

APRIL 2024

COMMUNITY OF HOPE International



COHI Regional Retreat - Arkansas

SATURDAY,
APRIL 13TH
9AM-3PM

ST. JAMES
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH

OPEN TO ALL

*REGISTRATION
REQUIRED



COMMUNITY OF HOPE *Retreat*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
BISHOP JOHN HARMON
"TAKING CARE OF
EACH OTHER"

Taking Care of Each Other is the theme of the spring 2024 Community of Hope Retreat to be held at St. James United Methodist Church. This is a time of rest, renewal, worship, and inspiration. Our keynote speaker will be Bishop Harmon and the day will begin at 9:00 AM with light breakfast. Lunch will be catered Newk's. Cost of the retreat is \$45 which includes lunch.

Please click [HERE](#) for more information and to be a part of this beautiful experience.



Regional Retreat Continued

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



The Rt. Rev. John Harmon

John Harmon is the 14th Bishop of the Diocese of Arkansas. He was ordained and consecrated in Little Rock on January 6, 2024.

He was previously the Rector of Trinity Church in Washington, D.C. Before accepting the call to Trinity, he was rector of St Stephen's, Petersburg, Va.; assistant rector of Grace Church, Norfolk, Va.; and Episcopal Chaplain at Norfolk State and Virginia State Universities. John is the principal visionary and co-founder of the Episcopal Service Corps (ESC), a federation of young adult service programs across the Episcopal Church. He also founded the Trinity

Development Corporation (TDC) to help empower the underserved to achieve self-sufficiency through counseling, education, and improved access to adequate health care.

During the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, TDC was a leading provider of HIV/AIDS education and prevention services, operated six centers, and realized about three million dollars in funding.

He graduated from Saint Paul's College with honors (English Literature, Political Science, and History), Virginia Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity), and Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education (Master of Theology). For ten years, he was a spiritual faculty with CREDO, a clergy development program of The Church Pension Group. He led and supported disaster relief efforts in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.

John and his wife, Keeva, have been married for 30 years. They are the proud parents of Joshua, Jarena, and Justin. He was born in Liberia. His interests include carpentry, gardening, poetry, reading, walking, writing, and sewing.

John is a pastor at heart. He values strong relationships with the community and the people he is called to serve. He is an experienced collaborative leader who cultivates ministries that thrive on building inclusive communities with compassionate discipleship. His life is shaped by prayer and public witness.



Community of Hope in Action

ST. JAMES UMC IN LITTLE ROCK, AR



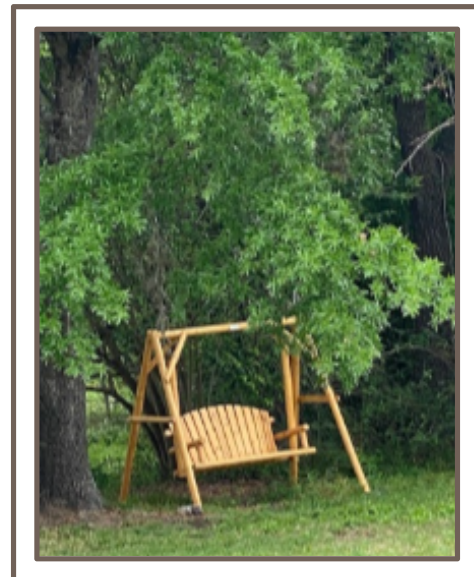
St. James produced a video of testimonials on what COHI means to our members. It was made to promote COHI within the walls of St. James, and hopefully to reach outside those walls as well.



In a recent service, the Senior Pastor at St. James spoke on what Community of Hope meant to him, and was helping to promote the upcoming training. It's the kind of endorsement we love to see from church leadership, and we'd love to see more from clergy.



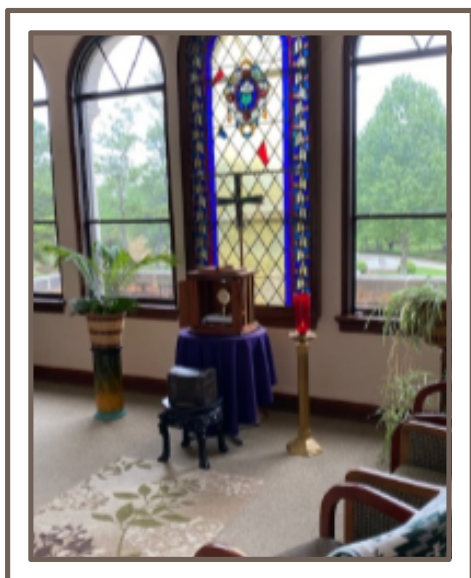
Heritage Region Spring Quiet Day



Where: Ruah Center, Villa de Matel, Houston, TX

When: Thursday, April 18, 10:00am-3:00pm.

Lunch is included and the suggested donation: \$25. The deadline to register is April 10, 2024. For more details and to RSVP, contact Beverly Davis at bad21a@aol.com





Reflections on the Rule

**DR. BRANDON BECK, LAY CHAPLAIN, COHI
MONK, THE OOOW - THEOLOGY STUDENT, BRITE DIVINITY SCHOOL**

Visualizing the Ladder

*"If we wish to reach the very highest point of humility..., we must by our ascending actions erect the ladder Jacob saw in his dream.... By that descent and ascent we must surely understand nothing else than this, that we descend by self-exaltation and ascend by humility."
(RSB, Chapter 7.2)*

The return to Jacob's Ladder brings us to a liminal space - the space between here and there. In such a liminal space, a great opportunity for kenosis presents itself. How do you empty yourself? The discipline of Lectio Divina is deeply valued and taught in Benedictine monasteries still today. I am drawn to its related Visio Divina. Gazing on an image or creating an image of scripture allows me to fully pour out all my self-exaltation, for who am I among these great images? How do you see this ladder set before us that we climb through growing less? Where up is down and down is up?



Jacob's Ladder - An Orthodox Icon

Notice that in Orthodox tradition, this Hebrew story is written with Mary, the Theotokos, in the story of Jacob dreaming the ladder between Heaven and Earth. Just as this ladder is a bridge, so will Jesus be through his Mother.



Reflections of the Rule Continued

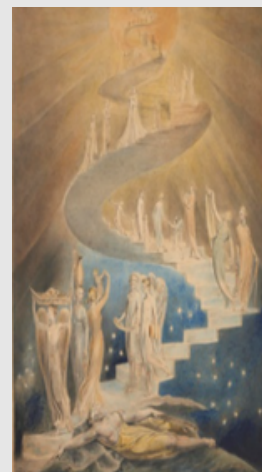


The Ladder of Divine Ascent - An Icon of St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai

Notice that these are monks on the ladder. These are the monks of St. Catherine's. John Climacus (Climacus means Ladder) wrote a book called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* from St. Catherine's ca. 600, a rulebook similar to the RSB. The monks are ascending following John's instructions and stories; however, the temptations and "wretched inner demons" are trying, always, to pull them off. John is near the top, in white. Jesus looks down, welcoming them to Heaven.

William Blake's Jacob's Ladder c. 1799

British author, mystic, artist William Blake rendered Jacob's Ladder in this pen and ink watercolor illustration to *The Bible for Commission*.



My own rendition using Google Gemini's AI

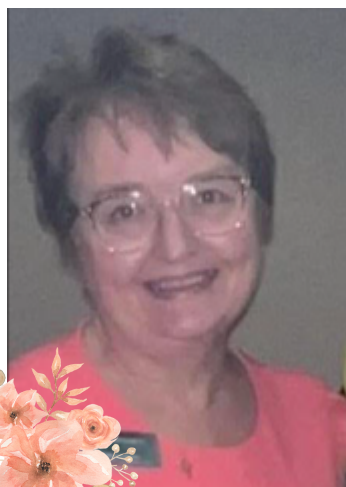
I've recently become interested in using my creative writing in combination with the ever-improving resource of AI to generate art responses to Scripture as a devotional technique. Using the newly-released Gemini from Google, I ran through several iterations of journal responses to the Genesis passage, the RSB ladder of Humility, and the John Climacus Ladder of Divine Ascent, and I produced this.



Kinsmen Lutheran Honors Lynnae Schatz

LINDA ASTALA - KINSMEN LUTHERAN - HOUSTON

At the February Circle of Care meeting, the COH Lay Chaplains based at Kinsmen Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas, honored their beloved Facilitator, Lynnae Schatz, with a tribute to her service. The group surprised her with cards of appreciation, a blue crocheted throw, a Community of Hope pendant, and a collage created with photos of hands of "her" lay chaplains' other titles.



Lynnae was part of the 2014 training class at Christ the King Lutheran in Houston and went on to establish a center at Kinsmen Lutheran in the spring of 2015. Since that class, at least sixty (60) Lay Chaplains are now part of the hybrid Kinsmen Circle of Care, from ten classes that have been commissioned there as well as a number of COHI members trained in other centers. In addition to facilitating COH classes and the Circle of Care at Kinsmen, Lynnae serves on their staff as Director of Congregational Care and Parish Nurse. She has served as a COHI Regional Representative, Parliamentarian, and Member-at-Large of the Board, and she has facilitated two online Facilitator Training classes.

Lynnae and her husband Steve have two adult children. At the COC meeting she announced that her daughter Hannah and her husband will have their first child this summer, adding "Grandmother" to Lynnae's many other titles.





We Are the Myrrh Bearers

THE REV. JOANNA SEIBERT-DEACON, ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, LITTLE ROCK

"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared." – Luke 24:1.

I remember preparing to present a workshop at the International Community of Hope conference one summer in Texas. Community of Hope began to train those not ordained to be hospital chaplains at St. Luke's Hospital in Houston. The training program is now used worldwide for people interested in visiting the sick and homebound. I have been involved in the Community of Hope in our diocese for more than twenty years. I continue to see it as outstanding preparation and study for anyone called to a ministry involving pastoral care in any form. (Some may believe this may be for all ministries!) One of the hallmarks of the training is that it is steeped in Benedictine spirituality.



The image of the Community of Hope Chaplains that keeps coming to me is the "myrrh bearers," the women who brought spices to the tomb of Jesus on that early Easter morning. They brought their most precious resources to honor the one who had cared for them. My experience is that this has been the story for many called to the ministry of pastoral care.

They know what it is like to be wounded and be ministered to by other healers. They understand what it is like to be loved and cared for by others. Their only of sharing, continuing, and keeping that love is to carry what they learned to someone else.

What happens with the myrrh bearers' visit is something totally unexpected. They go to honor their friend and teacher; instead, they are promised a new life, a resurrection in this life, and the next. I have never experienced a visit at which I did not receive resurrection. We are touched and healed by those we visit. We take our most precious possessions, ourselves, our time, and our presence, and make an offering. In return, we always meet the resurrected Christ in so many forms.



Connecting Practically

SAM RAHBERG - DIRECTOR

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, BRIDGE BUILDERS FOR A THRIVING MISSION

SAINT JOHN'S SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND SEMINARY - COLLEGEVILLE. MN

This spring, *Bridge Builders for a Thriving Mission* has gathered aspiring lay pastoral caregivers for our first iteration of the Community of Hope International training. About halfway through the 14 modules, we are discovering two dynamics that reflect the heart and commitment of these caregivers - **they are hungry for connection and they are eager to practice what they are learning**. These insights may not come as a surprise to other COHI circles, especially because the curriculum is designed to serve and sustain these very purposes. However, we as trainers are paying close attention to these dynamics as signs of our time and instructions for our facilitation.



First, we detect a pervasive hunger to be more truly seen and heard. Given the slightest opening into a meaty question, our participants - nearly to a person! - become generous with their stories and transparent with their questions. That comes as testimony to the broader need for listeners and safe spaces in which people can share. It also means we as

facilitators need to be focused and intentional so that this kind of connection has room to breathe.

Second, we recognize people's desire to "translate into action these holy teachings" (to borrow a phrase from Benedict's Rule). We observe whole-hearted participation in the sharing exercises and significant stories of impact about how this training is already making a difference in their ordinary lives. That just seems good for the world and underscores how facilitators need to preserve room for this kind of guided practice in our gatherings. The next



time we meet, we'll be debriefing their first practice visits. We're learning that it is essential for the facilitators to cultivate a spirit of genuine connection and grounded practice - with strong attention to the rhythms of our short times together. That sounds not unlike the ways we are connecting practically in a pastoral visit, too!



St. George Lay Chaplains Visit Local Veterans Facility

RHONDA CUNNINGHAM AND JOANN ESKILSEN -SAN ANTONIO AND DEVINE TX

On March 12, recently commissioned lay chaplains Jo Ann Eskilsen, member of St. Matthias Episcopal Church in Devine TX and Rhonda Cunningham, member of St. George Church in San Antonio, had the honor of visiting many veterans and some of their spouses in residence at the Frank M. Tejada Texas Veterans Home in Floresville TX, about 35 miles



southeast of San Antonio. They were joined by the Rev. Dexter Lesieur of St. Matthias and Leslie Mixon, Military Liaison from the Diocese of West Texas, who helped coordinate visit with the staff at the home. The staff welcomed the group warmly with a guided tour though the beautiful facility.

The Frank M. Tejada residence is currently home to 141 male and female veterans who served in various conflicts and a few spouses of the veterans who live there. Veteran residents served in numerous conflicts including World War II, The Korean War, Vietnam, The Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan, and Iraq. During our time there we visited and prayed with residents. We presented Vietnam veterans with The United States 50th Anniversary Commemorative Pins and challenge coins and distributed prayer shawls and prayer bracelets made by parishioners from St. Matthias. Jo Ann remarked on the warmth and encouragement expressed by the staff and caregivers. Rhonda noted that she was deeply move by the men and women who proudly served our country and how appreciative they were to spend time with us. Jo and Rhonda are working with the staff to set up regular visits and discover what other opportunities to provide additional support. As we begin our journey as COHI lay ministers, this time spent at Tejada Veteran's home marks a great beginning in our calling.



Left to right: Leslie Mixon, the Rev. Dexter Lesieur, Rhonda Cunningham, JoAnn Eskilsen



Welcome New Centers!



San Antonio Mennonite Church



**Grace Episcopal Church
Goochland, VA**



**St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Newman, GA**



*The newest video password
has been released!
Please check with your
regional rep. for more
information.*



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Tell us about books & blogs you like, ways of
reaching care-receivers, & training ideas that work!

DEADLINE: 6/20/2024

Email Pam Piedfort to share your story!

pam.piedfort@cohinternational.org

