

How about some good news?

Bad news. Fake news. It's all around us, grabbing the headlines and filling up our social media feeds. Violence, sadness, anger, disrespect. It's enough to make you disconnect, try to stop paying attention to the world around us. But we're wired for connection, for community, so we continue to search for just a little good news to help us plow through the bad.

Each day I scroll through the Facebook muck, searching desperately for today's Fiona update. If you're not familiar with Fiona, she's a baby hippo born prematurely in January at the Cincinnati Zoo. The zoo posts nearly daily pictures, videos and stories about her progress. She is growing big and strong. And, she's adorable.

Every day news about that little hippo brings a smile to my face, and reminds me there is good in the world.

Let's face it, news about religion and the Church is rarely positive these days – schism and decline are the stories that make it into the mainline media. In her article on Campus Ministry (page 26), the Rev. Deborah Woolsey references a recent opinion piece in the *Washington Post* that predicts there are only (spoiler alert) 23 Easters left until there are no longer any mainline churches left to celebrate it. And we are all very aware of which stories the secular media choose to highlight about the Episcopal Church.

So all of this got us thinking – what if we did an entire publication just about good news? Yes, *Connections* is typically filled with stories about relationships and ministries – good news that has often come about as a response to bad news in our communities. But since we've featured a few heavy topics recently (brokenness, violence, climate change), this *Connections* issue is featuring only good news. Sure, some of that good news is a response to something bad, but all of it, like baby Fiona, is sure to bring a smile to your face and reassure you that there is good in the world.

In his blog post, "Make Good News Your Life's Work," pas-



Fiona. Courtesy of cincinnati.zoo.org.

tor Steve Carter writes, "When Paul tells Timothy to 'do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:2),' he really means for Timothy to 'make the good news his life's work.' Every Christ follower has been given spiritual gifts. Most people think that if they don't have 'evangelism' in their top three gifts then they're off the hook. But doesn't every spiritual gift point people to Jesus and good news?"

Evangelism is a gift, but it's also the purpose of every gift. When people tell me their spiritual gift, I quickly begin asking how they can leverage that unique gift to help meet a need in the world. Every person you walk past or interact with has a need. When you make the good news your life's work you are constantly on the lookout for how you can meet someone's relational, physical or spiritual needs. When you make the good news your life's work you are

constantly on the lookout for these opportunities, those divine moments, where someone can encounter a God who loves them." (crosswalk.com, Dec. 12, 2016)

The churches and individuals highlighted in the following stories are doing just that. Looking for opportunities and meeting people's needs. Making sure that the people around them encounter our loving God.

A quote is often attributed to St. Francis, "You may be the only Gospel someone reads." And while I doubt that it was actually Francis who said it (fake news!) I don't doubt that, if true, we've been spreading a whole lot of Gospel in Southern Ohio. And that's good news.



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