



The PeliDeacon



*a newsletter about deacons
in the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana
Vol. 2026 No. 2
July 8, 2026*

Deacons Conference Focuses on How Different Faiths Do Service



**Serving
Others**
Multifaith Perspectives
on Compassion in Action

"Serving Others: Multifaith Perspectives on Compassion in Action" was the topic of a day-long conference sponsored by the deacons of the Episcopal Diocese of

Louisiana. Presenters and participants alike, over forty in all, represented a variety of Christian denominations and other faith traditions, exploring together the theologies and applications of following God's command to serve others. The conference was held June 17 at St. Augustine Episcopal Church in Metairie.

The three main presenters for the day came from different faith backgrounds and shared their personal stories as well as the theology of service of the tradition they follow.

Aaron Bloch, an attorney and director of the Greater New Orleans Jewish Federation, emphasized the importance of the values he received as a

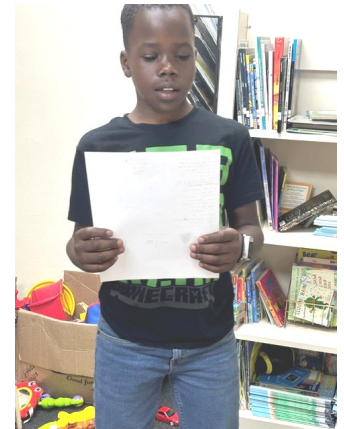
Archdeacon Turns Passion for Poetry and Service into Teaching Immigrant Students

"Home Away from Home" Theme Helps Students Gain Perspective

The Ven, Charles deGravelles, Archdeacon of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, partnered with another Louisiana poet to teach poetry writing at a Summer Program for children of the Louisiana Organization of Refugees and Immigrants in Baton Rouge in June.

DeGravelles, a published author of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, teamed up with Ed Ruzicka, president of the Poetry Society of Louisiana, to teach some sixty children from elementary grades through high school.

"I jumped at the chance to work with these children," deGravelles said, because it combined three of



(Continued on Page 2)

(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued from Page 1)

child growing up in a Jewish household, and how those values eventually led him from working in a large financial law firm in New York to New Orleans where he is active in community engagement in areas such education, immigration and juvenile justice.

Paige Davis, director of the St. Charles Center for Faith and Action in New Orleans, was raised in the Baptist denomination. She described how her faith journey took her away from the more conservative expression of her denomination that she experienced growing up before it brought her back to community organizing and facilitating service to the underserved in the greater New Orleans area.



Aaron Bloch of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans



Paige Davis, director of the St. Charles Center for Faith and Action



Sam Hubbard, director of Just Love of Greater New Orleans



Wednesday, June 17, 2026
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

St. Augustine's Episcopal Church
3412 Haring Rd.,
Metairie, LA 70006

What can we learn from each other? Join us for a multifaith panel & day of exploration on our shared call to serve.

Sam Hubbard, the third presenter, began his ordained ministry as a pastor in the Methodist Church but left that denomination to join the Disciples of Christ. His New Orleans-based ministry is called "Just Love of Greater New Orleans," a group that has no building but meets regularly to inspire and encourage ministry among its members in non-conventional venues and ways. Hubbard engaged participants by focusing on the central role of honoring curiosity as a starting point and as a medium for exploring one's faith.

Two interfaith worship services, organized and led by Monikia Cosson, Youth Director at Grace Church of West Feliciana, St. Francisville, featured prayers, scripture and music from different faith traditions and time for silent meditation.

(Continued on Page 3)



Participants enjoy a continental breakfast before the program begins.

(Continued from page 2)



Bishop Shannon Duckworth shares her support for interfaith work in the diocese.



Deacon JoAnn Garma, chair of the event, consults with St. Augustine volunteers who served through the day.



Members of the New Orleans Catholic and Jewish communities were welcomed by Episcopal Deacon Michael Hackett of St. Augustine, Metairie, where the conference was held.



The Rev. Sam Hubbard discusses principles of his Just Love of Greater N.O. ministries

Deacon JoAnn Garma, organizer of the event, expressed gratitude to the presenters for sharing their insights. “What we share among faith traditions and denominations is much greater than those things that divide us, especially when it comes to service. There is so very much we have to learn from one another, and in a time of societal division, just coming together in this way makes an important statement.”

Kristen Canezaro, a parishioner at The Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Rosedale, LA, reflected on what the conference meant to her. “One of the things I appreciated most was hearing from faith leaders who have intentionally cultivated cultures where loving their neighbors is not just something they talk about, it is at the very heart of their ministry. Rather than assuming what people need, they take the time to listen, understand the unique challenges facing their communities, and work alongside those they serve to develop meaningful solutions.”

Canezaro continued, “In a world that often focuses on division, it was refreshing to spend time with people who are actively working toward solutions, meeting real needs, and inviting their communities into the process. I left reminded that compassion is most powerful when it is paired with listening, learning, and action. My favorite takeaway was a conversation about practicing *infinite curiosity*. Approaching others with genuine curiosity instead of assumptions creates space for understanding, builds bridges across differences, and opens the door for deeper connection.”



Deacon Laura Freeze of Grace Memorial Church, Hammond, Louisiana’s newest deacon, and postulant for the diaconate, Karen Snyder of Grace, St. Francisville.

(Continued from Page 1)

my passions—poetry, teaching, and working with marginalized groups. In the highly charged political climate we’ve been living through, immigrants living in the United States—even immigrants and refugees who are following the laws and policies of our country—have been living in fear and have often been subjected to unfair, even brutal treatment,”

deGravelles said. “What a joy and a privilege to work with these bright, eager students who are either citizens now or who are seeking to become U.S. citizens. Participating students and their families came from many different countries--Cameroon, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and South Africa, just to name a few.

DeGravelles and Ruzicka worked with students for three days, starting with the fundamentals of poetry and quickly challenging them to write their own poems on the theme of “Home Away from Home.” “Many of these children have strong memories and feelings for the home that they left,” Ruzicka said, “and are now struggling to adapt to the challenges of making a new home in a very different country than the one they left behind. Charlie and I thought it would be a good idea to let them reflect on the most important components of what ‘home’ means, and how a person can bring some of those qualities to wherever you move. These young people really rose to the challenge.”



Some sixty young people from primary and secondary grades crafted poems on the theme of “Home Away from Home” at the Louisiana Organization of Refugees and Immigrants (LORI) Summer Camp. Deacon Chrls deGravelles worked with younger students, and poet Ed Ruzicka worked with middle- and high-school aged students.



Poets Ed Ruzicka, with hat, and Deacon Charles deGravelles, kneeling, with three younger poets selected to read their work at the World Refugee Day celebration at the Catholic Life Center on June 27, 2026.

When I Think about Home

By Brysen Myreka, Age 8

I feel so loved, I can sing a song.
Put to bed by my mother.
Saying goodnight to my father.
For the love they need,
I do a good deed.
I do my chores.
Mother’s heart becomes my core.
I take responsibilities, I do.
And I do them without further ado.
I may be sad, but I don’t get mad.
I get treated well,
My heart rings like a bell.
I like my brother and I love my father
I love the whole world.
I am a cat that is curled.

The PeliDeacon

a newsletter about the deacons

of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

The Peli-Deacon is an official publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana
1623 Seventh Street, New Orleans, LA 70115 (504) 895-6634

Publisher: The Rt. Rev. Shannon Rogers Duckworth—sduckworth@edola.org
Director of Communications and Marketing: Nicole Eiden—neiden@edola.org
Editor and Art Designer: The Ven. Charles deGravelles, Archdeacon EDOLA—
Charlie.degravelles@gmail.com



Walking in Love. Making Jesus Known. Transforming Lives.