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## Ecumenical Update by Fr. Scott Carter



Photo by Linda/Phil

I feel blessed to be serving as our Church's Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Officer. It's a job with goals I can get behind, a role that keeps me feeling inspired and motivated. As you can imagine, in-person meetings are rare because of the pandemic; however, I did have a pleasant garden chat (safely distanced) at the home of a former Antioch priest who lives in a nearby town.

Still, the many Zoom meetings and social media interactions I am having with folks who identify as Independent Catholic, Old Catholic, or part of the Independent Sacramental Movement are, with the rare exception, filled with happy, engaged and engaging people. People are sharing a genuine sense of gratitude and optimism in response to the growing numbers of us connecting and growing closer. Those who had admirable but unrealistic hopes of everyone unifying under one particular banner or another seem to have relaxed and opened up to considering how we can all support and assist one another as we are. Sometimes in these conversations, the Holy Spirit seems profoundly present. I can also report that Presiding Bishop Mark has been in regular  
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## Letter From Presiding Bishop



Photo by Linda/Phil

"These are the times that try men's (sic) souls". These words, from *The Crisis No. 1*, written by Thomas Paine in December of 1776, were addressed to a people who had just declared their freedom from England. They were engaged in a hard fought war to make that freedom a tangible reality, a struggle that would last for eight long years until at last in 1783 they would be successful. Many lives were lost during the struggle, many others were disrupted, and commerce was negatively impacted.

I thought of Paine's words recently as I was thinking about the nature of the global COVID – 19 crisis, its meaning and its impact on the world collectively, on institutions specifically, and on each of us individually. Paine's words are particularly germane at this time, one year into a struggle with no assured end in sight. This pandemic is trying our souls on all levels. Just as the colonists fought for their freedom from a foreign power, we too are struggling for freedom from the virus.

While this is true on the physical level, I am convinced that we are also struggling with something deeper, more involved, transformational even. Challenges are often the impetus for humanity's growth and a world-wide pandemic qualifies. Growth and change can come about in less disruptive and dramatic ways, but humanity seems to have an addiction to doing things the hard way. In this, we see the effects of the Fall as depicted in the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. It's as if we don't value an achievement unless we have struggled to obtain it. Here again, Paine's words are germane; "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

What transformation this virus is calling us to is unclear at the moment. There may not be one definitive outcome; there may in fact be many possibilities from which humanity must choose. The global transformation will be the result of the changes made to our institutions and ultimately to the changes each of us makes individually. The changes we make at an individual

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### Letter From Presiding Bishop (continued)

level impact the institutions in which we participate. The changes in the institutions that come about because of the changes made in them in turn create change at the global level. Change is a nested process, one in which each individual and each institution has a part. Only you can determine what role you play in this process. If you are unsure about what contribution you can make to this time of transformation, I would encourage you to begin to explore that in spiritual direction if you are not already doing so. Everyone's contribution is essential to the success of the work at hand and now is not the time to sit on the sidelines.

That leads me to the question of what role in general religious institutions have in this time of transformation, and in particular what role the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch can play. What are we called to do? What are we called to be? These are important questions that deserve our thoughtful consideration and honest exploration. They are questions that all clergy and seminarians should have a say in answering. To that end, this topic will be part of our discussion at Convocation 2021. I invite you to begin to think about this and come prepared to share your honest insights.

Until then, stay safe, stay strong, and trust that despite appearances, all is happening in divine right order. To quote Paine again, "Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated."

Peace and all good, Bishop Mark Elliott Newman



### Prayer for those affect by loss because of COVID-19

Divine Love, You know all who have died because of COVID-19 in the world. They are Your children and we trust they are cared for. For the ones who were left behind and missing them we ask that You, in Your Divine Mercy, watch over all who mourn their loss. May Your comfort and love give them strength and peace to continue without them. Help us to know You are always with Your children through all times. Amen

### Ecumenical Update (continued)

communication with me. I am well directed and supported, and we've discussed the possibility of incorporating a conversation on the topic of our ecumenical and interreligious relationships with all of Antioch at our next convocation. I hope it happens!

It was suggested that I share a bit about the collaborative efforts I've been making with Father Jayme Mathias down in Austin, Texas. My own contributions revolve around online Facebook and Zoom activities. I assisted not long ago, as just one example, with a Zoom meeting devoted to encouraging and supporting any of us interested in publishing, especially self-publishing books through Amazon. The intention is to grow the body of positive literature available to the public on the subject of Independent Catholicism. The effort is worthwhile, and it was a small but fun meeting I hope we'll offer again.

Upcoming online meeting opportunities for all of us include ongoing "Happy Hour" Zoom socials for Independent Catholics, Old Catholics, and folks in the broader Independent Sacramental Movement, as well as recurring meetings with changing themes and content. Sometimes I have a role in planning, preparing, or facilitating these meetings, and sometimes I'm just another participant learning and enjoying myself. Either way, I'm always doing my best to represent Antioch and improve our relationships. The best way to stay up to date on these Zoom and Facebook opportunities is to check out the public page of the Facebook group "Extraordinary Catholics." (Just search for "Extraordinary Catholics" or go directly to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/371141526873236>.) That way you'll see the latest posts on scheduled events along with any last minute date or timing changes.

**Church Leaders**  
**by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols**



*Photo by Linda/Phil*

A commonality among churches of many denominations is that the larger the church, the more leaders will exist. So a larger church or parish may have a full company of clergy, musicians, and other worship leaders, as well as a contingency of behind-the-scenes workers, creating church bulletins, maintaining the facility, and organizing the myriad of tasks that are only noticed if something is forgotten. In addition, these large places of worship have the ever-vigilant group lovingly known as the church ladies. These women (sometimes joined by a brave man) take care of the details for all the church functions. The rest of the congregation enjoys the result of everyone's energy, love, and devotion.

Smaller churches, both the individual congregations and the small denominations or jurisdictions also have a few named jobs; however, everyone is needed and expected to assume responsibility for the church. This is the case in the Catholic Church of Antioch. Everyone's help is needed; everyone is essential, and some have accepted specific roles. Currently, the specific leadership roles in CCOA, in alphabetical order, are: Director of Communications and Public Relations, Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Historian, Newsletter Editor, Sophia Divinity School Dean and Associate Dean, and the Presiding Bishop. Let's meet the people currently in these positions.

Director of Communication and Public Relations is a position I hold, along with that of Historian. There is a formal job description for both, but keeping it simple, for the first position, I am to oversee the development and distribution of CCOA's public communications, including social media and the newsletter. As the church's Historian, I am to review, research, and respond to questions about our history. For me, both roles include the underlying responsibility of holding the energy for the church – past, present, future. In any organization, it is important to have strong ties to the past to best function in the present and create sustainability for the future.

My other ministries include serving on the CCOA advisory committee with the other bishops, working with the Independent Sacramental Movement.

Through our local ministry, Agape Ministries, I perform weddings, write occasional articles for a local newspaper, and do some social media ministry. In addition, I do committee work with the Episcopal church. Post-pandemic, I'm hoping to return to chaplaincy work at a local hospital and at a local recovery treatment facility.

The newsletter is part of communications, and the current Newsletter Editor is Fr. Ron Catherson. It's his responsibility to solicit articles, photos, and other information for the newsletter, and then to create a final product. He sees our newsletter as a means of connection between our own clergy, other clergy, and the world. About the newsletter, he says, it "is our voice to the world. It shows we are active in making the sacraments available to everyone."

Fr. Ron is the pastor of St. John's Catholic Church of Antioch. As pastor, Fr. Ron not only provides worship services, Bible and book studies, and pastoral care to the members of his congregation, he is also involved in the community. While the pandemic has changed what Interfaith groups can do, he and the people of St John's have been involved with the Interfaith Ministries' activities whenever possible.

The leadership position in CCOA with the longest title also involves working in large and small groups and one-on-one with the most people, that being the Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Fr. Scott Carter currently holds this position and is actively involved in two Old Catholic/Independent Catholic groups, serving on the planning committee for one, helping to organize and then attending their zoom meetings and trainings. He also attends meetings and trainings of the other. Fr. Scott also interacts with individuals within the independent sacramental movement via text, phone, email, and social media, creating relationships with various people, learning about their jurisdictions, and sharing information about CCOA. He says he loves this role, because it includes the possibility for unity and connection with people across the world.

Fr. Scott is the spiritual director of the Pilgrim Chapel of Contemplative Conscience. He is looking forward returning to his ministry of presence, through which he ventures into the community to interact with people. He also plans to return to Pilgrim Chapel's weekly worship services, which had just started last year, as well as his work as a volunteer chaplain at the local hospital, and the contemplative prayer classes he was teaching.

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## Church Leaders (continued)

The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch was founded by Herman Adrian Spruit in the late 1950s, and while he was founding the church, he opened Sophia Divinity School, designed to educate people not only for their spiritual growth and /or ordination in CCOA, but also for people of other jurisdictions. This continues to be the purpose of the seminary today.

The current Dean of the Seminary is Bp. Michael Talbot. Under the direction of the Rector, our Presiding Bishop Mark Newman, Bp. Michael's job is to oversee all aspects of the seminary program, working with candidates from the time of their application, through their coursework, continuing to their graduation. To do this, he focuses on the seminary's program, the promotion of adult leadership and formation within the church, and collegiality through his work with the members of the board of directors. That said, he mainly sees his position as one of stewardship and maintenance of the history of the school, keeping it relevant for meeting the needs of people today.

Bp. Michael is also on the CCOA advisory board with the other bishops and provides devotional opportunities for the clergy of the church via zoom. In addition, he serves as one of the clergy who celebrate the sacraments for the Dignity/Arizona group.

A recently added position is that of Associate Dean of Sophia Divinity School. Rev. Mary Altalo currently holds this position. She provides assistance to the Dean as requested and enjoys this position because she has been an educator and believes in education. She enjoys curriculum development and interacting with students. She hopes she will be able

to expand the reach of the independent sacramental movement through her work in this role.

Rev. Mary leads Sophia Ministries, which has an online presence. She has recently started restoring a church building in Maryland. As well as a priest in the CCOA, she is a licensed spiritual practitioner for the Centers for Spiritual Living and teaches courses for that group. She is also heavily involved with the Center for Action and Contemplation Living School alumni groups, which whom she meets, via distance, regularly.

And then there is everyone else. Everyone in CCOA is in some type of leadership role. Some find themselves in one of the roles that occur before and during convocation, others are needed for special projects, and still others find that their current role, often due to health issues, is to pray.

We are all led by our Presiding Bishop, Mark Elliott Newman. Before 2009, the outgoing Presiding Bishop, with the help of the Holy Spirit, selected his/her successor. This process was changed by former Presiding Bishop Richard Gundry, and Bp. Mark was the first presiding bishop to be elected by the bishops. Mark's first term began in 2009, so he has been leading the church for over a decade. Perhaps we'll feature Bp. Mark in the next newsletter.

This all leads to the continual question, for those in CCOA, and for others reading this. In his letters to the people, Paul reminded them, and now us, that there are many gifts. The continual question for all of us is, 'What gifts has God given me?', followed by, 'How will I use them for the greater good?' In CCOA and in the world, we are each needed. May you answer God's call to go forth – because you, too, are a leader.

## (Facebook) Friends of Antioch?

by Fr. Scott Carter

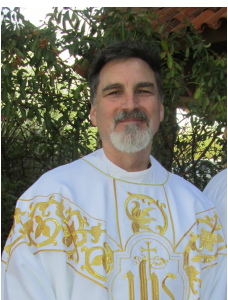


Photo by Linda/Phil

One upside of the pandemic's limits on our in-person gatherings has been more time and energy available for developing and deepening social media friendships. There are some fascinating other people out there in our online spiritual circles, and many of them are what I'd consider friends of Antioch, folks who are interested in and supportive of us individually and as an autocephalous Church. Here's a *very* brief list of a few such people you might enjoy connecting with online. You're spending time in our virtual, physically distanced world anyway. Why not make a few more friends for yourself and strengthen our ties to all of those existing and potential "Friends of Antioch?"

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**(Facebook) Friends of Antioch? (continued)**

Are you friends yet with...

*Father Jayme Mathias?*

Father Jayme (<https://www.facebook.com/RevDrJayme>) leads a very large congregation of Independent Catholics in Austin, Texas. His church, Holy Family Catholic Church (<https://www.facebook.com/HolyFamilyACC>), is currently unaffiliated with a bishop or any larger denomination, but Father Jayme is a major force for progress and sharing within the larger Independent Catholic and Independent Sacramental movements. He's an astoundingly productive person, and is personally kind and generous. When devastating fires left many people in Oregon homeless and distressed, Father Jayme used his public, pro-Independent Catholic Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/371141526873236>) to raise donations for the Pilgrim Chapel to distribute. The "Extraordinary Catholics" group has raised money and awareness for Independent Catholics all over the world. Connect with Father Jayme online; he is definitely a "friend of Antioch."

*Father Jerry Maynard?*

Sometimes called "the people's priest," (<https://www.facebook.com/theppspriest>) Father Jerry (<https://www.facebook.com/jerry.m.maynard>) is an activist priest interested in social and Sacramental justice. He is involved with a number of groups. He's a friend of theologian Matthew Fox and has assisted him on book publication projects. If you are interested in

social and Sacramental justice, connecting with Fr. Jerry online may leave you feeling inspired.

*Bishop David Strong?*

Bishop David Strong sometimes collaborates with Fr. Jerry Maynard. Bishop David (<https://www.facebook.com/davidcstrong1>) is active in Seattle, Washington. I met him for the first time at the gathering of Independent Catholics hosted by Father Jayme Matthias in Austin. Bishop David is a wonderful person working hard to provide a welcoming Independent Catholic option for folks raised in black worship and charismatic traditions.

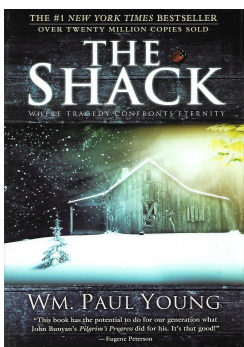
*The Rev. Dr. Trish Sullivan Vanni?*

Trish, who prefers "Rev. Dr." rather than "Mother" Trish Sullivan Vanni, is a theologian and writer worth "friending." (<https://www.facebook.com/trish.vanni>) She is an excellent theological resource for Independent Catholics, someone with whom Sophia Divinity School might have a mutually beneficial relationship. She's also a very nice person. Her latest book, *Turning and Returning: Reflections for Lent and Holy Week*, and a book she coauthored, *The Twelve Steps Meet the Gospel: Reflections on Scripture and Stories of Hope for Those in Recovery*, were both available on Amazon the last time I checked.

Of course, there are so many more friends and future friends of Antioch you might enjoy discovering online. If you're anything like me, one fascinating friend just leads to another. Enjoy.

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**Wm. Paul Young's *The Shack*  
review by  
Fr. Ron Catherson**



*The Shack* contains many theological concepts surrounded by an engagingly fictional story. Mack is the main character who encounters God – the Trinity – at the place of the greatest sadness of his life. Through the hard questions of Mack, God and Mack work together to help Mack, and thus his family, understand more of God's love for all of humanity.

They deal with issues such as good vs evil and judgment vs forgiveness. Additionally, a view of heaven on earth is wonderfully described which raises questions of heaven vs hell.

Would you like to have a conversation with God? Ask the hard questions? *The Shack* may be a good read for you. Even if you don't agree with all of the author's answers, the book does cause one to ponder. (The movie, *The Shack*, portrays the story in the book very well.)

What is missing? (Answer in next newsletter)



**Ours is a Spiritual Program**  
by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



*Photo by Linda/Phil*

Twelve steppers will recognize the sentence: Ours is a spiritual program, some nodding heads in agreement, and others grimacing. People of all walks of life (another common phrase) can find themselves dealing with the disease of addiction and while not all consider themselves spiritual or religious, many do. Clergy members may find that people will turn to us when help is needed. We may be approached by the addicted person him/herself, or it may be by friends or family members. We could also be asked to participate in community forums.

It is important for each of us to become prepared to provide assistance, and to share God's love (even with those who don't want it or who may not be easy to love.) Websites, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (aa.org) can be good sources of information. Formal and informal programs may also be available. For example, a colleague and I just completed a three-month, one session per month, training with a group of clergy in the Southwest. Learning about addiction and recovery is important for all of us.

**THE VOICE** is not only our voice to one another; **THE VOICE** is our voice to the world. If you have anything to share, contact me, Fr. Ron - your Editor, at [roncat@zianet.com](mailto:roncat@zianet.com)  
Your **VOICE** is an important part of who the Catholic Church Of Antioch (CCOA) is. For more information about the CCOA visit our website <http://www.churchofantioch.org/>

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