

SECTION 5. Our Program History, 2002-2022

Season 2021 / 2022

This Season was Produced Entirely on the Zoom App

September 20, 2021 - Mistranslated Words in the Bible with Jared Abram Seltzer

Our Bibles are a compilation of ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts authored by at least 40 different Israelites over a span of at least 1500 years, a compilation which was later translated into other languages like English for our reading pleasure and edification. Are any of the words in our translations inadequately translated? It is true that every translation lacks something in some way, be it significant or quite insignificant, because it moves an idea from one culture and normative pattern of thinking to another. Jared brings with him the expertise of a team of professors from the Israel Bible Center and spoke on a handful of examples of words in the Bible that frankly are mistranslated that really need to be corrected or else we will miss the original meaning of the text.

RECAP: About 33 Zoom participants were treated to an informative presentation on the inherent weaknesses of Bible translations.

Translations, said Jared, are always imperfect, and he began his remarks by detailing the many reasons words in the Bible get mistranslated. The texts from the Bible have come to us from people who are different from us in language and culture. They also came in steps. As the original texts have been lost our Scriptures come from early manuscript copies where the first changes and mistranslations could have occurred, to ancient

translations from many languages, to later manuscript copies to early English versions, to modern translations like the King James, Revised Standard Version the America Standard, and more. Finally, while the goal of a translation is to make something understandable, it may lose poetic value, double meanings, or interpretations. Jared's advice is that understanding the original meaning and intent comes from studying the differences between the best competing translations. From the dozens of mistranslated words in the Bible, twenty-five were listed by Jared, and the audience chose the ones they found most interesting. For example, he said that "grace" is the opposite of law, divine favor. Some Christian churches profess that grace saves people from judgment, but they miss what we must reciprocate for grace which is to show loving kindness to others and loyalty to God. When the "Law" is mentioned in the Old Testament we need to keep in mind that it can mean. Law with a small "l" is about sin, what it is, and what happens if we don't keep it. The Law, capital "L", is more about the entirety of God's relationship with his people. Jared has extensive knowledge of Hebrew, the Bible, and the Hebraic culture and he covered his topic with enthusiasm.

October 4, 2021 - The Catholic Roots of Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" by Dr. Michael Corso

Many avid readers of J.R.R. Tolkien may be aware that he was a devout Catholic. He was known to be a daily communicant and carried rosary. However, the particular pre-Vatican II, English Midlands "brand" of Catholicism that Tolkien grew up in had features that may be foreign to the modern reader of his fiction. Tuned to that era and ethos of Catholicism, we can discern his devotion to Mary, his love of the Eucharist, and his abiding sense that God's grace imbued the world. It surprised many who read Tolkien through a New Age or pagan lens to learn from his published letters that "*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a

fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision” (*Letters* 142).

In this presentation, we explored Tolkien’s Roman Catholicism and looked for evidence that his faith informed his writing in *The Lord of the Rings*. We paid particular attention to the powerful, elven Lady Galadriel as we explored the sources of her character in Tolkien’s devotion to Our Lady, Mary.

RECAP: Dr. Michael Corso is a delightfully engaging speaker whose depth of knowledge regarding J.R.R. Tolkien’s literary works and biography were on full display this October 4th. After explaining how difficult it was for Tolkien, or anyone for that matter, to grow up Catholic in England during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Dr. Corso went on to explain how different Catholicism was then from how we experience our faith now, after Vatican II. I was surprised to learn that the first drafts of *The Lord of the Rings* expressed Tolkien’s Catholic faith only subconsciously and peripherally and only during the extensive revision process did it become deliberate and purposeful. Dr. Corso may have pulled the rug out from under us when he explained Tolkien’s aversion to allegory. If not allegory, then what? Our speakers are advised to leave about half an hour at the end of the talk for a Q&A session which Dr. Corso did but for some reason the questions were few and our evening ended earlier than is typical. Two encouraging observations were the comments at the end where some of the audience expressed a new desire to read Tolkien’s works and that the participation level remained very stable throughout with a high of 31 Zoom participants.

October 18 & 25, 2021 – Heresies That Threatened The Early Church with Dr. Nate DesRosiers

What is heresy and what is orthodoxy? How did the early Church navigate through challenges to the faith when diversity of belief and practice emerged? What theological and social strategies and advancements worked best that enabled the Catholic Church to resist internal trials and continue to grow? This class explored some of the major heresies that threatened the church including the Marcionites, Donatists, Gnostics, and Arians and the Church's responses to these tests in the forms of church councils, the veneration of Mary and the saints, and high Christology.

RECAP: On October 18th and 25th, to an audience of approximately 35, Professor Nate DesRosiers delivered a riveting presentation on early Church heresies. With his unique style, we were challenged to pick out slight differences in the wording of an opinion of a saint or heretic and Nate would then explain what led that opinion to fall either on the orthodox or heresy side of the fence. It was tough to pick out as it would seem that very fence separating one side from the other was, itself, a moving target. For instance, Saint Augustine had very strong opinions about Predestination and the Full Depravity of humanity but when challenged by Pelagius (declared a heretic by the way) he modified his stand on those matters. The difference between saint and heretic was a very fine line indeed. If you missed Dr. DesRosiers' presentation, then you missed his comparison of the theories about the two Natures of Christ with either dryer lint or M&M's. It was priceless.

November 1, 2021 – Voices From The Pews On Environmental Degradation, with Mike Stover, Dr. Chris Swan, and Rich McGuinness

In this presentation, we heard from Saint Susanna parishioners who work directly on environmental issues tell their stories. Anyone who is aware of recent news stories must know that climate chaos is rearing its ugly head. Wildfires, heat waves breaking records, floods and droughts are common occurrences now all over the globe. Many of us have made some lifestyle changes to reduce our carbon footprints but tonight we heard from some who work much more closely with the issues surrounding the harm we are doing to the very planet which is our home.

RECAP: On November 1st, about 40 Zoom participants were treated to three presentations by parishioners of Saint Susanna's describing their career choices and how those choices involve the climate crisis. Our first speaker, Mike Stover, is an engineer by training and reminded us all how climate chaos has left many economically disadvantaged peoples without safe drinking water. Once, sufficient water flowed on the now drought-stricken areas but now they rely on far flung water sources entailing transport over long distances. Mike helps engineer more sustainable water sources and safer wastewater treatment systems. Our second speaker, Dr. Chris Swan works on ways to take plastics out of the waste stream and utilize them in common building materials. His work gives waste plastics a second life and keeps them out of our landfills. Our final speaker of the evening was Rich McGuinness who works with the City of Boston planning sea level rise mitigation methods. It would seem we are on the way to a sea level rise of about three feet and without drastic action, much of Boston will be flooded at each high tide. Worse flooding will occur when storm surges are added to the equation. The evening was informative and sobering. Most of all we were all inspired by these examples, and we learned what hope, effort and attention can accomplish.

November 8, 2021 – The Injustice of Excessive Punishment: Replacing life-without-parole sentences with Bob Marra

Tonight, Bob Marra helped guide us in a discussion where we hopefully re-considered some of our preconceptions surrounding the following subjects.

Who are those who commit the most violent crimes?

Who are the people harmed by these crimes?

Why are these crimes committed?

Why do we punish those committing these crimes so much more harshly than is done in Europe and elsewhere?

How are we proposing to change this excessive sentencing?

And lastly, how might we become more involved?

RECAP: On Monday, November 8th, to a Zoom audience of about 30, Bob Marra and his invited guest speaker, Jill Fagerberg, presented us with a compassionate, conscience pricking exploration of our criminal justice system. While many other countries concentrate on how best to reform those who resort to criminal activity with counseling and education, the United States operates on an incarceration as punishment paradigm. In Europe and especially Scandinavia, incarceration rates are shockingly lower than ours and recidivism rates are also so much lower that we must begin to ask the question “How do we remedy whatever it is we are doing wrong?”. An especially poignant scene in a short video which was shown to us revealed a very telling truth. A group of maybe 35 to 50 inmates formed a large circle while standing almost shoulder to shoulder. A facilitator asked, “How many of you felt unwanted in your family” and then “If you can reply “Yes” then please step into the circle”. After a few other related penetrating questions, almost all the inmates were in a very tight and crowded circle. The next scene was

equally touching. The inmates regaled how heart opening the exercise was and how they now saw each other more as companions rather than potential enemies. I am reminded of a quote anecdotally attributed to Albert Einstein: “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.” We desperately need to adopt a more humane system to reform inmates and return them to society as productive and engaged citizens.

November 15, 2021 – Faith In A Post Covid World with Dr Richard Gaillardetz

We recognize that the Catholic Church had already been hemorrhaging membership, particularly among young adults, prior to the pandemic. However, the pandemic has certainly exacerbated this loss in church membership. How might the church emerge from this pandemic better equipped to make a case for continued church belonging?

RECAP: On Monday November 15th, to a Zoom audience of about 43, Dr. Richard Gaillardetz gave a clear, insightful, thought provoking and comprehensive presentation covering possible explanations concerning the dwindling populations of church goers. Topics covered included: mistrust in all institutions including the Institutional Church; greater individualism and rejection of the common good; media pursuit of scandal exposing corruption within the clergy; suspicion of Church Doctrine; and toxic polarization redefining group identities. As if that weren't enough, the second half of the evening he outlined specific maturation the Church could embrace which might attract greater participation. Dr. Gaillardetz discussed Church as a performance school of discipleship with a pedagogy of “Loving Rightly”; emphasizing Doctrine in service to the Christian Life rather than as the cudgel it is

often used for; expressing a humble repentance for past malfeasances; confront polarization in ways which would bring opposing sides closer together. It was an evening full of new perspectives articulated in such a way that should enable those who were present to move forward with eyes wider open.

November 22, 2021 – Non-Violent Communication with Eli McCarthy

A Pax Christi event co-sponsored by the Adult Faith Formation program

Eli McCarthy, Professor of Peace and Justice Studies at Georgetown University, joined us via Zoom. His topic was “Compassionate Nonviolent Communication: A Cultural Shift in the Catholic Community toward Alternative Community Protection.”

RECAP: On Monday November 22nd, to a Zoom audience of about 25, Eli McCarthy gave a very nuanced presentation on Non-Violent Communication, NVC for short. One of the first things Eli talked about was how conflict can be a constructive endeavor if we can enter into the discomfort with the right tools. Constructive Conflict?? If that seems oxymoronic to you, you’re not alone. It would seem that if the parties in conflict would take a moment to center themselves, they might be better able to observe and evaluate the feelings and needs of not only themselves but also of the one they conflict with. Once needs and feelings are recognized and acknowledged, reasonable requests can be made, and the urge to make unreasonable demands can be put to rest. After a short break at eight o’clock, Eli talked about NVC’s place within the Catholic Just Peace Framework. According to this framework, conflict can only be transformed by acquiring the skills necessary to

make conflict constructive. Then, the cycle of violence can be broken when the means used are consistent with the ends desired. A sustainable peace can be a reality but the first disarmament to engage with is the internal disarmament we must all aspire to. Eli left us with an optimistic note as he outlined the groups who have undergone NVC training and are now utilizing their skills to promote nonviolent methods of conflict de-escalation wherever they find typical power play conflict. We can help on a local level by soliciting our Bishops with letter writing and asking our School Committees why NVC is not taught in our schools.

December 13, 2021 - Having Difficult Conversations with Fr. John Predmore S.J.

This session of “Having Difficult Conversations” intended to help a person respond patiently rather than to react quickly to aggressive statements by others. We learned the value of breathing unnoticeably when listening to others in order that we can remain in inward peace while retaining a positive relationship. We found ways to remain separated from the nitty-gritty exchanges so that we more deeply understand the worries and fears of the other person. Our job is to help reduce suffering while working towards the longer-term goal of restoring a fractured relationship.

RECAP: On Monday December 13th, Father John Predmore S.J. led a Zoom presentation, with an audience of about 55 Zoom participants, on a journey of self-discovery. In this fractured world, we often hear the cry of lament “But what can I do?” Judging by the high numbers of people contacting us wanting to sign up for the event, as well as those wanting Fr Predmore’s notes after the event, I would have to say he resonated with the audience in a way not often seen. I have even been asked by

some if the event were recorded because they heard about it from friends but could not attend the Zoom. Using the metaphor of “Food That Satisfies”, Fr. Predmore helped us visualize how conversations are fed by our responses, including conversations with ourselves. When we listen deeply, we can be witness to the harmful effects of dismissive or passive-aggressive comments and responses to the one we are in relationship with through conversation. When we listen deeply, we can offer responses which open the encounter to new and helpful possibilities. Careless disregard for the needs of the other will shut down these possibilities and stifle the loving compassion longing for expression. Fr John showed a chart with typical cookie cutter conversation killers on the left, and open, engaging and inviting responses on the right. Going back to Fr John’s “Food That Satisfies” metaphor, when your words feed discordance, discordance thrives. When your words feed compassion and understanding, compassion and understanding thrives. We were all given the opportunity to practice a deep breathing exercise which can be used any time we need time to center ourselves to avoid those knee jerk conversation responses that only serve to feed discord. Of note: we began and ended our time with Fr John with prayer.

January 31, 2022 – On The East / West Schism with Dr Nate DesRosiers

What is the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox churches (Greek, Russian, Armenian, etc.)? What are the differences between the east and west that keep them apart? This course provided a basic introduction to Eastern Orthodoxy and its most important ritual, architectural, and theological elements. We also examined the close similarities between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy as well as the long-standing historical disputes in theology,

politics, and church structure between the two that ultimately led the two sides to drift apart in 1054.

RECAP: On Monday January 31st, to an audience of about 45 Zoom participants, Professor Nate DesRosiers delivered quite an elucidating presentation on schism in general with a focus on the East/West Schism in particular. We spent some time discussing the very subtle differences between heresy and schism. Apparently, the differences are so subtle even experts can disagree as to just what constitutes heresy vs schism. Nate brought up the example of the Donatists and asked if we considered it a heresy or a schism. Depending on which particulars one wishes to focus on, the Donatists can look like heretics one day and schismatics the next. Saint Augustine considered them schismatics which he thought worse than heretics. Regarding the East/West Schism, there were a few different factors resulting in the schism:

*Ethnicity, The culture in the East was very different from that of Rome and so there were some obstacles to mutual understanding.

*Authority, While the Bishops of the East gave deference to the Bishop of Rome, they did not agree he could act unilaterally as he did regarding the Filioque.

*Politics, While Rome was fighting off invaders, the Eastern Churches refused to send military aid.

March 7, 2022 - Racism: Confronting our history, engaging our moment, and transforming our future. with Sr. Patricia Chappelle and Sr. Anne-Louise Nadeau

In the symbol of Sankofa: If we do not understand where we have come from, we will never be able to move forward. The only way to

understand the present and to move into the future is to see through the eyes of Sankofa. Sankofa embodies the spirit and attitude of reverence for the past, reverence for one's forebears, reverence for one's history, reverence for one's elders. The mythical bird effortfully bending its neck to reach back for the abandoned but precious egg signifies the diligence and effort required to pay due reverence to the past and give it its proper place in the current scheme of events. Sankofa is a gentle admonition that if even in our arrogance we overlook the gems from the past, when we come to our senses, we should be humble enough to retrace our steps and make amends. As the popular saying goes, those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. So are those who do not know or respect their roots and history bound to repeat its flaws and mistakes.

RECAP: On Monday March 7th, 39 Zoom participants were witness to a most powerful presentation on racism. Sisters Patricia and Anne-Louise certainly dispelled some of our preconceptions about racism with the opening line of "The Truth Will Set You Free". The problem being that when confronting our history, the truth is often uncomfortable and even ugly. When engaging the present, we recognize that racism is not prejudice, bias, or discrimination but racism is rather these things combined with the misuse of power by systems and institutions. Power itself is neutral but when used within systems and institutions like courts, schools, politics, and religion to keep a segment of society under subjugation, it becomes a horror. If we are to transform our future, we must confront the lies of Either-Or, Scarcity, Secrecy, and Individualism with Both-And, Abundance, Transparency, and Cooperation for the Common Good. For progress to be made, the lies need to be confronted with Intentionality, Consistency, Integrity, Courage, and Openness to Conversion. I am left with the feeling that many in attendance for this presentation will never see the world in quite the same way ever again.

March 21, 2022 - A presentation on Islam, specifically the Qur'an with Denis Hurley

Three of the world's major religions -- the monotheist traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam -- were all born in the Middle East and are all inextricably linked to one another. Christianity was born from within the Jewish tradition, and Islam developed from both Christianity and Judaism.

RECAP: On Monday, March 21st, our speaker, Denis Hurley gave an insightful presentation, to a Zoom audience of about 40 participants, focusing on the Qu'ran. A former member of St. Susanna, a journalist by profession, and a lifelong student of philosophy and religion, Denis shared with us his extensive knowledge about the Qu'ran and Islam. Beginning with Abraham, the father of faith for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, he traced the outlines of the history of Islam from biblical times to the prophet Mohammed to the present. He described the five pillars of Islam and answered many questions about Islamic practices. Acknowledging that all faiths have misapplied their sacred texts and used violence in "The Name of God", he also showed how in all religions, humans display "an instinct for God" which can be thought of as common ground.

April 25, 2022 – Catholic Social Teaching, and Its Implications for Global Society with Dr. Laurie Johnston

This presentation reviewed the origin of Catholic Social Teaching and the key documents and principles that comprise it. The issues of refugee resettlement, war refugees, and climate refugees and now the social

issues that surround the war in Ukraine were to be part of this presentation.

RECAP: On Monday April 25, 37 Zoom participants were treated to a presentation on Catholic Social Teaching which engaged both the heart and intellect. Dr. Laurie Johnston compressed a two-semester course into a two-hour presentation on Catholic Social Teaching and its implications for today's society/world. What kind of society would we have if we practice the See-Act-Judge principles of Catholic Social Teaching? After breaking open the above principles Dr. Johnson elaborated on 130 years of Encyclicals from Pope Leo's "Rerum Novarum", "Of New Things" to Pope Francis' "Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti" and the documents of Vatican II.

In addition to citing documents, Dr. Johnson lifted up individuals and groups who have and continue to respond to the Dorothy Day challenge quoted during this presentation, "If we can change the world shouldn't we? We have an obligation." In the second half of the presentation, Dr. Johnson spoke about systemic change, change in the structures in society that keep people poor and at the periphery of societal life. She cited the Sant' Egidio Community (movement of lay people, based on prayer, solidarity, ecumenism, dialogue) and how it took steps to stop the war in Mozambique. Lastly, Dr. Johnston noted, solidarity, universal distribution of goods, and political charity, as elements that could contribute to structural change and a more just and peaceful society.

May 2 – Father Steve's Book Group

Our discussion this year will focus on Archbishop John Wester's pastoral letter "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace". This letter invites us all into one of the most important conversations in which we will ever

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October 5, 2020 –Preparations for Caregiving and the Aging Process

For those of us advancing to a ripe old age, as well as those who may be called upon to assist as the years progress, a significant issue presents itself: Have appropriate plans been made for these future years? This issue is of great importance to both the individual who is aging and those who may be called upon to help, and appropriate planning can make things much more comfortable for all. Although this can be a significant issue to discuss, discuss them we must.

RECAP: In this first session we visited the topic in some detail, and hopefully helped to open the door to successful planning. We heard from an attorney specializing in elder planning, Attorney Rachel McCaw, who discussed health care law, health proxies, estate planning and much more. If these items are discussed and dealt with in advance, so many misunderstandings can be avoided, and the wishes of the aging person can be respected and honored. Attorney McCaw discussed what kind of planning needs to be done and at the same time made clear what is expected of potential caregivers or estate administrators.

The evening was quite a success. With 36 Zoom Connections, Attorney McCaw presented a well thought out and informative outline of all the legal positions which would be most helpful to those close to one who is approaching advance age. We were aided by the efforts of an excellent moderator as the questions from the audience were sent to him via text using the Chat feature of Zoom. You can always tell when the speaker really engages her audience by the type of questions being asked. By that measure, it appears she definitely was an engaging speaker because the questions almost always clarified a point she was making.

October 12, 2020 - The Caregivers

Rabbi Judi Ehrlich, Chaplain at NewBridge on Charles, presented on caring for those who are care-givers. So many of us naturally step into the role of caregiver thinking we are the ones providing support and care for a family member or loved one, sometimes needing reminders that in fulfilling that role, we also require a different kind of support to assist us during the time we are the caregivers.

RECAP: Rabbi Judi drew on her experience as chaplain, and care provider to care-givers, as well on the particular insights from her own faith tradition in the spirituality of providing care in the face of illness and uncertainty. Judi Ehrlich is the rabbi and chaplain at NewBridge on the Charles, Independent Living, in Dedham, where she has worked since 2009. She was ordained at Hebrew College Rabbinical School in Newton in 2008 and is a certified interfaith chaplain. Her first career was in Counseling Psychology. The evening went beautifully. She skillfully drew from the participants in the event those ways they can obtain some relief (or provide relief) from the burdens involved, including meditation, talking things through with a friend, and even conversing with the person being cared for. Talk of meditation included scanning the Psalms for helpful passages, and reciting the rosary. Rabbi Judi did not pretend to have all the answers, but rather aimed to convince us that we had some of the answers right there within us. The back-and-forth exchange utilizing Zoom worked extremely well and the result was a satisfying evening. Attendance numbered 37.

October 26 – Father John Dear

Fr. John Dear's life has been one of singular dedication to the pursuit of peace following in the footsteps of the nonviolent Jesus. He is an activist in the cause of peace and justice, a writer, retreat leader and international speaker. As a result of his "consistent ethic of nonviolence" he has been arrested many times for acts of nonviolent resistance against war,

injustice and nuclear weapons. He has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. John spoke to us addressing the themes presented in his newest book, "Praise Be Peace" - Psalms of Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of War and Climate Change. He joined us from California. Featured in the New York Times, the Washington Post, National Public Radio's All Things Considered, and more, he is the author of more than 30 books. A priest of the diocese of Monterey, California, Dear was recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

RECAP: On Monday October 26 a dual event with Pax Christi was convened. To an audience of about 80, Fr John Dear delivered an impassioned plea for all of humanity to adhere to the radical non-violent call of the Gospels. Our new Zoom format seems to attract a somewhat larger audience, some from out-of-state, and preserve a lively exchange of questions and dialogue that have been hallmarks of our presentations. Even though his latest book, Praise Be Peace: Psalms of Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of War and Climate Change, often references the Psalms, he suggested anyone interested in truly hearing the Word of God read only the Gospels for 30 or 40 years before moving on to the rest of the Bible. Hyperbole? It does not appear, coming from Fr John, that it was intended as hyperbole.

When he went on to explain how Gandhi himself was inspired to his radical non-violence by the Sermon on the Mount and read it daily, suddenly any argument of non-violence as being impractical lost its allure and substance. "Our God is the God of Peace" he continually emphasized and read for us excerpts from Psalms 33,34,46.65 and 83 to give credence to the naming of God as The God of Peace. Fr John is a speaker passionate about his cause, clear in his delivery and, with humor and humility, provocative as a teacher. I will leave you with one more quote from Fr John: "Any war fought in the name of God is blasphemy!"

One can often tell how engaging a speaker is by the type of questions asked during a Q&A session. If that is any sort of yardstick, one would have to say our audience found Fr John very engaging indeed. The questions and comments were on point and revealed a genuine connection our AFF events aspire to engender. When asked for signs of hope, Fr John gave examples of how active today's youth are in areas concerning racism, gun control, disarmament, social justice and climate chaos.

Fr John wanted to be sure we knew about his new initiative which can be accessed via Beatitudescenter.org This is sure to be a wonderful resource going forward.

November 9, 2020 – The Institutionalization of Racism

While many of us were taught to understand racism in terms of individual prejudice, more recently, activists and scholars have been emphasizing how racism is written into the systems that govern our collective life. From policing to education to health care to faith communities, institutions that purport to support the health, safety, and well-being of the people were founded on white supremacy and continue to reproduce racial injustice into the present. This presentation takes a historical perspective to chronicle the white supremacist roots of some of our institutions before turning to consider what it means to take responsibility for our history in the present.

RECAP: Our Speaker was Kimberly Humphrey. Ms. Humphrey is studying for her PhD in systematic theology at Boston College and is a graduate assistant at the Center for Teaching Excellence. Her work investigates the ways shame interrupts the capacity for Christians to

remember dangerously and live justly, with a particular focus on the struggle for racial justice in a US Catholic Church that has been marked by white supremacy. She earned her B.A. in Religious Studies and English Literature from Denison University and her M.T.S. from Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. She is currently working on a dissertation in systematic theology on the intersections of shame, sin, and antiblack racism in the U.S. Catholic Church. She also supports and empowers survivors of sexual violence as a volunteer at the campus sexual assault crisis hotline.

We had excellent attendance, with Zoom screens ranging from 56 to 65. We were fortunate to have a speaker with such an incredible depth of knowledge on the subject of Institutionalized Racism. She presented the information in a coherent way but because the issue is so complex, we were only able to scratch the surface in the time allotted. She started with some quick figures on the one-down position of the Black population in the US: a Prison and Parole rate six times that for Whites; sizeable differentials in amount of wealth (Net Worth of the unemployed at \$8.00), Maternal Death Rate, and Suspensions of students from school, all multiply in the negative. She then turned to a continuing cycle of Personal Sin, Social Sin, Cultural Sin and Systemic Sin, which continues to the current day as people, and ultimately institutions and governments, continue to tweak the racism so that Blacks continue as exploited and marginalized. She started with history going back to the original importing of slaves to America from Africa, and as pressures mounted to remove the worst of the horrors of racism/slavery, the continuing amendment of the laws and practices to virtually cancel out the improvements. As slavery was abolished it was rapidly replaced with Jim Crow, The Freedmen's Bureau set up after the Civil War ended up recommending that the freed individuals go back to work for their former slave owners. Ways were found to keep Blacks from benefiting from such programs as Social Security and even the GI Bill after the Second World War. Over time Redlining was introduced to bar Blacks from home loans and insurance, funding for predominantly

Black schools was but a tiny fraction of that for White schools, the state college systems dried up such that college graduates were left with huge debt, urban redevelopment programs predominantly displaced Black residents, voting rights were blocked with Poll taxes and rigged literacy tests, many times life-long bars to voting enacted for anyone with a criminal conviction, even lynching. As a closure on her presentation, she spoke of the following remedies open to us to help obliterate the results of racism: Reflect, Listen, Share, Lament/Celebrate, Intervene to Diagnose and Identify a strategy for a Solution, Engage with Art, Identify Allies, Make Changes within our own Sphere, Advocate, Organize, Develop a certain comfort in Knowing we will make mistakes, and Take Feedback. A lot to learn in a single evening, but well presented and understandable to a large degree. We were all left with plenty to think about and plenty of actions to take as occasions arise.

NOVEMBER 30 AND DECEMBER 7 –

The Emperor's New Church, with Cory Mork

Cory Mork is a scholar with a BA in Religious Studies from the University of Minnesota, an MTS from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and a ThM from Boston College. His interests include eastern patristic theology, western intellectual history, and cultural analysis. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife and two children.

Week one, November 30, The Church: Pre-Constantine

The early Church, the Apostolic Church, the proto-orthodox Church, the proto-Nicene Church, the cult of Bishops — these are some of the many ways the early church is described by scholars and historians. This talk seeks to explore the origins and infancy of the Orthodox-Catholic Church from the Book of Acts to Emperor Diocletian's purge at the dawn of the fourth century. This talk explores relevant topics such as Christian identity and ecclesial structure; Christian, Jewish, and Pagan

relations; the Church's relationship to the State; intermittent persecution throughout the Roman Empire; early Christian heresies; and expressions of ecclesial worship — all while seeking to put to rest common misunderstandings and popular myths about these subjects of the Church's adolescence.

Week two, December 7, The Church: Post-Constantine

Continuing the prior talk on the origins of the Church up to Diocletian's purge, this talk begins with the vision and victory of the Emperor Constantine and the decriminalization of Christianity and took us to Emperor Theodosius I's Edict of Thessalonica in 380, heralding the ascendancy of a new age of Christendom. Explorations included the mutual benefits and compromises of both Church and State in their new relationship; the rise of monasticism as a political reaction; ecclesial authority and charismatic elders; the Nicene Council and dogma as imperial stability; and Julian the Apostate as the last pagan emperor. As in the prior talk, this talk cleared up common misunderstandings and popular myths about this period.

RECAP: Cory Mork's double-header presentation on the first few centuries of existence of the Christian Church was, in a word, very well attended and roundly applauded.

In the first week Cory introduced us to the essential terms of what was going on with this new phenomenon - Assembly and Church, for example, and "catholic". The new movement was intended for following Christ in a Jewish Tradition. Cory generously provided references to the key written works involved, starting with the Didache, the first "manual" of the new church, written contemporaneously with the Gospels themselves. He led us through the sources involved in the Liturgy of the Word, including the role of the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures. He dwelt for a while on the fact that there were no "sacred spaces" per se, but rather "Church houses," a major move from the centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem for the Israelites. We were introduced to the fledgling roles of "Bishops" and "Presbyters," whose roles evolved over the centuries, and the many different "kinds" of

Christians and Jews at the time. He also addressed the common misconception that the Christians were persecuted consistently and Empire-wide, re-casting that belief to reflect the fact that the persecutions were sporadic and territorial, for the most part. Key words for the such persecutions were "rapid" and "intense." It was astounding the amount of information he covered.

In the second session Cory started out with an explanation that the church was seen by its followers as "Israel," not a replacement for Judaism, but a "Fulfillment," a concept still not fully understood in modern times. To the extent that persecutions persisted episodically, we were introduced to the Edict of Toleration promulgated by Diocletian in 311, noticeably calming down such events, followed up by the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity and other religions. At no point during this period, however, was Christianity made the sole religion by any of the emperors. It was not until the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 that Christianity was afforded the role of the Imperial religion. At the time of Constantine, he and most other political leaders saw theology as a political tool, intended to promote a stable and non-defiant religion for social harmony and having little to do with beliefs per se. Cory then turned to the first Church Council, in Nicaea, attended by 318 of the thousand bishops invited, which attempted to deal with three items - the rise of Arianism, agreement on a unified Creed for the church, and a date on which to celebrate Easter. Greek theology and philosophy became an important part of the discussion. It was at this council that Origen was the first to use a new term, "Trinity." The struggle regarding Arias had to do with his teaching that Christ was a "creature," namely a person who did not exist and became a god-like creation affiliated with God. The Council closed that door with its Creed, which also dealt with the role of Christ in terms since remembered as the "filioque" tenet. That term continued to be a subject of controversy through the Council of 1054, the turning point for the East/West Schism. Canons were produced at Nicaea, but not a Canon of the New Testament, which came much later - if at all. Cory then dwelt on the founding of Constantinople and its role in ultimately settling on Rome as the central church location. Constantine himself died in 337, having been baptized on his

deathbed. Interestingly, Julian the Apostate in 361 discovered that there really were no pagans anymore, as the church expanded. He failed in his attempt to build a Third Temple as well his try at a new religion. Cory then turned Theodosius I and his decree at Thessalonica outlawing all types of Christianity except the version established at Nicaea. It is then we see the "Rise of Christianity." Cory turned to the decline in the number of Martyrs and its connection to the rise of monasticism, due to the drop in the numbers of heroes stemming from persecution and a search for others to venerate. It was then that we see a development of theorizing that Scripture and Nature are sides of the same coin and that mere thought does not make you holy. As it has developed, Egyptian monasticism holds almost total sway in the Eastern Church while the Western Church sprouted dozens of various types of monasticism, such a Benedictine, Carmelite, etc. This ended the formal talk, but a number of interesting questions arose and were discussed.

It was astounding how learned Cory Mork was on the topics he discussed, and how he was able to explain things in understandable terms to an audience consisting largely of people hearing somewhat complicated material for the first time. From the number and quality of the questions at each session we can readily conclude that people were attentive and very interested. We give him a high mark as a presenter at AFF.

Attendance numbers for the first week were in the vicinity of 73. In the second session it took a brief while for the numbers to firm up at 54, but that number held fast for almost the entire session.

Dec 14 2020 and Jan 11 2021, OUT OF EGYPT WITH PROFESSOR NATHANIEL DESROSIERS

Our Speaker: Professor DesRosiers is a perennial favorite here at Saint Susanna Adult Formation. He is Associate Professor and Chair in Religious Studies at Stonehill College in Easton and Visiting Professor at Brown University. His published research focuses on the issues of conflict and competition in the ancient world and the social and

intellectual developments that helped to create and shape the religious movements and texts of antiquity. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Stonehill, an M.T.S. in New Testament from Harvard Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Brown University.

December 14, 2020

Out of Egypt, Part One

We explored the background of Egypt and its influence on the Jewish Bible, 10 Commandments and the concept of an afterlife.

RECAP: Once again Professor DesRosiers delivered a provocative presentation yet, because of his delivery style, without being off-putting. It may have come as a surprise to some in attendance that Egyptian ideas of a particular judgement or a vibrant afterlife were well established in Egypt centuries before we see them expressed in our Scriptures. Our concept of a “Living Tradition” was also evident in ancient Egypt wherein early on only Pharaohs could expect an afterlife, then anyone who could afford the funeral expenditures, and finally the possibility of an afterlife was open to all. The realization that doctrine needs to be re-interpreted as cultures evolve seems to be as evident in ancient Egypt as it would be to anyone who studies our Scriptures with an open heart. Nate had yet one more area to demonstrate his willingness to confront our beliefs we hold sacrosanct. He explained how the Ten Commandments, which we may have thought unique in the ancient world, are so very similar to other numerous Suzerain - Vassal treaties. Under such treaties or covenants the vassal would swear absolute fealty to the suzerain and would agree to adhere to a series of stipulations which would ensure civil order in the vassal state. Of course, it makes sense that people would utilize commonly understood conventions to explain their relationship with God but to be made aware the Israelites and God were entering into a well-known type of covenant called a Suzerain-Vassal covenant could be jarring anyone who had not been exposed to the concept earlier. This is why we enjoy Professor Nate’s presentations so much; he exposes us to new ways of appreciating our faith traditions and new ways of appreciating, period.

Professor DesRosiers, with his unique and provocative style, and summoning up his expertise on the topic, challenged us to appreciate our faith and tradition by allowing us a peek into ancient Egyptian practices. Some of these practices may open our minds to a different understanding of heretofore accepted truths. One example is the concept of an afterlife. This concept was well developed centuries before it appears in Scripture. In ancient Egypt, at first only the pharaohs could expect an afterlife. In the next phase, an afterlife was opened as well to those who could afford the expenditures involved in funerals. Eventually, the afterlife was available to all.

What becomes apparent, here, is that doctrine needs to be re-examined as cultures evolve, even in ancient Egypt. Studying our Scriptures from that point of view, that is, confronting previously held concepts to the light of new understanding of the evolving culture can be enlightening and challenging. Professor DesRosiers offered a few more examples. In one he suggests that we should realize that there is no archeological or historical evidence for the Exodus. Rethinking the purpose of that narrative allows us to learn that the Ten Commandments are very similar to other numerous Suzerain-Vassal Treaties. Under a treaty or what was also commonly called a covenant, the vassal would swear absolute fealty to the Suzerain and would agree to adhere to stipulations that would ensure civil order in the vassal state. Realizing that people commonly use familiar conventions to explain their relationship to God makes good sense. However, to be made aware that the Israelites and God were entering into an already well-known covenant called a Suzerain- Vassal covenant is no doubt jarring to anyone not exposed to this concept earlier.

January 11, 2021

Out of Egypt, Part 2

We focused on Christianity in Egypt: The influence of the Egyptian (Coptic) Church on the Roman Catholic Church as it

relates to the Holy Family, Lent, the expansion of the Virgin Mary. Prof. DesRosiers teaches an Egypt class and large portions examine indigenous influences on Judaism and Christianity. These can include ideas of afterlife, the 10 Commandments, monasticism, cult of saints, stories about the Holy Family, etc. The list is deep and allows for us to discuss some things that are interesting but very different.)

RECAP: In this session Professor DesRosiers focused mainly on Christianity as practiced in Egypt by Coptic Christians. Our gospels offer little information on the childhood of Jesus. However, the Copts have many traditions based on the time Jesus spent in Egypt. There are springs of water directly attributed to Jesus sought out of concern for His family as they traveled in this desert.

Early Egyptian Christians preserved several apocryphal gospels which were found at Nag Hammadi in 1945. Much of the information we now know about Gnostics comes from these writings.

Another early Egyptian revelation involves monasticism which developed there and from which our modern monasticism evolved. Lastly, we were left with the question of how to view the Coptic Church. Professor DesRosiers asked us to consider the following as we formulate our answer:

Is it ancient? Was it instituted by St. Mark? Is it unfamiliar?

He also suggests that we investigate the Marian apparitions at the Church of the Virgin Mary Coptic Church in Cairo, Egypt in 1968 to 1971 before we jump to conclusions. He ended by asking us to let him know what we discover.

For both Sessions 1 and 2, we had initially about 60 attendees on Zoom which seemed to drop to about 48 after the break.

Jan 18 & 25, 2021,

Living The Gospel

January 18, Be Careful of What You Pray For, with Sister Nancy Corcoran

Sister Nancy understands that it is difficult for younger humans to believe that older people have anything of interest to share. [She knows this to be true because she once was young.] Nancy shared stories of having her prayers answered: prayers that got her out of college, gave her earaches, introduced her to an "angel," challenged her to confront the interlocking systems of oppression, and gave her courage to be both Catholic and catholic. (P.S.. She doesn't do boring!)

Nancy Corcoran is a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet (St. Louis, MO Province). Raised in Brookline, she attended Regis College, class of '66, Harvard Divinity School, MTS '91, retired as Catholic Chaplain at Wellesley College in 2015, and now lives in Ferguson Missouri. Sr Nancy is now active in Anti-Racism work and ministers to Transgender, Gender expansive, Intersex humans and their families. Sister Nancy's time in campus ministry introduced her to individuals who challenged her to see gender in a new way. She committed to expand her knowledge and experiences with gender identity issues, and today, Sister Nancy defines her ministry as one of presence and accompaniment with LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) folks.

RECAP: With an attendance level ranging around the mid-fifties of Zoom connections, Sister Nancy Corcoran joined us on January 18. We almost always receive a few comments from our audience after our sessions, but one we received this time really hit the mark. "Thank you for hosting Monday's presentation, Sister Nancy was terrific," she

wrote, going on to say, “As my brother, D--- said, Sister Nancy’s words were right on the money and straight from the heart.” Although Nancy’s talk consumed only a bit more than an hour, the brevity only reflected her manner, which is to get to the point and hide nothing with verbiage. She addressed the fact that her prayer life is not at all ritualistic, but rather based on what she is seeing before her. She spoke of three levels one goes through in succeeding at prayer: Interiority, Differentiation or Diversity, and Compassion, both to others and to yourself. As an example, she recalled going to a conference on Racism with the saintly and well-known Sister Thea Bowman. At lunchtime Nancy came to the cafeteria by way of a balcony overlooking the diners, and ran into Sister Thea, who asked if Nancy saw anything interesting in the assembled groups, who were chattering excitedly at their tables about the conference. It was only then that Nancy noticed that the blacks were all seated with blacks, and whites with whites. After reflecting for a couple of days through the steps of her concept of prayer, Nancy joined a black table and entered into their conversation. She now makes it a point to always sit with the “others” in such situations. Her “prayer” led to her making a change. She has had similar realizations as she now works with the LGBT population, particularly when the question is “Am I sinful?” As she has proclaimed in the past, she scoffs at the idea that following some defined course of rituals is essential to being a good Catholic. It was a pleasure to have Nancy back.

JANUARY 25,

“Christianity is not a set of doctrines to be taught but a way of life to be lived.” says Soren Kierkegaard.

Scott and Claire Schaefer-Duffy have been running the Sts. Francis and Therese Catholic Worker in Worcester MA for well over 30 years. They sell their baked goods a couple times a year at Saint Susanna's to help support their mission and have been gracious enough to have given talks to our AFF community here before. You will often find them where injustices need to be called out or where the poor and hungry need to be fed. We hope to hear from them how they received the Gospel call and how they came to say "Yes" in the way they did.

RECAP: On January 25, the Adult Faith Formation community had the distinct pleasure of having Claire and Scott Schaefer-Duffy speak to us about how it was that they each came to hear God's call and respond with a "Yes". After watching a 3-minute video on the life of Dorothy Day, Scott was the first to speak. On the theme of "God often speaks to us through our mistakes" Scott told a story of meeting up with a beggar while on a date in college. Scott kept reaching into his pocket for a one-dollar bill and pulling out a five. This repeated three times before he found the one to hand to the beggar. A few seconds after this, realizing his mistake, he turned around to give the five-dollar bill but too late: the beggar had disappeared. This made a lasting impression on Scott and thus God continues to speak to him through that mistake. Scott contends the ability to see and hear how God is working in our lives comes in "fits and starts" until, if we allow it, it becomes a way of life. Just as saying "Yes" to God may be difficult at first, it becomes easier each time. So, also with saying "No".

Next, we heard from Claire whose experience in India while still young helped her realize the omnipresence of God. Incense, chimes, bells, and calls to prayer were constant throughout the day as reminders that our relationships with God are not reserved for Sundays but rather to be seen, heard and smelled all day every day. While in India, she saw a man

going through the trash of the more affluent looking for somethings to eat or smell so she made for him a snack of jam on a slice of bread. When she offered it, their hands came very close and she was struck not only by what divided them but also by the communion they shared. This was a life-altering encounter for Claire and brought her to volunteer at a shelter for battered women when back in the US and more grown. While at this shelter, Claire had an encounter with a violent woman who threatened her and returned another day to carry out her threats. Fast forward in time and to another city entirely and Claire ran into this same woman again who when seeing Claire alerted her to a possible medical condition. Turns out this woman's suspicion was true and may have saved Claire's life and the life of the child she was carrying. Claire's spirituality is one of Incarnational Theology, where we meet Christ in all those around us and we need to learn to respond in a manner reflecting that reality.

We ended with a prayer from St Francis of Assisi but not the one we usually associate with St Francis. There were 47 participants according to Zoom with a few screens being shared by two people.

February 1 and 8, Global Christianity - Zimbabwe and Chile

February 1, Christianity in Southern Africa,

with Caswell Machivenyika, S.J.

Our Speaker was Caswell Tamuka Machivenyika, S.J., a Zimbabwean, born and raised in Harare. He joined the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 2009. He worked at a rural Catholic mission St. Rupert's Makonde (hospital, primary and secondary schools, parish), for two years for his regency, an experiential period in Jesuit formation. "This experience

greatly informed me about practical faith and the need to recognize people. I am passionate about teaching and spiritual conversations.” Caswell is currently studying for an STL at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry (STM) in moral theology, “Christian ethics.”

In Caswell’s words, “The African continent is widely considered as a continent of faith. Some early sociologists even claimed that ‘Africans are ontologically religious.’ Faith is a community experience ‘tradition’ that needs to be handed down to the next generation. In my sharing, I shall give a brief historical background from the first missionaries recorded to have arrived on the African continent with a particular focus on Southern Africa that includes Gonçalo da Silveira, David Livingstone. I will highlight the unfortunate perception of Christianity as a “colonial and exploitative religion.” The background will help us in understanding how people practice the faith today in Zimbabwe. I shall then highlight some of the positive aspects that the missionaries did, e.g., building hospitals, schools, and Churches for the local people. I will discuss the current social situations in Zimbabwe and comparative with some countries in Southern Africa. This will give us some background for Christianity as a lived experience. I will focus mostly on these areas: Christianity as a social religion- Mothers as “teachers and exemplars” of the Christian faith - Christianity as experience of solidarity - Christianity as possible means for justice and social transformation.”

RECAP: On February 1, with 33 Zoom logins, our Adult Faith Formation community was treated to a presentation on Christianity in the region of southern Africa by Caswell. He took pains to be sure the audience recognized that he was not speaking of the country South Africa but rather the southern region of the continent of Africa. First, we needed to be educated on some history of the area beginning with the

migration/expansion of the Bantu people which began around 2000 BCE.

The Bantu origins were in west sub-Saharan Africa and the expansions were sometimes easterly and sometimes southerly but, in both cases, peoples encountered were either absorbed or displaced. For this reason, most all languages in southern Africa are similar and based on Bantu. It was not until the 15th century that Europeans, beginning with the Portuguese, began to seriously consider southern Africa as a potential prospect for establishing colonies. They were soon followed by the Dutch and English. In their lust for minerals and land, they also brought various forms of Christianity. The different Christian groups fought for dominance and supplied weapons to the local tribes in a divide and conquer campaign to assert control. Another sad history of European colonization. Caswell prefers to call the descendants of those Europeans “Settlers” rather than “Colonizers” in an effort to defuse racial tensions.

The last part of Caswell’s presentation focused on Syncretism vs Inculturation. It seems some things never change. As an example of syncretism, Caswell noted that many people who self-identify as Christians, still visit local witch doctors to deal with perceived curses. As an example of inculturation, he described the importance of Women’s Guilds in bringing women together to worship and tend to those in need. Syncretism would be the blending two things to form a third thing different from either of the first two. Inculturation would be recognizing the elements of local culture which would reinforce that which is newly introduced. All in all, a very informative event by a thoughtful and patient presenter on a topic about which most of us are sorely ignorant.

February 8,

Christianity in Chile,

with Maria Soledad Del Villar Tagle

This evening we were introduced to the Catholic Church in Chile. Our Speaker called her talk “From the Samaritan to the Bartimean Church” and topics included the recent history of the Church, with special attention to the interaction between religion, social reality and politics. This is the schema: - The reception of Vatican II - The “Samaritan Church” during the Dictatorship (1973 - 1990). Preferential option for the poor, defense of human rights, confrontation with the dictatorship. - The Church during the transition to democracy (from moral authority to growing silence) - Sexual abuse crisis in the Chilean Church (the turning point towards discredit, losing its moral authority). - The Church in the midst of the “estallido social” and the pandemic (the Bartimean Church).

María Soledad was born in Santiago de Chile in 1985. She is now living in the Boston area while pursuing her PhD in Systematic Theology at Boston College. She is also a Resident Minister serving college students, and a member of the Hispanic community of St. Ignatius Parish at Chestnut Hill. During her life, María Soledad has been able to combine her academic interests in theology, feminism, and politics with an active life of pastoral work among marginalized communities and young people both in Chile and the US. She is also a history teacher, and holds two masters degrees, one in Contemporary History and one in Theology (M.T.S). She recently published a book that narrates the stories of the social workers of Vicaría de la Solidaridad, a Catholic institution that defended human rights during the last Chilean dictatorship (1973 – 1989). She is also co-founder of the movement Mujeres Iglesia, a Catholic and feminist movement based in Chile, that unites Catholic

women from different parts of the country in the common effort to deepen their faith through a feminist lens and pursue justice for women both in the Church and society.

RECAP: Chilean history is fraught with change and contradictions. During the 19th century, Chile was a predominantly agrarian country often referred to as a “Catholic Republic.” In the 20th century, great change took hold. Chileans were migrating to urban areas seeking lives of more opportunity with many only to be mired in abject poverty. Among the political influences going on during that time was the Cuban revolution and that influenced many in the cities to join socialist leaning organizations. In time, the citizens recognized the need for change and supported the candidacy of a Social Democrat who was elected President. The rich and powerful elite dug in their heels and opposed the attention being paid to those living in poverty. Enter now the multiple changes brought to the church through Vatican 2. Many bishops reacted to the political and economic atmosphere by selling off many of their extensive land holdings to help support the poor. This was referred to as Agrarian Reform. In order to suppress the socialist leanings happening in Chile, the United States supported a military coup that led to a military dictatorship. For the next ten years, the people experienced severe oppression. The Catholic Church provided safe places for those opposing this dictatorship to meet and organize protests. Sole referred to the Church of this era as the Good Samaritan Church because of its concern for those marginalized by society. This attempt to forward preferential treatment of the poor and defense of human rights began to change again with the election of Pope John Paul II. He named many conservative bishops. This, along with the arrival of the widespread sexual abuse issues in the church, the suffering of the poor was no longer a priority. Maria calls this the era of the Bartimean Church because the Church became as blind to the plight of the poor as

Bartimaeus was blind before Jesus healed his vision. The depth and severity of the sexual abuse in the Church directly impacted its influence among Chileans. The clergy which had been held in such high esteem was experiencing a change in its influence. The Church was left with little moral authority and even today, the people are leaving the institutional church behind.

Until and unless the Church puts forth a radical and sincere process of dealing with both the sexual abuse issues and offers a return to prioritizing the Preferential Option for the Poor, Chile has little chance of regaining its self-identity as a Catholic Republic.

**February 22,
Spiritual and Psychological First Aid During a Time of Pandemic,
With Carol Mitchell Ph.D.
Director of THE FRANCISCAN
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
at Saint Anthony Shrine in Boston MA**

The stress of a world-wide pandemic is affecting all of us. For some there is too much loneliness and isolation, for some too much togetherness in too small a space. For most of us there is anxiety about whether we or loved ones will succumb to COVID-19. We also suffer from the uncertainty about where this is all headed, what we need to do to stay safe, whether we can survive financially, when it will end. Added to these stresses political tensions and the specter of racism hang heavily over us. In this session we will focus on specific psychological and spiritual practices we can use to help ourselves and those around us cope and maybe even thrive during these times.

Dr. Mitchell tells us: “Since 1994, I have accompanied people in spiritual direction, led weekend retreats and days of prayer and worked

on directed retreats, including the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. My first career was as a clinical psychologist where I focused on trauma and abuse issues as well as helping to train long term prisoners to become addiction treatment counselors. I am married with three grown children and five grandchildren, two of whom live across the hall from me.”

RECAP: On February 22, Dr. Mitchell, a gifted spiritual director, took the followers of St Susanna’s Adult Formation Program on a wonderful journey. Acknowledging all the stress and anxiety of life in general and that which is particularly present during this pandemic, she introduced us to her 11-item tool kit for some solace and relief. The introduction began with the straightforward such as “Asking for Help” and progressed to the less obvious, like “Standing on the Watchtower.” Carol noted that these tools are equally suited for the spiritually inclined to those with more secular outlooks. Noting next that psychology and spirituality are linked, Carol put into practice one of her spiritual tools. We were led through a guided meditation. After a brief physical inhaling and exhaling technique, we took a mental seat by a window in our house that looks out toward the neighborhood. We imagined seeing Jesus walk by and we were encouraged to invite Him in. With being given a few lead-ins as to how the conversation might go, we then had time to explore this lovely experience. Her years of experience as a spiritual director shone through in her calming approach to dealing with the anxiety we all encounter from time to time. Suffice to say, Carol provided us with comforting and soothing techniques to help us cope with our stress.

March 8,

Pope Francis, How Goes His Papacy?

Since his election in 2013, Pope Francis’ Papacy has swirled in controversy. The first Jesuit Pope, the first Pope from the Western Hemisphere and a Pope who eschews the usual ostentatious trappings his predecessors adopted or at least acquiesced to, he has been carefully

watched by the conservative wing of the Catholic Church and raised expectations among the progressive wing. Yet he is well loved by so many of the laity. We awaited with optimism Fr. Richard Lennan's commentary on what has come to pass, where things may be headed, and, possibly, where things seem to have stalled.

Fr. Richard Lennan, who is Professor of Systematic Theology in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, and *Professor Ordinarius*, grew up in Newcastle, on the east coast of Australia, and has been a priest of the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (Australia) since 1983. Richard has a degree in history from the University of Newcastle, a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology from the Catholic Institute of Sydney, a Master of Philosophy degree from the University of Oxford and a doctorate in theology from the University of Innsbruck in Austria, where his dissertation was on Karl Rahner's ecclesiology. From 1992 to 2007, he taught Systematic Theology in the Catholic Institute of Sydney; from 2005–07 he was President of the Australian Catholic Theological Association. Richard taught at Weston Jesuit School of Theology (2007–08), before it became the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry at its foundation in 2008. From 2010–13, he was chair of the STM's Ecclesiastical Faculty. He currently directs the STM's S.T.L. program, serves on the editorial board of *Theological Studies*, and chairs the steering committee of the "Karl Rahner Society." Richard has authored two books and edited five others.

RECAP: Attendance was excellent, with Zoom connections in the mid to high 80's, and many couples tuned in together, for an audience centering around 100.

Fr. Lennan centered his talk on three Avenues of Interpretation: PERSON (Who is speaking?), TEXT (What is the person saying?), and RECEPTION (How are we hearing this?).

Francis comes from a career as a pastor among his peers in a religious order. There had never been a Jesuit pope before, and most all of the popes for many decades had been either a professor or a diplomat and were from a diocesan or Vatican background. As a minor example of the difference in background, Francis took the bus to work every morning, even when he became an archbishop. No limos.

A key word for Francis is Mercy, which he sees as a synonym for God. Another word of import to him is Joy (an early encyclical of his was titled “The Joy of the Gospel”). He also speaks of “encountering” the world, and “accompanying” the world. He sees being with people as a dual role, he and they both being teachers, no one just a giver or receiver.

Francis has a certain Boldness in going to war zones on more than a couple of occasions. He speaks often of Hope. He sees the Church as looking outwards at all that is occurring, not just “Churchy” things. While a Reformer, he is yet by no means a micro-manager. He travels extensively, unusual for popes, and he seeks out bishops from far and wide to appoint as cardinals, often bypassing metropolitan cities which have “always” had a cardinal. His texts often include an appropriation of themes from Vatican II. A favorite theme is that the Church must “go out” to share the gospel, and learn from the encounters.

Discernment of the Spirit, often obscure or hidden in situations, is a key theme of his. He spends little time being solipsistic or introspective, and asks that of the Church as well. His message is to leave behind where you are and go out. This Discernment consists of “Offers from God,”

and must be responded to. He is also very open to the idea that what was once useful may not always be so, and we must be ready to change with circumstances. Faith is a communal reality of God, me, and everybody else. The Church is “messy” and will always be so, as there is no neatness in Scripture (e.g., St. Peter and St. Paul in regular conflict).

The Church must be ready to listen constantly, for if it does not and remains defensive of its current condition, it becomes a museum for want of listening to questions. Francis believes bishops must listen to all, not just people who agree with them. Complacency is seductive, but the gospel message is unsettling, as intended by the Lord.

Francis resists clericalism. On the subject of women deacons, Fr. Lennan points out that since the fourth century, all roles previously held by members of the Church fell by the wayside when the decision was made to centralize authority almost exclusively among those with the Power to Consecrate the Eucharist, which reduced to virtual insignificance all other roles, so the subject of women deacons does not begin to address what the problem is. The Church must again become a Listening Church as well as a Teaching Church. All the baptized are called to significant roles. Yet Francis wants this result to come from discussions by a Synodal Church, with many voices being heard, not just a fiat from on high. Francis is convinced that the pope does not, and should not, “rule” the whole Church. There should be no one told to just listen. On the issue of War, for example, it is to be expected that bishops around the world would be of varied opinions at any one time based on geography and political conditions.

There is no question, Fr. Lennan concludes, that Francis is re-shaping the papal office rather than the office shaping him. Riding in a Fiat (no limo), residing in a rooming house (no Vatican Palace apartment), calling together people from around the world to consider issues rather

than issuing papal decrees, etc. The College of Cardinals has never looked like it does now, and the cardinals have had to consult with one another on positions and issues rather than assuming that they are all from the same background and generally agree. Liberation Theology has been further removed from the cloud under which it operated for so long.

Francis has openly made clear his frustration with a Curia that does not assist the pope but has become a church unto itself. For this reason, he has begun to emphasize Synods over the Curia. He is also of a mind that Questions must come before Answers or the Answers mean nothing. The goal of the Church must be Faithfulness, not Perfection. Holiness is about Engagement . Mercy is Fundamental. These are ongoing themes of Francis.

March 22, Eco-Spirituality,

We are indeed fortunate to have access to such prominent experts in the fields of our various inquiries over the years, and this is certainly true with respect to our decision to present this season on the topic of Eco-Spirituality.

How does our faith relate to the environment? What does our faith ask of us when it comes to the earth? Our Speaker on this subject is just now publishing a book entitled **Ethical Challenges in Global Health: Climate Change, Pollution, and the Health of the Poor**. What better Speaker than **Father Andrea Vicini, S.J.**, of the Boston College faculty? Father Vicini holds an S.T.L. and a Ph.D. from Boston College, an M.D. from the University of Bologna (the oldest medical school in the world) and tops it off with a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Faculty of Theology of Southern Italy. He has held the

Chaired Gasson Professorship at Boston College, and has spoken world-wide on the topic.

RECAP: Fifty-eight Zoom participants joined us for a presentation by Andrea Vicini, SJ on Eco-Spirituality. We have had presentations on the looming climate crisis before but if anyone thought this would be a re-telling of the same statistics and dire warnings, they were in for quite a pleasant surprise. We were enlightened with fresh perspectives on Solidarity, The Common Good, Individual Choices and making good Qualitative choices while recognizing our seemingly insignificant positive Quantitative effects. The delivery was, at times, rapid fire but judging by the activity during the Q&A, the audience was undeterred by the delivery and remained engaged throughout the presentation.

Though some might question that there are few substantive or positive effects from any choices we make to stem negative climate change, Father Vicini answers with a wide range of choice. The evening began with ideas on contemplation of our beautiful Earth. We moved on with ideas about accompanying others on our journeys of reordering our lives in consideration of the environmental effects of our choices. No one need walk this journey alone.

Next, we considered Solidarity, not only with others but individual solidarity where we engage our whole selves while sharing our mutual concern for the environment. We learned how multifaceted the idea of Common Good can be when common good is not limited to economic vitality but also the impact economic growth will have on our common home. While on the surface, economic growth can seem like positive change, we must consider the impact it has on the life of the poor and on Earth, our common home.

A vital role often seen in others but not necessarily considered and applied to our own daily living is the role of the Prophet. We have all heard the prophetic voices of those like Greta Thunberg but are we giving prophetic witness and performing prophetic actions to ensure the world is fit for the generations to come? Remember, while individually we can make little quantitative difference, how we choose to live can absolutely have a qualitative effect and can be prophetic witness to those around us. It was also pointed out that the last few popes have written encyclicals on the subject of the earth as a particular gift to be treasured and none written so pointedly as that of our present Pope Francis. Father Vicini's vast experience and scholarly background have given us much needed energy to move forward in our efforts to make our earth's preservation a top priority.

April 12 and 19, Exploring Non-Canonical Texts

Our Speaker for this two-part series was Dr. Daniel Ullucci, currently a Visiting Associate Professor at Stonehill College. Daniel Ullucci received his PhD from Brown University in 2009. His work focuses on the development of early Christianity out of Greco-Roman religion. His book *The Christian Rejection of Animal Sacrifice* (Oxford 2012) analyzes the process by which Christians departed from the ancient Mediterranean's most prevalent religious ritual. He has written extensively on Christian origins and the practice of animal sacrifice. Other research interests include social network theory, cognitive theory, and ancient philosophical discourses. He is a founding coeditor of the *Journal of Religious Competition in Antiquity*. He has taught at numerous schools around New England and was tenured at Rhodes College in Memphis, TN.

April 12, Exploring Non-Canonical Texts, Part One

This session examined some of the many early Christian texts that did not end up in the New Testament. The session focused on texts that expand and adapt the stories in the New Testament. We considered what these texts can tell us about the development of Christianity in the 1st to 3rd centuries. We also considered why these texts were not included in the Bible. Texts used:

- The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (a rather odd narrative of Jesus' childhood)
- The Protoevangelium of James (a story of Mary's childhood leading into the birth of Jesus)

RECAP: Professor Ullucci was well prepared and had developed a very helpful PowerPoint for his first talk of the series on Non-Canonical New Testament scriptures. Attendance held at the low 50's of Zoom connections for the presentation.

It is clear from the Canonical and Non-Canonical scriptures still in existence today that there were winners and losers in the contest to build the Canon, and that the efforts were both chaotic and competitive. The beliefs held by the writers of the various texts were very different. We know that some active sects of Christianity never had any sacred texts. From those that did have texts, we must understand that the writers of a particular text had no idea that they were writing a "Bible," nor that the works of others would be joined with the texts they were drafting. Many works heavily mentioned in the second century in various writings never ended up in the New Testament. The definition of "Scriptures" was totally fluid. The first known list of what was to be contained in such a testament did not appear until the Fourth Century. Major Christian beliefs which were being spread were in fact totally in conflict with each other. For several centuries wholesale charges of heresy were leveled back and forth.

Prof. Ullucci first turned to The Infancy Gospel of Thomas. It was used extensively and there were even significant noticeable variations among the manuscripts of this text. One question: Were these texts just for the elite? Almost no one could read at that time. Another question: Why do we have an Infancy Gospel where Jesus is a difficult child with miraculous powers doing wondrous things, sometimes for good and sometimes not? By the way, there was no teaching in this text, just wonder-working stories, with really inappropriate behavior on the part of Jesus? What is going on?

It is known that scribes (not the original writers of texts, but copyists, there being no printing presses) often inserted their own words or interpretations within the texts they were working on, adding and cutting material.

There is no evidence that any known “Thomas” had anything to do with this text.

What was the intent of the various authors? To record history, to entertain, to serve as “campfire stories?” We may today be reading a particular intent into a text that was not there at all because that is what we want the intent to be.

Is this particular gospel referring to an internal conflict of the second century about which we know nothing? Was conflict over “Adoptionism” (belief that Jesus was not born divine, but became God later) at play in this text? We know that the Baptism in the Jordan was central to this controversy. In any event, we do know that this non-canonical text was extremely popular back then, as manuscripts are found all over in all languages used at the time. That this gospel was intended as some sort of history is highly unlikely.

The next text we approached is entitled the Proto-Evangelium of James, which despite its title is mostly a biography of Mary with a start on a gospel story. In this text Mary herself enters this world as a Virgin Birth. The tale goes on through her being raised as a very special child within the Temple itself (there being no history of any child being so isolated). The author of this text is also totally supporting the Virgin Birth reported

in our own gospels. Beginning in Chapter 18 there is a switch in the story to the First Person, reporting things seen by Joseph. Chapters 18-20 give great detail about the Virgin Birth of Jesus, including the claim that even after the delivery Mary's status of virginity remained. Thus, the Proto-Evangelium is in harmony with, and builds upon the versions of Matthew and Luke. Dr. Ullucci opines that during the second century CE interest in Mary grew steadily, and a writer obliged this interest, on the basis of evidence not reported elsewhere.

The important points to be taken from the ProtoEvangelium are Virgin Birth stories, the Perpetual Virginity of Mary - not claimed elsewhere, and multiple references to the advanced age of Joseph – to help explain how Jesus had brothers and sisters by characterizing them as step-siblings from Joseph's earlier marriage. This Virgin birth story brings a bit of harmony to the discrepancies between the two Gospel birth stories. Dr. Ullucci's question: why do you suppose this book is not in the New Testament? There is no explanation to be found readily, but we do know that it was quite popular at the time and remained so for ages, and has had an impact on what the average Christian today believes. Many copies and translations were made.

Prof. Ullucci notes that not one of the "Old Testament" prophecies cited in Matthew's Gospel are in fact to be found as prophecies in the Old Testament. Also, the Feast of the Presentation, a huge feast in many countries, is not at all mentioned in any book of the New Testament. Moreover, the New Testament itself makes no mention at all of Joseph's age, nor at any point does it explain that there are step-children involved.

Just to show how widespread are the references to Jesus, Mary, and religious texts of Christianity, Dr. Ullucci pointed out that the Quran contains passages from the Infancy Gospel as well as a passage from the ProtoEvangelium, with the result that Mary is mentioned more than any other woman in all of the Quran, Islam's foundational text, and as we will see from the next presentation in this two-part series, there are lots of texts which "expand upon" the New Testament books -even adventures.

Asked how many of these non-canonical texts are to be found, our presenter answered that there are way over fifty, and many more are referenced in texts we still have.

Giving us a peek at what we were to explore in the second part of this series, Dr. Ullucci called it to our attention that historical works are not just written by the winners, but also preserved by the winners. Winners don't conserve texts prepared by losers, and may want to not only let the texts self-destruct but may actually destroy them as heretical. Were it not for the discovery in 1945 of the Nag Hammadi texts in an ancient Egyptian grave, we would have nowhere near as many ancient non-canonicals as we do, as writings of this nature eventually turn to dust if not conserved. The Nag Hammadi texts were preserved by believers who had a different view of who were the winners and losers of the early centuries, and smart enough to know they had to be concealed if they were to be saved.

April 19,

Exploring Non-Canonical Texts, Part Two: Other Christianities

This second session focused on the astounding diversity of early Christianity. We examined texts that provide a window into a set of 'Christian' beliefs that are radically different from those found in the New Testament. These other groups believed that they possessed the *true* teachings of Jesus, while their enemies (the Christians who wrote the New Testament) were wrong on *everything*. Texts used were:

- The Gospel of Thomas (a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus)
- The Secret Book of John (an alternate view of creation, God, and role of Jesus in the world)

RECAP: As Part 2 of Dr. Dan Ullucci's presentation began, with a Zoom attendance of 45, he followed up on two issues from Part 1. First, he reminded us that there was a fluid notion of what counted as scripture in the early centuries of Christianity, along with a lot of chaos and competition, and secondly, that Mary was not the only person to have

had a "miraculous" birth. It was commonplace for important people to have such a birth attributed to them. Socrates is but one example. Egypt was the perfect place to have discovered early (first through fourth century) texts of Christianity. The findings at the Nag Hammadi Library "blew the lid" off of what had been previously accepted as early "Christian" writings. Due to the extremely arid atmospheric conditions in Egypt, many manuscripts have survived which exist nowhere else. Everything in these Nag Hammadi manuscripts was rejected by those Christians whose texts form the basis of the New Testament. In the mid first century or early second century, the Gospel of Thomas was written. This a collection of 114 sayings. These are supposed "secret" sayings. There is no organization; no chronology; no progression of events. Jesus "does" nothing and there is no reference to his death and resurrection. Though it's referred to as Gospel of Thomas, it is probably from an anonymous author. These sayings have no narrative setting and hence leave much ambiguity. Two examples are:

#42 "Become passers-by."

#77 "It is I who come from the light which is above them all...split a piece of wood and I am there. Lift up a stone and you will find me there."

All these sayings are referred to as the Logion. A lot of work of historians and theologians has gone into attempting to decipher them. Another huge difference between the New Testament and this Gospel of Thomas is regarding death. The sayings include "Jesus' knowledge will save you, not any events he performed," thus rejecting the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection. About half of these sayings are similar to the Synoptic Gospels. In the New Testament, the gospels of Matthew and Luke had a common source of knowledge (known as Q) and most scholars feel that Mark had to have copied from them. After the fourth century and the Nicene Council, these early texts we have been examining were outlawed by those Christians in power, who also wrote the New Testament. Even today, scholars have difficulty

gaining access to these manuscripts for a variety of political and private reasons. For example, modern highly protective and punitive legislation declares possession of ancient texts as illegal, so their owners will not disclose their existence for fear of confiscation.

The second text being presented is The Secret Book of John, which was written probably in the early to mid-second century and of which multiple copies have survived. This text looks at answering What is Life? What is the Human Condition? and How Do We Understand It? These thinkers looked at the world and saw it as a bad place with bad things happening all the time and asked What God would allow this? They then looked at the human body that gets riddled with disease and deformities and asked the question What God would create this? Their considered answer was that God would never do this. So this means that creation of the world by God comes into question. In fact, there are a lot of Graeco-Roman traditions that don't believe God created the world.

The description of the creation of the world in the Secret Book of John plays out like a science fiction story and would have been nearly impossible to follow without the superb drawing which Dr. Ullicci provided. In this text there is one true "God" called the Monad, which is in no way a stereotypical divine power. From the Monad emanate other divine beings, about six in number, bodiless yet gendered, called Aeons. One is named Indestructibility, and another is Sophia, the only female essence. (Sophia is the Greek word for wisdom). The text begins with a perfect universe with lots of discourse about what these Aeons do, etc. Then the action begins. Sophia decides to have an offspring without male approval or help. She does this and emanating from her is this imperfect being, Yaltabaoth, quite dissimilar from herself. He is a quasi-divine, imperfect being without his Mother's perfection. Sophia tries to hide this being. She creates a luminous cloud, with help from the Aeon Barbelo, around the monster. This cosmic world of Barbelo is tiny and not real. Yaltabaoth is powerful, yet stupid. In flexing his powers, he had created a world which early Christians came to understand as the "real" world, with the Earth as the center of the Universe, and is round with characteristic gravity. Now Yaltabaoth begins to think that he is the only

God. He says "I am God and there is no God but me," which we see echoed in the Judean scriptures in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere. Then the question becomes How do we undo this disaster? So Sophia and Monad try to trick Yaltabaoth into doing something really special, like creating human bodies into which he can breathe and make them come alive. He does it, and when he does, his divine spark goes out! It goes into the humans and he realizes he has made a big mistake. He realizes humans are smart and he casts them into the Pits ...the Earth. There, they become ignorant and see Yaltabaoth's creation as the "real" universe. They believe Yaltabaoth is God. They are in need of being told the Truth - That they are not their bodies and need to escape this world! Who will it be to tell them this?? Christ is one of the Aeons. He will and does deliver this message to the humans and then goes back to his universe. revealing that once you know your reality, you can get out of your body and go back to the upper realms to which you belong!

When asked where these early Christians got their ideas, each competing group would say "Jesus." Most scholars believe that the New Testament version of creation came to be more believable. History discloses that this dissenting group to the teachings of the New Testament had more adherents than the New Testament group in the Middle East in the early centuries. The New Testament Christians just did not agree at all with anything the opposite camp proposed, and vice versa.

Worthy of note: the Quran, the fundamental text of Islam, quotes more from the non-canonical authors than the New Testament writers, and uses as its Trinity/triad Father/Mother/Son, not Father/Son/Holy Spirit, and is thus a challenging text to the Canonical writings.

April 26,

How Do Art, Images and Icons Affect Our Faith?

Our Speaker for this Event was Professor Paul Briggs from Massachusetts College of Art. Dr. Briggs is presently an Associate Professor of Art Education at the Massachusetts College of Art and Director of the historic Saturday Studios Program, now in its 84th year.

He completed his PhD at the Pennsylvania State University and his MFA at the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston. He studies art making as spiritual practice, visual culture and representation in the classroom, and the place of the vessel in contemporary ceramic art. Professor Briggs says, “I have a meditative practice. Therefore, my work often explores the inner resources individuals and communities develop to maintain equanimity in the face of failing personal supports and demoralizing social systems.”

Dr. Briggs explored with us how the understanding of images by 8th century theologians during the Image Controversy is the foundation for how all images should be understood as functioning in the world. It is not just religious art and images that have affected our faith. Prof. Briggs asks us to consider how we cherish or destroy old photographs as an example of the power of images to connect us with their prototype. The veneration of icons, indeed all religious objects, is based on the same principle. The scriptures support this thinking as when Moses sets specific objects aside only for divine use; that is, they are designated as holy. Have not our old photographs, heirlooms and keepsakes been set apart by us in some manner not because they are precious in themselves but because of their connection with, most often, someone we hold dear? This holiness was less widely applied as the Church transformed during various historical stages. For example, mistrusting the effect of images on faith, Calvin held only the performance of the Lord’s Supper as on par with the holiness of icons. Dr. Briggs holds that human nature is yet under the persuasion of images. Understood in this way the power of art and images, whether found in the museum or a magazine, must be wielded responsibly.

RECAP “Creeds say we are on the same journey yet there is chance, accident, rawness which intrude on that fact.” With this quote, Dr. Briggs began sharing with us his own journey and some conclusions he has made. He first got our attention by beginning with Moses and his return from his trip atop Mt. Sinai. Aaron had caused a Golden Calf to be made. Moses asked him where the concept had come from. Aaron

told him that it had "just come out" as they melted their gold. Visuals have their own way of intruding. Professor Briggs then began to show how in his own life, things had "just come out." As a summer camp counselor, he had worked with ceramics. Then later, as a public school teacher, feelings cropped up within him which made him consider work in church settings. So, he quit his job and began working in language study of older pre-Christian religious texts (such as the Mishna). His group was studying the look forward to Christianity. Dr. Briggs' graduate thesis was "Prospecting for the Golden Rule." He met up again with ceramics as he began to work with such objects as Steles. Oral Roberts University influenced his life, though it was of a conservative nature. He marveled at the discussion between Amenhotep, the architect and his Pharaoh concerning why the Book of the Dead was written on the walls of the temple. Next, Dr. Briggs took on work in museums and that is when the Alfred Art Institute became his principal interest. It is at this time his interest went from Steles to Stylites. The discipline of these Stylite dwellers as well as their asceticism fascinated him. In his theology, he was entranced by the existence of a continuum between spirit and flesh. When Pastor versus Artist became a major "concern" in his life, Dr. Briggs turned to rabbinic studies. He did this more from wanting to learn how they approached their studies than from any interest in ministry. Pennsylvania State University offered him the chance to earn a doctorate in arts/ceramics which led to his teaching at Penn State both in ceramics and drawing. This is when he began to realize that Prophets are Seers and so are Artists. Arts move society forward. Art impacts heavily on concerns of race, gender and capitalism for example. Images are powerful because they offer more than depictions of objects but more so because they are windows to more important things. It dawned on Dr. Briggs that Americans really fear Art. Art impacts even more heavily in a religious setting. Iconoclasts have a terror of the image becoming the holy item. In Christianity, images began being much less seen with the separation of the East from the West and Protestants cut images out almost entirely. This ban on images, starting way back to the Golden Calf, was born of the fear that if images should be labeled "wrong" then they lose their right to exist.

Professor Briggs opines that no social movement develops without art. He asks the question “How is it possible for images to stir up emotions so strongly in response to viewing them?” A danger feared by Iconoclasts is that an image has already changed you instantly as soon as you see it, before defenses can be raised. Iconoclasts believe that holy images are set apart and may only be used and respected in that status. Interesting to note here the Catholic tremendous use of and respect for art/ images, aromas such as incense, the taste of wine and Eucharist, the resplendency of robes and garments and the touching and kissing of sacred art objects such as the crucifix on Good Friday. At this point. Professor Briggs’ life took a turn toward ministry and he became a pastor for the next ten years. Nonetheless, art still had him in its grasp. His art was in a way his prayer life. To a great extent, imagery had taken over doctrinal issues. As a Baptist minister, he embraced gay couples, prison inmates as well as a surprising congregation made up of the most progressive of people. Clearly not typical particularly of Baptist congregations. In conclusion, Dr. Briggs assures us that images will continue to challenge us as we move forward in society. Take for example the topic of racism. Our society has been inundated with racist images for years. From much-loved old movies and "Aunt Jemima" confronting us with images that take a long time to wear down and erase to the recent video image of George Floyd that has been cemented in our visual memory forever, it is more and more evident to this, our ever-growing zoom audience, that Dr. Briggs thesis, “Prospecting For The Golden Rule,” is a worthwhile endeavor as our society grapples with its own image.

May 3, 10, and 17 – Father Steve’s Book Group

The traditional ending for each of our Adult Faith Formation seasons is Father Steve’s Book Group. This year we conducted that experience on May 3, 10, and 17, by way of Zoom. We used Zoom in the Book Group last May with great success.

The Book for Father Steve’s May Book Group in Adult Faith Formation was

**Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents,
by Isabel Wilkerson.**

(#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • OPRAH’S BOOK CLUB PICK • LONGLISTED FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD • “An instant American classic and almost certainly the keynote nonfiction book of the American century thus far.”—Dwight Garner, The New York Times)

Father Steve has described this book as “a must read.” He suggested that each section have been read prior to the evening it was discussed. The Sections are as follows:

(Part 1 + 2) **Toxins in the Permafrost and Heat Rising** and **The Arbitrary Construction of Human Division.**

(Part 3 + 4) **The Eight Pillars of Caste** and **The Tentacles of Caste**

(Part 5 + 6 + 7) **The Consequences of Caste** and **Backlash** and **Awakening**

This basically represented approx. 1/3 of the book each night. Discussion was vigorous.

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Season 2019 / 2020

October 21, 2019 - Hope in a Time of Turmoil: Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*, with Julie Butters and Joanne Parnell Mongeon, OCDS

Today, we have life coaches. In the fourteenth century, there was Julian. For the people of Norwich, England, the anchoress and mystic was *the* person to turn to for answers and advice. In a period of social, economic, and political upheaval, Julian found hope and consolation. She shared that message with her visitors and through her seminal work, *Revelations of Divine Love*. Our program presented a brief history of Julian and the mystical visions that sparked the *Revelations*. After a dramatic reading adapted from Julian's writings, we discussed how this extraordinary woman can still help Christians find hope and healing today. Dr. Joanne Parnell Mongeon is a Secular Carmelite, writer and English professor. Julie Butters is a writer and performer based in Salem, Mass., and is the former managing editor of *Catholic Digest* magazine.

RECAP: On Monday, October 21, Julie Butters (with Joanne Mongeon as Emcee/Producer) did a presentation of the visions of Julian of Norwich, which Julie also drafted from the materials on Julian. As was clear from the outset, Julie is a fine actress, and her recital went over very well. The entire assembly was riveted to her words. A successful event indeed. This was preceded by a very brief video (maybe seven or so minutes) on the life of Julian, and the video and presentation took us to the coffee break after about an hour. The break was followed by a breakdown of the assembly into groups of eight or so, to discuss some of Julian's more salient quotations, as gathered by Joanne and Julie. The discussions were lively and varied, and those who stayed for the discussion period were definitely ready to expound. As the witching hour of nine o'clock rolled around, it was necessary for us to draw the event to a close. All in all, a very successful and much appreciated presentation.

The presentation itself attracted an audience of 38, and 23 remained for the discussion period.

November 4, 2019 - FAITH AND LITERATURE with Dr. Allan Hunter

Literature has always been a way of telling a story about an event, shaping it so it can be understood. Spiritual texts are no different. The problem is that every story can be interpreted in diverse ways, and so no two people ever read the same tale, or the same Bible. Certain specific literary texts tended to ask questions or explore topics and in doing so they changed the way the following generations saw spiritual matters. If we look at Christopher Marlowe, the playwright, his most famous work is Doctor Faustus, about an academic who sells his soul to the Devil in return for power. The theme of this play was that one could make a deal with the devil. And it changed the way we thought of temptation and, indeed, the devil. This is a leap forward even from Dante, who saw Hell as a place where "the punishment fits the crime" which was a new idea at the time. Following on from Marlowe we have Hamlet -- surely one of the biggest popular discussions of religion and God. This play is famous for its acceptance of fate, or destiny or whatever we want to call it. In that sense it is very 'modern', because it does not fall back on the era's established orthodoxy. Marlowe, Dante, Shakespeare and others can clearly be seen to have asked deeply important questions about the nature of Faith, Fate and Destiny. In doing so they have intruded into the spheres usually reserved for clergy. In this presentation we saw how their explorations have forever changed the way we think about things, and so have had a direct impact on issues of Faith.

Allan Hunter is a professor emeritus of literature, a counselor and an author of 12 books. The most recent is "Spiritual Hunger". It tackles the serious problem that afflicts so many of us - how do we find meaning in life? This hunger is a symptom of a sense of our inner emptiness, and if we aren't careful, we can find ourselves filling that emptiness with

compulsive, destructive habits. His focus is on the wisdom contained in ancient and neglected texts of our society.

RECAP: Many people who attended this event remembered Dr Hunter from last year so expectations ran high. Those expectations were clearly met or exceeded. Thirty-three attendees (including two Confirmation students) were treated to an exploration of human foibles as told through Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. At the outset, Dr Hunter set the stage by introducing us to the ways storytelling can break through our barriers of rationality and speak more directly to our humanity in ways philosophical or religious arguments cannot. After the break we learned a bit about how some of our beliefs have been shaped by storytellers and playwrights rather than the more traditional routes. Given that we are creatures whose cultures are shaped by storytelling it should come as no surprise.

November 18, 2019 – Immigration And Our Border With Mexico, Defining Us In A Time Of Crisis with Dr. Westy Egmont

In response to a legal scholar's question "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds with His telling of the Parable of the Good Samaritan and at the end of His telling asks the legal scholar "Which of the three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?". The scholar replied, "The one who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." The priest and the Levite who both walked by the injured man may very well have felt compassion for him but it was the Samaritan, code word for "outsider", who allowed his compassion to be actualized into mercy. A movement from emotion to action is what Jesus was calling for when He said, "Go and do likewise". With all the news programs and articles about the current plight of refugees in many parts of the world appealing to our emotions, we can become desensitized because emotions are meant to be acted upon to be resolved. Without resolution, repeated dead end emotional appeals can

begin to numb the compassionate emotions rightfully elicited. Carolina Velazquez, a student of Dr. Egmont, joined us to share her experiences of spending some time last winter at a Catholic Worker center in El Paso. Dr. Westy Egmont is Co-Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Immigrants and Refugees. With a doctorate in pastoral counseling, Dr. Egmont has focused on the human needs and social services of newcomer communities, immigrant rights, and the complex dynamic two-way process of immigrant integration.

RECAP: Our first speaker, Carolina Velazquez, has first-hand experience of the border crisis. She volunteered at a Catholic Worker house in El Paso helping immigrants newly released from detention with basic needs and also with help navigating the US system purposely made much more difficult than need be and becoming more and more difficult as time passes. Her descriptions of conditions at the border were matter of fact representations as were her chronicles of the first hand experiences dealing with events as they occurred. Dr. Egmont spoke next and explained in vivid detail how although the situation at the border is indeed in crisis mode, it is entirely of politically motivated human fabrication. Unlike natural disasters which can and do produce crises, this one was designed, produced and implemented by people who meant to divide our nation for political gain. "Do not let anyone you know not vote!" was one of his answers to the question "What can we do?". There were 70 people in attendance of whom 17 were Confirmation students.

December 16, Film - "The Work"

Twenty-three interested parties came to view the film "The Work". The audience itself was of some note: there was a base of regular attenders, but also a cluster of about a half-dozen Confirmation students, mostly female, and several people currently involved in Prison Ministry, who came on their own. Also in attendance was a woman from Needham who wanted to present the film to her own community (We loaned her the DVD for this purpose after the event). Although refreshments were

available throughout the showing, the audience remained glued to the seats the whole time. In addition, as the film ended at approximately 8:30, an effort was begun to encourage discussion of the presentation among the audience, but the effort was unnecessary, as everyone stayed and participated extensively., including each of the sectors mentioned above. The film itself, billed as a film about restorative justice, centered around a real-life four day "gathering" of about a dozen adult men, a mix of long-term convicts and community volunteers, with a few facilitators, at the Folsom State Prison in California. The gathering seemed to be aimed at asking the group members to really confront their violence and/or criminal behavior, absent all their usual excuses and refusals to deal with such. It was fascinating that the other members of the group were conspicuously alert at identifying and exposing the excuses, etc. The film also served to reveal some of the major faults in the way corrections and imprisonment authorities deal with those in their custody. A couple of the community volunteers, and not just the inmates, were among those who took this opportunity to view themselves in a deeper fashion than they might previously have allowed themselves to delve. There was some violence involved in several of the episodes, but with positive outcomes. The language was a bit rough, but again, not gratuitously so. In the end the film can be viewed as optimistic in its suggestion that current highly-violent behavior, both among prison inmates and in the community, can be addressed with some real hope of success. Among the audience those in Prison Ministry suggested further exploration in this subject area.

January 6, 2020 – “Come, Follow The Star, That Is The Light Of Christ: Nurturing our Relationship with Jesus” (A Joint Adult Faith Formation and St. Susanna Pax Christi Event)

Philip Harak, Ed.D., is a retired high school educator who crafted methods of teaching and learning that reflected research and best practice in social justice education. He is a long-time member of the Pax Christi MA board, and is a teacher of nonviolent spirituality and

conflict resolution. He is nearing completion of the book, “In the Company of Jesus: Using a Jesuit and his Brother’s Scriptural Reflections on Jesus’ Original Teachings to Enrich your Journey with the Nonviolent Jesus Today.” His brother, the late Fr. Simon Harak, S.J., was a theologian, professor, and founding member of The Center for Peacemaking at Marquette University.

RECAP: Phil used Simon’s thought-provoking homily on the Magi to more fully explore the seldom-considered gifts the Wise Men brought, and also examine an enduring unanswered question about them. Participants explored the “epiphany” of this event so as to more profoundly nurture and deepen our relationship with Jesus. Dr. Harak challenged all in attendance to reconsider our preconceptions concerning the journey of the Magi by reflecting on his brother Fr. Simon Harak, S.J.’s homily on this Gospel story. We began by a contemplation of the attributes of three famous people, Albert Einstein, Robert Perry, and Katherine Johnson. After reflecting on these famous people, we were asked by our presenter to make a similar analysis regarding the Magi. This turned out to be a process well received by the audience as there was a lively response to Dr Harak’s prompting. A member of the audience read Sunday’s Gospel story of the Magi and Dr Harak read his brother’s homily on this Gospel reading. After the break, we concentrated on the idea that the Magi were lacking some positive attribute(s) which resulted in their leaving the Messiah once they found Him. Although this theme was the crux of Fr. Simon’s homily, it did not go over well with the audience. There was a lot of well thought out objection to this idea but at least the audience was, indeed, reconsidering the Magi’s stereotypical portrayal. The evening wrapped up with a discussion of non-violence and how much a movement toward non-violence resembles the arduous journey undertaken by the Magi. All in all, based on the level of audience participation, this was a very well received and provocative presentation by a Pax Christi/Adult Faith Formation collaboration. There were 29 in attendance including one Confirmation student.

January 13, 2020 – A Decision to Reach Out with Christine Lott.

Christine founded the Tanzania School Foundation in 2009, an organization dedicated to helping children and the poor in Tanzania. The Tanzania School Foundation has grown rapidly since its founding. In 2011, the foundation created the School of St. Nicholas for children born into chronic poverty in the remote village of Moivaro in Northern Tanzania. The school started in a living room of a rented house, but in 2013 the foundation began building an official school building. It now has multiple locations. The Foundation's web site describes the Foundation in these words:

“Fighting poverty in Tanzania one classroom at a time, one child at a time, providing a free quality education to disadvantaged children to end the cycle of poverty. We are advocates for global responsibility and help promote innovative solutions and strengthening capacity for self-help; providing economic opportunities to artisans. We currently sustain a variety of artisans in their small businesses. We pay all of our artisans a fair wage and help by providing a marketing venue for their work. We have individuals painting beautiful ornaments, women who roll paper into beautiful beads, individuals who create jewelry from seed beads and individuals who hand carve beautiful items from olive wood. All funds raised through our efforts go back to Tanzania and help support our school project. Guided by Christian values and the aspirations of local communities, we pursue our mission with heartfelt compassion. The people we serve deserve nothing less.”

Ms. Lott spends half the year in Tanzania and the remainder in Stoughton, MA. While in the U.S. often she can be found in Boston on Summer Street or the Rose Kennedy Greenway selling Tanzanian Art.

RECAP: To an audience of twenty-four, including one Confirmation Program student and his mom, Christine Lott presented an informal presentation and photo display on the motivation, successes and challenges involved in giving up her senior position at a financial firm's Boston office and taking on providing an educational opportunity for young children in a rural area of Tanzania. The spark that started it all, she reported, was her amazement at how joyous and dedicated the members of the congregation in this small town were at a Mass she attended one Sunday on a vacation visit. She made no attempt to create a rosy picture of how things have gone and the continuing difficulties in making such an effort in a different culture with different values and motivations than she is accustomed to, particularly with little in the way of formal financial or organizational support, all of which she has had to supply on her own. Her honesty and candor were charming and at the same time revealing, leading us to the possible conclusion that many of these tales of such storied events have, over time, become "cleaned up" to look a lot more "heaven-sent" than was probably true at the time. Christine's conviction that she is doing something of value and her determination to keep at it became convincingly clear as she spoke of her efforts. She certainly put a dent in the belief that one person can't do much to improve the world. Lots of questions followed her oral presentation, and it was clear that those in attendance found the story fascinating

January 27, 2020 – Loving A Catholic Institution That Doesn't Love You

This evening we visited a topic which has of late become particularly controversial with the LGBTQ Community, but extends as well to other populations such as women who have divorced and remarried and are now forbidden to receive Eucharist, or couples who are trying to do some family planning, but are forbidden to use almost all effective forms of birth control.

Michael Hartwig is a religion scholar, dividing time between work at Illume (an international religious travel consultancy) and Emmanuel College (where he is an adjunct instructor of religion) and his work as an artist (represented by On Center Gallery in Provincetown). He is a popular professor whose work in sexual ethics touches upon the theme for this evening's presentation. Many of Hartwig's students come from Catholic backgrounds and struggle with messages from the Catholic Church about sex, gender, sexual orientation, marriage, reproductive technologies and other topics that come into direct conflict with their identity, experience and self-awareness.

RECAP: In this interactive presentation, we explored the interface between institutional messages, sources of Catholic moral reflection, and contemporary sociological, psychological and scientific research about relationships and sexual identity. We identified strategies for maintaining personal health and well-being while seeking to remain in relationship with Catholic institutions that seem to threaten that.

At the presentation, before an audience of forty-one adults and ten Confirmation students, Dr. Michael Hartwig made an outstanding presentation on the issue of dealing with the negative positions taken by Catholic Church authorities on such subjects as LGBTQ friendships and relationships, the divorced and remarried, and couples using various forms of artificial birth control. Participation by the audience was invited by the speaker, and led to much productive discussion. Not one to shrink from directly confronting the items in dispute, Professor Hartwig early-on examined the claims of the authorities that the negative positions taken by them were not at all in opposition to the myriad scriptural passages encouraging love in whatever form it takes among us, because the forms of "love" of which they disapprove were not "true" love, but rather false instances of love. He held that position up to the daylight of many scriptural passages and the findings of modern science, and suggested we ask ourselves just how convincing those positions taken by the authorities actually are in this day and age. He also addressed at some length the few scriptural passages constantly dragged out by the institution to affirm their positions on these subjects

and pointed out the findings of excellent and well-respected scriptural analysts of the current time, suggesting interpretations at odds with those proposed by the authorities, not to mention other scriptural passages which cast a different light on the issues. Dr. Hartwig left us all with several suggestions on how persons embroiled in such topics should proceed to find themselves in a better and more loving place. Included were such suggestions as (a) reading the findings of modern scholars within the church on the topics, (b) examining and studying the scriptures themselves rather than taking the interpretations of others as definitive, or (c) seeking out and finding other believers, both individually and already formed into groups, within the church who have taken this road before them, and sharing thoughts with them that support their own feelings. Much was learned from this talk, and much remains to be done.

February 10 and 24, 2020 – The “Mission-Based Community”

This two-session series examined what it means to be a Mission-based Community. In recent years Saint Susanna Parish has more and more identified as such a community. Just what are we talking about?

The Work of Peace – The Calling of Pax Christi. On **February 10** Father Rocco Puopolo and Saint Susanna’s Pat Ferrone, centered on Pax Christi and its mission, together with the close ties that have developed between Pax Christi itself and Saint Susanna Parish. Father Puopolo is a Xaverian Missionary Priest engaged in Global Education here in New England. Originally from Norwood, Massachusetts, Fr. Rocco was ordained in 1977 and has since ministered extensively in Sierra Leone as well as in the US Midwest. In his final assignment in Sierra Leone he worked as director of the National Pastoral Center in Kenema. In the United States, Fr. Rocco has done both seminary training, youth retreats and advocacy work . While in Chicago he worked with Archdiocesan Muslim-Christian Dialogue groups. Pat Ferrone, Chair of the Pax Christi community here at Saint Susanna, has long been deeply involved in the Peace and Justice movement. *Pat has been an integral part of the life of*

Agape since its inception in 1982; in addition, Pat is the Regional coordinator of Pax Christi . Theme for this session was “peacemaking as a vocation,” as much a calling to a parish as to such groups as Pax Christi.

RECAP: The February 10 event was a bit unlike our usual lecture format. It seemed more like two people, Pat and Fr Rocco giving witness to how their association with Pax Christi has enriched their lives and enlivened their faith. With thirty-four adults and nine confirmation students present, Pat gave us a rendering of the history of the Pax Christi movement and how a belief in the unwavering message of non-violence in the Gospels came to rest in the hearts of the movement’s founders. The Pax Christi movement has since spread far and wide to become a truly international organization and even has branches within prisons. Fr. Rocco described some of his experiences in Sierra Leone in west Africa with regards to the times of relative peace and times of devastating war. Fr Rocco displayed a brief Power Point outlining his belief that whichever faith one may adhere to, the message of non-violence is a common denominator through which we can work together to reduce the effects of violence on this world no matter what the form violence may manifest itself. It was a heartwarming evening by two sincere individuals who have taken the Gospel message of non-violence into their very being and are now doing their best to bring that message to the world.

The Agape Community. On February 24 Suzanne and Brayton Shanley of the Agape Community presented on community life and living the non-violent peace gospel at the grassroots level. Agape is a residential, lay Catholic Community dedicated to prayer, voluntary simplicity, and gospel-centered nonviolent witness in the world, situated on 32 acres of land in Hardwick’s Quabbin watershed to incorporate sustainability and ecology into their lifestyle of nonviolence.

Brayton and Suzanne, along with many interns, assisted hundreds of volunteers who selflessly contributed to the building of structures on the

Agape homestead, including the main house and residence, Francis House, as well as Brigid House, a straw bale house with compost toilet and solar energy. Agape's large organic garden feeds the community and guests throughout the year, while wood from Agape's 32 acres in the Quabbin Reservoir watershed provides the community's only source of heat, wood burning and wood cook stoves. Many pilgrims travel to Agape's hermitage, behind the main house, for rest and prayer, joining in community prayer three times a day and simple, vegetarian fare. Brayton and Suzanne drive a car fueled by donated vegetable oil from a Restaurant 99.

The Shanleys are no strangers to Saint Susanna. For example, recently at an Adult Faith Formation Monday night session Brayton spoke eloquently of the deep spirituality he found in the non-violent Standing Rock Native American protest. The Agape Community has opened its doors to Saint Susanna's Confirmation Students to experience a full-day apostleship at the basic level. Saint Susanna's parishioners have joined with Agape in non-violent protests during the Tsarnaev trial and elsewhere.

RECAP: At the **February 24** event, in the presence of thirty-two adults and eleven confirmation students, Suzanne and Brayton Shanley, passing the speaking role easily back and forth, dwelt a bit on what Catholicism meant to them and their families of origin when they were young, their eventual dissatisfaction with a Catholicism based on devotional duties, and their founding (with a few others) of the Agape Community in rural Massachusetts, changing their priorities from duty-bound devotional practices to Total Non-violence, saving the planet, doing away with the death sentence, and the like. We learned of water conservation, hay-bale housing construction, autos powered on used vegetable oil, etc. Much of their work now is in the nature of modeling these practices for visiting students, some of whom come for an extended stay, others just for a day's exposure. They report working

closely with Pax Christi and other similar groups. They referenced a number of authors they find particularly persuasive in their chosen fields for those called to delve deeper. The Q&A period was fruitful and extensive. An evening well spent.

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Because of the Corona Virus Pandemic, the Adult Faith Formation programs for the months of March and April of the 2019-2020 season were cancelled. The AFF Commission began using the application Zoom to hold virtual meetings in anticipation of the 2020-2021 season and because of our success with the new format we began to imagine using Zoom to somehow resurrect the AFF program. After much planning and strategizing, it was decided to keep Father Steve's Book Club on the schedule and adapt it to best take advantage of Zoom's virtual meeting format.

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Father Steve's Book Group May 4, 11, and 18, 2020

As usual, the Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation season closed with Father Steve's Book Discussion Group on the first three Mondays of May. Unusual however, is the fact that for the first time the Book Club was conducted with virtual "table" groups hosted by a facilitator using Zoom. The book chosen by Father Steve this year was Falter by Bill McKibben.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that Bill McKibben has written a book so important, **reading it might save your life**, not to mention your home: Planet Earth. *Falter* is a **brilliant, impassioned call to arms** to save our climate from those profiting from its destruction before it's too late. Over and over, McKibben has proven one of the most **farsighted and gifted voices of our times**, and with *Falter* he has topped himself,

Season 2018 / 2019

The Many Faith Traditions: The Desire for Truth, Unity, and Understanding – with Andrew Massena

October 15, 2018

In the postmodern era of comparative religion, there has been a strong reaction to universal theories about the world religions. The problem for scholars these days is that universal theories, or the desire to draw commonalities, tends to downplay the rich historical and cultural context in which each tradition exists. Christian scholars, in the spirit and wake of Vatican II, have attempted to develop a practice to address these desires among Christians in our contemporary world, a practice known as comparative theology. This practice attempts to address the concerns some scholars have, while engaging a Christian desire for truth, unity, and understanding. Andrew Massena is a PhD candidate in Comparative Theology at Boston College. Andrew is currently the Graduate Assistant of the Boston College Theology Department. Previously he was the director of the annual Engaging Particularities graduate conference. His publications have appeared in *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* and *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*.

RECAP: Andrew presented on Comparative Theology to an audience of 34 attenders. We were doubly blessed in that both the topic and the speaker were outstanding. Mr. Massena was extremely knowledgeable, energetic, and well prepared, and made a great impression. His youthful energy and his personal fascination with the subject area were apparent. Those in attendance were treated to an excellent capsulization of where we are since the great springing forth during and since the Second Vatican Council, prior to which time the subject area was a minefield for scholars and forbidden territory for Catholics in general. Questions were invited and forthcoming throughout the talk, and Andrew was superb in his responses both for being on point and boldly and clearly stated, with written citations. For Part Two of the evening he had prepared a comparison of two creation stories, one from our own Book of Genesis

and the other from the Upanishads of the Brahman Tradition. Small groups were formed and willingly joined in a comparative study which was certainly eye-opening. Much was learned.

The Current Situation in the “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” – with Kathleen Schatzberg

October 29, 2018

Kathy shared her thoughts with us in three broad areas: a brief description of the new organization through which she was blessed to spend 7 months in the Holy Land: "Volunteers in Global Service," which aims to place retirees in volunteer situations with NGOs that have interfaith or peace & justice missions; a brief description of Tantar Ecumenical Institute, and the programs and activities through which the Institute enacts its mission of ecumenical and interfaith engagement, learning and research; a brief discussion of her observations and reflections in both the inter-religious realm and the arena often called the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (the latter a phrase, in her opinion, that oversimplifies a very complex set of issues).

Sharing her Biography with us, Kathy relates: “I'm a writer, an educator with 45 years in education, 35 of them in community colleges -- and a lifelong advocate for justice (community colleges are, in fact, instruments of social justice). I have always been passionate about learning, traveling, and understanding the world's religions and political systems.”

RECAP: From September 2017 to April 2018, Ms. Schatzberg spent 7 months as a volunteer at Notre Dame University's Tantar Ecumenical Institute, a beautiful campus in Jerusalem, on a hill near Bethlehem and in sight of the "Security Wall" erected by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's administration. This gave Kathleen a unique perspective on the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to peace. Intransigent government policies along with cemented religious agendas leave little room for compromise. Grass root organizations like Women Of the Wall (WOW) and others offer glimmers of hope as expectations

for a top-down resolution fade and real progress from bottom-up solutions grow. This event was a Joint Presentation with Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair, with Blanche Crandall as Facilitator.

Dante's Divine Comedy – with Allan Hunter

November 5, 2018

How Does Dante's Divine Comedy Speak To Us Today? Dante's Divine Comedy will be 700 years old in 2021 and has many vital insights to give us about life, morality, and the spirit – if we know how to look. The aim of this event is to explore the psychological and spiritual insights Dante provides to us even if they might be overlooked if we become mired in his medieval sense of how the universe is constructed.

Allan Hunter is a professor of literature, a counselor and an author of 12 books. One of his recent books is "Spiritual Hunger". It tackles the serious problem that afflicts so many of us - how do we find meaning in life? This hunger is a symptom of a sense of our inner emptiness, and if we aren't careful we can find ourselves filling that emptiness with compulsive, destructive habits. His focus is on the wisdom contained in ancient and neglected texts of our society. Allan holds a PhD from Oxford University and has spent thirty years exploring the way literature has been not only vital in helping us to explain ourselves to ourselves but has been central to our civilization for over 3000 years. Literature changes lives -- if we take the trouble to understand it.

RECAP: Dr. Hunter expertly guided us through a tour of Dante's Divine Comedy. His charm and wit endeared him to the audience early on even as the subject matter began to hit close to home when he pointed out examples from the poem of our human foibles. Allan's experience as a counselor was on display when discussing the psychological states of those characters Dante had populate Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. It was quite an unexpected take on the topic but a worthwhile perspective to be sure. Many of those present voiced their enthusiasm for the presentation. The question and answer period was lively, demonstrating

the healthy level of audience engagement.

Radical Hope – with Lawrence Barriner II

November 19, 2018

Much of what the world offers is alienating us to the virtue of Hope. Did you read or listen to the news today? Did you find reason for optimism? How about hope? They are not the same. Optimism is a sometimes naive, temporary state of mind where Hope is one member of the trinity of theological virtues. What kind of world could we imagine and confidently work toward if we allowed The Holy Spirit to kindle the flame of Hope in our hearts to guide our actions?

Lawrence Barriner II is a communications strategist, connector, and systems thinker. His current work includes communications and narrative strategy at the Community Innovators Lab at MIT and running a productivity coaching practice. His previous work includes food systems & food justice research and consulting, web design, and graphic design. He plays a lot of volleyball, keeps busy with a million side projects, writes daily, and has a weekly newsletter. He has an undergraduate and graduate degree, both in City Planning, from MIT. (One of his favorite quotes: “I believe in social dislocation and creative trouble.” - Bayard Rustin)

RECAP: On November 19 AFFC presented an event orchestrated and led by Mr. Barriner on the subject of Radical Hope. Mr. Barriner is an engaging magnetic speaker, totally comfortable in his role as group leader. Rather than a lecture format, the presentation consisted of considerable audience participation, with those attending broken down into groups as small as two, and no larger than five. The topic for consideration was Radical Hope, how it is generated, how it can be analyzed and explored. Asked to write short lists of our most important aspirations, as well as a letter to someone of the participant's choice, the items were then questioned within the groups at multiple levels. One of the procedures was to take a hope and ask "Why?" repeatedly down to five or so levels. Our Presenter was quite capable of opening the

audience up, with ongoing reference to his own life story. His style was comfortable and attractive. There were about 51 people in attendance, falling into three groups. The first group consisted of about 17 Confirmation Program students who had chosen to come by selecting this program from a list of several AFFC programs. The second group consisted of several adults who seemed new to AFFC and apparently were there because one of the Confirmation Students was one of their kids. A bit more than twenty audience members were our faithful AFFC attenders. So, while the numbers were considerably larger than recent attendance counts, that number may be skewed by the circumstances rather than the attractiveness of this particular program or a sudden surge of interest in AFFC programs. Or perhaps not.

The Exercises of Saint Ignatius in the Context of Social Justice - with Peter Gyves, SJ, MD

December 3, 2018

Centuries ago Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, devised a series of Spiritual Exercises to be practiced in making ourselves better followers of Christ. Father Peter Gyves, himself a Jesuit, is personally known to Saint Susanna's Parishioners from his service as occasional presider and Preacher at our weekend Masses. Father Peter has devoted his time and ministry to Social Justice He is the founder of A Faith That Does Justice, which is an ecumenical program that seeks to raise consciousness about social issues that affect the most vulnerable among us and offers others opportunities to walk in solidarity with those less fortunate than themselves.

Father Peter is a Board-Certified Pediatrician (1984) and Pediatric Endocrinologist (1986). He entered the Society of Jesus in 2003 and was ordained a priest in 2008. He has lived and worked in several countries outside the United States, both as physician and a priest, including El Salvador and Guatemala during their civil wars of the 1980's and early 1990's, and in several English and French-speaking African countries. RECAP: The audience count was 60 people showing up on this clear, warm night. An engaging speaker with a warm and sagacious presence,

Fr. Peter regaled us with harrowing tales of his experiences in Latin America as a physician all the while returning to relate his experiences to the Spiritual Exercises. We were all supplied with handouts to help follow the structure of the lecture and also to bring home for an aid to further reflection. Although quiet contemplation is certainly a large part of the Spiritual Exercises, the impact is most felt when one engages the emotions and as they well up and then ask why the emotional response is the way it is. This seems to be where the fruit of the Exercises is to be found. Fr. Peter reminded us all how compassionate Jesus was during His earthly life, healing those who were ill or crippled, dining with outcasts, comforting those burdened by life and even resuscitating the dead. Certainly, His compassion for others is well worth emulating but, according to Fr. Peter, His compassion had nothing to do with why He was tortured and killed. Few if any people would be persecuted for being compassionate. Jesus was killed because He sought justice for all God's children. Any who seek such justice will be persecuted by those in power who have much at stake for keeping things as they are. The organization Fr Peter started, A Faith That Does Justice, seeks to equip people with the tools necessary to seek such justice even in the face of almost certain persecution. Fr Peter explained that as good and necessary as compassion is, it is not justice.

Racism in our Church – How to Recognize It and How to Address It – with Father Oscar Pratt

December 10, 2018

Father Oscar Pratt, an African-American priest, Pastor of Saint Katherine Drexel Parish in Dorchester spoke on determining where racism is in our church and its parishes, and how to address it once found. Where are places and efforts where the races can do much good by working together? How do they get started? How to meet and relate?

In parishes which are historically and/or geographically racial “islands,” how can meaningful interracial connections be formed? Brother John Dornbos was Coordinator for the event.

RECAP: Father Pratt was a superb presenter on the subject of racism and how to recognize and deal with it. He is a dynamic, energized and forceful speaker, and his talk was laced with compelling stories drawn from his own life. His definition of racism was highly detailed and quite informative, with an emphasis on the problem as intimately involved with the issue of power, yet much of it is unconscious and unintended, a product of being brought up in this society. The basic thrust of his commentary on how to deal with the issue was to just start in your own community and introduce the young people (and others) to those of other races by way of visits and joint projects, whatever causes them to meet and interact. A joint presentation with Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Prison Ministry - with Deacon Frank Tremblay

January 7, 2019

If Jesus were on earth today, would we find Him in the prisons, talking and dining with the most loathed criminals and outcasts? Of course, we would. He would be there “to seek and to save the lost” and to restore them to their true identity, children of God, just as He did with Zacchaeus. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2. This evening we considered some ways by which all the Baptized can answer the call to serve others.

RECAP: Normand LeBlanc, who first suggested this topic, kicked off tonight’s meeting by showing a short film called “Reaching Behind Prison Bars,” produced by the Prison Visitation and Support (PVS) organization. PVS is a national organization which trains and supports volunteers who visit federal and military prisons. The primary purpose of the volunteers is to listen to those prisoners who desire supportive contact from those outside the prison system. Normand suggested to

those wanting more information to contact PVS at www.prisonvisitation.org. Normand stressed that because of the way the federal prison system operates, prisoners are often incarcerated great distances away from friends and family and thereby making visits from them unlikely. All this makes their mission all the more rewarding. Our principal speaker was Deacon Frank Tremblay who has a prison ministry at the Suffolk County Jail. Deacon Frank was careful to explain the differences between jails and prisons. Those in prison have been found guilty of a crime and sentenced to over two years of incarceration. Those being held in a jail are either awaiting trial or have received a sentence of less than two years. These facts result in a very different attitude of those being detained in jail versus those serving their time in a prison. Those in jail are more likely to claim innocence and often express feelings of indignation at being detained. Deacon Frank spends three days a week giving spiritual direction, lending a sympathetic ear and, on Saturdays, providing Eucharistic Services at the jail's chapel. Unlike the volunteers of PVS, Deacon Frank is often ministering within the general jail population.

Our third speaker of the evening was Fr Robert Gaudreau who is the Catholic Chaplain at MCI Norfolk and Pondville prisons here in Massachusetts. The MCI Norfolk prison is the largest state prison in the system with a large percentage of the prison population serving life sentences. In contrast, the Pondville facility is where prisoners who are nearing the end of their sentences serve their remaining detention as they transition into life outside the prison system. Fr Robert meets many prisoners who after much time to reflect on their circumstances seem truly repentant.

Voices from the Border and a Call for Justice

January 14, 2019

Joining us for a presentation and discussion were human rights activists Sunny Robinson and Jeanne Gallo, who had just returned from the US-Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona, where they met with human rights workers, the families of the disappeared, DACA and the organization 67

Suenos Youth. Sister Linda Bessom, SND, a longtime friend of the Saint Susanna community, joined them in this presentation. Sunny and Jeanne bring a wealth of information and understanding of U.S. policy issues around criminalization of immigration, legal issues about asylum, arms sales to Mexico and Central America, and the militarization of the U.S. – Mexico border. Sister Linda is a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur who currently is the Co-Chair of Pax Christi, Beverly. She is a longtime advocate of justice issues, and has been a community organizer and outreach coordinator for many years at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, at which she volunteers. She is also currently involved with ECCO (Essex County Community Organization) which works on systemic change in criminal and immigrant justice reform.

RECAP: Rather than each speaker maintaining possession of the mike for a sustained one third of the time, the mike was handed back and forth several times during the presentation. The major takeaway was that not only are current policies at the southern border immoral, they violate our own laws on immigration. Astounding! There are several organizations offering welcome and compassion to those our government chooses to reject and one such entity is The Annunciation House of El Paso. Their web address is <https://annunciationhouse.org> and donations are sorely needed.

A Joint Presentation with Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Women of the Bible – with Professor Mary Joan Leith

January 21, 2019

By popular demand Professor Mary Joan Leith was called upon to speak about Women in the Bible. She chose to give prominence to women of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), who are often neglected in Christian religious education. Unlike the New Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures have given entire books of their scripture over to women considered important to their story. Professor Leith, Chair of Religious

Studies at Stonehill College, is a long-time friend of Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation.

RECAP: The presentation centered on the Old Testament forebears of Mary, mother of Jesus. With a superb and beautifully illustrated PowerPoint background, Professor Leith told it like it is, warts and all, as she presented the status of women in the various ages of the Old Testament, the standards of behavior in those times, and the exceptions which seemed to abound with respect to the biblical characters, male and female. The accuracy of the rendition was totally supported with quotes from the scriptures themselves, and all was told with a fantastic sense of humor, as is Professor Leith's style. The audience had dared the elements expecting an outstanding presentation, and they were not disappointed. To top it all off, Professor Leith admitted that she greatly enjoyed all of her visits to Saint Susanna Parish, that her word for the parish was "prophetic," and that she would be available for any future events we might invite her to present.

Flawed Human Heroes of The Bible: What Are Their Stories Trying To Convey? -with Professor Nathaniel DesRosiers

February 4 & 11, 2019

This two-week session addressed the question of just what the stories of the very human and therefore flawed heroes of the Bible are trying to tell us. Professor DesRosiers is a perennial favorite here at Saint Susanna Adult Formation. He is Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Stonehill College in Easton and Visiting Professor at Brown University.

RECAP: The presentation was divided into two parts with the Hebrew Bible being featured on February 4th and the New Testament on the 11th. It was wonderful to see some of Professor DesRosiers' personal photos of the sites in the Holy Land that we were discussing as it added a nice personal touch to the talk. Professor DesRosiers often tweaks our topics a bit and this time his expansion of the topic to include unsung heroes was inspired. Never one to shy away from controversy, one

character Professor DesRosiers chose to highlight was none other than Jesus himself which, I think, surprised most of those in attendance. We were encouraged to ask questions as they arose rather than wait for a designated question and answer segment and for a period of time mid lecture, the questions were coming rapid fire. All in all, a thought provoking and educational two-week series.

The Journey From The Head To The Heart: A Journey Through Reason To Faith - with Tim Sullivan

March 11, 2019

Any journey from the head to the heart must, by definition, begin in the head. Can we use reason alone to discern that God must exist? Has science eliminated the need for God in order to explain our existence and the existence of the cosmos? We employed some very old thought experiments to see where logic and reason can take us. Hopefully, what begins in our heads can make the journey to our hearts as we discuss and become confident in the evidence for the existence of God. Perhaps after this presentation, we will all be more willing to engage in a calm and reasoned conversation with someone who expresses doubt or even denies God's existence. Our presenter, Tim Sullivan, has been facilitating the Tuesday night Scripture Study meetings for the past seven years and has recently begun working with Deacon Larry directing the Monday Night Adult Faith Formation Program. Most Thursday mornings during the academic year you can find him at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham studying the Scriptures.

RECAP: The main thrust of the talk was to share some ways on how to engage in conversations with those who have not considered their relationship with God. In a way that engages our perception of the world around us, certain pathways open up that lead us deeper into a reality beyond just an empirical interpretation of events. We all have common ground in what we can perceive about the reality we all share and using that as a starting point, we can trigger the natural curiosity we are

endowed with to have a potentially fruitful encounter with another and bring us closer together in the process. Judging from the lively Q&A period, it seems there was at least a modicum of success in that regard.

Social Isolation in the Era of Technology – with Professor Robert Brenneman

March 24, 2019

Professor Brenneman spoke last season on the topic of Violence in Central America, and the damage it has done in several countries. He returns this season to speak on a topic well known to him and perhaps equally menacing, which he has taught to his college students. The subject is very much under discussion among academics, with publications such as “Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other” and “Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in the Digital Age” by Professor Sherry Turkle of MIT. Professor Brenneman points out just one small example from his own life: “...The cultural changes ushered in largely by the spread of a technology do not just impact “choices” made. They impact the reality that we live in and must deal with. My son Nico does not yet have a phone, but since most of his bus-riding peers do, he will be increasingly “left alone” if not “left out” by his generation the longer he goes without one. And this leads to the agonizing decision that will be made by many Gen-X parents like me—when will we have to buy the kids a phone? One more reason to think carefully and strategically about the social circles that envelope your kids. They matter now more than ever.” Robert Brenneman holds a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame, is a recent Fulbright Fellow, and is currently Associate Professor of Sociology at Saint Michael’s College in Vermont.

RECAP: There were about 19 youngsters from our Confirmation Program in attendance, which was fortuitous because the program was immensely appropriate for people their age, as well as the several

parents who accompanied them. The entire evening was very active, both as to the youngsters and the adults, with an exercise for all which everyone reported as quite successful. Professor Brenneman made a fact-packed presentation on the principal theme that as with every advance in technology, unwanted/unexpected results often accompany the improvement, and in the case of the cellular telephone and related media, and the accompanying obsession with concentrating on the cellphone rather than live interaction, several unfortunate results have impacted particularly severely on high school age youngsters with respect to their suicide rate, their rate of reporting severe loneliness, a significant reduction in dating, a significant reduction in developing "small talk" skills and several other points. The audience was rapt.

Effects of Global Climate Change – with Peter Hartzel

April 29, 2019

Pope Francis "pulls no punches" when lamenting pollution, climate change, a lack of clean water, loss of biodiversity, and an overall decline in human life and a breakdown of society. "Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years," he states.

In *Laudato Si'* Francis "describes a relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment, for which he blamed apathy, the reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness. " *Laudato Si'* states that "climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods."

This, from Peter: The history of global climate change provides plenty of cautionary data points for humans looking at modern scenarios. The Little Ice Age (1300-1850) offers a lot to think about. It had major impacts on populations, governments and health. This talk puts this transformative period in context and hopes to provide insights into our evolving conditions.

Peter Hartzel is one of our longest serving presenters in Adult Faith

Formation. For more than ten years he has been enlightening us with such varied topics as Aramaic Prayer, Gandhi, Zoroaster, Religion in America, Luther and Lutheranism, The Crusades, Saint Francis/Pope Francis, Heresy/Inquisitions, and more.

RECAP: As is so predictable with his presentations, the event was replete with firm factually based data, displayed in chart form for the most part, but with explanatory pictures where appropriate. Peter explained, with examples, that while it is quite clear that we are experiencing a highly unusual and historically quite accelerated change in the planet's climate, almost demanding a relationship with current activities of the human race, the actual occurrences have all been experienced before over eons of the planet's existence, from what one might call purely natural events such as sun spots, volcanic activity, changes in planetary orbit and the like. Since science does not make blanket conclusions but rather goes where the data lead it, Peter's presentation presented probabilities rather than bald-faced conclusory statements. Peter also took the time to explain how and why precipitation changes, temperature spikes, ice formations, droughts, etc., occur on the planet's surface, and have occurred before. There was a certain amount of push-back from some of the audience members who had expected a more "partisan" presentation, but Peter calmly and carefully addressed these anxieties. In short, the audience was left, fully informed, to come up with their own conclusions. In all, a worthwhile presentation.

Father Steve's Book Group

May 5, 12, and 19, 2019

As usual, the Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation season closed with Father Steve's Book Discussion Group on the first three Mondays of May. The book chosen by Father Steve this year was Unbelievable: Why Neither Ancient Creeds Nor the Reformation Can Produce a Living Faith Today, by John Shelby Spong (HarperOne publishers, 2018). Some of the old-timers with the book discussion group remembered that we

read an earlier book by Bishop Spong, *The Sins of Scripture*, way back in 2006. He can be quite controversial, so the discussion was lively. Most everybody had a great deal of praise for the book, and it certainly generated a lot of discussion. Participants were quite candid about what they could no longer believe and how that impacted them and their attitude toward church. Many reported feeling freed by this discussion and this book.

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Season 2017 / 2018

Roland Merullo/Religion and Current Politics

October 16, 2017

We live in a country divided by partisan politics, in a world torn apart by hatred and war. What if Jesus, alarmed at how the U.S. has lost its compassion for the poor and the immigrants, dismayed at how his teachings have been distorted and used by politicians and religious zealots to turn love into hatred and faith into a call for arms, returns and announces he is running for President? The notion of Jesus coming to earth and running for President was at the heart of one of Roland Merullo's novels, *"American Savior"*, but it grew out of an idea he's wrestled with in many of his books: "How is one to behave in this imperfect world?" and "As Christians, what should our response be to the divisiveness and anger in America now?". Roland discussed these

questions in his presentation.

A bit about Roland Merullo - Roland 's most recent book is the “Delight of Being Ordinary: A Road Trip with the Pope and [the] Dalai Lama” His books range from suspense novels (Fidel's Last Days, A Russian Requiem, Revere Beach Boulevard, The Return) to love stories (A Little Love Story, The Talk- Funny Girl, Leaving Losapas) to golf and travel books (Golfing with God, Passion for Golf, The Italian Summer, Taking the Kids to Italy) to humorous spiritual road trips (Breakfast with Buddha, Lunch with Buddha, Dinner with Buddha, Golfing with God, American Savior).

We had a very large audience (109), and lots of participation.

Merullo walked the narrow and winding path between the left and the right of the political spectrum in his desire to keep lines of communication open, although he also, quite rightly, disclosed that he is well over on the liberal side, as a matter of fairness. As is so true of so many of us, his family has a large split between the left and the right in these difficult times, and he told of his efforts to keep communication open at least as far as he himself is concerned. He (and a number of audience members) gave a good description of why people on the right have done what they did and feel as they currently do. No earthshaking disclosures of how this reconciliation is going to come about, which alone tells us a lot. Q&A was lengthy and lively.

Native American Spirituality: Cultivating the 3Rs: Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility as Indigenous Practices

October 30, 2017

Professor Joyce Rain Anderson was our speaker. Last season Brayton Shanley, in speaking with us about Standing Rock, mentioned how awed he was by the spirituality of the Native Americans displayed at that event.

Joyce Rain Anderson traces her heritage to Algonquin, Wampanoag, English, and Irish ancestors. She received her BA and MA from the University of Massachusetts Boston and her Ph.D. in 2005 from the University of New Hampshire. She is Associate Professor of English at Bridgewater State University; there she teaches first year writing, upper-

level courses, and graduate courses, and is currently developing a course in Global Indigenous Literatures and Writing. Currently, she is the Faculty Associate for the Pine Ridge Partnership where she works with Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge South Dakota. Her co-edited collection, *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching Indigenous Rhetorics* was released in November 2015 from Utah State University Press, and has received an honorable mention for the 2017 Outstanding Book Award from CCCC. In this talk Professor Anderson demonstrated how the culture, history and spirituality of indigenous peoples are intertwined: “Prominently situated in front of the dorms on a broad walkway through the Bridgewater State University campus, our two sustainable, organic garden beds mirror each other. In the middle of each, the three sisters of corn, beans and squash are planted in the tradition of our ancestors. In the process of preparing, planting, and harvesting we can listen to their stories. These plants are our relatives. The plants become the teachers and we must listen to their stories. In doing so, we bring their teachings into our lives and learn to live in relationship with one another.” Our speaker presented as a very likable person, and had a certain joie de vivre in her way of presenting. Her presentation was in two parts: a brief history of the rocky relationship between the Native Americans and the Europeans, who arrived as "saviors" of the continent who thought they had nothing to learn from its occupants; and an excellent discourse on what the land and the plants have to teach us if we would just listen. She seemed to be well received. Because she ended her presentation about twenty minutes early, we had an extended break, but after the coffee break the Q&A was really solid, with excellent questions and comments from her audience. She ended with a sort of mini-workshop on how to make toys from corn-husks, which attracted mostly the Confirmation students. There were approximately 103 in attendance, including about 30 Confirmation students and a group of their parents and sponsors, most of the latter being first-timers, it appeared.

**The Many Meanings of Worship (*Ibadah*) in Islam
November 6, 2017**

Our speaker was Shaykh AbdurRahman Hashim Ahmad of the Islamic Center of New England in Sharon, to explore the broad meaning of the term Worship (Ibadah) in Islam and what it entails.

Imam Ahmad was born in 1977 in Lackawanna, New York. At the age of 2, he moved with his parents and two brothers to the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia and spent 6 years there. He began memorizing the Qur'an in the Masjid Al-Haram while his father was studying at Umm Al-Quraa University in Makkah. At the age of 8 his family moved again, but this time to Karachi, Pakistan, where his father took up a post as professor of Arabic. At the age of 9, Shaykh AbdurRahman completed memorizing the Holy Qur'an, and has been leading tarawih prayers since 1991. He then began his `Alimiyyah studies where he rigorously studied the sciences of Arabic, `Aqidah, Tafseer, Hadeeth, Fiqh, and other sciences, under highly respected Islamic scholars graduating in 2000 with a full ijazah to teach these Islamic sciences. Upon graduating he continued his quest of gaining knowledge by enrolling in a specialized study of the Hadeeth sciences for an additional 2 years. In 2002 he started teaching the sacred Islamic sciences such as Arabic, Hadeeth, Fiqhand other subjects in Karachi. In 2008 he took up a post as the Imam of Masjid as-Saaffaat in Trenton, NJ until August of 2015. Also, in 2013, he and his wife, Ustadhah Nadia Salma, founded the Nakhlah Institute as a means for disseminating the sacred Islamic sciences to dedicated students on an advanced and rigorous level. Currently he is the new Imam and resident scholar at the ICNE in Sharon, MA.

We had a very respectable crowd of 63 in attendance for Imam Ahmad. He was lucid, well-informed, expansive and melodious in his presentation, with a touch of humor, as he explained the source and basic tenets of Islam, and explained some of the customs related to the faith. The audience seemed to really take to him, and the Q&A period was excellent, with incisive questions and clear explanations on some very complicated subjects. Several people came up to me at the break and after the event to express their appreciation for our making a presentation on this topic, pointing out how difficult it is to get accurate information in this subject area. The audience had a number of newcomers and several people returning after a significant absence.

"The Crusades."

November 13, 2017

We had a very interesting program with our local church historian, Peter Hartzel, entitled, euphemistically, "The Crusades." He spoke on why we seem to have been handed a bill of goods about the intentions and purposes of the parties at the time of the "Crusades" in the 11th through 13th Centuries. Why does mention of this period to the people of the Middle East raise such anger? Just what went on and why? Peter Hartzel did a yeoman's job with his presentation on the Crusades. Loaded with facts and interesting asides, a trademark of Peter's events, the talk went very well. His usual humorous yet concise method produced an excellent result. Peter is a great asset to have in the program. Attendance was respectable in keeping with figures this season.

The Role of Saint Paul

December 4 and 11, 2017

Professor Nathaniel DesRosiers walked with us the path of Saint Paul at the very beginnings of Christianity, even before the Gospels were written. As with his previous presentations here at Saint Susanna, there was excellent audience participation and interaction. He is well known to Saint Susanna Adult Formation, and extremely well-liked. He is Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Stonehill College in Easton, where he teaches courses in Classics, New Testament, and Early Christianity, and Visiting Professor at Brown University. He received a Master's degree from Harvard University in 1998 and a Ph.D. from Brown University in 2007. His research focuses on the issues of conflict and competition in the ancient world and the social and intellectual developments that helped to create and shape the religious movements and texts of antiquity.

There were 95 people in attendance, 23 of them confirmation students. Professor DesRosiers, who has presented here quite a bit, is such a great presenter that he has a following among our audience, plus we have had large audiences now from the very beginning of this season.

We all know a lot more about Paul than we did a couple of weeks before. As the frosting on the cake, Professor DesRosiers is quite enamored of the audience here, asserting that they are alert, interested in what he has to say, incisive in their questions, eager to hear more. We apparently put the college students to shame.

Film: "I Am Not Your Negro."

January 8, 2018

In 1979, James Baldwin wrote a letter to his literary agent describing his next project, "Remember This House." The book was to be a revolutionary, personal account of the lives and successive assassinations of three of his close friends - Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. At the time of Baldwin's death in 1987, he left behind only thirty completed pages of his manuscript. Now, in his incendiary new documentary, master filmmaker Raoul Peck envisions the book James Baldwin never finished. The result is a radical, up-to-the-minute examination of race in America, using Baldwin's original words and flood of rich archival material. I Am Not Your Negro is a journey into black history that connects the past of the Civil Rights movement to the present of #BlackLivesMatter. It is a film that questions black representation in Hollywood and beyond. And, ultimately, by confronting the deeper connections between the lives and assassination of these three leaders, Baldwin and Peck have produced a work that challenges the very definition of what America stands for. The documentary was nominated for an Oscar in 2016

We had some doubts about attendance numbers for the Baldwin film, as we had just come out of what seemed like eons of frigid weather and obstructive snow, but we had a very good turnout, with 48-50 viewers. The movie was excellent, as established by the fact that no one got up to get some popcorn or coffee. The documentary style was perfect, and the research was evident, with a large number of film clips going all the way back into the sixties. It appeared that we had some new faces in the audience, a couple of whom were pretty "excited" about having found out about us. A Joint Presentation with Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair. Thanks, as usual, to Pat Ferrone and her committee for yet another excellent presentation.

Women in the Church: Prophetic Voices

January 15, 2018

Professor Ernest Collamati, retired from the Theology Department at Regis College, spoke on this compelling topic. He has the same talent exhibited here at Saint Susanna Parish by Professor Nate DesRosiers, the ability to draw the audience into the process and have them become their own teachers. Everyone was abuzz from the first minute, and the two hours flew by. We got an excellent introduction into the whole concept of what it means to be "clergy," and all its ramifications. We learned far more than that women were under consideration for entry into the role of deacon. That became a minor point as we reviewed who and what has been diaconal in our lives. Despite biting cold and some snow flurries twenty-nine brave souls made up our audience.

Cosmic Spirituality and Deep Incarnation

January 22, 2018

These are hot topics stemming back to Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and beyond, and constantly referenced by Father Richard Rohr and theologian Elizabeth Johnson, but how much do we really know about those subjects? Brother John Dornbos, who holds advanced degrees in this area, began with us to explore these topics. Brother John made a great presentation and the audience hung on his every word. He held their attention throughout.

The audience was unusually large, numbering 67, who turned out on a frigid and dark mid-winter night. He interconnected his many years of studying every subject known to mankind, including physics and advanced math, and collecting multiple degrees along the way, with his returning always to Christ as what and who was important. No big words, no fancy language, just a life lived in advanced science yet interwoven with Christ. Very well done. There were five new registrations, and I suspect most if not all were people attracted by Brother John.

"Hopeful Resistance/ Resisting Hopelessness, A Conversation"

With Frida Berrigan

January 29, 2018

Frida Berrigan is a mother and stepmother, wife and daughter. Her parents, Phil Berrigan and Elizabeth McAlister, were a former priest and nun who became nationwide icons for their prophetic witness against war and nuclear weapons, which sometimes resulted in long jail sentences. She grew up in the community they helped found, Jonah House in Baltimore, and becoming a parent herself has forced her to come to terms with her own upbringing in new ways. She came to Saint Susanna Parish to discuss resistance without despair.

Her Talk was an outstanding success. The headcount was excellent at 70. Frida spoke of her balancing of a family life with a serious call to ministry, in a fashion that was understandable and compelling. She spoke of choosing a principal call to befriending the inmates at Guantanamo Bay, with an occasional march or the like on other issues of the day. An opportunity to make contact with the Guantanamo prisoners was presented to all in attendance. As always thanks go to Pat Ferrone and the Parish Pax Christi Committee for bringing Frida to us.

Violence and Its Impact on Humanity

February 5, 2018

Professor Robert Brenneman of St. Michael's College in Winooski, Vermont, Fulbright Scholar, and author of *Homies and Hermanos: God and Gangs in Central America*, came to speak with us on violence and its impact on humanity, in light of his years of study, discussing the way that, in Guatemala, the violence of an earlier era (civil war, and state terror) has morphed into street crime, narco-conflict, and organized crime, while fueling demand for weapons and private security, and what this means for all of us worldwide. His talk was excellent, particularly in separating propaganda and politically motivated fiction from the actual events unfolding down in Central America. We all sort of have an inkling that we have been handed a bunch of goods by partisan groups and even our own federal government at times during recent decades, centering mainly around stirring up fears about immigrants and refugees, and support for oppressive right-wing governments that keep control with death squads and the like. It was good to get the actual facts. At the same time he did not varnish the truth about the violent atmospheres in

some of these countries, and with respect to some of the youth gangs founded here in the US or imported into the US (which mainly restrict themselves to killing each other, and do not constitute a big threat to the American populace as whole, he reports).

As Catholics we may actually have been kept better informed than those of other faiths about such situations because nuns, priests, and even bishops have been the targets of the violence, most often by oppressive governments. Robert Brenneman is a friendly, soft-spoken kind of a fellow, not the least bit professorial, and clicked with the audience right away. Q&A went very well. Attendance was in the area of 40.

Justice Denied

February 12, 2018

This was a joint presentation of the Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee and Adult Faith Formation. It is the story of the incarceration of our Japanese residents here in the United States during World War II as seen through the eyes of a Japanese-American family. It included a slide presentation with numerous historic photographs and documents. The speaker is an actual family member, Margaret Yamamoto, recently retired from a forty year career in the public relations field, most recently as Director of Community Programs at WGBH-TV. She is co-president of the New England Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, a human rights organization. With our nation's current controversies over immigration at the forefront of our attention, this could not have been a more timely presentation.

The presentation indeed was just wonderful. She was a great speaker, and it was like we were listening at her feet to her story. No rancor or anger were reflected, neither that evening nor, surprisingly, during the internment or thereafter, as she reported, by anyone in her family. In a sense this made the injustice, stupidity and cruelty all the more outrageous. The warning for the current circumstances of the White House was all the more foreboding. The Q&A session was very fruitful, and information flowed in both directions as people in the audience reflected their experiences. Mrs. Yamamoto herself commented on how much information was present there in the audience. There were 46

people present for this event.

How Do We Talk About the Cross

March 5, 2018

Tim Sullivan spoke on issues surrounding the question "We Are Taught 'Christ Died for our Sins.' Does This Mean What I Think It Means?"

Over the last two thousand years or so there have been quite a few attempts to come to terms with why the Earthly life of Jesus ended on the Cross. Some concepts are confusing, some are horrible to contemplate and most are both.

In Tim's talk we examined some of the most popular ideologies, but we sought within Scripture a non-violent way to interpret what Jesus accomplished on the Cross.

For those of us who were hoping that Tim's talk would be on a par with his outstanding talk last season on heresy, Tim did not disappoint. An audience of forty was treated to an excellent presentation. While first paying appropriate heed to the opinions of the Fathers of the Church about the meaning of the cross, Tim quickly moved to a talk not at all laced with theo-babble, but rather a Journey into the meaning of the subject, accompanied by all of us, with Christ as our companion on the trek. With the assist of a lighthearted PowerPoint and an easy manner of speaking, Tim brought us through the bad and the ugly interpretations to the good. The trip was delightful. The Q&A period was almost hushed as comments and questions were shared. Because the tone of the presentation was in effect essential to the understanding of it, Tim was a bit nonplussed when asked to please prepare a summary of the talk in maybe one page. In short, an extremely worthwhile evening.

Refugees

March 12, 2018

Those fleeing their countries due to war, famine, fear of death, and many other causes have become a crucial part of America's conversation with itself, and a moral issue for those with religious beliefs of whatever persuasion. Joining us was Professor Westy Egmont of the Graduate

School of Social Work at Boston College, Director of the School's Immigrant Integration Lab, and a Consultant to NECN on immigration issues.

In Matthew's Gospel rendition of the Last Judgment it is written: "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in..." Mt 25:34-46. What does this mean in today's world? Last evening an audience of 37 appeared to hear Prof. Egmont's talk on Refugees. We were treated to what turned out to be an admirable witness talk loaded with verifiable data. He explained in some detail who these people were, where they were coming from and why, what was happening to them as they took on their new status of refugee, emigre, asylum seeker, and other subsets of the issues involved. Despite his description of how humanity was unable - or in some cases unwilling- to keep up with providing assistance to these unfortunate people, his talk was nonetheless upbeat. He spoke highly of the international agencies doing their best, particularly the UN agencies and Catholic Relief Services, and made due note, with specifics, of how the Catholic Church has been way out in the forefront of these issues. Professor Egmont paused for a while to highlight the POWR program now running smoothly at Our Lady Help of Christians/Sacred Heart Parishes in Newton, and the birthing process here at Saint Susanna's in partnership with our Congregational and Episcopal brothers and sisters here in Dedham (Peter Metz of OLHC and Pat Ferrone of Saint Susanna's gave updates on their progress). High praise was given to such countries as Turkey and Germany for their incredible generosity, especially in comparison to the rapidly shrinking amount of assistance on offer by the USA, and to those countries doing what they can despite a lack of resources of their own, such as Bangladesh. Particularly impressive was how Prof. Egmont was able to show the remarkable generosity of the USA in accepting immigrants when one looks in terms of decades and scores of years, under various federal administrations of both political parties, opening the door for optimism about the issue with a future

change in administrations. All in all, this was a remarkable talk, and he was a superb presenter.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

March 19, 2018

Father Stephen Wilbricht, CSC, of Stonehill College, spoke in a continuation of our Series on Sacraments in the Twenty-first Century, which began with Father Folan's talk on the Eucharist last season. Father Wilbricht discussed what we have variously known as Confession, Penance, and Reconciliation, based on the latest thought.

Father Stephen Wilbricht did a good job presenting an interpretation of the Sacrament which no one present had dreamed of, but it was excellent. Everybody there seemed to get a lot out of it, and he was quite expert in drawing members of the audience into the discussion. He himself is an excellent presenter. You could see the ideas being generated as the listeners made their comments during the Q&A period. Starting us off with an extensive history of how the Sacrament has been celebrated over the centuries, faults and all, he then took us through the possibilities for how it could be well celebrated today. His approach centered on bringing back to the sacrament the community's focus on the Eucharist and unity for any who might have strayed, with extensive involvement by lectors, cantors, and a congregation, something like the second form of the sacrament sometimes described as a Penitential Service, but much improved in his version. Whether his presentation, good as it was, turned anyone around from what has developed into a desertion of this sacrament is a question, but the task was worth a try. There were 21 Confirmation students present as a part of their program, and 27 adults as well, some of whom may have been parents or sponsors.

Icons of the Civil Rights Movement: Dispelling White Privilege

April 9, 2018

Nearly 50 years have passed since the April 4, 1968 assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. We were joined on April 9 for a timely

presentation by Pamela Chatterton-Purdy, artist, and husband, Rev. Dr. David Purdy, a Methodist minister and author, for a multi-faceted presentation on the Civil Rights Movement. Both were active participants in the movement, which has been chronicled in their book, "Icons of the Civil Rights Movement: Dispelling White Privilege," and in a DVD of those years. Pam shared some of the stories of her beautiful icons of important Civil Rights figures, some of which were on display. Their life-long dedication to peacemaking has been recognized by the NAACP of Cape Cod with their "Unsung Hero" award, and by the Barnstable County Human Rights Commission's "Cornerstone Award." They made a great presentation that evening. It is astounding how involved they have become over the decades in the lives of the many heroes of the Civil Rights Movement in the South. An audience of 33 was treated to an all-encompassing personal memoir of so many figures only known to us as names, as well as a well-produced DVD filled with numerous first person testimonies. Copies of several icons created by Pam were displayed, further enriching the evening's presentation. While 33 is a decent number, it is too bad we did not have a banner audience for such a direct personal review of what continues to be an epic movement. It was a wonderful presentation full of sometimes now forgotten history but redolent with emotion. Would that we could have spent more time on some of the individual stories.

The Myths of Grief

April 30, 2018

Our speaker was Professor Melissa Kelly of Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, whom many recall from her presentation at Adult Faith Formation on the subject of Grief in March of 2015.

The Myths of Grief: While all of us will experience loss and subsequent grief in our lives, we may be confused or concerned about grief itself. There are many pervasive myths about grief, such as the idea that grief proceeds through predictable stages and that "successful" grieving helps a person return to "normal" or achieve closure. In this event, we considered some of the common myths of grief in light of contemporary research, including Pauline Boss' work on ambiguous loss. This event

also helped us to consider the place of our faith and religious resources as we grieve or support others in grief.

Melissa M. Kelley is associate professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling and the faculty director of the Professional Ministry Practicum at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Previously, she was on the faculty of Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA. She has many years of pastoral-clinical experience, including serving as a campus minister for 14 years at both Boston College and Emmanuel College in Boston. She holds a PhD from Boston University in pastoral psychology. Dr. Kelley is a fellow and nationally certified pastoral counselor through the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. She is also certified in Thanatology: Death, Dying and Bereavement through the Association for Death Education and Counseling, the primary organization in the country for all bereavement researchers, educators, and clinicians. From her prior appearance with us we knew that she is extremely knowledgeable, has a great speaking voice, and has a very positive attitude.

We had anticipated a great evening, and she did not disappoint. To a sizable audience of 63 she delivered a talk which was informed and upbeat. Several people had been concerned that the topic would bring them down emotionally, but the exact opposite was true. She knows her subject area, and she is very clear in her presentation style, with a wide open attitude towards questions and comments. She has the gift of causing the audience to feel that they have educated themselves. Many commented that they had felt relieved, that they should not think they were "doing it wrong" if their grieving was not following some formula they had heard about. A great event for the formal season's end.

Father Steve's Book Group

May 7, 14 and 21, 2018

As usual, Father Steve Josoma, Pastor of Saint Susanna Parish, selects a current book for discussion over three sessions. A discussion group format is used, with small groups. Father Steve chose as this year's book Father Gregory Boyle's *Barking to the Choir*. Some will recall that we read Father Boyle's previous book, *Tattoos on the Heart*, a few years ago

in the Book Group. Discussion was lively and, predictably, broad in scope. There was an understandable reluctance to bring an end to each session.

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Season 2016 / 2017

**Movie “Spotlight” and Presentation by Walter Robinson
of the Boston Globe Spotlight Team**

Sep. 26 and Oct. 3, 2016

The movie "Spotlight" attracted 65-70 people, with some in attendance who reported not having come to church since the scandal broke. Spotlight is the Academy Award winning movie about the Boston Archdiocese’s efforts to conceal child abuse by clergy, and the Boston Globe Spotlight Team and its successful exposure of the scandal. Walter Robinson, who was the Spotlight Team Editor at the Boston Globe for this story, spoke the following Monday on the topic. Walter V. Robinson is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter for The Boston Globe, where he has worked as reporter and editor for 34 years. From 2007 to 2014, he was a Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Northeastern University in Boston. Robinson currently holds the title of Editor-at-Large at the Boston Globe. The turnout for his presentation was enormous, numbering 147 people.

The Hidden and Long-Term Effects of War

October 17, 2016

Margot Carlson-Delogne was a good speaker for her cause, and her

fledgling documentary put the idea home as she presented on understanding the long-lasting and often unnoticed effects of war, and the healing process, with the example of Vietnam. It was good to see that the participants in the 2Sides Program overcame their hatred of "the enemy" and reached out to each other. You get a whole new idea of what is really bad about war, including a lasting hatred between the previously warring nations.

Ms. Carlson Delogne is the executive director and founder of the 2Sides Project, and presented portions of her documentary. The background was the Vietnam War, and our experience since then, including the point of view of children who lost a parent in the war, the positions taken by governments, and those of the communities involved.

Biblical Literary Criticism – Is the Bible “True?”

November 7, 2016

Presenter: Deacon Laurence J. Bloom

Why do different parts of the Bible say opposite things? Why do some parts sound like fables? How do we base our faith on what sometimes appear to be made-up stories? The main thrust of this presentation was on how to read the Bible so it makes a lot more sense, by understanding literary forms and historical settings, instead of depending on Fundamentalism. The Catholic Church has been calling on its scholars to assist the believers with this effort since the 1940s, but beyond telling people that it's OK to believe it took longer than six days to create the universe, little seems to have sunk in about what people should believe if they are not required to believe what is actually written. This evening was a very brief introduction to what the scholars have uncovered.

Deacon Larry kept it light and interesting. It was reportedly extremely well organized, crammed with cogent information, leavened with humor and delivered with aplomb.

Eileen Markey, Author

“A Radical Faith: The Assassination of Sister Maura”

November 14, 2016

On December 2, 1980, Sister Maura Clarke and three other women were stopped by El Salvador's brutal US-trained National Guard at a checkpoint set specifically for them. On that night the National Guardsmen kidnapped, raped and killed them. Their discarded bodies were left by the side of a remote dirt road.

Investigative journalist Eileen Markey breathed life back into one of these women in *A Radical Faith*, the riveting biography of Maryknoll Sister Maura Clarke. Ms. Markey came to Saint Susanna to tell us that story.

"Eileen Markey's beautifully told narrative reminds us of Maura's courage in the face of brutal dictators and shocking suffering. It's an important story that has been forgotten for too long, and Markey's book returns Maura to her deserved place in history." -Martin Sheen

Ms. Markey's presentation went well. The interest level was high. Eileen took a while laying the foundation for her talk by reading from her book, but the event took off when she started speaking extemporaneously and during the Q&A period. Several people who were very familiar with the historical events in El Salvador at the time were present, and appeared new to Saint Susanna's, including a Latin American Study Group. This was a joint presentation with Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Jewish Mysticism and the Kabbalah

November 21, 2016

Presenter: Rabbi Jim Morgan

Mystical experiences have been a part of Jewish tradition from the earliest times, beginning with the bible. They have, however, not always been at the center of much of Jewish practice, which often focused more on practical law (halakhah--the Jewish way). Even within streams of Judaism that emphasized mystical experience, including Hasidism, explicit attention to mystical themes was often restricted to men (and a few women) who had already mastered written and oral Torah (i.e., the bible and legal codes based on the Talmud). This limitation is the basis of the well-known rule that people learn Kabbalah (one of the Jewish

terms for the mystical tradition) only after the age of 40. Mistrust and even disdain for mysticism grew during the 20th century, with its emphasis on rationality in all things, including religion. As interest in spiritual experience across a variety of traditions grows now in the early 21st century (even if Madonna's infatuation with Kabbalah has waned!), Jewish mysticism remains a rich vein of discovery for Jews and non-Jews alike. This session presented a short introduction to the Jewish mystical tradition, drawing on texts from the bible, rabbinic literature, and the medieval texts that form the corpus of Kabbalah. The emphasis was on discovering the texts together rather than on a historical overview. Starting from scratch, which is where Rabbi Jim had to start with our audience with a topic like Kabbalah, is always challenging, and Rabbi Jim did a great job with it. He had actual paper handouts, a treat for those who recall fondly the earlier days of Adult Faith Formation, before PowerPoint, and the handouts were both useful and interesting. In a sense this was for us a revisiting of the recent program on biblical criticism, but with a centuries-old perspective of rabbinical thinking, trying to tease out more meaning from the scriptures as they appear on paper. Our speaker was likable and kept everyone interested. The Question and Answer period was active and intelligent. All in all, a well-done program.

Rabbi Jim Morgan, who serves as Rabbinic Advisor to the Worship and Study Congregation at Harvard Hillel and as Rabbi and Chaplain at Center Communities of Brookline, holds a Ph.D. from Yale University.

Addiction, Addicts and the Faith Communities

Dec. 5 and 12, 2016

December 5, 2016 – Addiction's Impact: Families, Communities and Friends.

Is it a disease, moral failing or bad choices? What can we do, does treatment work, what is the treatment, and is there a cure? In Week One Dr. Laura Kehoe of Massachusetts General Hospital, an addiction medicine specialist, and Amy Thomas, RN, who is familiar with the local scene in the Dedham area through the Dedham Coalition for

Alcohol and Drug Awareness, presented. The audience figures were remarkable. The students of the Saint Susanna Confirmation Program, grades 9 and 10, were in attendance.

December 12, 2016 – Response of Faith Communities.

For Week Two we had great numbers as well. There was a Ted Talk video of about 15 minutes on how most of what we thought we know about addiction was untrue, and the new information was imparted. Then Mike Benedetti and Scott Schaeffer-Duffy from the Worcester Catholic Worker Houses gave personal witness talks and had some very practical suggestions for the audience on how to deal with addiction and those addicted in a fashion that is consistent with our Faith Tradition. The Q&A session was active and informative, with a very attentive group of listeners. This was an excellent complement to the medical/scientific information of Week One.

The sum and substance of what was brought out included what to look for, where to get help locally, what was available and not available by way of resources, and what was the best way to work with loved ones who were in the clutches of this condition. Much was learned.

The Gospel of John

Jan. 9 and 16, 2017

Presenter: Professor Nathaniel DesRosiers

Again a resounding success for Professor DesRosiers as he laid out the Gospel of John, compared it to the Synoptics, explained its differences, and showed us the Jesus of John. He has a following at Saint Susanna from his previous appearances, and despite bone-chilling cold the first Monday of the series he had large audiences for both sessions. He is enamored of our audience as well, and asked that he be kept on our list for future presentations. It doesn't get any better than this. Perhaps his popularity is explained in part by the fact that he enlists the audience deeply in making his presentation. He asks questions and then makes the

absolute most of the answers he gets, such that it appears the audience is teaching themselves. Very few educators can do this well, and he is tops at it. He is Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Stonehill College in Easton, where he teaches courses in Classics, New Testament, and Early Christianity, and Visiting Professor at Brown University. He received a Master's degree from Harvard University in 1998 and a Ph.D. from Brown University in 2007. His research focuses on the issues of conflict and competition in the ancient world and the social and intellectual developments that helped to create and shape the religious movements and texts of antiquity.

Nuclear Resistance in Word and Deed

A Conversation with –

The Prophet – Sister Megan Rice

The Professor – Elaine Scarry

The Journalist – Dan Zak

January 30, 2017

Sister Megan's story gives witness to her long-time commitment to stand up to nuclear madness by way of civil disobedience, and bear the burden of long periods of imprisonment for her resistance, most recently a years-long sentence at a federal prison. In 2012, at age 82, carrying a backpack and a deeply held conviction that the United States was breaking international law by quietly keeping up a multibillion-dollar nuclear weapons program, she took part in a middle-of-the-night break-in to a high security nuclear facility in Tennessee – an action that was later described as the largest security breach in American atomic history. Rice's non-violent anti-nuclear action, which involved walking through a wooded hill for two hours in the dark, crawling underneath four fences that had been cut through, and avoiding patrol cars, resulted in her being sentenced to almost three years behind bars.

Elaine Scarry is the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value at Harvard University. Scarry is the author of eight books, most recently *Thermonuclear Monarchy*. In it, she contends that nuclear weapons eliminate the citizenry and the legislature from the

sphere of decision-making about war. Scarry shows how elements of the US Constitution can be used as tools to abolish nuclear weapons.

“Centering on a single episode, a powerful declaration of conscience, Washington Post reporter Dan Zak tells an intensely unsettling story about living with our nuclear arsenal. In July 2012, cutting through fences topped with razor wire and avoiding guards, guns, sensors, armored cars, and alarms, an 80-year-old nun, a Vietnam veteran, and a housepainter, all deeply religious, all affiliated with the pacifist Plowshares movement, broke into the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the "Fort Knox of Uranium."... it's the moral convictions demonstrated by Zak's three holy fools that will remain with readers. A scrupulously reported, gracefully told, exquisitely paced debut.” –Kirkus (starred review)

This evening’s event was an outstanding achievement by Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee. A head count indicated an audience of 114. Veteran staffers estimated that maybe one-quarter of the audience, if that, was from our usual crowd of regular attenders. Many of the audience knew each other and greeted each other warmly as the hall filled up, and without the slightest doubt this was an anti-nuclear crowd. Sister Megan, Dan Zak, and Elaine Scarry all contributed significant information and ideas on the topic of nuclear resistance and networking on the subject. Most compelling was the fact that they somehow found motivation to continue on the mission despite overwhelming odds. Persons without a great deal of faith would have quit long ago. It was very inspiring.

The Evolution of God

February 6, 2017

Presenter: Professor Mary Joan Leith

By popular demand Professor Leith returned to present on the way our understanding of God has grown, and how this is reflected in the Scriptures. Why does God seem almost blood-thirsty in one book of the Bible and kind and loving in the next book? Her mention of that in a prior appearance at Saint Susanna led to a plea on our part that she return and explain that all to us. It is always a question whether Mary

Joan Leith, Chair of Religious Studies at Stonehill College, loves coming here even more than we love having her. She says she finds our audiences a treasure, since they are knowledgeable, committed, willing to listen, open to learning. She has sort of a following of people who do not come to our events that regularly but always show up for her. This evening she charmed and educated us on how the concept of God became more and more clear as centuries went by, and amused us with the still-remaining references to our God as the Storm God, Baal, and the truth that for quite some time God's people were comfortable that He was just one of the gods, the monotheism coming along as ages passed. Another chapter in Biblical Literary Criticism is under our belts.

**Heresy in the Twenty-first Century –
Still with Us After All These Years**

Feb. 13, 2017

Presenter: Tim Sullivan

Tim Sullivan's intention was for us to leave his talk wondering. Tim did a fantastic job with his presentation, wasting little time on bizarre differences among religious authorities over the centuries, and homing in on how heresy could be avoided entirely by just concentrating on relationship between oneself and God. He had some good humor, some personal stories, everything thing you need to grab and keep an audience, and the feedback was extremely positive. One of our veteran commission members summed up the evening as follows: "Tim's heresy talk was one of the best homegrown programs in our history. He covered history, biblical sources, theology and personal spiritually with facility, humor and modesty that that kept the audience deeply interested. It was a remarkable and even moving evening."

Tim is the Coordinator of the Tuesday evening Sacred Scripture and Catholic Studies program here at Saint Susanna Parish, the sister program to Adult Faith Formation's Monday evening program.

The Sacraments in the Twenty-first Century

March 6, 2017

**Presenter: Father Peter Folan, SJ, PhD Candidate at Boston College
School of Theology and Ministry**

The Sacraments have not always looked the same over the 2,000 years of the Church's existence. Prior to the start of the Second Vatican Council, much of sacramental theology amounted to little more than the application of the Code of Canon Law to the church's liturgical life. Practically speaking, this meant an outsized reliance on a mechanistic understanding of the sacraments, seeing them almost exclusively through a cause-and-effect lens. It was almost like a set of rigid instructions for assembling a piece of furniture. With the dawn of the 21st century, however, things have changed. Father Folan discussed this change as part of a variety of new ways to think about the sacraments in the church today. He is a very captivating speaker, and has an incredible command of PowerPoint. He also had done his homework, as he constantly used the presentational trick of making a statement and then having it pop up on the screen. He did a wonderful job of showing us that there are far more dimensions to sacraments than we initially think of, although he stopped short of taking us to whether the old requirements about validity are still totally in effect. Those in attendance were quite pleased and the Q&A was a good dialog. Many of us learned a lot. For some the talk they had expected was some kind of intellectual analysis of the sacraments, but the talk we received was directed to our hearts rather than to our minds. Father Nolan did a wonderful job of re-kindling the sense of beauty in the sacramental and also of challenging our intellects as well. That he is a Michelangelo of PowerPoint is just frosting on the cake.

Prior to coming to Boston College, Father Folan held a faculty position at the University of Scranton, and he is a contributor to America, the national Jesuit magazine, and The Jesuit Post.

Carmelite Spirituality

March 13, 2017

Presenter: Joanne Mongeon, Ph.D.

Joanne enlightened us on Carmelite Spirituality as a part of our continuing series on meditation and spirituality in different faith systems (e.g., Buddhism, Eastern Centering Prayer). Carmelite Spirituality is Christian Spirituality, and is accessible to all. It centers on prayer, understood as loving friendship with God, and contemplation as a free gift of God. This interactive workshop focused on the source of Carmelite spirituality and the Rule of St. Albert, as well as the writings of the founders of Discalced Carmel, Sts. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. To quote Joanne's report: "I felt somewhat technologically challenged going from the Youtube to the Powerpoint and then getting to the Youtube at the end the other night, but I felt good about the presentation on the whole. Various people mentioned enjoying the variety of media, different voices reading from the various saints, and breaking into small groups for discussion. I particularly liked hearing the different voices reading from or about John of the Cross, Therese, Elizabeth and Edith Stein: made us pay attention more or something. Nicer than hearing just my own voice, and people seemed to enjoy the sharing at the tables-- everyone seemed engaged."

Joanne gave a very interesting overview of Carmelite spirituality, Joanne's "grace under pressure" regarding minor technical difficulties and her calm and relaxed manner throughout the presentation helped to keep the audience engaged. The way that she used different readers from the audience to present the background info on John of the Cross, Therese, etc., was noted with approval. One veteran Commission member commented:

"I enjoyed the small group discussion/faith sharing time because I met someone I had seen at AFF but had never had an opportunity to talk to before. The handouts were very interesting and helpful for generating meaningful discussion."

Several were left wanting to know more about The Interior Castle, their interest having been ignited.

Dr. Joanne Mongeon, OCDS, has been a Secular Carmelite for thirty years, and for much of that time, was Director of Formation or Director of On-going Formation for the Secular Carmelites of the Barrington, RI,

Carmel. In that capacity she gave monthly talks on Sts. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese, Elizabeth of the Trinity. She has been a director of RCIA for over thirty years, and is a published author with Sadlier and Benziger Publishing Companies. Her most recent books are *Chatting With Mother Mary*, for 23rd Publishing Co. and *St. Teresa of Avila: A Journal*. Having been a college English professor or high school English teacher for many years, she prefers an interactive teaching style to a lecture style presentation.

“One Man’s Pilgrimage to Standing Rock”

An Evening with Brayton Shanley.

March 20, 2017

A Joint Presentation of the Adult Faith Formation Commission and the Saint Susanna Pax Christi Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Brayton Shanley has just published a monograph entitled “A Pilgrimage to Standing Rock: After 500 Years of Oppression, All We Have Left Is Love.” In it he discusses the impact of coming as a White Ally to the Native Americans after all this time: “As the women speak, fighting back tears, I feel my own coming on. Approximately 4,000 or so “white allies” learn the lesson: our settler colonialist behavior is ingrained. The women recite the code of conduct here: prefer to listen, not to speak; to stand for prayer before and after all gatherings; to refrain from all criticism, opinion and gossip; to accept and follow what the Elders have established here as well-thought-out and trustworthy. Avoid settler, colonialist behavior, i.e., taking charge, taking over, looking to control, having everything figured out, quickly fixing everything that is wrong. Whew! I can feel too many of these impulses brewing within me as I listen.”

In light of Pope Francis’s recent pronouncement on sensitivity to indigenous peoples, this talk could not have been more appropriate and timely.

A large group came to hear Brayton Shanley talk about his experience in visiting the site of the Standing Rock encampment in North Dakota. He was quite clear that it was the impact of the word "Sacred" with the

encampment that totally captivated him, and there was little if any discussion in his talk of the pipeline protest itself. He spoke of the gatherings for prayer as powerful events each day, the complete cooperation to get everything done without anyone "taking charge." Particularly impressive to him was the feeling he had of letting go of the "White Man" urge to take charge and line things up, and bowing to the Native American method of allowing the sacred to take over and control the experience. In the presence of hundreds of Native American tribes from all over, most of whom had never met each other before, plus thousands of veterans who had come because of their disgust with the way the original protesters were being treated, and so many others, all came together in an almost perfect meeting of the minds. It was quite impressive to hear him speak this way, as he has attended scores of protests of every description, but saw this as wholly different and impacting on the soul.

Brayton Shanley earned his BA from St. Anselm College in New Hampshire and an MA in Pastoral Ministry from Boston College. He has taught college courses on the Philosophy of Nonviolence at Worcester State University and as an adjunct professor at Anna Maria College in Paxton, MA and has been leading workshops, retreats and seminars on Prophecy and Peace, Gospel Nonviolence and Sustainability, simplicity and Resistance since the early 80's. His recently published book, *The Many Sides of Peace: Christian Nonviolence, the Contemplative Life, and Sustainable Living*, Resource Publications (Wipf and Stock, 2013), is used nationally by professors, students, & religious orders.

Living Simply

April 3, 2017

Presenter: Joel Boutin

Pope Francis has heavily stressed the importance of addressing the materialism in our culture which is causing damage to our earth and injustice to the less fortunate in the world. How can we contribute? We heard from a speaker who has decided to cooperate in a major fashion.

The following is from a Boston Globe article on our speaker.

Joel Boutin lives in a 128-square-foot house built of two-by-fours on a trailer bed in the backwoods of Durham, N.H. There's no running water, sewer, heat, or electricity. He likes it that way. "There are only a few inconveniences, and they don't outweigh the benefits," said Boutin, 36, who moved into the so-called "tiny house" in August.

A teacher of global studies and psychology at St. John's Prep in Danvers, he's committed to living a simple, sustainable life close to nature.

Boutin was raised in Lawrence, where he attended Central Catholic High School. He went on to Merrimack College in North Andover on a full scholarship, majoring in philosophy, and later earned a master's degree in public health at Boston University. He spent two years serving with the Peace Corps in Tanzania. "That was my first experience with 'tiny house' living," he said. "I lived in a hut. And I learned it was possible to be happy and content with few material possessions. "What I needed for survival was a short list: food, clean water, shelter, appropriate clothing, friendships, and intellectual stimulation."

When Boutin returned to the United States, he said, "I felt life had a plasticity to it; there was something missing. I was curious to see if I could return to the lifestyle I had in Tanzania."

He joined a Jesuit prayer group, Contemplative Leaders in Action , which includes doing a capstone project to "help us live our values more fully." That's what led him to the tiny house in New Hampshire. The only drawbacks, he said, are the one-hour commute to work and being away from his circle of friends in Cambridge and Somerville, where he previously lived. On the up side, he said, he's more focused, sleeps well, and is "writing more letters and reading more books."

Boutin also hopes to inspire his students at St. John's. "A lot of my boys come from material wealth and define happiness as a bigger house or bigger car. I want to challenge that assumption and provide an alternative measure of success. That is a great joy."

Although no longer in residence in his tiny house, Joel reflected on his experience there and share his ideas on living simply more generally as well.

Joel Boutin was a very good speaker, incredibly real in his presentation, and very engaged with the audience, including the youngsters from our parish confirmation classes. He started off with a prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi which was quite topical for the evening, and after an enlightening talk invited all to get chatting with each other, including adults with students, which proved to be remarkably successful, the room abuzz with chatter. The evening went far beyond living in a tiny house, to several excellent suggestions on how to get a handle on starting the process of living simply (for example, "One Hundred Items," the process of reducing one's possessions from the average householder's items in the tens of thousands down to some lower level, the 100 being a probably unrealizable ideal).

Father Steve's Book Group

May 1, 8, and 15, 2017

Book: *The Book of Joy* by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, along with Douglas Abrams.

Here is the Amazon review:

An instant New York Times bestseller Two spiritual giants. Five days.

One timeless question. Nobel Peace Prize Laureates His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have survived more than fifty years of exile and the soul-crushing violence of oppression. Despite their hardships—or, as they would say, because of them—they are two of the most joyful people on the planet.

In April 2015, Archbishop Tutu traveled to the Dalai Lama's home in Dharamsala, India, to celebrate His Holiness's eightieth birthday and to create what they hoped would be a gift for others. They looked back on their long lives to answer a single burning question: How do we find joy in the face of life's inevitable suffering? They traded intimate stories, teased each other continually, and shared their spiritual practices. By the end of a week filled with laughter and punctuated with tears, these two global heroes had stared into the abyss and despair of our time and revealed how to live a life brimming with joy. This book offers us a rare opportunity to experience their astonishing and unprecedented week

together, from the first embrace to the final good-bye. We get to listen as they explore the Nature of True Joy and confront each of the Obstacles of Joy—from fear, stress, and anger to grief, illness, and death. They then offer us the Eight Pillars of Joy, which provide the foundation for lasting happiness. Throughout, they include stories, wisdom, and science. Finally, they share their daily Joy Practices that anchor their own emotional and spiritual lives. The Archbishop has never claimed sainthood, and the Dalai Lama considers himself a simple monk. In this unique collaboration, they offer us the reflection of real lives filled with pain and turmoil in the midst they have all been able to discover a level of peace, of courage, and of joy to which we can all aspire in our own lives.

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Season 2015 / 2016

Human Freedom – Mind and Morality : What Does Science Have to Offer Here?

Oct. 5, 2015

Presenter: Brian Dwyer

In this presentation, we journeyed through the universe, through the body, and through experience itself to illuminate How things are and Why that really matters! Science really sets out to answer the How question. How is it that humans are able to be alive? How is it that the universe is as it is today? These types of questions scientists and their relative fields of study have been answering at various levels for centuries. Understanding how things are in reality can be very useful and informative. If you knew how things are, would you not be able to use that information to help you answer other question types? Humans love the why questions. Why are humans alive or Why are humans the way humans are? Why is the universe here or why is the universe the way it is? Believe it or not, answering How can really help answer Why. Science looks at how things are. Interestingly, more and more aspects of what it is to be a human being fall under the “eye” of science. Topics like our thoughts and our free will open up into new realities when looked at with “How” glasses on. Don’t worry. Even if there is a fundamental scientific explanation for all things human, it does not remove our experience of what it is to be human; in this way our free will is safe (or maybe it is even more than that). Understanding How things are actually enriches human experience and invites us to be ever more aware of how we are human. Brian Dwyer, Presenter, has been working in the professional world of biochemistry and biophysics for over 15 years within academic, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical institutions. Presently, Brian is a Scientist at Shire Pharmaceuticals and a Ph.D. Candidate for a doctorate degree in Chemistry at UMass, Lowell, Department of Chemistry. In addition, Brian has co-authored articles in peer reviewed scientific journals.

Brian really put our brains to work as he set the scientific base for his

talk and then introduced us to some theories that gave us plenty to ponder. It was lot to pack into two hours but all had plenty to talk about, and minds were opened to thinking about things not pondered before. That's what Adult Education is all about.

David Rothauser on the Nuclear Menace

Oct. 19, 2015

Rothauser, an anti-nuclear activist and film producer, spoke on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the recent Japanese nuclear disaster at Fukushima in 2011, which is currently spewing radioactive materials into the Pacific Ocean, and presented his film, “Hibakusha – Our Life to Live,” about survivors of Hiroshima/Nagasaki, which turned out to be a very professionally made film, highly informative and yet resisting the temptation to be overly gory or sensational. In fact, there was a peaceful, understated quality to the whole film. We learned about the witness given by those who survived the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the intent and purpose to never have such an event again. David had a good Q&A session after the film, with some incisive questions from an audience that obviously paid attention. A co-presentation with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

An Aramaic Perspective on the Sermon on the Mount

Nov. 2, 2015

Presenter: Peter Hartzel

This was a reprise of a presentation given several years ago here at Saint Susanna, returning by popular demand. It was a review of the most basic words of Jesus as rendered by Matthew, from an Aramaic cultural perspective, giving a new insight into Jesus’ teachings.

As usual, Peter attracted a good crowd for his presentation, and his PowerPoint show was avidly followed. Lots of those in attendance took away his handout with the nuances of Aramaic applied to the Sermon on the Mount and Our Father. The Q&A/Commentary period was busy and reflected careful concentration on the topic. A successful event.

Christian Ethics and the Wage Gap in America

(A Two Week Series)

Nov. 9, 2015 –Part I

A DVD from Prof. Robert Reich entitled “Inequality for All.” Here is a review from the LA Times: ”Smart, funny and articulate, Robert Reich is the university professor we all wish we'd had. He's so accessible and entertaining he takes a subject that sounds soporific and makes it come alive like you wouldn't believe in "Inequality for All." That topic, as the title indicates, is the widening income gap in the United States between the hugely rich and the rest of us. Reich and documentary director Jacob Kornbluth turn out to be the ideal collaborators to tell the story of what that gap is, why it happened and why it's important, all in a totally engaging way. Kornbluth, for his part, employs his skills as a dramatic feature director to bring energy and vigor to the way this film is structured, making especially good use of lively animation and vivid charts.”

The DVD was just as predicted, a well done piece. He did a fabulous job, with charts and examples, of establishing that Economic Inequality has reached crisis proportions again, and is very bad for our economy and us as a people. It was interesting to note that, during the Questions and Comments period, several of younger audience reported they were puzzled by the subject matter. One thought that this topic had nothing to do with religion. Another thought that this was not a subject which students his age (high school) should be examining. There seemed to me to be an undercurrent of opposition to the ideas presented by Reich (which were well within what our Church teaches on the subject).

Christian Ethics and the Wage Gap in America

Nov. 16, 2015 - Part II

Presentation by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy of the Worcester Catholic Worker House. Scott focused on his personal experiences with the poor, and

related those to some of the themes that Pope Francis has been stressing, but predominantly in the Gospels. One of Saint Susanna's favorite raconteurs, he delighted and at the same time educated his listeners on the subject of the relationship between money and happiness, particularly Christian happiness. Scott Schaeffer-Duffy has a million tales to tell and does so with conviction and humor. Most of his sagas began with the statement that he didn't have a dime to his name when all of a sudden... He was also unexceptionally clear that money does not produce the happiness we think it does/would/should. His was a great complement to Robert Reich's data-driven but equally convincing presentation the week before. This was a good series, as it seems we are not sufficiently educated elsewhere on the relationship between money and happiness, as well as the moral implications of economic decisions and capitalist efforts. It opened a few eyes for the members of the audience . A valuable series for our AFFC Program.

Presentation of the Film “Philomena.”

Nov. 30, 2015

In “Philomena,” Judi Dench’s portrayal of a stubborn, kindhearted Irish Catholic trying to discover what became of the toddler she was forced to give up as a teenager is so quietly moving that it feels lit from within. A major theme of this film from Stephen Frears is forgiveness. Ms. Dench’s Philomena Lee glows with the radiance of someone serene in her faith despite inhumane treatment by the church. That she makes you believe her character has the capacity to forgive provides the movie with a solid moral center. Ms. Dench’s dignified performance and the screenplay — adapted by her co-star Steve Coogan and Jeff Pope from Martin Sixsmith’s 2009 nonfiction book, “The Lost Child of Philomena Lee” — stabilize a volatile blend of ingredients.

No Room at the Inn

Dec. 7, 2015

A Special Event, a co-presentation with St. Susanna Peace and Justice Committee (Pat Ferrone, Chair) .

This was a particularly topical program as Christmas approached. Haley House of Boston presented the history and purpose of Haley House, a Boston resource for housing, training, and other services to the poor, homeless, and disadvantaged, as well as a discussion of the current economy and its impact on these affected populations. It was well worth attending.

Kathe McKenna, one of the early workers at Haley House, which is now celebrating its fiftieth year in operation, and Marylou Bozza, one of the newer staff, took us for a fascinating trip down Memory Lane to the beginning years of Haley House, then a soup kitchen and shelter, and then filled our audience in on how Haley House has grown to include low-income housing, training programs, and a Cafe and Bakery popular in the neighborhood. Several of our audience were particularly delighted to return to the early days when they first came to know of, and help at, Haley House. It was fascinating to hear of the offshoots into new ventures over the years as one set of problems led to the need for another set of solutions. The Q&A session indicated that the audience was listening and had been drawn to do some thinking about this hallowed institution. A pleasant and informative evening.

Jesus' Life and Times. (Two Week Series)

Jan. 4 & 11, 2016

Professor Nathaniel DesRosiers of Stonehill College presented on everyday life in first century Palestine with an eye towards filling out what we know about Jesus by way of the Gospels. Professor DesRosiers has appeared several times now at Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation, and has become a favorite due to his teaching style and profound knowledge of the subject matter. Professor DesRosier's presentation was a tremendous success in more ways than one. To no one's surprise, he was in complete command of this subject, had a great PowerPoint slide show, and had an easy way of conveying information with totally open access by way of questions from the student body. The first week he laid the groundwork for what things were like way back when, and the second week he inserted Jesus into the mix. The student body left raving about his presentation.

Sex and Violence in the Bible

Feb. 1, 2016

Professor Mary Joan Leith, Chair of Religious Studies at Stonehill College, provided us with new insights on the Bible from this perspective. Her course on Angels last season was a hit with all who attended, as she is a remarkable professor with a hilarious teaching style. Many who thought they wouldn't learn a thing about Angels changed their tune after hearing her presentation. As we expected, Professor Leith did a great job of presenting her topic this year. She always does her homework. She went several steps down deep into the text of the Bible to show the ancient sections dealing with the primitive idea of God who violently brought the earth into existence (from very early non-monotheist Creation stories); she dealt with the supposed violent takeover of the Promised Land from those dwelling there when the Israelites arrived (mostly made-up stories to show God's providing for his people); she spent a little time with the idea of exactly what else was taken off besides the heads of the enemy chiefs, and dallied briefly at the bedwarmers for King David. It was an informative and educational evening, and well received by those in attendance.

Saint Francis of Assisi, His Life and Times

Feb. 29, 2016

Peter Hartzel, presenter. This was a reprise from a presentation at St. Susanna Adult Faith Formation in the Fall of 2008. This time around, there was a focus on some parallels with, and meaning for, Pope Francis. As we have come to expect from Peter Hartzel, we were treated to a fact-filled presentation on Saint Francis and the background to his life and ministry, all with a light touch and a bit of humor. The talk set some groundwork for the upcoming April presentation on Pope Francis.

Women and the Church: Rome's Stained Glass Ceilings, Faithful Dissent and Prophetic Vision

Apr. 4, 2016

Presenter: Professor Catherine Mooney. Professor Mooney reacquainted us with some well known women through the ages who had significant disagreements with church authorities. Today many are canonized as saints and/or recognized as Doctors of the Church. In recent times, a new narrative has taken root among some Catholics, one that suggests that criticism and debate have no place in the church. This presentation demonstrated how the church can only advance when people of good will faithfully take positions (often unpopular) that lead others in the church forward on new frontiers. Professor Mooney drew on the experiences of Hildegard of Bingen, Clare of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila and others from the present day to discuss how their thoughtful critiques and forthright disagreements have helped shape the Church. These women of the church got what they wanted despite the patriarchal system they were facing, and not always by using kind words either. They all were pretty up front with their needs and desires, and did well by persistence. Some of those in the audience were a bit put off by the fact that this was all ancient history, but the Q&A went well. Professor Mooney is hugely intelligent and knowledgeable, and did well in her task.

Catherine Mooney is Associate Professor of Church History at Boston College. Her teaching and research interests include women and gender in Christian history. She has served on the boards of the Society for Medieval Feminist Studies and Monastic Matrix. While living in rural Argentina during its military dictatorship and “Dirty War,” she worked as a human rights advocate and taught in a seminary for campesino catechists and base community leaders. In addition to teaching and lecturing in universities and at scholarly conferences, she offers presentations and workshops in various pastoral venues and is active in several human rights efforts. Her books include *Philippine Duchesne: A Woman with the Poor* and *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*. In a few weeks her next book is due to appear, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules, and Resistance*. Professor Mooney holds a Ph.D. in medieval history from Yale University.

Pope Francis

April 11, 2016

Because Pope Francis is so new on the scene, there are few speakers with the depth of knowledge to speak on his papacy thus far. Professor Richard Gaillardetz of the Boston College Theology Department, one of the few with the necessary experience, agreed to make the presentation. A chaired professor of Catholic Theology with research interests in Vatican 2 and Authority in the Church, Dr. Gaillardetz this past year published two books : An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis and the Renewal of Catholicism, and A Church with Open Doors (as co-editor with Thomas Rausch). This event was nothing short of excellent in every way. Professor Gaillardetz took control of his audience with his first few words. He speaks clearly and distinctly in understandable (and even at times a bit salty) language, and his analysis of what Pope Francis is trying to do with his papacy was beautifully and simply laid out. The professor went back in history to point out that popes historically almost never got involved with theology and doctrine, leaving that to the theologians to debate, and only making pronouncements when the difficulties had been fought out and resolved. Pope Francis is 100% committed to approaching all current controversies with a pastoral mindset, reaching out to people where they are and asking what can I do for you in your current situation, even if it be irregular. The audience was completely smitten. The Q&A was active and productive. The professor commented on several occasions what a pleasure it was to speak to and with people who remembered the events and controversies so many years back, as opposed to his students at college for whom this is all confusing news.

SPECIAL EVENT

“Opening to the Boundless Heart of Being” -

A Zen Buddhist Approach to Peace.

April 18, 2016

Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, in conjunction with Adult

Faith Formation, presented Kotatsu John Bailes, interim Buddhist Chaplain at Wellesley College for an evening of exploration into the heart of Buddhist meditation. John trained in Zen at the San Francisco Zen Center for 13 years, and was ordained a Zen Buddhist Priest in 1977. He lived and practiced in the Buddhist communities of Tassajari and Green Gulch in CA, returning to the East Coast to gain a degree in International Political Economy from Harvard University. He continuing his Buddhist meditation practice as an ordinary citizen, married and sailed around the world as a professional sailboat captain. He is the founder of One Heart Zen in Somerville, a meeting place for instruction and meditation whose mission is to “share the Zen attitude, spirit and practice with the world, working together to open the heart of the human person, joining life...”

Besides leading meditation groups at Wellesley College and One Heart Zen, his work includes work with interfaith groups on meditation and contemplation. Our evening included a presentation by John, as well as a short meditation practice guided by his instruction, with time following for reflection and sharing. This was a unique opportunity to listen, then sit with one another in the deep silence where we are joined as One. He has an interesting combination of a commanding presence and yet a calming and heartening approach, with a touch of self-deprecation and humor. The audience was rapt as he took us through the need-to-know basics of Zen and led us with a short demonstration of a Zen meditation, followed by a great Q&A session.

Father Steve's Book Group

May 2, 9 & 16, 2016

This year's book was *Why the Catholic Church Must Change: A Necessary Conversation* by Margaret Nutting Ralph. For the first week we discussed the Preface, the Introduction, and the first three chapters on Catholic Church teachings. In the second week, on May 9, we covered Chapters Four through Seven, on Contraception, Women's Ordination, Homosexuality and Abortion. On May 16 we concluded with Chapters Eight through Ten (Marriage, Social Justice and Employment, and Church Unity) and the Conclusion. There was much to be learned.

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Season 2014 / 2015

Suicide

October 6, 2014 (one session)

Speakers: Jan Brogan and Anne DiNoto

Suicide has been a topic that few people talk about, yet it is occurring and the prevalence is high. However, more and more people are now talking about suicide than ever before: the fact of suicide, suicide linked to psychological disorders or conditions like depression, suicide linked to sociological factors which range from economic to socialization are all discussed. Recently the Boston Globe featured the article, “Teen’s brains make them more vulnerable to suicide,” by Jan Brogan. This article seeks to develop an understanding as to the unique vulnerability a teenager could be at for suicide just because of their brain development at that time of life. Jan Brogan has been doing extensive research and has been in a working relationship with many of the top doctors in our local hospitals and universities regarding suicide.

Boston University is among those at the forefront of colleges with not only providing an infrastructure for institutional psychological care and socialization assistance programs, but also developing and hosting

events like “International Survivors of Suicide Day,” which are developed and produced by dedicated college staff like Anne DiNoto. Both Jan and Anne know of each other and presented together. They had personal and professional angles on this topic that are similar and yet very different.

Prophecy, Prophets and The Prophetic Imagination

October 13, 2014 (One session)

An exploration of Old Testament Prophecy and the Prophets of Israel and their successors in the modern world. Working with the seminal writings of Heschel and Brueggemann, Peter Hartzel of the Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation Commission, who has taught many church history courses over the years, cleared away much of the misunderstanding about the roles of prophets (e.g., “fortune-tellers”), and brought their role up to the present date. His presentation on Prophets and Prophecy was as thorough and entertaining as we have come to expect from Peter. The PowerPoint slides were packed with information, and the audience seemed quite interested, even bringing up questions and comments.

Becoming Disciples of Christ Jesus – “Christ in Our Lives”

October 20, 2014 (One session)

Presenter: Rev. Darrell Minnich

Rev. Minnich’s presentation focused on the primary characteristics necessary for being a successful disciple of Christ Jesus. That is, living in a manner that reflects Christ’s glory and nature. The study also highlighted some of the battles that hinder one’s intention to follow Christ in a disciplined way. Due to the brevity of the evening, the presentation only “touched the surface” of this marvelous topic! There was time for Q & A.

Rev. Minnich has served as the senior minister of the Good Shepherd Christian Fellowship (in Needham) since the summer of 1994. Prior to this assignment he began and established a new Church in Hartford, CT (there for eight years) among Laotian refugees. Before that he served

(for four years) as the associate minister with an evangelical Church in the Cleveland, OH area. Darrell and his wife recently celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. They have two married sons and four grandchildren (with the fifth soon to be born)! Their older son lives in Newton with his family; their second son lives in southeast Asia with his family where they serve as “secret servants” (because the country is Communist and does not allow traditional church workers).

Veterans for Peace

October 27, 2014 (One session)

Presenter: Pat Scanlon

Pat Scanlon gave a great, and somewhat emotional, witness talk about his conversion from planning bombing missions to non-violence, adorned with a humorous PowerPoint slide show and a set of Peace folk songs. Everyone seemed to enjoy the talk, including Pat. His stories about local peace events, particularly the South Boston Saint Patrick's Day Parade, evoked many a chuckle. Pat is a member of Veterans for Peace. He was an Intelligence officer in the Vietnam War and subsequently realized that war and killing people was wrong. He spoke to us about how his thinking transitioned from war to non violence. The music he played is anti war songs that he writes himself. We therefore were treated to some folk singing. This was a co-presentation with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Special Event: Making Christmas Meaningful and Peaceful.

November 3, 2014 (One session)

Presenter: Chris Welch, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

It was amazing how Chris Welch was able to make contact with all the Saint Susanna confirmation students and have them eating out of his

hand for the whole session. He had all of those in attendance, full adults and confirmation students, working on collages made of cut-outs from magazines, and huge sheets of newsprint. In addition, he had panels of students constantly working on various parts of the program. If nothing else, the adults in the audience got a chance to work cooperatively with the youngsters and hear what they had to say about the Christmas Season, warts and all. Chris also did a yeoman's job of explaining the Nativity narrative, why there was one in the gospel to begin with, how this differed from a historical or biographical piece, what its purpose was, etc. It may well be that many of the kids and adults will, if even in a small way, modify how they live through future Advent seasons as a result of this presentation. They may consider the often-unnoticed messages in society that shape their experiences, and put those messages in conversation with the Church's tradition. Most essentially, each participant may draw out his or her own best hopes for him/herself and for society, and they may come to their own decisions about how they want to make those best hopes more real for themselves.

Chris Welch: After college Chris worked at a hospitality house and soup kitchen in the Catholic Worker tradition. He then received a Master of Theological Studies from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and subsequently taught theology at Fontbonne Academy for nine years. He is engaged in doctoral studies in the Theology and Education program at Boston College, focusing his studies on developing a pedagogy for prophetic imagination that builds real hope in challenging circumstances. A co-presentation with the St. Susanna Confirmation Program.

Democracy and Catholicism

November 10, 2014 (One session)

Steve Krueger, an old friend of Saint Susanna's, Founding Executive Director of Voice of the Faithful and currently President of Catholic Democrats, a national advocacy organization, representing a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, together with Thomas Groome and Marian Walsh made powerful presentations on the church's history of speaking for the poor and disadvantaged and the progress that has been

made in some areas. Each speaker was enthusiastic and highly experienced, and had to be wrestled to the ground to stop passionate deliveries in order to stay on schedule. The entire program was very well received by those in attendance. Professor Thomas Groome is Chair of the Department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at Boston College, author of *What Makes Us Catholic* and many other publications, and consultant Marian Walsh was for many years a member of the Massachusetts legislature, is the author of *Run*, a book about running for political office, and holds a graduate degree in Theology from Harvard Divinity School as well as a law degree.

DVD and Discussion - "Journey of the Universe"

November 17, 2014 (One session)

“Journey of the Universe” is an epic film that covers the sweep of time, beginning with life’s origins 14 billion years ago, up to the present. It reverentially examines the evolution of cosmos and Earth as a “profound process of creativity, connection, and interdependence.” Modern science is combined with cultural wisdom to posit provocative questions about the effects of human behavior on the earth’s body. The film was written by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme and produced by Tucker and her husband, John Grimm, professors at Yale University and founders of the Forum on Religion and Ecology. All three were strongly influenced in their work by the late Fr. Thomas Berry, cultural historian who urged us to address the ravages and disruptions of human hubris on the Earth and become its benign stewards. This was a co-presentation with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Divorce and Remarriage – Gay Marriage

**How Does The Church Promote Jesus’ Ideal of
Covenantal/Sacramental Marriage?**

December 1, 2014 (One session)

Presenter: Michael Hartwig, Ph.D.

Our theme this evening was to explore the relationship between Jesus' and Paul's teachings on marriage and contemporary patterns of marriage and to ask how the Church might advance these ideals in the contemporary context.

From the Q&A session, it appears that most if not all of those in attendance had a personal interest in the topics under discussion. Dr. Michael Hartwig gave a scripture-based and fact-based talk on these topics which, of course, are all the more worthy of note from the fact that these exact topics were the subjects most in controversy at the recent Synod in Rome. There was no distracting emotionalism in his delivery. As we knew from his talk on Pilgrimage as Prayer last season, he is a good speaker, very engaging and understandable. Those who attended received a good outline of the issues as they now are being reviewed by Rome, and a good basis for cogent argument of the various positions. He had several points to raise which, in his judgment, would seem to call for a re-assessment of the position currently taken by the institutional church on these highly important issues if the church as an institution hopes to remain relevant. The whole Galileo story was briefly reviewed, giving any reasonable person cause to re-think things. Michael Hartwig is an adjunct faculty member at Emmanuel College and Northeastern University. He holds the Ph.D. in religious ethics from Southern Methodist University. His specialty and expertise lie in the area of applied ethics – taking ethical theory and applying it to health care, business, environment, social justice and sexuality. His areas of publication have centered on sexual ethics. His current research is focused on the foundations of monotheistic ethics, namely how Jews, Christians and Muslims develop positions on controversial moral issues, particularly models of marriage, single adult sexuality, and same-gender sexual relationships. Hartwig serves as the in-house scholar at the Illume organization, a Boston-based organization that collaborates with schools, colleges, parishes and religious institutions to create group programs that involve travel to places of great historical and religious significance – such as Israel, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain and other destinations.

Emerging Christianity

January 5 & 12, 2015 (Two weeks)

Presenter: Timothy K. Snyder

Emerging or Emergence Christianity is a term given to a fluid and hard to define Christian movement. What is it and what impact has it had as a movement within the Christian world? To guide us through this topic we had Timothy Snyder who recently finished his Ph.D. in Practical Theology, with a concentration on Church and society, at Boston University. This two-week event was a pleasure to attend. Tim Snyder has an easy and casual way of presenting his material in a well thought out fashion. He held everyone's attention as he presented on the many ways that traditional religious practice is being nuanced by those attempting to keep it relevant. Many were surprised to learn that they have often (without knowing it by any particular name) used several of the new techniques in their own practice of the Faith. We ended up the program forming a large circle as we listened to Tim and his friend Paul recall how much joy they gained from a spin-off of Lutheran practice for a college age group a few years ago. Needless to say, several of the variant efforts mentioned by Tim would not be a surprise to those who attend Saint Susanna on a regular basis. All were quite taken by Tim and his topic.

“My own interests and experience have most often centered around community development and worship. For three years I pastored an emergent community in Austin, Texas and, of course, wrote about that experience in *The Hyphenateds: How Emergence Christianity is ReTraditioning Mainline Practice* (Chalice Press).”

Tim's research is a series of investigations into religious identity and authority in contemporary American life. Mostly recently, along with Ashley Theuring, he has conducted research on the public discourses and practices of memorialization that emerged in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Newtown, CT. Currently he serves as Director of Education at Faith Lutheran Church,

Cambridge.

Thoreau and the Civil Rights Movement

January 19, 2015 (One session)

Richard Smith, who portrays Thoreau in a one-man event, has been doing it for 15 years all over the country. The format is to appear in costume as Henry, speak one of his essays –such as “On Civil Disobedience”; respond to questions in costume, then switch to the real Richard to make connections between Thoreau’s writings and his influences on Tolstoy, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights movement. The youngsters in attendance were very attentive, and the Q&A session was immensely productive. People seemed quite interested in the arguments to be made for civil disobedience. Was this turnout somehow connected with the recent marches, traffic stoppages, lie-ins, etc., in connection with the shootings by police? Perhaps unlikely, but then there is no alternate explanation. Richard Smith, the Thoreau double, gave a forty minute talk, but he held everyone's attention. A co-presentation with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.

Angels – Mesopotamia to Modernity

March 2, 2015 (One session)

Presenter: Prof. Mary Joan Leith

Prof. Leith's presentations are always a joy to attend. She is lively and fun, and she does her homework. She makes it clear that she invites questions and comments from those in attendance, so everyone feels valued. She brought with her a PowerPoint set of slides which tore apart our concepts about angels, including our belief that Cherubim were cute, tiny little guys, and that all angels have exactly two wings. The slides included statuary depicting the real cherubs, massive and hostile-looking, and paintings of six-winged Seraphim and unwinged angels, among many other items. She took us through numerous bible passages dealing with angels performing all sorts of missions, including a hilarious story about an angel seen by a donkey but invisible to his

passenger. Our knowledge of the history of religious beliefs and certainly our supposed knowledge about angels were enormously enhanced. Mary Joan Leith is full of surprises. As an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Stonehill College, Leith says that students often have preconceived notions about what they are going to learn in her classes. She likes to challenge these ideas. “I love surprising my students with crazy stories,” she says. “I like seeing students come into a class and think, for instance, ‘It’s not really something I’m interested in.’ Then I see them get excited. I like turning on the light bulb.” Leith recently showed parts of the British comedy Monty Python’s Life of Brian to illustrate some of the facts about Jesus’ lifetime – and the students loved it. “I like to bring in unusual things, keep them on their toes; give the class the sense that it’s going to be worth it to walk into my classroom every day.”

Good Works in a Time of War

An Evening with Claire Schaeffer-Duffy.

(In our periodic “What Is Jesus Doing Nowadays?” series)

March 9, 2015 (One session)

Claire did a beautiful job of presenting the good works of charity being done during the chaos of multiple wars in the Mideast, narrating a story in slides of her visits to truly heroic people carrying out the work of Catholic Relief Services. No gory photos, mostly smiling ones in fact, of persons placing themselves at great risk at overwhelming odds to do what can be done for the dispossessed of the war zones. She made detailed mention of the enormous generosity of the neighboring nations in accepting millions of refugees, often amounting to 25% of their country's own population, asking us would we Americans be as accepting if, in our country of 300 million, we were asked to accept 75 million refugees. Claire's presentation was soft-voiced, and easy to listen to, without any preaching but with a powerful message nonetheless. She made a great impression. It was a great night for the Confirmation class to be present. The Q&A period went well, with cogent questions, some from our youngsters, indicating that all of us had been listening.

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy lives and works at the SS. Francis and Therese Catholic Worker in Worcester, MA. For nearly three decades, the community has been offering hospitality to men and women in need and speaking out on issues of peace and justice. A free-lance journalist, Claire is an occasional contributor to The National Catholic Reporter and other Catholic publications. She is chair of the Board of Directors for Worcester's Center for Nonviolent Solutions, a newly created non-profit engaged in peace education in the city's schools. She and Scott are the proud parents of four and grandparent of one.

Being Well While Dying

Week One: Presentation by Good Shepherd Hospice of Newton

About Good Shepherd Community Care

March 16, 2015 (First week of a Two-week series)

Jennifer Sax, who is currently Good Shepherd Hospice Director of Communications, gave an in-depth description of the hospice process and its rationale. She came loaded with handouts, including a printout of all the PowerPoint slides she used. She showed video clips of Dr. Atul Gawande, an outstanding speaker on the subject, and presented facts and studies on the whole issue of dying with dignity while in control of the process. It was generally agreed that she was very good and extremely well prepared. Here, basically, is her message:

The first hospice in the state of Massachusetts, Good Shepherd Community Care has provided hospice and palliative care to the people of Greater Boston since 1978. It is an independent, non-profit, non-sectarian organization. Good Shepherd Community Care provides a range of services and resources to people facing the final stage of life -- their own, or that of a loved one.

Hospice: A New Alternative, An Age-Old Way of Caring

When someone has a life-limiting illness, there are often profound feelings of isolation – sometimes fear and confusion. But in the final

stages of life, there can also be dignity, comfort, peace and love. Hospice is a philosophy and model for quality, compassionate care for people facing a life-limiting illness or injury. Hospice care focuses on pain and symptom management rather than curative treatment. Hospice utilizes an interdisciplinary team of healthcare professionals and trained volunteers to provide support to the person who is ill and his/her family and loved ones. At the center of hospice and palliative care is a goal to help people live as fully and comfortably as possible. This presentation is intended to help increase participants' comfort with conversations about end-of-life issues, wishes and care options.

Being Well While Dying

Week Two: Death - Finding Meaning Through Faith

March 23, 2015 – (Second of a Two-week series)

Presenter: Professor Melissa Kelley

Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

If “life is what you make it,” the same can be said for death. Dr. Melissa Kelley of Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry offered a presentation on meaning-making at the end of life, through the lens of the Catholic faith.

Meaning-making – coming to a deep, personal understanding of one’s experience – is a common challenge as one nears the end of one's mortal life. But all meanings are not created equal, particularly through the lens of faith. This session explored how people might draw on faith to make helpful and even transformative meaning – for themselves and with loved ones – while preparing for the great mystery of death. Professor Kelley did a great job on this topic. She is extremely knowledgeable, has a great speaking voice, and has a very "up" attitude. She presented the psychological bases for what is happening with the dying process, and several different approaches for making it all meaningful, as well as the theological facets to the topic. A PowerPoint slideshow enhanced her presentation. Because she presented several alternatives, the audience was able to select from the menu, so to speak. Some were taken by one approach, while others tended towards a different one. The Q&A period

was lively and meaningful, with plenty of input from those in attendance.

Melissa M. Kelley is associate professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling and the faculty director of the Professional Ministry Practicum at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Previously, she was on the faculty of Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA. She has many years of pastoral-clinical experience, including serving as a campus minister for 14 years at both Boston College and Emmanuel College in Boston. She holds a PhD from Boston University in pastoral psychology.

Dr. Kelley is a fellow and nationally certified pastoral counselor through the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. She is also certified in Thanatology: Death, Dying and Bereavement through the Association for Death Education and Counseling, the primary organization in the country for all bereavement researchers, educators, and clinicians. She is a pastoral formation guide with the Metropolitan Boston Association of the United Church of Christ and is the author of *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry*, published in 2010 by Augsburg Fortress Press.

The Gospel of Mark

April 6 & 13, 2015 (Two sessions)

Presenter: Professor Nathaniel DesRosiers

Professor DesRosiers revealed the Gospel of Mark, which is the gospel for this liturgical year. As with his presentation last season on Matthew, there was extensive audience participation and interaction. In his two week appearance with us he again endeared himself to our audience, as he is a very nice person, a clear speaker, patient and informative. He was loaded with plenty of material (including a slide show) on what it is you are looking for when you seek a gospel (Week One), and on Mark particularly (Week Two). At the beginning of the second week of the course, he was inundated by our inquiring audience, and spent more than twenty minutes answering questions. Professor DesRosiers is Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Stonehill College in Easton Massachusetts, where he teaches courses in Classics, New Testament,

and Early Christianity. He received a Masters degree from Harvard University 1998 and a Ph.D. from Brown University in 2007. His research focuses on the issues of conflict and competition in the ancient world and the social and intellectual developments that helped to create and shape the religious movements and texts of antiquity.

Liberation Theology

April 27, 2015 (One session)

Presenter: Prof. Roberto Goizueta

Flatley Professor of Catholic Theology

Boston College Dept. of Theology

Those who read this past season's Book Group selection, Sister Elizabeth Johnson's "Quest For the Living God," will recognize Professor Goizueta's name from the multiple references to him in the chapter on the Hispanic/Latino quest for God. Once a highly questionable and controversial topic, Liberation Theology has come into its own. Nearly half the practicing Catholics in the United States are Hispanic/Latino. The time has come to explore this theology more deeply.

Dr. Goizueta was extremely knowledgeable and in command of his subject. At times he expressed real emotion in telling us of the ups and downs of Liberation Theology. There are connections, of course, to the murders of Jesuit Priests and Maryknoll Sisters and many others, connections which have fingerprints of the United States on them in many instances. He clarified the non-existence of a connection between Liberation Theology and Marxism/Communism, despite charges to that effect from the powers that be in Latin American countries. He clearly spelled out the Preferential Option for the Poor, how it works, and where it is supported in the gospels. In sum, he gave two hours of real value to those in attendance.

Father Steve's Book Group

May 4, 11 and 18, 2015 (Three sessions)

Season 2013 / 2014

Reporting from the Ground: Building Understanding of the Israel/Palestine Conflict.

September 30, 2013 (one session)

Speaker: Dr. Alice Rothchild. A joint presentation with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair. Alice Rothchild is an obstetrician-gynecologist who has worked in the health care reform and women's movements for many years. Since 1997, she has focused much of her energy on understanding the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict. In 1997, through her involvement in the Boston Workmen's Circle, a progressive secular Jewish organization, Alice turned much of her non-medical focus to understanding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and its relationship to US foreign policy and American Jewry. She co-founded and co-chairs Visions of Peace with Justice in Israel/Palestine, now American Jews for a Just Peace – Boston and co-organized the AJJP Health and Human Rights Project.

The Pilgrimage as an Act of Worship, A Historical and Current-Day View

October 7, 2013 (one session)

Speaker: Michael Hartwig, Ph.D. Dr. Hartwig spoke about the importance of pilgrimage, the history of pilgrimage, how pilgrimage has changed over the centuries, and examples of contemporary pilgrimage with photos and sites to share. Dr. Hartwig is the in-house scholar at the Illume organization. He collaborates with educational and pastoral leaders to create unique and thoughtful programs that advance continuing education and ongoing faith formation through pilgrimage travel to places such as Israel, Turkey, Greece, Italy and other destinations. Michael teaches Religious Studies part-time at Northeastern University and Emmanuel College. His specialty is ethics and he teaches courses that include ethics from Christian, Jewish and Muslim perspectives particularly in the area of health care ethics, business ethics and sexual ethics. His work in the area of pilgrimage

travel developed out of his expertise in religious history and spirituality and his having lived and studied in Spain, Italy and Germany. Creating successful pilgrimages is more than setting up a tour. It is a work of art – a way of inviting people to transformation by encountering other lands, peoples and traditions and visiting places where important changes in history inspire change today.

Keeping the Faith: Why People Stay Catholic (First of Two sessions)

October 21, 2013

In the first week of our two-part “Keeping the Faith” series, Father Joseph P. Marchese spoke on Why People Stay Catholic: Does the drop in Church attendance represent a diminishing faith and secularization of society, or is the cause more complex, and what are its elements? Father Marchese is the Director of Boston College First Year Experience. He received his bachelor's degree from Georgetown University, and performed his Master's and Doctoral studies at American University and Harvard University, respectively. Over the course of his career in higher education, Father Joe has served at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Mount Holyoke College, UMass Amherst, and is now in his twenty-eighth year at Boston College. In addition to his current post at FYE, he has held positions in the Theology Department and Campus Ministry. Under Father Joe's direction, First Year Experience runs the university Orientation program each summer, and is home to First Year Academic Convocation, the urban service-immersion Freshman Leadership Project, and Boston College's largest retreat program, 48HOURS, which boasts a participation rate of nearly 50% of each incoming class. A specialist in Adolescent Developmental Psychology, Father Joe also oversees the freshman cornerstone seminar The Courage to Know: Exploring the Intellectual, Social, and Spiritual Landscapes of the College Experience.

Raising Catholic Grand/Children: IS IT POSSIBLE?

October 28, 2013 (Second of Two sessions)

Speaker: Sister Nancy Corcoran, CSJ. In this second week of this "Keeping the Faith," series, Sister Nancy Corcoran, csj, spoke on the issue of children and grandchildren pulling away from their Catholic roots. She addressed how parents and grandparents can help younger members cultivate faith and stay engaged with the Gospel message of Jesus. Sister Nancy touched on issues such as:

- How to navigate the challenges that arise when parents or grandparents themselves may be grappling with concerns over Church discipline or doctrine;

- Going beyond Mass or CCD to show children Catholicism in action and encourage meaningful engagement;

- How to leave a door open if children do choose to stop practicing.

Questioning religion as one grows and comes-of-age is not uncommon; this session provided perspective and insight into how we can keep our multi-generational faith family strong and encourage children and teens to be active, questioning, free-thinking, passionate members of the Catholic community.

Sister Nancy is a favorite of Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation, at the same time both highly informative and humorous.

As the Director of Newman Catholic Ministry at Wellesley College, Sister Nancy Corcoran, CSJ serves as a chaplain to the students, staff and faculty of the College supporting the spiritual practices of a diverse community. Understanding the most precious teaching of the Catholic Church to be the honoring of one's conscience, Sister endeavors to provide opportunities for each person's spiritual growth. Together with the resources abundant in such an educational experience, Sister Nancy facilitates rituals which reflect the multi-cultural realities of the truly universal tradition found in Catholicism. Sister Nancy's understandings of the richness of a multi-faith world derive from her lived experiences in Hawaii, Missouri, New York, Alabama, Mississippi, Illinois, and her home state of Massachusetts. Her studies at the University of Hawaii, St. Louis University, Boston College, Xavier University, and Harvard Divinity School complement her commitment to intra-religious and

inter-religious dialogue. Sister Nancy is a member of the Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (St. Louis Province). She is the Founding Director of grass/roots Women's Spirituality Center whose mission is to create community one conversation at a time. She serves on the Leadership Team of the Weston Wayland Interfaith Action Group (WWIAG) and the Advisory Board of the RUAH spirituality Institute. Her book *Secrets of a Prayer: A Multifaith Guide to Creating Personal Prayer In Your Life* was published in May of 2007.

Messianic Judaism

November 4, 2013 (one session)

Speaker: Rabbi Richard Nichol. It would probably come as no surprise to you that the earliest disciples of Jesus were faithful Jews who believed they had found the Messiah, the fulfillment of prophesy. We now live in an age when, due to the success of those early disciples, Christianity is largely a religion of the Gentile nations. That is not the whole story however and we were thrilled to have Rabbi Richard Nichol come and speak to us of the Messianic Jewish experience. Rabbi Rich leads a congregation of Messianic Jews in Needham and guided us in an exploration of what it means today to be a Jew and a disciple of Jesus.

Faith and Finances

November 18, 2013 (one session)

Does the use, misuse and abuse of money play a role in our faith experience? Should it? Do finances play too large a role in our lives as we seek to follow the teachings of Christ?

Speaker: John Bach. "I'm the 'Friend in Residence' here at Friends Meeting at Cambridge, and I'd be happy to attend your program and speak from a Quaker point of view concerning our Peace Testimony and our embrace of Simplicity. I have been a Friend for over 35 years and spent three years in prison during the war in Vietnam. I'm the Quaker chaplain at Harvard and am involved in many issues of social justice and peace." He spoke on how faithful people should think about earning and spending their money, and the role of money in a faith-filled family.

The Nuns on the Bus

December 2, 2013 (one session)

Sister Elaine Betoncourt, CSJ, one of the Nuns on the Bus, described her presentation in her own words: “I'm excited about the prospect of talking about Nuns on the Bus. What I would like to do is weave together a presentation that includes Catholic Social Teaching, the moral imperative for Immigration Reform now, Nuns on the Bus, and our present day call to justice as one of political activism and changing systems. I was a nun on the bus for three weeks from May 28th to June 18th, from New Haven Ct to San Francisco CA.”

She also spoke about the Network Lobby and invited people to become members and join in Network's advocacy for laws that promote the Common Good (which is what Catholic Social Teaching promotes).

Sister Elaine is a Sister of St. Joseph from West Hartford CT. During her religious life she has been a teacher, a parish pastoral associate, and has held a variety of leadership roles in her congregation. She is currently serving as a member of a retreat team at Holy Family Monastery in West Hartford and involved in presenting weekend retreats to men and women. She is also on the boards of the Hartford Catholic Worker, the Spiritual Life Center (West Hartford) and the Hartford Archdiocesan Office of Social Justice Ministry. “I'm especially grateful for 6 years of ministry working with the poor in Appalachia from 1995 to 2001.” Her education includes degrees in Latin and Theology.

Whole Hearted Living

December 9, 2013 (one session)

Quietly, almost silently, Americans are realizing they are living lives that lack full meaning. At the forefront of this quiet dialog is Brene Brown and her concept of Whole Hearted Living. We can learn to ease into Whole Hearted Living with her book, *Daring Greatly* (as well as the other books she has written). We saw who whole hearted people are, what they do, why they do it, and how they do it. This was a walk with Brene Brown, each other, and a handful of other authors who cover other areas of living that fit nicely into a discussion of America and its ever so quite awakening to Whole Heartedness. Presenter: Brian Dwyer of the Adult Faith Formation Commission.

Seizing the Nonviolent Moments: Reflections on the Spirituality of Nonviolence. A Live Presentation by Nancy Small

January 13, 2014

Nancy spoke on the subject of her soon-to-be-published book of that name. She is a 2013 Recipient of the Pax Christi of Massachusetts Peacemaker Award. She holds degrees from Boston College and Union Theological Seminary. This was a co-presentation with the Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee.

A Time of Two Popes

January 27, 2014. (First of two sessions)

For the first time in 800 years we have a pope resigning and a new pope elected, with both of them still alive and well in Rome. What is it about the papacy? Has it always been the way we know it to be now? What will it look like in the near, and far, future?

In the first of two weeks, Peter Hartzel of the Adult Faith Formation Commission introduced us to the pivotal points in the papacy and the popes involved. For several years now, Peter has given a number of courses at Saint Susanna in Church History. A PowerPoint presentation was utilized.

A Time of Two Popes

February 3, 2014 (Second of two sessions)

Deacon Larry Bloom continued the PowerPoint presentation and discussed current issues with the papacy, how they impact on us and the world, even though we may not realize it, and what may happen to address/change these issues. Deacon Larry has been an instructor in Adult Faith Formation for over thirty years, and has previously given many courses on the papacy and related issues.

Incarceration of Black Males: Issues of Disproportion and the Impact on Black Communities and All Communities

February 24, 2014

Our Speaker: Rev. J. George M. Walters-Sleyon. The United States leads the entire world in the rate at which it jails people, far more than Cuba, Russia, or Iran, for example. Within the prison population the percentage of black males as inmates is far out of proportion to the percentage of black males in the population as a whole. These facts impact heavily on black males as a group, on the communities from which they come, and on the general community. Rev. Walters-Sleyon, the Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Church and Prisons, Inc., a resource and research center, addressed these subjects.

He is a Ph.D. student at the University of Edinburgh. He holds a Master of Divinity (M.Div) and a post-graduate master: Master in Sacred Theology (S.T.M) in Philosophy, Theology and Social Ethics from Boston University. He is the Founder/Executive Director of The Center for Church and Prison, Inc.: a resource and research center working towards community revitalization through prison reform and strategic solution development and intervention in the high rate of incarceration and recidivism in the United States prison system. The Center for Church and Prison has organized two major conferences. They organized The 2012 Strategic National Conference on Mass Incarceration and Reentry from October 18-20 at Boston University School of Law Auditorium. Similarly, they hosted The 2013 Strategic National Conference on Mass Incarceration and the War on

Drugs from October 3-5 at Boston University School of Law. Rev. Walters is the Author of: *Locked Up and Locked Down - Multitude Lingers in Limbo: Revised Edition* (A practical and prescriptive analysis of the high rate of incarceration of minority men, women and youths in the United States prison system), *The Criminal Is Still a Human Being*, *The "Ineffable Ethics,"* *Mass Incarceration and the Black Family: A Tragedy Unfolding*, *The Role of Religion in Reducing Recidivism*. He has spoken at Harvard University on the topic: *Restorative Justice and Faith*; at the New England School of Law on: *Why Are There So Many Black Boys in Jails*; and at a national forum organized by CLASP in Washington, D.C., on the topic *Higher Education as a Pathway to Success for Men of Color*. Rev. Walters has served as a keynote speaker at the National African American Drug Policy Coalition Conference at Howard University in DC., and as keynote speaker at the National Prison Summit on Incarceration at St. Mark United Methodist Church in Wichita/Kansas. He was a panelist at the National Urban League 2011 Conference in Boston where he spoke on the topic: "Saving Our Sons: Surviving and Thriving of African-American Males." He was also a panelist on the panel to discuss the State of Black Boston- 2011 Criminal Justice Report. He has also spoken at Northeastern University School of Law on the topic: *Making Parole a Reality* and at the 2013 Reform Conference of The Drug Policy Alliance in Denver Colorado. This was a co-presentation with the Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee.

Film: "The Way"

March 3, 2014

This movie was presented picking up on the talk by Dr. Hartwig on October 7, 2013, on *The Pilgrimage as an Act of Worship*.

The Way is a 2010 American drama film. It is a collaboration between Martin Sheen and his son Emilio Estevez to honor the Camino de Santiago and promote the traditional pilgrimage. Thomas Avery is an American ophthalmologist who goes to France following the death of his adult son, killed in the Pyrenees during a storm while walking the Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James), a Catholic pilgrimage route

to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. Tom's purpose is initially to retrieve his son's body. However, in a combination of grief and homage to his son, Tom decides to walk the ancient spiritual trail where his son died. While walking the Camino, Tom meets others from around the world, all looking for greater meaning in their lives. He reluctantly falls in with three other pilgrims in particular. Joost (Yorick van Wageningen) is an overweight man from Amsterdam who says he is walking the route to lose weight to get ready for his brother's wedding and so that his wife will desire him again. He is a warm extrovert who is the first to start walking with Tom. Sarah (Deborah Kara Unger) is a Canadian fleeing an abusive husband, who says she is walking the pilgrimage to quit smoking. Jack (James Nesbitt) is an Irish travel writer who when younger had desires to be great author like Yeats or Joyce but never wrote the novel he dreamed of. He is the last to join the quartet and has been suffering from "writer's block." As the pilgrims travel the Camino, they occasionally meet and talk with other pilgrims — two Frenchmen, a young Italian and an elderly priest from New York named Father Frank. Thomas occasionally sees his son alive and smiling among other people. On the pilgrimage, the group have various incidents such as when a young Romani steals Tom's backpack. Although the thief escapes, his father drags him back to Tom to return the pack with his embarrassed apologies and an offer to attend a street party in compensation.

Planning the Final Farewell: A Practical Guide through the Many Options of Celebrating a Funeral

March 10, 2014 (First of Two Sessions)

Father Steve Josoma made a presentation on how to plan a funeral (yours or a loved one's) in life-giving hope, transforming a time of sadness and grief into a moment of cherishing Loved Ones. Both sessions offered interactive learning where participants were amazed at

how enjoyable and life-giving planning and praying our farewells can be.

Session 1: the many honest conversations and family planning options to consider before letting the funeral director and “the Church” determine “what ought to be done.”

Planning the Final Farewell (Continued)

March 24, 2014 (Second of Two Sessions)

Session 2: the actual planning of the many options available, quite a few of which are unknown to the average person. For example: what are the “rules” on cremation?

Sacred Scriptures: Matthew’s Gospel

March 31, 2014 (First of Two Sessions)

Instructor: Professor Nathaniel DesRosiers of Stonehill College.

Professor DesRosiers is Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Stonehill College in Easton Massachusetts, where he teaches courses in Classics, New Testament, and Early Christianity. He received a Masters degree from Harvard University 1998 and a Ph.D. from Brown University in 2007. His research focuses on the issues of conflict and competition in the ancient world and the social and intellectual developments that helped to create and shape the religious movements and texts of antiquity. Both sessions featured many examples from the texts and were designed for open discussion. No previous experience with Scripture Study is necessary.

Week One – "Matthew and the Synoptic Problem" focused on Matthew's relationship to other gospels and in particular his formulation of Jesus as Messiah.

Scripture Study: Matthew’s Gospel

April 7, 2014

(Second of Two sessions)

Week Two - "Matthew and the Law" covered how Matthew aimed to provide a guide for life in a newly formed Christian community.

Film: "Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai"

April 28, 2014

Wangari Maathai (1940-2011) was the founder of the Green Belt Movement and the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. She authored four books: *The Green Belt Movement*; *Unbowed: A Memoir*; *The Challenge for Africa*; and *Replenishing the Earth*. As well as having been featured in a number of books, she and the Green Belt Movement were the subject of a documentary film, *Taking Root: the Vision of Wangari Maathai* (Marlboro Productions, 2008).

Wangari Muta Maathai was born in Nyeri, a rural area of Kenya (Africa), in 1940. She obtained a degree in Biological Sciences from Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, Kansas (1964), a Master of Science degree from the University of Pittsburgh (1966), and pursued doctoral studies in Germany and the University of Nairobi, before obtaining a Ph.D. (1971) from the University of Nairobi, where she also taught veterinary anatomy. The first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate degree, Professor Maathai became chair of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy and an associate professor in 1976 and 1977 respectively. In both cases, she was the first woman to attain those positions in the region. (A co-presentation with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone Chair)

Father Steve's Book Group

May 5, 12 and 19, 2014 (Three Sessions)

In what is now a tradition, the group read and discussed a current book in the area of Faith and Religion, specially selected by Father Steve Josoma, Pastor of Saint Susanna Parish. Father Steve selected as this year's book *Quest for the Living God*, by Elizabeth A. Johnson, CSJ, Professor of Theology at Fordham University, New York (Continuum Publishing, 2007). It was originally last year's selection until the Marathon bombings led Father Steve to select the Kushner book dealing with issues of bad things happening to good people.

human potential and his teachings on helpful ways we can view and navigate the world we live in. Wendy explored with us how we can use these tools to create a happier, more meaningful spiritual life.

Coordinator: Jean Mudge

The Latter Day Saints: A presentation on the Mormon Church, its history and beliefs.

October 1, 2012 (one session)

Speakers: Robert S. Wood, a life-long figure in the LDS, including missionary service in France and South America, and leadership positions with the Church at its Salt Lake City Headquarters, and Mrs. Dixie Leigh (Jones) Wood. As Catholics who have lived through the anti-Catholic diatribes in both the Al Smith and John F. Kennedy campaigns for the presidency, we are called to a special awareness of this type of bigotry. Professor Wood and Mrs. Wood assisted in raising our awareness. Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

What are people saying about the Historical Jesus?

October 15, 2012 (one session)

Speaker: Kelly Dunn. In “The Quest for the Historical Jesus” Ms. Dunn discussed the questions: Who is the historical Jesus? How is that person different than the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith? Why is this important? The talk looked at the sources available for the person who wants to know the Jesus of history and the reliability of these sources, including the Gospels. Attention was paid to additional ways that one can come to better know and understand Jesus of Nazareth. Kelly Dunn received her MA in Theology from Boston College and an Advanced Certificate in Theology from Weston Jesuit School of Theology. She was certified as a Catholic Chaplain in 1984 and has served in a variety of ministries, including Director of the Office of Health Care Ministry for the Archdiocese of Boston. She teaches Pastoral Care courses for that Office and the Office of the Permanent Diaconate. Since retirement she has taught a couple of courses for Regis College’s retirement program including The Historical Jesus and Early Christianity. Coordinator:

Dottie Parker

**Dorothy Day – Presentation by her granddaughter, Martha Hennessy
October 22, 2012 (one session)**

Ms. Hennessy describes herself as follows: “My name is Martha Hennessy and I live in Vermont with my husband Steven Melanson. My parents moved to Vermont in 1957 when I was two years old. Steven and I built our home across the field from where I grew up in Vermont and where our children were born. My grandmother, Dorothy Day was the co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement begun in 1933. The Catholic Worker Movement has grown from one house in New York City to 180 houses of hospitality for the homeless around the world. As the seventh of Dorothy’s nine grandchildren, I am committed to the Catholic Worker tradition of welcoming the needy, celebrating the dignity of work, and speaking out against war and injustice, all grounded on a foundation of prayer. In a spirit of gratitude I am available to give talks on the history of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement and its most needed and relevant vision and application today. Through my travels to England, Mexico, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, the Rafah Border, and here at home in America I have come to know the suffering of the world’s people and I take to heart the calling of my Roman Catholic baptism.” – a co-production with Saint Susanna Parish Peace and Justice Committee. Coordinator: Pat Ferrone

America the Religious: Five Centuries Seeking the Promised Land – Puritans, Politicians, Polemicists and Pragmatists

November 5 and 19, 2012, January 28, 2013 (Three sessions)

In part a reprise of a course given several years ago, but updated and with an audio-visual enhancement. Instructor and Coordinator: Peter Hartzel.

November 5, 2012 -

PART I : COLONIAL TIMES: Native American Religion, Pilgrims and Puritans, Conservatives & Radicals, Witch Trials, 1st Great Reawakening, Independent Churches, Old Lights & New Lights.

November 19, 2012 –

PART II: REVOLUTION TO 1900: Millenaries, Communitarians, Revivalists, Civil War, African American Spirituality, Immigrants and the rise of American Catholicism.

January 28, 2013-

PART III: MODERN ERA 1890 -2000

Evangelicals, Fundamentalism, Social Gospellers, Pentecostalism, African American Churches/ Islam, War & Peace and Nuclear Age Issues, New Age Expressions, Catholicism broaches 21st Century

I Was A Stranger And You Welcomed Me (Matthew 25:35)

November 12, 2012 (one session)

Sister Patricia Andrews, CSJ spoke on Immigration in America. In her presentation Sister Pat cited some of the USCCB (bishops) comments and stance to give credence and a strong Christian/gospel response to this "hot bed" topic of comprehensive immigration reform. She also addressed some stereotypes and common misconceptions (e. g., drain on the economy; "why don't they get in line and come in like our relatives" [**there is no line!]), and gave emphasis to the efforts to pass the DREAM Act. Since 2000, Sister Pat has been Director of The Literacy Connection, which offers literacy programs and citizenship preparation programs, and holds a Master's Degree from Suffolk University. She received the ABCD Community Award in 2010 for her work. A co-presentation with Saint Susanna Parish Peace and Justice Committee.
Coordinator: Eileen Gorman

Documentary Movie - BAND OF SISTERS

November 25, 2012 (one session)

"Band of Sisters" follows the story of Catholic sisters from different congregations across the U.S. in their work for civil rights, women's rights, immigration reform, environmental justice and other causes. It also covers how the sisters increasingly find themselves on a collision course with more conservative elements in the church today. "I did exactly what the church asked me--and now, the church is looking at me like, where have you come from... who are you?" says Sister Nancy

Sylvester, IHM, in the movie. The film coincides with the recent investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) as well as the 50th anniversary of the second Vatican Council. SPECIAL ADDITION TO THE SCHEDULE. Coordinator: Tricia McKenna

Will the Real Nuns Please Stand Up

November 26, 2012 (one session)

A panel of sisters presented on a particularly timely issue, the Roman Catholic religious women in America, their history, their mission, their future. There was a panel of three nuns and one associate.

Sr. Anne Fahey, Sister of Charity, Halifax spoke on community.

Sr. Mary Jane Cavallo, Sister of Notre Dame, spoke on ministry.

Sr. Barbara Reney, Sister of St. Joseph, spoke on prayer and spiritual direction.

All three also talked about the rules of their founders and why they are different.

Jean Brown, as an associate of the Sisters of Charity, spoke on the role of the associate.

Oddly enough, even though many in our audiences had sisters as teachers or otherwise have interacted with women religious, the big picture is not there. At a time when the sisters are under investigation by the Vatican, this could not have been more timely. Coordinator: Jean Brown.

Music as Worship: Congregational Psalms and Songs from East and West

December 3 and 10, 2012 (Two sessions)

“The Church knew what the psalmist knew: Music praises God. Music is well or better able to praise him than the building of the church and all its decoration; it is the Church's greatest ornament.” Igor Stravinsky

In a series of two lectures, Professor Andrew Shenton looked at Christian congregational singing, especially chant, and traces its use to

the present day. Chant from East and West traditions was the springboard for a wide-ranging discussion exploring the huge legacy of music for worship and especially how it can be used in today's church to praise God and to enhance worship. Presenter: Professor Andrew Shenton of Boston University's Program in Sacred Music. Dr. Shenton is a scholar, prize-winning author, performer and educator based in Boston, Massachusetts. Born in England, his first professional music training was at The Royal College of Music in London. He holds a B.Mus. degree from there, a Master's degree from the Institute for Sacred Music, Worship and the Arts at Yale University and a Ph.D. in musicology at Harvard University. He has given recitals in such venues as King's College, Cambridge, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue (New York debut), and Washington National Cathedral. His teaching specialties include sacred music, sacred art, and music of the world's religions. He is the James R. Houghton Scholar of Sacred Music and Director of the Master of Sacred Music program at Boston University. Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom

**DVD – “The Saint of 9/11, the True Story of Father Mychal Judge,”
January 7, 2013 (one session)**

The film is a biography of Father Mychal Judge, OFM, Chaplain to the New York City Fire Department, who gave his life at the September 11, 2001, disaster. In an enduring photograph of 9/11, a team of rescue workers carry a Franciscan priest's body from the World Trade Center. The world came to know Father Mychal Judge, in death as a symbol of courage and sacrifice. Saint of 9/11 represents the turbulent, restless, spiritual and remarkable journey of Father Mychal. Compassionate champion of the needy and forgotten, and a beloved New York City Fire Department Chaplain, he was a humble priest who wrestled with his own private demons while touching others in powerful and miraculous ways. Saint of 9/11 weaves interviews with friends, colleagues, and congregants and archival footage with Mychal's words and shows the

full humanity of a special life interrupted. Narrated by Sir Ian McKellen. Features interviews with famed author Malachy McCourt and former New York City Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen. Coordinator: Dottie Parker

Revisiting the Death Penalty and Sentencing in Serious Cases

January 14, 2013 (one session)

Presenter: Judge Paul Chernoff.

Capital Punishment keeps returning as a supposed cure-all to certain ills of society, despite its being abolished by a majority of the States in the U.S. and most of the civilized world, and despite its being deplored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In addition the goals of sentencing and the fashioning of an appropriate sentence raise very difficult moral and ethical issues. For example, "fairness" and "justice" may be mutually exclusive concepts and goals in sentencing. Also discussed was what a judge should do when the law requires one result, but that result would lead to a severe injustice. Mandatory sentencing also raises many important issues particularly in light of the June 2012 United States Supreme Court's 5 to 4 decision prohibiting mandatory life sentences for juveniles. Jesus has called us as Christians to pay special heed to those in prison ("For I was in prison and you visited me." Matthew 25) Judge Chernoff is a former Chairman of the Massachusetts Parole Board, and a retired Justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court. He served as a judge for 36 years and is now involved in mediation and arbitration work. He also is on the faculty of Boston College Law School. He previously addressed capital punishment at Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation in November, 2006. Coordinator: Dottie Parker

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Visionary of a New Church

February 4, 2013 (one session)

Bonhoeffer was in the midst of envisioning an entirely new concept of church in the twentieth century when his life was tragically cut short by the Nazis. We were very fortunate to have as our Presenter Professor Clifford J. Green, who is widely recognized as a world expert in

Bonhoeffer, was founding president of The International Bonhoeffer Society (English Language Section), and is Executive Director of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (English Edition), the definitive multi-volume compendium of Bonhoeffer's works. Coordinator: Peter Hartzel.

DVD - Richard Rohr, OFM

February 11, 2013 (one session)

This DVD presentation focusing on Father Rohr's book, "The Naked Now" is a good introduction to Father Rohr's work for those who are not acquainted with him. Learn to see as the mystics see! The enlightenment many are seeking in other religions has been present in Christianity from the very beginning. Richard Rohr in his book "The Naked Now, Learning to see as the Mystics See" helps us to recognize the forces at work that separate us from our true selves. Drawing from the Gospels and the traditions of the greatest Christian contemplatives, Fr. Richard shows us what it means to become spiritually awake and to open our hearts to the deeper meaning of Jesus' teachings. Coordinator: Tim Sullivan

DVD - "Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives"

February 25, 2013 (one session)

The Environmental Footprint of War. In an on-line description of the film, these are some of the comments: "What prompts this film is recognition of our deep dependence on the natural world and the significant threat to that world posed by war and preparations for war...In all its stages, from the production of weapons through combat to cleanup and restoration, war entails actions that pollute land, air, and water, destroy biodiversity, and drain natural resources. Yet the environmental damage occasioned by war and preparation for war is routinely underestimated, underreported, even ignored. The environment remains war's "silent casualty." A co-presentation with Saint Susanna Parish Peace and Justice Committee. Coordinator: Pat Ferrone

DVD, "Monsenor Romero,"

March 4, 2013 (one session)

March is the anniversary month of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom. In El Salvador in the late Seventies, one man was the voice of the campesinos, the poor, the disenfranchised, and the Disappeared -- all struggling under the corrupt Salvadoran government. Appointed Archbishop in early 1977, Monsenor Oscar Romero worked tirelessly and in constant personal peril until the day he was assassinated in March 1980. Inspired by his friend Monsenor Rutilio Grande, himself murdered for speaking out against the social injustice around him, Romero broke off ties with the military and aligned himself with the poor, delivering messages of hope in weekly sermons which became national events. Encouraging direct action against oppression from his unique position in the Catholic Church, Romero preached a gospel of Heaven on Earth and a powerful version of Liberation Theology that directly impacted political events in El Salvador that still have meaning to this day. With rare recordings and film footage from Romero's own collection and a wide range of interviews from those whose lives were changed by Archbishop Romero, including church activists, human rights lawyers, former guerrilla fighters and politicians, Monsenor: The Last Journey of Oscar Romero is a timely portrait of one individual's quest to speak truth to the rich and powerful forces which dominated his government. A co-presentation with Saint Susanna Parish Peace and Justice Committee. Coordinator: Pat Ferrone

DVD: "Budrus"

March 11, 2013 (one session)

This documentary is an excellent presentation of real conflict being resolved with carefully conceived methods of nonviolence, sustained by a Palestinian community over a period of 10 months. It might be another good example of thoughtful activism following the Romero film which elaborates on Archbishop Romero's own spiritual transformation and subsequent prayerful and outspoken resistance to the powers-that-be in El Salvador. Presented in cooperation with the Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Coordinator: Pat Ferrone

Sacred Scriptures: The Gospel of Luke

April 22 and 29, 2013 (Two sessions)

Luke's Gospel is the gospel for this liturgical year. The place and role of Luke in the New Testament was examined and explained. Each evangelist offers unique visions of Christ and composes his gospel with precise and passionate skill. Each strives to make Jesus' love real and powerful. How does Luke accomplish this? How can we respond to this love in a way that is faithful to both Luke's vision of Christ and to the relevance of this vision today? These are some questions explored in this presentation. The goal: to allow this Jesus who guides Luke's heart and hand to speak to us in surprising ways. A PowerPoint presentation was included as well as prayerful reflection and discussion. Instructor: Maria Costa. She is a professional teacher of religion with a Master's Degree from Boston College, and has several years' experience in teaching the gospels. She is a parishioner of Saint Susanna Parish. Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom

Father Steve's Book Group

May 6, 13 and 20, 2013 (Three sessions)

In what is now a tradition, the group read and discuss a current book in the area of Faith and Religion, specially selected by Father Steve Josoma, Pastor of Saint Susanna Parish. In light of the Boston Marathon bombings, Father Steve decided it was important to explore the issues raised by this tragedy. We studied *The Book of Job: When Bad Things Happened to a Good Person* by Harold S. Kushner (Nextbook/Schocken, New York, 2012). Some may have read Rabbi Kushner's seminal work *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, which came out a number of years ago, and this new book is a scriptural approach, based on the classic tale from the Scriptures. Kushner is Rabbi Laureate of Temple Israel, Natick, and author of more than a dozen books. Coordinator: Father Steve Josoma

Father Helmut Schuller: A Catholic Tipping Point

July 17, 2013

In *The Catholic Tipping Point: Conversations with Helmut Schüller* Father Schüller presented his call for inclusive and transparent changes to Church governance, including lay leadership of parishes and relaxing the restriction of priesthood to celibate males. Fr. Schüller, who once served Cardinal Christoph Schönborn as vicar general, is a priest in good standing of the Archdiocese of Vienna. (Added as a Special Event to the schedule, jointly presented with Voice of the Faithful. The talk was held at First Church and Parish, Dedham.) Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom

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Updating Theology: What Catholics Believe Now, and Why

October 24, 2011 and March 19, 2012 (two sessions)

Father Joe Nolan, Boston College Professor and an old friend of Saint Susanna Parish, a frequent speaker at AFFC, who is poet, raconteur, professor, liturgist, had a very interesting program to present about baptism and original sin, the importance of symbol and myth, eschatology, ecumenism, the Mass, the new status of the laity, lay theologians, etc.

Brief Outline of Father Nolan's Lecture

The subject for discussing is UPDATING THEOLOGY:

What Catholics Believe Now, and Why About...

baptism and original sin.

biblical scholarship (accepted by the Church since 1943)

the importance of symbol and myth..

eschatology (judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory. the influence of language and culture)

ecumenism - the opening to other religions. the end of anti-Semitism. the

Mass - sacrifice? yes. sacramental meal? yes. Adoration? Offering?

different models (or ways to think) about salvation

the new status of the laity. the Sant' Egidio movement. Lay theologians.

an example: what do these people (all orthodox believers!), Thomas

Aquinas, N.T. Wright, Josef Ratzinger, Karl Rahner, Brian Hebblewaite,

Gerald O'Collins, think about death and what really does happen? These topics should be discussed because the church is divided into two large groups: one thinks that truth is unchanging, it must be taught with authority, and unquestioned. The other group does not think truth is relative but part of what is called historical consciousness; time and culture influence our beliefs and church teaching. The church is far more aware now of two factors, experience and empathy, that influence the way we believe.

[Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom]

Women and War: The Lineage of Women Peacemakers

November 7, 2011 (one session)

Speaker: Suzanne Belote Shanley, Peace Activist, Poet, and Educator. She completed her MA in English at the State University of New York at Buffalo and a post-Masters Degree (MPhil) in English at Simmons College in Boston, MA, where she taught in the late 70's for three years. Suzanne has taught college courses at Worcester State and Anna Maria College in Paxton, as well as courses at the Paulist Center in Boston, workshops and seminars at colleges throughout New England. She is co-founder of the AGAPE Community in Central Massachusetts, a lay Catholic residential community committed to sustainability, prayer, non-violence and witness. Suzanne's presentation is offered in college and university graduate and undergraduate programs, including Gender Studies, Women's Issues Classes in Women's Studies Programs, Peace and Conflict Studies courses, as well as in parishes. Her presentation included perspectives on women and war--philosophical, spiritual, feminist and psychological. (For more info visit: www.agapecommunity.org.) [This was a co-production with Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair.]

The Interaction between Islamic Values/Ethics and Western Culture

November 14, 2011 (one session)

Professor Shari Lowin of Stonehill College spoke on this compelling current subject, using as her reference the concepts of suicide and

martyrdom.

Dr. Lowin is Associate Professor of Religious Studies, and holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago (2002). She does research on comparative aspects of early Islamic and rabbinic intellectual thought, focusing mainly on scriptural exegesis. Her book, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (2006), traces the mutual influences the traditions exerted upon one another as each created the forefather Abraham in their own image. Her current project, *Sex and God*, examines the use of Biblical and Qur`anic characters made by erotic poetry-writing Jewish and Muslim religious scholars in medieval Andalusia. At Stonehill, she teaches various courses on Islam and Judaism, including a team-taught LC course that travels with the students to Europe. Dr. Lowin also directs the Middle East and Asian Studies Minor.

[Coordinator: Peter Hartzel]

The Faces of Homelessness

November 28, 2011 (one session)

The Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance sponsors the Faces of Homelessness Speaker's Bureau program. The Bureau is comprised of homeless or formerly homeless individuals who share their experience with members of the community. The purpose of this presentation was to break down existing stereotypes as well as get more people actively involved in the fight to end homelessness. Two speakers (mother and daughter) who were victim of homelessness, shared their story and perspective. They were phenomenal, real, and put a human face on an issue that a semester of classes could not capture or convey. Two additional speakers (Andrew and Samantha from the Alliance) filled the audience in with the data and statistics. There was very good discussion at the end with much participation. There is no doubt that no one there that evening will ever look at homelessness as they did in the past. (Part of our "What is Jesus Doing Nowadays?" series.) [Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom]

Eyewitness Gaza

December 5, 2011 (one session)

Skip Schiel, photo-journalist and peace activist, did a photo/video-based program based on his Quaker faith and his experiences in Palestine/Israel, documenting the violence and inhumanity of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict.

[Coordinator: Pat Ferrone. A co-production with the Saint Susanna Peace and Justice Committee]

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps

December 12, 2011 (one session)

As a part of our “What is Jesus Doing Nowadays?” series, we learned about a lay group of persons who dedicate themselves for a period of ten months at a time to doing as Jesus has asked us to do. IVC is mature men and women sharing their skills, talents and life experiences with organizations that directly assist people who are poor. At the same time they grow deeper in their Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the tradition of the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Dave Hinchey (Regional Director of the IVC), Jim McCarthy (Casserly House), Ann Bersani (Hearth, Inc.) and Dave Sheehan (Irish International Immigrant Center) spoke about how this program has changed them, especially from a spiritual viewpoint.

[Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom.]

“Of Gods and Men”, A Film

January 9, 2012 (one session)

The monks at the Trappist monastery in Algeria seem almost to exist outside of time, so it may be a while before we recognize the 1990s as the setting for Of Gods and Men. And old traditions cannot escape new warfare in this stirring movie, based on a true story that happened at a remote enclave of peaceful, studious priests. These Christian monks minister to the largely Muslim (and very poor) villagers in their vicinity, a balance that is threatened by Algeria's Civil War. When nearby radical-Islamist insurgents begin killing foreigners, the monks must face a

choice. Will they flee to safety--a perfectly rational and understandable decision that will leave the villagers without their only source of health care--or will they stay on, secure in their spiritual calling despite the possibility of abduction or murder? Director Xavier Beauvois makes an absorbing film from this question, and it's not at all difficult to understand why it became an unexpected box-office smash in France (and ended up winning the Cesar award for best film of 2010). The film is beautifully cast, and sometimes Beauvois simply trains his camera on the lined, weathered faces of his priests, as though allowing those lines to tell the story. Heading the cast is Lambert Wilson (of Matrix fame), who leads his men with an almost regal bearing, and veteran actor Michael Lonsdale, who quietly inhabits the role of the physician in the group. The film takes time out for quiet contemplation, as though understanding that the priests' suspenseful situation is only half the story. The wordless climax, which allows the men to be animated by the earthly pleasures of wine and Tchaikovsky, is something of a spiritual journey of acceptance all on its own. It's a moment you'll find very difficult to forget.

[Coordinators: Linda Bates, Nancy Bates]

Mahatma Gandhi: The Man, the Mahatma and His Legacy

January 23, 2012 (one session)

Gandhi is one of those featured in Saint Susanna's Peace Chapel. Under the guidance of Peter Hartzel of our Adult Faith Formation Commission, we learned about this fascinating world figure, one of the most important people of the Twentieth Century.[Coordinator/Instructor: Peter Hartzel]

- "As It Is In Heaven," A Film

February 27, 2012 (one session)

Nominated for Best Foreign Film at the 2005 Academy Awards, *As It Is In Heaven* is the story of Daniel, a successful international conductor who returns to his childhood village in Sweden. Soon thereafter, the local church choir seeks him out to solicit his advice. He can't refuse, and nothing in the village is the same again. As the amateur choir

develops and grows, he is drawn to the people of his old hometown, makes friends and finds love... A beautiful and engaging film, *As It Is In Heaven* is a wonderful story about life and love that is sure to inspire and delight.

[Coordinators: Fr. Steve Josoma, Linda Bates, Nancy Bates]

The Primacy of Conscience

March 5, 2012 (one session)

What happens when our own conscience will not allow us to defer to supposed teachings of our church? You'd be surprised! Father Bill Kremmell spoke on this vital topic. Fr. Kremmell discussed what is required in the formation of an "informed conscience" as well as the integrity needed to act on one. In a 1968 commentary by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) on the Vatican II document on *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, he wrote "Over the pope ... there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary, even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority" Fr. Bill is a retired Pastor from St. Athanasius Parish in Reading and leads retreats and workshops on Spirituality.

[Coordinator: Dottie Parker]

Methods of Prayer

March 12, 2012 (one session)

Jean Brown is a Consultant on Life Topics to the Sisters of Charity of Halifax as well as the Ursuline Sisters, and deals extensively with spiritual and religious issues with the sisters she works with. She has years of experience as a Master Teacher and Parish Health Minister, and holds a certificate in Spiritual Direction, and she has spoken on many occasions on methods of prayer. She has recently joined the Adult Faith Formation Commission. Jean presented on some of the many ways we can converse with God.

[Coordinators: Jean Brown, Deacon Larry Bloom]

**“Updating Theology: What Catholics Believe Now, and Why,
March 19, 2012 (Part Two)**

Father Nolan’s course, commenced in October, concluded. See the October 17, 2011, course description.

**Father Steve’s Book Group
May 7, 14, and 21, 2012**

An annual tradition. The book selection this year was *Insurrection - To Believe is Human, to Doubt, Divine*, by Peter Rollins. [Coordinator: Father Steve Josoma]

A Sampling of Book Reviews: In this incendiary new work, the controversial author and speaker Peter Rollins proclaims that the Christian faith is not primarily concerned with questions regarding life after death but with the possibility of life before death. In order to unearth this truth, Rollins prescribes a radical and wholesale critique of contemporary Christianity that he calls pyro-theology. It is only as we submit our spiritual practices, religious rituals, and dogmatic affirmations to the flames of fearless interrogation that we come into contact with the reality that Christianity is in the business of transforming our world rather than offering a way of interpreting or escaping it. Belief in the Resurrection means but one thing: Participation in an Insurrection.

"What Pete does in this book is take you to the edge of a cliff where you can see how high you are and how far you would fall if you lost your footing. And just when most writers would kindly pull you back from edge, he pushes you off, and you find yourself without any solid footing, disoriented, and in a bit of a panic...until you realize that your fall is in fact, a form of flying. And it's thrilling."

--Rob Bell, author of *Love Wins* and *Velvet Elvis*

"While others labor to save the Church as they know it, Peter Rollins takes an ax to the roots of the tree. Those who have enjoyed its shade will want to stop him, but his strokes are so clean and true that his motive soon becomes clear: this man trusts the way of death and

Season 2010 / 2011

Adam and Eve: Rising Apes or Fallen Angels: Theology and Biology on Evolution

September 20, 2010, one session

A live presentation by Dr. John Hart, Professor of Christian Ethics, Boston University School of Theology, who enlightened us on the new and exciting subject of the relationship between Evolutionary Science and Theology. Does Darwin threaten Faith? Can Genesis and dinosaurs co-exist? Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

Melting Mountains, Burning Bushes: Global Warming and Faith

September 27, 2010, one session

A live presentation by Dr. John Hart, Professor of Christian Ethics, Boston University School of Theology, and consultant to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. A must for those trying to reconcile their beliefs with the new developments in science. Is re-cycling a moral imperative? Are tree-huggers the new prophets? Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

Worship Practices and Moral/Ethical Practices: Which is the Cart and Which is the Horse?

October 18 and 25, 2010 (Two sessions)

Live lecture series by Father Joseph Nolan, Professor, Boston College, author of many books, the latest being "Rediscovering the Mass." Does our worship and liturgical practice lead us to be good people, or do good people choose these types of worship? The two Monday night talks by Fr Joe Nolan explained, in depth, how symbols work, and their relation to liturgy. He learned this as a student under Raimon Panikkar at Harvard, but he presented an understandable (even an exciting) theology. It is, for example, completely wrong and now outdated to say of something that "it's only a symbol." How does all this (expressed in our Mass, for example) motivate us to happier lives and building a better society? Or fail to do so? Is the family meal a key symbol? Why is

baptism, in one sense, the failed sacrament? “What’s a parish to do?” The answer he gives – fourfold – is all related to the coming of the kingdom – Jesus’ favorite metaphor – and what that really means. Another big theme is the quality of listening – to written as well as spoken words – and this is a powerful statement, drawing upon a great Italian novelist, and Elie Weisel, and the challenge to turn an “objective Christian” into a subjective (involved, passionate) Christian. Interspersed with examples and humor.

Kathy Kelly: “The Cost of War, the Price of Peace” – A Live Presentation

November 15, 2010 (One Session)

Kathy, who prior to this presentation had just come back from trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan, is a devoted peace activist, pacifist and author who has been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. She was a founding member of Voices in the Wilderness and is currently a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. She has been part of more than 70 delegations to Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Gaza, bringing medicine, relief and comfort to people in areas of extreme conflict and distress. Kathy has spent time in federal prison for planting corn on a nuclear missile silo site and for crossing the line at Fort Benning’s military training school. Studs Terkel, remarking on her travels and passion for peace, writes, “Her hosts have been the men, women and children whose homes have been under constant fire. Her pilgrimages have one purpose: to reveal the lives of war’s innocent victims.” She and her companions embrace the belief that nonviolence necessarily involves simplicity, service, sharing of resources and nonviolent direct action in resistance to war and oppression. (A Joint Live Presentation with St. Susanna Peace and Justice Committee)

This is the first in a three-part series on Modern Day Prophets

Rethink Afghanistan, a film

November 29, 2010 (One Session)

Established documentarian Robert Greenwald (“Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers” & “Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism”) brings his polemic attacks on US administration policy into the Obama era with this six front attack on the new President’s decision to continue and even escalate the war in a region Al Qaeda has long since vacated. The six distinct parts cover such broad subject areas as the cost of the war, security and civilian casualties with the usual mix of talking-heads and archive footage with some particularly shocking revelations coming out on the status of Afghan women, the potential destabilisation of Pakistan and the futility of an Iraq style troop surge. Professors Robert Pape and Andrew Bacevich head up the battalion of experts which includes Brave New Films alumni Pratap Chatterjee of CorpWatch, as well as Robert Baer and Graham Fuller of the CIA, and a host of fascinating new comers including author Stephen Kinzer, retired Russian general Ruslan Aushev and prospective Afghan president Ramazan Bashedost. The reinvented television director wisely steers his impressive assemblage of experts away from the origins of the war in the dark days of the Bush regime to expose the continuing myths and misunderstandings which continue to drive the policy of the incoming administration to make more of the same mistakes. (A Joint Production with St. Susanna Peace and Justice Committee) (One session)

"Jesus Camp," a film

December 6, 2010 (One Session)

An insight into the impact religion makes on the lives of the young. REVIEW: The feverish spectacle of a summer camp for evangelical Christian kids is the focus of Jesus Camp, a fascinating if sometimes alarming documentary. (Shortly after its release, the movie gained a new notoriety when Ted Haggard, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, who appears near the end of the film, resigned his post amid a male prostitute's allegations of drug use and sexual misconduct.) For most of the film, we follow a charismatic teacher, Becky Fischer, as she trains young soldiers in "God's Army" at a camp in North Dakota.

Some of the kids emerge as likable and bright, and eager to continue their work as pint-sized preachers; elsewhere, the visions of children speaking in tongues and falling to the floor in ecstasy are more troubling. Even more arresting is the vision of a generation of children home-schooled to believe that the Bible is science, or Fischer's certainty that America's flawed system of democracy will someday be replaced by a theocracy. (In one scene, a cardboard cut-out of George W. Bush is presented to the children, who react by laying their hands on the figure as though in a religious procession.) Filmmakers Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady maintain neutrality about all this, maybe too much so (they throw in some interviews with radio host Mike Papantonio to provide a liberal-Christian viewpoint) and one would like to know more about the grown-ups presented here. Power broker Haggard is the creepiest person in the film, an insincere smooth talker whose advice to one of the young would-be campgoers comes across as entirely cynical. Time will tell whether the film's Christian soldiers will be marching onward. --Robert Horton

Etty, a live dramatic presentation.

January 24, 2011 (one session)

Susan Stein performed her one-woman play called "Etty" based on Etty Hillesum's writings (a brilliant, young Jewish woman caught in the midst of the Holocaust who wrestled with God, and ultimately accepted the death that came to her). The play has run in New York and internationally. DESCRIPTION: ETTY is a touring one-woman theatrical play based on the diaries and letters of Etty Hillesum, adapted and performed by Susan Stein. Directed by Austin Pendleton. Using only Etty Hillesum's words, Susan Stein's adaptation brings us to 1943 when Etty, a young Jewish woman, is about to be deported out of Holland. As she prepares for the three day journey eastward, she digs deeper into her soul to understand this piece of history and root out any hatred or bitterness, believing that humanity is the best and only solution for survival. Etty's words, insights and beliefs reach out from the Holocaust and allow us to see the power of hope and individual thought in the most extreme circumstances. In her gentle yet forthright way, Etty

asks us not to leave her at Auschwitz but to let her have a bit of say in what she hopes will be a new world.

(A joint production with St. Susanna Peace & Justice Committee.)

The second in our Modern Day Prophets series!

Dr. Alynne MacLean. A live presentation.

February 14, 2011 (One session)

Alynne MacLean quit her job to follow her dream and bring hope to doctors in developing countries. In December 2000, Alynne quit her research job at Biogen, Inc. to start Science with a Mission, a non-profit organization that creates low-cost diagnostic tests for use in the developing world. The idea, says Alynne, is to develop tests for kidney disease and other ailments that are as simple to use as home pregnancy tests. Because of donations from U.S. pharmaceutical companies and initiatives by the World Health Organization, doctors in countries like the Dominican Republic have access to the drugs they need to treat many diseases. But they don't have the tools they need to diagnose those diseases. After finishing her degree at Gordon College, Alynne knew she wanted to go on and get her doctorate in chemistry. First, she worked for two years and stayed home to help her mother after her dad died during her senior year of college. While looking at graduate schools, Alynne wanted to find a program that would allow her to help people as well. "In the background was always this concern," she says. "I even prayed and asked if I was supposed to be a missionary. I told God, 'O.K., you gave me this passion for chemistry and this desire to help people in the developing world. Tell me what I am supposed to do.'" Yet she says "I am not suffering for the Lord—I am doing something I love. I love being in the lab and seeing it all come together."

A joint presentation with St. Susanna Peace and Justice Committee.

The third in this year's Modern Day Prophets series

Why Four Gospels?

March 14 and 21, 2011 (Two sessions)

Deacon Larry Bloom presented on the interesting questions: Why Four?

Why not One? Why not Eleven? A live presentation on the many scriptures in existence during the early centuries of the Church, how some were accepted and some were rejected, and why.

“ ‘Heaven’s Bottom Rung is Heaven’: Spiritual Ecumenism in a Time of Fragmentation”,

March 28, 2011 (One session)

A live presentation by Dr. Mark S. Burrows, Professor of the History of Christianity, Andover Newton School of Theology, who presented on a spiritual approach to Christian Unity. Mark Burrows, Ph.D., joined the faculty of Andover Newton Theological School in 1993, where he is currently Professor of the History of Christianity and director of the program in Worship, Theology, and The Arts. Author and editor of numerous books and more than fifty articles, his writings explore a range of topics related to medieval mysticism, aesthetics, poetics, and contemporary culture. He is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, and serves the denomination in its ecumenical partnership with the Protestant church in Germany. He is also an oblate at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, MA, where he regularly teaches a course on the poetic theology of Bernard of Clairvaux.

Catholics in America: Four Centuries Looking for the Kingdom

April 4 and 11, 2011 (Two sessions)

A review of the Catholic presence in America from the colonial period to the present. Peter Hartzel, presenter.

Seder Supper

April 19, 2011

Rev. Stephen Josoma

Father Steve's Book Group

May 2, 9 and 16, 2011 (Three sessions)

An annual tradition. This year's selection was *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*, by Gregory Boyle (Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, 2010).

Fr. Steve Josoma was Discussion Leader.

Reviews of the Book: From Publishers Weekly Starred Review. In this artful, disquieting, yet surprisingly jubilant memoir, Jesuit priest Boyle recounts his two decades of working with homies in Los Angeles County, which contains 1,100 gangs with nearly 86,000 members. Boyle's Homeboy Industries is the largest gang intervention program in the country, offering job training, tattoo removal, and employment to members of enemy gangs. Effectively straddling the debate regarding where the responsibility for urban violence lies, Boyle both recounts the despair of watching the kids you love cooperate in their own demise and levels the challenge to readers to stand in awe at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it. From moving vignettes about gangsters breaking into tears or finding themselves worthy of love and affirmation, to moments of spiritual reflection and sidesplittingly funny banter between him and the homies, Boyle creates a convincing and even joyful treatise on the sacredness of every life. Considering that he has buried more than 150 young people from gang-related violence, the joyful tenor of the book remains an astounding literary and spiritual feat. "An astonishing book . . . about suffering and dignity, death and resurrection, one of my favorite books in years. It is lovely and tough and tender beyond my ability to describe and left me in tears of both sorrow and laughter."—ANNE LAMOTT, AUTHOR OF GRACE (EVENTUALLY) "Sometimes we are allowed to see in our own lifetimes what we were supposed to see in the life and ministry of Jesus. Read, and let your life be changed!" —FATHER RICHARD ROHR, O.F.M., CENTER FOR ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

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same, wouldn't that be easier on all of us? These and many other questions were addressed in this course. The Instructor: Deacon Larry Bloom, who holds a Doctorate from Harvard University with concentrations in ethics and legal history, and has been teaching in adult formation for over thirty years. Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom

Meditation: Nexus of the Secular and the Spiritual

October 5 and 19, 2009, two session series

This course provided access to two tried and true avenues for approaching God and reaching inner peace, long known as effective and uplifting but sadly not often explored or utilized in our modern Western culture. Featured Speakers: Prof. Christopher Ives, Chair of Religious Studies, Stonehill College, spoke October 5 on Meditation; Father Harvey Egan, SJ, Dr. Theol., Professor of Theology, Boston College, spoke October 19 on Christian Mystics. Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

Can the Church Keep its Young People?

October 26, 2009, a one session program

Featured Speaker: Sister Nancy Corcoran, CSJ, Catholic Chaplain at Wellesley College and author. Ever hopeful in the face of overwhelming odds, Nancy shared stories, insights and possibilities she has gained in the last twenty years as she reflected on the thoughts the younger generation share with her on a consistent basis. Nancy Corcoran, CSJ is the Catholic Chaplain at Wellesley College and a Provincial Counselor for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (St. Louis Province). Her academic background includes Regis College, St. Louis University Divinity School, Boston College, Black Catholic Institute, Mexican American Cultural Center, Dar al Islam, and finally she ended up at Harvard Divinity School. Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom

St. Peter's Basilica, the Church's Church, from Constantine to the Imperial Papacy

November 9 and 16, 2009, two week series

A study of St. Peter's Basilica, from the original basilica donated to the

pope by Emperor Constantine in 326 C.E. to the second basilica's "completion" in the mid-1600s. Included among many topics was a look at the Renaissance Papacy, the role of the pope as a secular ruler of the Papal States, the unfortunate results of the squandering and rampant corruption in the church's construction, the many artists and other geniuses who contributed to the final result, and the connection between the fundraising "indulgence scandal" and the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation. Featured Speaker: Deacon Larry Bloom

Renewing the Earth: Catholic Documents on Peace, Justice and Liberation

November 30, 2009 a one session program.

(Produced jointly with Saint Susanna Peace & Justice - Outreach Committee) Featured speaker: David J. O'Brien, Ph.D., Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, who spoke on his seminal work on this subject.

The Diary of Sacco and Vanzetti

December 7, 2009, single session

Video presentation with comments from and discussion with the writer/director/producer. David Rothausser of Brookline has produced a docu-drama about the Sacco-Vanzetti case, titled The Diary of Sacco and Vanzetti, that has been broadcast on WGBH-TV. Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were two Italian immigrants to America who were executed in 1927 after they were convicted of killing two people during a robbery at a shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts. The trial took place right here in Dedham. Their controversial trial became a political firestorm fueled by the anti-immigration hysteria that gripped post-World War I America. Many will see a parallel with today's anti-immigrant rhetoric. In this unique docu-drama, shot on location around Boston and Dedham where the actual events of the case took place, Rothausser portrays Vanzetti and uses Vanzetti's own letters, speeches and documents to revisit one of the nation's most notorious criminal cases. Mr. Rothausser, who was with us in person on the evening of December 7 for commentary and discussion, began his career as an actor while living

in Paris, France. As a writer Mr. Rothauser was awarded a First Place Massachusetts Artists Fellowship for his stage play THE FIRST ALL-AMERICAN PRESIDENT, and won a Blue Ribbon at the American Film Festival in NY for A GOOD EXAMPLE: Bertolt Brecht and HUAC. David is a recipient of the Sacco-Vanzetti Social Justice Award from the Community Church of Boston for this film.

Origins of Christian Traditions and Beliefs: Zoroaster

January 11, 2010, a one session program

A presentation in lecture form on the influence of the ancient faith of Zoroastrianism on the Christian faith system. Course Description: Did you ever wonder why God passed on such great teachings and stories just to this little group of Israelites, and then to this even smaller group of Christ-followers, by way of the Bible? But wait! What if it turns out that many of these teachings and stories WERE given to others, maybe in slightly different form, maybe exactly as given in the Bible, sometimes centuries before they ever showed up in the Scriptures? Wouldn't you like to learn more about that? If so, then this program is right for you, as we begin a potential series of programs on precursors to Judaeo-Christian beliefs. Featured Speaker: Peter Hartzel.

On the Waterfront

February 8, 2010, a one session program

An Audio-Visual Presentation in DVD form, "On the Waterfront," a classic film in which Marlon Brando and Karl Malden play out the Christian ethical dilemma in a modern setting. Cited as the premier performance of Karl Malden. Discussion followed.

Early Christianity

March 8 – 22, 2010, three sessions

A three part series providing insight into the cultural, social and theological cauldron in which Christianity took form in the post Apostolic period (64-311 C.E.)

· The Roman Persecutions / Christian Martyrs - March 8 · Evolution of Creedal Christianity - March 15 · 1st Century Roman and Jewish

Culture- March 22

Presented by Professor John Lanci of Stonehill College and Peter Hartzel of the Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation Commission. Professor Lanci (along with Professor Mary Joan Leith) was with us last season in the multi-part series on Saint Paul, which all found revealing, worthwhile - and hilarious. He has written extensively on the early Church. Peter Hartzel is one of the experienced instructors on the Saint Susanna Adult Faith Formation Commission. He has taught several series in our programs, including courses on Christian Agents of Change, The Crusades, The Inquisition, Religious Symbolism and the Religious Experience in America.

Seder Supper

March 30, 2010

Rev. Stephen Josoma

Film: Pray the Devil Back to Hell

April 12, 2010, single session

"Pray the Devil Back to Hell" has won multiple awards and rave reviews. This program was presented in collaboration with the St. Susanna Peace and Justice Committee. The film is about women from Liberia who, non-violently and creatively, stand up to the government.

Emerging Christianity

April 19, 2010, single session

We presented a video of the very dynamic Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M. followed by a discussion moderated by Dr. Don Pachuta, who attended both national conferences sponsored by Fr. Richard. The Emerging Church is reputed to be the most exciting and inspiring movement in Christianity in the last 500 years.

Eastertide Scripture Study Program: The Hebrew Scriptures

April 26, May 3, 10 and 17, 2010, four session program

Each week we hear readings from what we call the Old Testament, and this was an opportunity to learn about them in depth in this course. Cited were the numerous references to these scriptures by the New Testament writers and we examined whether they had anything to do with Jesus of Nazareth. We looked through the eyes of Jewish scholars to see if there really is a Judeo-Christian heritage. Featured Speaker: Dr. Don Pachuta.

A Special Presentation: Sister Nancy Kehoe, Ph.D.

Presentation and Book Signing

April 29, 2010, single session

Noted author Sister/Doctor Nancy Kehoe, RSCJ, of the Harvard Medical School faculty spoke on the topic of her latest book, *Wrestling with Our Inner Angels: Faith, Mental Illness, and the Journey to Wholeness*. Anyone with mental health issues in the family or among one's friends would find this topic immensely helpful, as it explores the until-recently unexamined relationship between faith and mental health.

September 22 through October 6, 2008, three week series

- Francis and Clare of Assisi: Heralds of Modernity
- Martin Luther: Monk in the Middle
- Pierre Teilhard deChardin: Toward the Future

Instructor/Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

Islam

October 20 and 27, 2008, two week series

Dr. James Morris, Professor of Islamic Studies at Boston College, has previously taught at Princeton University and the Sorbonne in Paris. He has published many books in the field, three since 2004, and has another in print. Professor Morris led off the course with the basic teachings of the Qur'an and hadith in an introduction to the religion of Islam, entitled "Surrendering to Peace": the Qur'an and Foundations of Islam. He was followed in the second week by Riham Bahi, Ph.D., from the faculty of Cairo University, a visiting professor at Bryant University in Rhode Island and a Fulbright recipient, who spoke on "Contemporary Islam in the Middle East Region." Coordinators: Linda & Nancy Bates

The Life and Work of St. Paul

November 3, 10 and 17, 2008, three sessions

Professors Mary Joan Leith and John Lanci of Stonehill College in a Socratic dialogue format presentation. Topics:

11/3 Paul's experience of/understanding of Jesus ~ Paul's understanding of his mission ~ Paul as a missionary of Christ in the Greco-Roman world and its challenges 11/10 Paul and Women ~ Paul and the question of Jews and Gentiles 11/17 Paul and the Roman Empire ~ Peter and Paul
Coordinators: Betty Murray, Sally Gould, Arlene DiPhillipo, MaryBeth Kabat

Film: For the Bible Tells Me So

December 1, 2008, single session

A significant film on a topic of great importance in the current age. The film, 98 minutes, was followed by a voluntary discussion period. Winner

of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Seattle International Film Festival, Dan Karlslake's provocative, entertaining documentary brilliantly reconciles homosexuality and Biblical scripture, and in the process reveals that Church-sanctioned anti-gay bias is based almost solely upon a significant (and often malicious) misinterpretation of the Bible. As the film notes, most Christians live their lives today without feeling obliged to kill anyone who works on the Sabbath or eats shrimp (as a literal reading of scripture dictates). Through the experiences of five very normal, very Christian, very American families -- including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson -- we discover how insightful people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child. Informed by such respected voices as Bishop Desmond Tutu, Harvard's Peter Gomes, Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg and Reverend Jimmy Creech, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO offers healing, clarity and understanding to anyone caught in the crosshairs of scripture and sexual identity.

Coordinators: Nancy & Linda Bates

Ethnicity, Race and Religion: The Rwanda Experience January 26, 2009
– Single Session

A presentation with audio-visual material by Carol Geyer of The Paraclete Foundation, who recently spent several months in Rwanda in connection with the work of the Foundation, which works with the education of the poor in both South Boston and Rwanda. A nice counterpoint to our more academic programs. The presentation was packed with interesting and emotion-laden facts on faith and religion enmeshed in race and politically engendered genocide.

Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

Celtic Christianity: A Sacred Tradition, A Vision of Hope

March 9, 2009 - Single Session

Father Timothy Joyce, OSB, Sub-prior of Glastonbury Abbey, presented on a subject well known to him, the topic of his recent book. He spoke on the relevancy of the Celtic beliefs and culture for today's Christians

and with a world-wide view for all religions.

Coordinator: MaryBeth Kabat

Current Christian Anti-Semitism

March 16, 2009 - Single Session

Father Walter Cuenin, STD, Catholic Chaplain at Brandeis University, discussed a topic which is particularly timely, given the current controversy between the Jewish community and the Vatican over the remarks of Bishop Williamson, recently relieved of his excommunication by Pope Benedict. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism within the Christian churches is not just historical fact but a current reality. Father Cuenin spoke from his own personal experience of many years as an active participant in the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Coordinator: Verona Mazzei

Faith Communities and The Spiritual Imperative of Environmentalism

March 23 and March 30, 2009 - Two Sessions

On March 23 we presented the award-winning documentary film “Renewal”, which depicts faith communities – Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists – and how they tackle environmental problems around the country. The producer of the film, Marty Ostrow, came and spoke as well as answering questions. On March 30, Dot Walsh of the Peace Abbey appeared with a short film and presentation on food choice as a spiritual practice that contributes to the healing of the planet. Father John Dear’s publication on this topic was available as a handout that evening.

Coordinator: Pat Ferrone

A Special Night with Father Joe Nolan

March 26, 2009 - Single Session

Father Joe Nolan, Emeritus Professor at Boston College, Liturgist, Poet, Raconteur, presented on his new book, *A Life in Liturgy: Rediscovering the Mass*, which recounts his life in the liturgy and the liturgical changes since the Second Vatican Council.

Coordinator: Christie Syner

Seder Supper

April 7, 2009

Rev. Stephen Josoma

Bible Study:

Are the Six Gospels and the Eastern and Western Churches talking about the same Jesus?

April 27 - May 18, 2009 – Four sessions

Yes, we have at least six gospels if you count the source Gospel Q and the Gospel of Thomas. A marked difference exists in the Jesus of each gospel and between them and the Christ of Paul's Epistles. Since the Eastern Churches were established first, why are there such drastically different ideas, interpretations, and theology from the West?

Instructor/Coordinator: Dr. Don Pachuta.

**An Evening with James Carroll and His New Book, *Practicing Catholic*
Presentation and Book-Signing**

April 30, 2009, single session

PRACTICING CATHOLIC is a personal history of the American Catholic Church during Carroll's lifetime. Practicing Catholic is for the millions of practicing, questioning, or lapsed Catholics and others who are searching for a way to reconcile the acts of Church leaders with the faith and the Church they still want to claim as their own. James Carroll is a columnist for The Boston Globe and a bestselling author. His 2001 book, Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History (2001), was a New York Times bestseller and was honored as one of the Best Books that year by the Los Angeles Times, the Christian Science Monitor, and others. Coordinators: Christie Syner, Linda Bates

Father Steve's Book Discussion Group

James Carroll's *Practicing Catholic*.

June 1, 8 and 15, 2009, three sessions

Discussion Leader: Father Steve Josoma

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Season 2007 / 2008

Faithful Dissenters

September 10 - October 1, 2007 - Four week series Father Steve Josoma and guest speakers presented on those valiant and courageous Catholics who, despite vigorous opposition from the church hierarchy, present different views of the church while remaining within it.

September 10 – Historical and current struggles within the Church - Fr. Stephen Josoma, St. Susanna’s Parish and Attorney Sharon Harrington, St. Albert the Great Parish (Weymouth, Ma)

September 17 – The Liberation Theology Movement - James B.

Nickoloff, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Religion, Holy Cross College
September 24 – A Matter of Conscience - Fr. James Keenan, SJ, STD,
Professor of Theological Ethics, Boston College

October 1 – Women in the Church: Crises and Controversies - Mary Ann
Hinsdale, IHM, Ph.D., Professor of Theology, Boston College

Coordinators: Fr. Steve Josoma, Linda Bates, Pat Ferrone

Special Event: Author Nancy Corcoran, CSJ

September 18, 2007

Author Sister Nancy Corcoran spoke on her book,
Secrets of Prayer: A Multifaith Guide to Creating Personal Prayer in
Your Life

Coordinator: Christine Syner

What is Jesus Doing Nowadays?

October 15 – 29 - Three week series

October 15 ... Scott Schaefer-Duffy's presentation on "Becoming a
Peacemaker: An Evening with International Peace Activist and Catholic
Worker Scott Scaeffe-Duffy

October 22 ... "Gospel Walking With the Poor" presented by Sister
Nancy Braceland

October 29 ... Lou Maloof on the Situation in Palestine

Producers: Arlene DePhillipo, Pat Ferrone

Issues and Events in Church History

November 19, 2007 – January 7, 2008, plus June 2, 2008 (snow date)
(Seven week series)

November 19 – The Churches Founded by the Apostles: What a
Difference Millennia Make

Presenter: Dr. Don Pachuta

November 26 – From Community to Creeds: The Development of
Authority, Dogma and Doctrine

Presenter: Dr. Don Pachuta

December 3 – The Crusades: Islam Meets the West – Success or Failure

Presenter: Peter Hartzel

December 10 – Heresy and Inquisition

Presenter: Peter Hartzel

December 17 – Missionaries, Conversion and Proselytism
Presenter: Patrick Provost-Smith, Ph.D., Professor of the History of Christianity,
Harvard Divinity School

January 7– Divisions in the Church – Part One: The Chalcedon Split and
the Great Schism

Presenter: Deacon Larry Bloom

June 2, 2008 (Originally scheduled for January 14) – Divisions in the
Church

Part Two: The Reformation

Presenter: Deacon Larry Bloom

Producers: Peter Hartzel, Don Pachuta, Deacon Larry Bloom

Religious Symbols: The Real Deal

January 28, 2008 – February 11, 2008 (Three week Series)

January 28, 2008 – Symbolism and the Modern World

Presenter: Dr. Ann Wetherilt, Professor and Chair, Dept. of Religious
Studies, Emmanuel College

February 4, 2008 – An Overview of Symbols

Presenter: Peter Hartzel

February 11, 2008 – Use of Greek Characters in Church Symbolism and
Church Symbolism of Early Twentieth Century

Presenter: Deacon Larry Bloom

Producer: Peter Hartzel

Celebrating Women

February 25 – March 3, 2008 (Two Week Series)

February 25, 2008 – Sister Patricia Norton Speaking on Her Life as a
Minister

And Her Hopes for the Future

March 3, 2008 – “Don’t Call Me A Saint” - A video presentation
of the life of

Dorothy Day, Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

Program Coordinators: Betty Murray, Sally Gould

Seder Supper

March 18, 2008

Rev. Stephen Josoma

A Resurrection People

March 31 and April 14, 2008

A Two-Part Presentation by Noted Author and Emeritus Professor at
Boston College

Father Joseph Nolan

Producer: Betty Murray

Religious Environmentalism

April 7, 2008

A Lecture Presentation by

Professor Roger S. Gottlieb, Professor of Philosophy, Worcester
Polytechnic Institute

And Author of A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our
Planet's Future

Producer: Linda Bates

Book Discussion Group

April 28 through May 19, 2008 – Four week series

CALLED TO QUESTION: A SPIRITUAL MEMOIR

By Sister Joan Chittister, OSB

Discussion Leader: Rev. Stephen Josoma

Special Event: Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

May 29, 2008, single session

A lecture by Bishop Geoffrey Robinson based on his book *Confronting
Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*

Co-Sponsored by Boston Council, Voice of the Faithful

Co-Coordinator for St. Susanna Adult Formation: Christine Syner

Co-Coordinator for Boston VOTF: Sharon Harrington

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Season 2006 / 2007

Forbidden Books

September 11, 18, 25, 2006 – Three week series

The Gospel of Judas, the Gnostic Gospels of Mary Magdalene, Philip and Thomas, other Gnostic texts,

and comparative review of The DaVinci Code

Producer/Presenter: Deacon Larry Bloom

Evenings of Scripture Study

Periodically throughout the Fall, 2006

Producer/Presenter: Don Pachuta, M.D.

Gospel Non-Violence: The Great Failure, the Only Hope

October 16, 23, 30, 2006 – Three week series

Speaker: Rev. Emanuel Charles McCarthy, Nobel Prize Nominee
[Co-Presented by Parish Outreach Committee, Pat Ferrone, Chair]
Coordinators: Linda Bates, Nancy Bates.

Major Issues in Catholic Ethics

November 6 – November 27, 2006 – Four week series
November 6.....End of Life Care - Speaker: Edwin Cassem, SJ, MD, Chief of
Psychiatry, Mass. General Hospital

November 13.....Stem Cell Research: The Global AIDS Epidemic,
Presented by: Don Pachuta, M.D.

November 20.....Capital Punishment: Legal and Moral Issues –
Speakers: Honorable Paul Chernoff, Associate Justice, Massachusetts
Superior Court,
and Rev. Stephen Josoma

November 27.....The Moral Teachings of the Catholic Church: The
Challenge of Interpretation- Speaker: Rev. Walter Cuenin, STD, Catholic
Chaplain, Brandeis University Coordinator: Don Pachuta, M.D.

A Day of Scripture

(Based on Introduction to the New Testament by Rev. Raymond Brown)

November 11, 2006

Producer/Speaker: Don Pachuta, M.D

America the Religious: Mayflower to the Moral Majority

January 8, 22, February 5, 12, 2007 – Four week series

A Study of the Religious Experience in America

Produced/Presented by: Peter Hartzel

The Sacraments: History & Practice

March 5, 12, 26, 2007 – Lenten series – Three week series

Speakers: Rev. Walter Cuenin, STD, Catholic Chaplain, Brandeis
University, and Rev. Joseph Nolan, Emeritus Professor, Boston College

March 5.....Overview of History of the Sacraments – Fr. Cuenin

March 12.....Baptism and Confirmation, and other Sacraments – Fr.
Cuenin

March 26.....Eucharist and Reconciliation, and other Sacraments – Fr.

Nolan

Coordinators: Elizabeth Murray & Sally Gould

Special Event: Resurrection Chorale

March 30, 2007

Oratorio by St. Patrick's Players

Coordinator: Christine Syner

Seder Supper

April 3, 2007

Rev. Stephen Josoma

**Cosmology: Fundamentals of Creation - Mysteries of the Universe,
Long Ago and Far Away**

April 16, 2007

Speaker: Prof. Alessandro Massarotti, Department of Physics, Stonehill College

Coordinators: Teri Seeley & Peter Hartzel

Scripture Study: Controversies in Scripture

April 23 – May 21, 2007 – Five week series

April 23. The Place of the Jews in scripture and for the next two millennia. An in-depth look at the history of the Jewish people, especially in regard to their treatment by Christians, then and now.

Speaker: Rev. Walter Cuenin, STD, Catholic Chaplain, Brandeis University

April 30. Women in the New Testament the Early Church, and now. Jesus above all, upheld the dignity and importance of women, at a time when all the cultures of his day held them as nothing more than slaves to men. This is especially so in the gospels of Luke and John. We explore the scriptures and the writings of the early and later fathers and doctors of the Church, as well as the errors in translation, deliberate or otherwise.

Speaker: Don Pachuta, M.D.

May 7. Secrets of Scripture. For millennia and today, people search for hidden meanings in the bible. Of all the many controversies in the interpretation and exegesis of scripture, translation lies at the source of most. We explore the historical context of some key books, as well as major errors in translation of Hebrew and Greek. We explore the nature of sin and evil, in an attempt to answer everyone's burning question of why is there evil in the world, and to examine how these concepts overtook love as the dominant theme of our religion.

Speaker: Don Pachuta, M.D.

May 14. The scriptural and early fathers' interpretation of the Incarnation, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Why we believe what we believe. What is the critical difference between the early church, the early fathers, and the present time, on how these sacred mysteries at the heart of our religion are held?

Speaker: Don Pachuta, M.D.

May 21. The Book of Revelation . We conclude this year's scripture with the last and most controversial book of the New Testament. This book belongs to a genre called apocalyptic literature. Is this book prophetic, historical, imaginary, a warning, or a combination? Why did early Christian communities reject it? Why do most people not want to read or study it?

Speaker: Don Pachuta, M.D.

Book Discussion Group

June 4 – 25, 2007 – Four week series

THE PRACTICAL PROPHET by Bishop Ken Untener

Discussion Leader: Rev. Stephen Josoma 2005 / 2006

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Season 2005-2006

Hot Buttons for Catholics

September 19 – October 24, 2005

Five week series

September 19.....The Papacy - Professor Patricia deLeeuw, Boston College

September 26.....The Priesthood of the Laity - Fr. Walter Cuenin
Pastor

Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Newton, MA

October 5.....The Church and Sexuality - Fr. Joe Marchese, Boston College

October 17.....Emotional and Psychological Implications of Being a Catholic in an

Age of Transition – Fr. James Burns, Ph.D., McLean Hospital

October 24.....The Changing Face of the Church in Boston 2000-2005
– Discussion Panel

Steve Kreuger- Co-founder VOTF

Senator Marian Walsh

Fr. Robert McMillan, S.J., Archdiocesan Planning Office

Sister Mary Ann Doyle, CSJ, Planner, Archdiocesan School Office

Rev. Stephen Josoma
Coordinator: Don Pachuta, M.D.

Women in the Church

November 21 – December 12, 2005

Three week series

November 21.....Mary Magdalene – Video and discussion

November 28.....Great Women of The Church - Professor Patricia deLeeuw, Boston College

December 12.....The Future of Women in the Church - Mary Jane England, M.D., President, Regis College
Coordinator: Sally Gould

Special Event: “A Dancer’s Christmas”

December 12, 2005

Boston Liturgical Dance Ensemble at Robsham Theater, Boston College

Coordinator: Christine Syner

Inter-Faith Understanding Series

January 9 – February 13, 2006

Five week series

January 9.....Protestantism - Professor James Weiss, Boston College

January 23The Orthodox Church - Very Rev. Fr. John K. Teebagy, St. John of Damascus Syrian Orthodox Church

January 30.....Judaism - Professor / Rabbi Ruth Langer, Boston College

February 6.....Islam - Imam Ibrahim Sayar and Salih Yucel, Boston Dialogue Foundation

February 13.....Buddhism - Professor Christopher Ives, Chair, Dept. of Religious Studies, Stonehill College

Coordinator: Peter Hartzel

Discovering Spirituality: An Introspective

March 13, 20, 27, 2006 – Three week series

Presenters: Sister Betsy Conway, CSJ, Susan Troy, M.Div., Betty Murray and Deacon Larry Bloom

Coordinator: Elizabeth Murray

Seder Supper

April 11, 2006 Rev. Stephen Josoma

Special Event: Author Angela Bonavoglia

April 28, 2006

Author Angela Bonavoglia speaks on her book,

GOOD CATHOLIC GIRLS,

A “Top Ten Women’s History Books of 2005” selection

Coordinator: Christine Syner

Bible Study: The Gospel of John

April 24 – May 15, 2006 – Four week series

An in-depth study of “The Mystical Gospel”

Emphasis on light and darkness, treatment of women

Reference text: The Gospel and Epistles of John, by Rev. Raymond Brown

Instructor: Don Pachuta, MD

Book Discussion Group

May 22, June 5, 12, 19, 2006 – Four week series

THE SINS OF SCRIPTURE by Bishop John Spong

Discussion Leader: Rev. Stephen Josoma

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Season 2004 / 2005

Day of Healing

September 18, 2004

Don Pachuta, M.D., and Rev. Stephen Josoma

Workshop: Lay-led Communion Services

October 24, 2004

Producer/Presenter: Deacon Larry Bloom

Biblical Exegesis Explained

October 28 - November 1, 2004

Three week series

Presenter: Peter Hartzel

Bible Study: Gospel of Matthew

November 8 – 22, 2004

Three week series

Presenter: Deacon Larry Bloom

One-Woman Dramatic Presentation on Mary

December 2, 2004

Coordinator: Elizabeth Murray

History of Catholic Church

January 10 - February 7, 2005

Five week series

Presenters: Deacon Larry Bloom, Don Pachuta, M.D.

Keynote Speaker: Professor Patricia deLeeuw, Boston College

Jesus and Paul

February 28 – March 14, 2005

Peter Jennings video– Three week series

Coordinator: Elizabeth Murray

Seder Supper

March 22, 2005

Rev. Stephen Josoma

A Time for Healing

April – May, 2005

Four week series

In-depth exploration of Healing and Prayer, Spirituality, mind-body connections

with Meditation and other practical exercises

Producer/Presenter: Don Pachuta, M.D.

Book Discussion Group

May 16 - June 6, 2005

Four week series

IMAGINING A NEW CHURCH, Bill Huebsch, editor

Discussion Leader: Rev. Stephen Josoma

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Season 2003-2004

The Contemporary Church in Light of Vatican II

October 2 – 23, 2003 (four week series)

AIM Lecture Series

Eileen Snow, Lecturer

The Vision of Vatican II for Today

November 3 – December 1, 2003

Five week video series

Recorded Lectures by Fr. Michael Himes – Boston College

Coordinators: Sally Gould and Deacon Larry Bloom

Lay Ministry Workshop

January 18, 2004

Demonstration of Liturgy of the Hours – Antiphonal – lay-led

Demonstration of Communion Services – lay-led

Deacon Larry Bloom, Instructor/Coordinator

Day of Healing

February 21, 2004

An Exploration of the Nature of Healing in Scripture, Prayer, Meditation

Presenters: Rev. Stephen Josoma, Don Pachuta, M.D. and Deacon Larry

Bloom

From Jesus to Christ

March 1-24, 2004

Four week video series

Coordinator: Betty Murray

Seder Supper

April 6, 2004

Rev. Stephen Josoma

Acts of the Apostles

April 26 -May 17, 2004

Scripture Study with Background and History

Four session series

Presenters: Deacon Larry Bloom, Don Pachuta, M.D.

Book Discussion Group

June 4 – 25

Four week series

TOMORROW'S CATHOLIC by Michael Morwood, MSC

Discussion Leader: Rev. Stephen Josoma

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Season 2002 / 2003

Bus trip to Holocaust Art, McMillan Art Museum And Lecture by Cardinal Walter Casper,

President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the
Jews

November 6, 2002 Coordinator: Deacon Larry Bloom

Soup with Sister Bridget Haase

March 10 – April 17, 2003

Five Weeks of Lenten Reflections

Coordinators: Rev. Stephen Josoma, Karen McDougall, Deacon Larry
Bloom

Seder Supper

April 14, 2003

Rev. Stephen Josoma

Revised: May 31, 2018

End Of Adult Faith Formation History Pages