

## **The 2009 Diocesan Campus Ministry Convention Report**

In my new role as missioner for ministry to higher education for the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, with the Ark Board I have completed a two-year evaluation process concluding that higher education ministry in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts should move from a building-based ministry at the University of Massachusetts, to a “building-less” ministry serving the higher education needs of the sixty-eight parishes throughout the Diocese. Continuing as chaplain to the five colleges in the Pioneer Valley, I have been called to serve as consultant to parishes seeking to spawn and/or recognize campus ministry as part of their mission to the world. In this regard, the new strategic configuration is intended to more effectively serve the Diocese as a whole, as well as to realize significant financial savings in this difficult economic time when “sustainability” is critical to its institutional future.

Twenty-five years at the Five College Episcopal Center – a veritable incubator of spontaneous, creative ministries outside “the institutional box,” including Taize-inspired alternative worship, art, poetry, and music series, classes on Belief, service-learning on the problem of homelessness, the “Dead Sea Café,” the God and Science Project, the Five College Roundtable on Spirit and the Academy – have laid the foundation for this exciting new chapter in Diocesan mission. While campus ministry was formerly considered principally an independent, non-parochial, indeed, “separate” ministry, students appear to be gravitating back to the church sanctuary and ancient liturgical rites, suggesting a viable bridge between student and adult life in the church. It is this opportunity that I hope will serve as a focal thrust for my work in the coming year.

My move from the Ark to my office at Saint John’s, Northampton is complete, and I have spent much of the fall helping Treasurer Steve Abdow dispose of the Ark building. I am maintaining my presence and ministry to the Amherst campuses: by way of a weekly six o’clock evening service (followed by dinner) at Grace Church, Amherst, monthly student-faculty discussions about the relationship between vocation and their Christian faith, and ongoing pastoral care to faculty and students on the five campuses. I am presently leading the Episcopal campus ministry at Smith through weekly student dinners, a monthly Taize evening service, and a once-a-semester midnight breakfast for Smith students during their final exams.

In terms of consultancy in the larger Diocese, I have been meeting with clergy in both Springfield and Worcester about ongoing campus ministries in those places, and about possibilities for new ministries. I am also looking ahead to the creation of a more regionally diverse Diocesan Higher Education Ministry Board, drawing on potential members from the three geographical corridors. I have also worked to create the Canterbury pilgrims website, which will serve to publicize campus ministries throughout the Diocese, and thereby to draw students and faculty to them.

In the coming year the Board will begin to strategize about the critical need of fundraising, which needs to be a priority in the coming months and years for Diocesan campus ministry. It is the hope that this new, regionally oriented campus ministry strategy, with its intentional concern for institutional sustainability, will serve well the Diocese of Western Massachusetts in its critical mission to the student and faculty populations.

Respectfully Submitted,  
The Reverend Christopher Carlisle, Chaplain