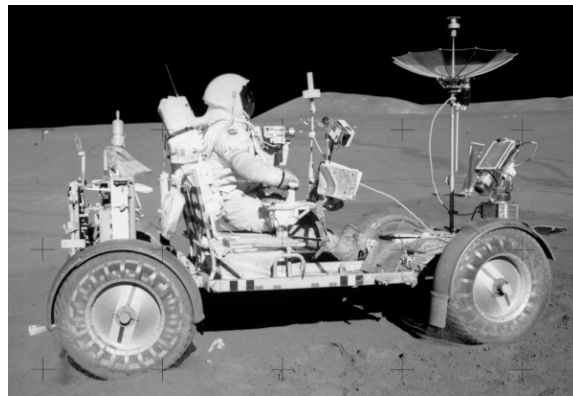
The Bible left by David Scott is shown in the red circle. Photo: NASA via St. Christopher Episcopal Church



David Scott was the commander of Apollo 15. Photo: NASA

Scott was the seventh person to walk on the moon (one of four living people to have done so) and the commander of the Apollo 15 mission. When Apollo 15 launched, Scott was carrying the Bible his parish had given him, though it's unclear whether this was officially allowed. Apollo astronauts were permitted to bring personal items with them in small bags with weight restrictions. Earlier that year, Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell [took 100 microfilm Bibles](#) – the entire King James Version printed on a 1.5-square-inch piece of film – with him to the surface of the moon, but he brought all of them back to Earth.

Apollo 15 was the first mission to bring a lunar rover to the moon, and Scott was the first person to drive it there. On Aug. 2, 1971, just before returning to Earth, Scott placed the St. Christopher Bible on the lunar rover's control panel. He walked to a nearby hollow, where he placed a memorial plaque and statuette honoring the astronauts who had died during their missions, and then he returned to the lunar module. (This was kept secret until the post-mission press conference.)



David Scott drives the lunar rover on the moon. Photo: James Irwin/NASA

Scott, who recalled the moment in the book “Two Sides of the Moon,” later presented to his parish a signed copy of a photo showing the Bible sitting exactly where he left it on the lunar rover. That’s [where it remains today](#): in the moon’s Sea of Showers, between Hadley Rille and the Apennine Mountains.

– *Egan Millard is an assistant editor and reporter for the Episcopal News Service. He can be reached at emillard@episcopalchurch.org.*

A CHURCH INVESTS IN MENTAL HEALTH IN RESPONSE TO PARISHIONERS’ SUFFERING

A 6,400-member congregation in North Carolina has created a “wellness director” position after experiencing six suicides in five years.

By Ken Garfield (July 11, 2019)



Dr. Jon Kocmond looks at photos of his family in his home office in Charlotte, North Carolina. Kocmond lost his 16-year-old son, Nathan, to suicide in the fall of 2017. He has since been active in the suicide support group at Christ Episcopal Church. Photo: Wendy Yang/Faith & Leadership

When their teenage son Nathan took his own life, Jon and Sarah Kocmond's pain was too heavy to bear alone. So they turned to the place where they knew they would be comforted and heard: Christ Episcopal Church in Charlotte, North Carolina — and, eventually, its Survivors of Suicide (SOS) group.

“If we need love to overcome sorrow, what greater source than God?” Jon Kocmond said. “The thing that has sustained me is my faith. I’ve become closer to God and the Holy Spirit. The act of sharing stories with others, sharing grief with others, is therapeutic.”

The support group was formed after the congregation was rocked by a half-dozen suicides within five years — a series of traumas that affected nearly everyone at the church, the largest Episcopal congregation in North Carolina.

The experience helped spur the congregation to make mental health a top priority, inspired by Jesus' words in the Gospel of John to a man who had been ill for 38 years: “Do you want to be made well?” (John 5:6 NRSV).

In addition to the SOS group, the church has invested in mental health support and awareness in a number of ways.

It has helped one member establish a nonprofit residential mental health center and another launch a one-woman crusade to educate people about bipolar disorder. It has hosted two appearances by bestselling author Brené Brown to share her message that asking for help is a sign of strength.

And most significantly, the church has begun a search for a wellness director, a new full-time position that will focus on mental health as part of a holistic understanding of what it means to be well.

While the trend is too new to be reflected in hard numbers, mental health advocates and faith leaders say that a growing number of houses of worship across the nation are ministering to those with mental health challenges. Few have discerned the church's call to nurture body, soul *and mind* as dramatically as Christ Church.



Besides offering people opportunities to share their life challenges, Christ Church seeks to equip them with information and resources. Photo: Wendy Yang/Faith & Leadership

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly 1 in 5 U.S. adults has some form of mental illness in a given year, including depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobias.

The poor are hardest hit: according to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the rate of adults with serious mental illness is highest among those with family income below the federal poverty line.

That factor generally does not affect Christ Church, whose membership is largely well-to-do. But regardless of one's affluence or status, no one is immune.

And the church has a responsibility to offer help for those who are suffering, said [Warren Kinghorn](#), a psychiatrist and theologian at Duke University Medical Center and Duke Divinity School, who speaks often to congregations about the church's responsibility in addressing mental illness.

“God cares about human suffering and calls us to attend to those who suffer,” he said.

THE SILENT THINGS

The roots of Christ Church’s mental health ministry trace back to the 2008 recession. Realizing that many in the congregation were having their lives turned upside down, the church organized a Sunday morning forum called “The Wisdom of Contentment” and invited members to come and share their struggles out loud.

Church leaders were stunned by the outpouring. Parishioners rose to tell their stories, not just about financial woes, but about their spiritual and emotional well-being — or lack of it.

“It made our pain so public, and so widely shared,” said the Rev. Chip Edens, the rector of the 6,400-member church. “It defrosted us. It opened us up more deeply to the struggles of our members.”

The Rev. Lisa Saunders, an associate rector, was struck by how eager people were — and are — to express out loud the most difficult issues in their lives. “It made us realize the impact of sharing our stories,” she said. “It made this big place seem warmer and more caring.”

The focus expanded from that first gathering, as the congregation and clergy began to see the role of the church as a safe place for parishioners to share what Saunders calls “the silent things.”



The Rev. Lisa Saunders offers communion during a Sunday service. Photo: Wendy Yang/Faith & Leadership

As the congregation's awareness of mental health needs grew, Saunders said, so did their support of programs, preaching and teaching on wellness.

Besides offering people opportunities to share their life challenges, Christ Church seeks to equip them with information and resources, to direct them toward help, and to encourage them not to suffer in silence.

While the initiatives are focused on the congregation, the community is welcome to attend the classes and programs. No one is turned away.

The question posed in the Gospel of John — "Do you want to be made well?" — is applied broadly in this setting. Edens said the ministry isn't based on the belief that Jesus alone can heal what ails us. God, he notes, works through many means, including health care, exercise, meditation and more.

"Jesus wants to renew our minds," Saunders said.

WHAT GREATER SOURCE THAN GOD?

Despite its growing support of mental health, the congregation was shocked by the rash of suicides. Among the dead was a 20-year-old college student, a 51-year-old businessman and father of two who was active in the church, and the Kocmonds' son Nathan.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. suicide rate was 14 per 100,000 — 47,000 deaths — in 2017, the year Nathan Kocmond died.

Christ Church was moved to act. In 2019, the church created the SOS group, which meets twice a month for an hour and a half, longer if necessary. Saunders helps guide the conversation. The half-dozen families involved politely declined a reporter's request to sit in, asking for privacy.

But over coffee one Saturday afternoon, Jon Kocmond, a pediatrician, talked about SOS, and about his son.

Nathan Kocmond, 16, died by suicide Oct. 9, 2017. He left home on a Monday and did not return. His body was discovered the following Friday, about a 90-minute drive from Charlotte. He left no note, nor did he share any warnings on social media.

A junior at Providence Day School, he was an excellent student, a football player and a Boy Scout. His father said that Nathan, the middle of their three children, made friends easily.



The Kocmond family smiles in their last family portrait before Nathan's death. Photo: Courtesy of Jon Kocmond via Faith & Leadership

But as Jon Kocmond characterizes it, multiple factors seem to have played a part in the tragedy. Eight months before his death, Nathan started showing signs of distress. He ran away briefly, and was having thoughts — though not suicidal — that disturbed his sleep.

Six weeks before his death, he suffered a football-related concussion, which caused daily headaches. He had to step away from football, and he missed three weeks of school, further fraying his social network.

Jon and Sarah Kocmond try not to blame any one person or factor. “We were all a part of his world,” Jon Kocmond said. “And his world failed him.”

In SOS, Jon Kocmond talks about Nathan. He listens intently to others who have lost a child, spouse or other loved one. His wife, Sarah, attends, but not as often as he does.

The group discusses the importance of recovering at your own pace, he said, and of not blaming yourself or feeling shame. And the importance of heeding the advice that Edens and his wife gave Kocmond: “You can’t do this without community and love.”



Dr. Jon Kocmond and his wife, Sarah, lost their 16-year-old son, Nathan, to suicide in the fall of 2017. They have since been active in the church's suicide support group. Photo: Wendy Yang/Faith & Leadership

WE BELONG TO EACH OTHER

Kinghorn, of Duke, can cite any number of passages from the Old and New Testaments about God hearing those who cry out in the night.

“Jesus knew what it was to have people say, ‘You’re crazy,’” he said.

From the beginning, the church has raised the question of how we relate to each other, Kinghorn said. In the 1700s and early 1800s, Quakers opened rural “retreats” for the mentally ill — forerunners of psychiatric hospitals.

Psalm 13:2 asks, “How long must I bear pain in my soul?” — a challenge that individual congregations have an obligation to answer, Kinghorn said.

When he speaks at churches, Kinghorn offers suggestions to put this principle into practice: Preach about mental health from the pulpit. Organize support groups. Offer classes to help people learn the warning signs. Offer information on where to find help — through pamphlets in book racks, for example, or a page on the church website. Host forums for people to tell their stories aloud. Call people with mental illness into positions of leadership and service. Sponsor direct treatment.

But he also notes that there’s a difference between being included and truly belonging. He urges congregations to ask themselves whether they truly welcome the mentally ill into the life of the church and let them know they have a place in God’s home.

Kinghorn said he is moved by Christ Church taking the step, unusual among congregations, of creating a suicide support group.

While Scripture, he said, does not affirm suicide — our lives are God’s and not ours to take — neither does it condemn those who take their own lives. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, he said; there is grace and hope for those who die from suicide.

And yet, as St. Thomas Aquinas taught, suicide leaves lasting scars in communities. “We belong to each other,” Kinghorn said.

[Life matters](#)

Coping with suicide hasn’t been the only struggle for parishioners. Personal experience with mental illness has prompted two church members to action.

Parishioner Beth Purdy spoke publicly for the first time at a Sunday morning forum in 2008 about her decades-long struggle with bipolar disorder, panic attacks, depression and misdiagnoses.

Purdy and Saunders had feared that few would come to the gathering, called “Life Matters.” But a capacity crowd of 200 turned out.

The experience emboldened Purdy to share her story at churches, mental health seminars — wherever she could. She launched [her ministry](#) as a speaker and advocate for mental health at Christ Church.

Purdy believes that by speaking out about her experience, she emboldens others to come out of the shadows.

Thinking back to that turning-point Sunday at Christ Church, she recalls that people seemed relieved to share their stories. “It was like a huge pressure valve was released and people could breathe when talking about mental illness,” she said.

IT’S COURAGE

Faced with a family mental health emergency and finding nowhere to turn, Bill Blue retired early from Wells Fargo. With his wife, Betsy, he established Hope Way, a nonprofit residential mental health facility that they opened in 2016. It was unveiled at a Sunday morning forum at Christ Church, the Blues’ parish for 34 years.

Today, the church refers families to Hope Way, and the facility’s medical staff has spoken at the church. The congregation has supported Hope Way financially, Blue said — including a grant to bring in Theo, a therapy dog.

Extending its reach beyond its campus, Hope Way has hosted communitywide programs in uptown Charlotte featuring nationally known speakers — among them, ABC News anchor Dan Harris, who has written and spoken about mindfulness and meditation since suffering a panic attack on live TV.

Bill Blue praises his church's commitment to shatter stereotypes around mental illness. "It's courage," he said.



The Rev. Chip Edens says God works through many means for our healing, including health care, exercise, meditation and more. Photo: Wendy Yang/Faith & Leadership

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE TOGETHER?

Perhaps the biggest step that Christ Church has taken is to create the new staff position of wellness director. The vestry, the lay leadership body, agreed to fund the full-time position in January 2019.

The ad for the position ends with these words from Romans 12:2 (NIV): "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will."

The first wellness director, when he or she is hired, will serve as an advocate, educator and navigator for the congregation.

The position calls for training and credentials in psychology, social work, counseling or psychiatric nursing, but rather than providing treatment, the director will triage parishioners to the right places for help. In addition to being on the church campus at least two Sundays a month, he or she will be available to respond to crises at any time.

Church leaders describe the new position as a ministry of presence, charged with addressing the array of issues that contribute to a person's health — mental and otherwise.

It's one answer to the question that Kinghorn asks congregations everywhere he goes: "What does it mean to live together as a community of people, committed to the glory of God?"



PLEASE LET US KNOW IF SOMEONE NEEDS A HOME VISIT

If you know of anyone who needs a home visit because they cannot get to Church, please call the Parish Office, or let Fr. Makowski know. Either Fr. Makowski or one of our Lay Eucharistic Visitors will call on them. If you have a pastoral emergency, please call Fr. Makowski at 713.299.7675.

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER

Praying is something that we all can do, young and old, rich and poor, tall and short. Please pray for everyone on our Prayer List.

ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

We will be studying Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Join us at 9:15 AM in the Parish Hall.



***Don't forget to bring pork and beans for our
Mannafest outreach.***



St. Luke's Episcopal Church

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NOTICE

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