



## Reflections on a decade in ministry

– Pastor Jocelynn Hughes

It seems like just yesterday I said farewell to an amazing Episcopal church in San Diego and moved back to the area where I grew up to begin my ministry as the Lutheran Episcopal Campus Pastor at UC Davis. It was March of 2008. The country was deep in a recession that was going to last many years. People were losing their savings, their jobs, their homes on a daily basis. The UCs were in the midst of deep budget cuts, even as they raised student fees, which increased the anxieties of already struggling families. There was a small handful of students living in the rental property attached to the Belfry. Most of them were not Christians. But they liked food, and so they were willing to have dinner with me once a week. We talked about their hopes, dreams, fears, course work, and families. As the months went by we added a worship service to that weekly dinner. And then Communion. And then the students started to bring their friends – they liked food too. And they wanted a space for worship that felt churchy, so we dedicated the Ranstrom Chapel. There we've held baptisms and confirmations. And they had questions about God and Jesus, and the meaning of life in general. So we started a weekly bible study. And they wanted to deepen their prayer life, so we started a spirituality group. And they wanted to watch movies together, so we started gathering monthly for "Faith and Film" nights.

And we went to Prov (the Province VIII Campus Ministry conference), and we hosted Prov. We went on retreats to Los Angeles and Tahoe and talked about mountaintops and miracles. When Prop 8 passed our students applied for and received the Knutson Grant to host a campus wide weeklong conference on 'Christianity and Sexuality.' When students on the Quad were pepper sprayed, our students hosted discussion groups and teach-ins with the Occupy movement. When hate crimes were perpetrated on campus we joined with interfaith friends and colleagues to demonstrate and pray for peace, love, and justice.

Our students have gone on to become teachers, nurses, social workers, community organizers, scientists, professors, priests, youth pastors, doctors, lawyers. They have completed years of service with Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Episcopal Service Corps, and Young Adults in Global Mission. It is truly awe inspiring to think of the incredible children of God who have passed through this ministry in the past ten years!



But it hasn't been easy. Finances have consistently been problematic. Beginning my tenure in the middle of the recession made fundraising really difficult. Churches' budgets were shrinking as were diocesan and synodical funds. And then the opportunity to start an Episcopal Service Corps program here presented itself and the rest – as they say – is history. Now in our 6<sup>th</sup> year, our LEVN program continues to provide incredible, transformative opportunities for college graduates serving the most vulnerable in our community.

I can't believe this is my tenth academic year leading this ministry. I can't believe the ways this ministry has grown, the challenges we have faced, the incredible students and young adults I've had the privilege of serving. I can't believe

the ways the campus has changed, the ways technology has changed, the way the world has changed. But I do believe, now more than ever, that the ministry of the Belfry is a necessary part of the community of UC Davis, and LEVN now impacts the broader Yolo and Sacramento counties. We've worked hard, played hard, and prayed hard. We've accomplished incredible things together – the students, staff, board, local churches, clergy, *all*. Through God's Grace, your love and support, we are still here, doing this work, ministering to these students and young adults, sharing God's love and the Gospel message of love on a daily basis. Time has flown by! And God willing, and with your support, we'll be here for another decade, and many more. Thank you for your continued support, and for believing in this ministry and the importance of campus and young adult ministry. *Together, you've helped us touch thousands of lives.*

## Student in the spotlight: Danielle Empson

Meet *Danielle*, a second-year student at King Hall, the UC Davis School of Law. Here's a little more about her in her own words.



**Name:** Danielle Empson  
**Hometown:** Charleston, WV  
**Year:** 2L  
**Home Church:** n/a

**What you are studying and why:** I am a second-year law student, focusing on energy and environmental law. While I was researching biofuels at the University of Kentucky, there was a big energy-related

environmental disaster in my hometown. I became interested in the political reaction to that and began advocating for safer energy sources. After studying policy and watching environmental cases, I decided to go to law school to become a more active part of the energy regulatory system.

**Why did you decide to come to UC Davis?** UC Davis School of Law has one of the best environmental law programs in the county and is a very strong overall law program.

## Congratulations to Pastor Casey and Jonathan!



On October 14, 2017, our beloved Pastor Casey wed her fiancé (and UC Davis alum) Jonathan Dunsworth. May God richly bless their marriage!

**You've been active in campus ministry since graduate school. What led you to be a part of the ministry at UK?** I was looking for a spiritual connection with non-judgmental folks that was not connected to work in any way. I was particularly interested in an ELCA/Episcopal group because they encourage students to ask questions and to make their own choices about their beliefs.

**Why is campus ministry important?** Campus ministry helps students develop a spiritual connection with their peers, despite the transient nature of being a student. It's also a place where students can grow spiritually. Often, it is the first time a student develops spiritually without the influence of a parent. I think it helps students develop a safe-haven and a home away from home that they can go to.

**Hobbies:** Bluegrass and country music, folk dancing, running.

**Hopes/dreams for the Belfry:** To continue to be welcoming to students of all kinds.

**What you want to be when you grow up:** An energy attorney, a trusted and reliable member of my family and community.

## Make your donations online!

It's back! Now you can make donations online through our website: [thebelfry.org/support-our-ministry](http://thebelfry.org/support-our-ministry). Click the "Donate" button and then you can use a credit card or Pay Pal account to support our ministry. Thank you so much for your support!

## A note about our donation envelopes:

We have recently discovered that when a donor checks the 'endowment' box on our donation envelopes, the funds are held as an investment recommendation and do not go into an actual endowment fund. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns about this.



LUTHERAN EPISCOPAL CAMPUS MINISTRY *at The Belfry*  
LEVN: the Lutheran Episcopal Volunteer Network

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# Meet the 2017-2018 LEVN Volunteers!

Introducing our 6<sup>th</sup> cohort of LEVN Volunteers! Here is a little more about each of them in their own words. You can follow their year of service on their blog at [levn.org/volunteerblog/](http://levn.org/volunteerblog/) or on our facebook page at [facebook.com/levn.transform](https://facebook.com/levn.transform)



## **Leo Alva** (*Community Prior*) – *Computers 4Kids*

I was born in Zihuatanejo, Guerrero but was raised in the Central Valley. My parents and I immigrated to Modesto, CA when I was one year old and it wasn't until I started college that I moved to the Bay Area. I earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in Legal Studies from UC Berkeley in May 2016. I plan to pursue a graduate degree that will allow me to have a career where I can focus on serving the underserved populations that I identify with, especially immigrants. Some of my interests and hobbies include: going on walks, journaling, writing letters to friends, and hoping to travel/explore new places!

## **Livvy Belisle** – *The Belfry and Sierra Pacific Synod*

I was born in Oregon but I didn't stay there long; I'm a military kid and have lived in a handful of states, mainly Alaska and Virginia with some Washington sprinkled in here and there. I've considered the DC area to be my home for over a decade now, and I graduated with a B.A. in Religion from the University of Mary Washington... I know this year will present me with many new challenges... I hope that my experience with traveling and living in different places and among different people can provide a unique perspective and keep my mind and heart open to who and what may come.

## **Hannah Boggs** – *Trinity Cathedral and Next Move*

I grew up 50 miles northeast of Indianapolis, Indiana and graduated from Anderson University (Indiana) in May 2014 with a BA in Psychology and complementary major in Youth Leadership Development. Since then I have been working in residential treatment for teenage girls and women with eating disorders. I am not certain what the next few years have in store for me but I know I have a heart for youth, their stories, and helping them build life-giving community with each other...

I am so excited to build community with other service-oriented humans at LEVN, to be challenged in new ways, and to expand my perspective through the life-altering encounters we are sure to have this year with God's children!

## **Zachary Kihm** – *Lutheran Social Services*

I am a collection of ideologies, an over-thinker, and a compassionate human being. Because I am extremely privileged and beyond blessed with the life afforded to me thus far, I try my hardest to think about others and their livelihoods. I intend to use my good fortune for good and to uplift others in need. As to my lived experience and identity: I am the youngest of five—two brothers and two sisters... and I am partially deaf and wear hearing aids, which has led to many hardships and tons of growth. My interests are: Books; Science; Politics; Philosophy; Anime; Movies; tv shows; EATING; and conversing with people!

## **Nicky McHugh** – *Impact Foundry*

I was born in Seoul, South Korea, but raised in Atlanta, Georgia. I earned my B.A. in Visual Communication from Berry College in December 2016. I plan on continuing my studies and hopefully receive my PhD in Strategic Communications. Some of my interests include playing soccer and chess, fishing, and of course the Auburn Tigers!

## **Nicolette McHugh** – *Lutheran Social Services*

I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia and graduated from Berry College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology and Anthropology and a minor in Women and Gender Studies. While I was earning my degree, I met my sweet husband Nicholas, who I've been married to since August 12th. Some of my favorite things include documentaries, rainy days, and all things Disney... I'm looking forward to deepening my understanding of our world, challenging myself and my views, and exploring my new home on the west coast!

## **Andrea Merkey** – *Lutheran Social Services*

I was born in Rochester, New York. I went to college in Buffalo at Canisius College, and yes it's as cold as they say! I graduated with a Bachelors in Arts, and my major was Sociology, with a minor in Psychology and Child, Family, and Community studies. I have learned a lot during my studies at Canisius, and what resonated with me was the Jesuit way of being a man or woman with and for others... I want to explore the realms of the Lutheran religion, while meeting individuals that will influence me in a positive way, all the while instilling a positive change in them. I'm ready for this spiritually and magical journey with a heart full of love and a mind full of curiosity.

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## Announcing our 2018 St. Augustine Lecture: The Rev. Rob Lee IV

We are pleased to share that the Rev. Rob Lee IV has accepted our invitation to be our 2018 St. Augustine Lecturer. Rev. Lee is the author of the book, "Stained Glass Millennials." In the wake of the riots in Charlottesville, he became a public figure as a direct descendant of Robert E. Lee calling for monuments to his namesake and relative to be removed. He appeared at the 2017 MTV VMA awards, denouncing white supremacy, and has also been featured on The View. As a result of speaking out against racism, he was forced to resign from his church in North Carolina.

Rev. Lee will speak on campus on **Thursday, February 1, 2018**. This lecture is free and open to the public. The location and time are TBA as of press time, but please mark your calendar now and check our website for further details.

