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by Peter Feuerherd

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A theologian ponders [what a parish of mercy might look like](#).

The Diocese of Portland, Maine, deserves praise for not sweeping a sensitive situation under the rug: A pastor [has an affair with a parish employee](#) and now, apparently, has moved with her to Texas. Bishop Robert Deeley personally explains the situation to parishioners. The bishop's announcement was [followed by a healing service](#).

Manhattanites argue there is little room at the inn this Christmas for low-income New Yorkers seeking shelter and ask that a now-shuttered church on the Lower East Side [be used for housing for the poor](#). The Nativity Church is the former parish of Dorothy Day. Previous Manhattan church closings have resulted in property sold for high-income development.

The Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, synod comes up with [recommendations on tithing](#).

In Minnesota, a Native American mission church [burns to the ground](#). After a period of mourning, the pastor plans to rebuild.

A Gainesville, Florida, parish marks respect for life with a [service dedicated to abolishing capital punishment](#).

"I am Donald Trump, and I approve this sermon." Coming to a pulpit near you? The new Republican tax bill overturns the Johnson Amendment, which prohibits partisan endorsements from the pulpit. A Miami newspaper columnist argues this is [a disaster for both politics and religion](#).

Two Texas sisters make a contribution to the Diocese of Brownsville to [create a new church and social service center](#).

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A former administrator is [sentenced for embezzlement](#) at the Catholic parish at the University of North Carolina.

In Toledo, Ohio, a landmark church, now closed, will be [used as a social service center](#).

[Peter Feuerherd is a correspondent for NCR's Field Hospital series on parish life and is a professor of journalism at St. John's University, New York.]

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