

JUNE 2009

PASTORAL STAFF

A PUBLICATION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Partners in Mission



**Discover.
Experiment.
Interact.**

The Diocese has awarded \$13,500 in 2009 Partnership for Missional Church grants to nine congregations in Western Massachusetts. These unique grants, part of the flagship program for Church Innovations, will help churches in our midst discover God's mission for them and act to complete it. See story Page 4.

ALSO INSIDE...

A Neighborly Parish



All Saints', Worcester, is a neighborly parish, offering aid that ranges from shelter for homeless fire victims to support for youth.

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Welcome!



Parishioners from a handful of parishes teamed together to learn how to welcome the stranger.

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New Priest-In-Charge



The Rev. Darius Mojallali, has come on board as priest-in-charge at St. David's, Agawam, where he says 'people are eager for strong leadership and deep relationships.'

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The *Pastoral Staff* is the official news publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, 37 Chestnut St., Springfield, MA, 01103-1787, (413) 737-4786. Visit us on line at www.diocesewma.org.



AT DIOCESAN HOUSE
The Rt. Rev. Gordon P. Scruton,
Bishop of Western Massachusetts
The Ven. William H. Coyne,
Archdeacon
Steven P. Abdow,
Administration and Finance Officer
The Rev. Canon Sarah Shofstall,
Canon to the Ordinary

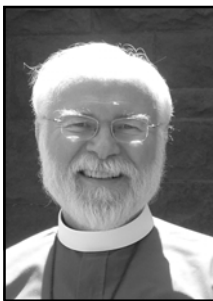
MISSIONERS

The Rev. Christopher Carlisle,
Chaplain – UMass the Ark
The Rev. Jennifer Gregg, Christian
Formation Missioner for the Berkshire
Corridor
Bruce Rockwell,
Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship
The Rev. Scott Seabury, Christian
Formation Missioner for the Pioneer
Valley Corridor
E. John White,
Missioner for Legacy Stewardship
The Rev. Jill Williams, Christian
Formation Missioner for the Worcester
Corridor

The *Pastoral Staff* welcomes ideas, comments and opinions and will make space for appropriate items. Photos and news items may be submitted to the editor, Janice Ripley Beetle, (413) 374-6239. E-mail: beetlepress@charter.net. Deadline for the next issue of the *Pastoral Staff* is Sept. 1. It will be distributed in mid-October. PLEASE NOTE: *Pastoral Staff* will not be published in August 2009.

BLESSINGS ...

A Pastoral Mission Letter



“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:18,19

We are experiencing a new season, a Great Disruption, in our world and in our Diocese. The global economic collapse has impacted us personally, as congregations and as a Diocese. Daily life goes on, but no one predicts a quick recovery from this unprecedented crisis.

We live in a media-fueled environment of contagious anxiety and fear, but God calls us to walk through this time with a different perspective. God put us here at this time to represent Christ as Good News people. Our mission is clear: “We work and pray together to develop healthy, mission-focused Christians and congregations who live the fullness of the Baptismal Covenant as a way of life.” (Diocesan Mission Statement)

What is God’s invitation to us in this situation? What are the temptations that would distract us from fulfilling our God-given mission at this time? These are crucial questions to struggle with prayerfully at this time.

As we reflect on these questions, we need to be aware of and respond to changes unfolding in our Diocese.

◆ Congregations are more vulnerable. The courageous decision of St John’s, Worcester, to close and disperse, planting seeds of sharing with other congregations in the area, reminds us that congregations, like all of us, can come to the end of their fruitful ministry. Several of our congregations are living at the edge of survival. Others with endowments have been hit especially hard by the decline in the stock market. Due to new government regulations, changing expectations and deteriorating facilities, we have experienced the heartbreaking suspension of ministry at Bement. What buildings and ministries can we sustain?

◆ The Diocesan endowment income that supports half of our Diocesan budget has also diminished. As a result of all these factors, we will need to cut \$200,000 out of the balanced Diocesan budget

Continued on Page 19

Treasurer Steve Abdow: Looking Over Financial Checks and Balances



I spend a lot of time these days thinking about ways to maintain a healthy financial environment here at the Diocesan level. I am also still involved with the affairs at my parish, Grace, Amherst, to an extent, so I have plenty of incentive to come up with ideas of how to financially support ministry. Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ Be top-line oriented. It's a lot easier to balance the budget by increasing income than by cutting costs. I know it's a challenge, but continue stewardship campaigns until the goal is reached, even if it's just before the next campaign starts. Talk about money. Don't be shy about it. Let everyone know what the needs are. Try new approaches. Maybe you've tried it all, so start over. Plan one or two fundraisers. They provide fun and fellowship and much-needed income. Be creative. Most importantly, collect all of the pledges. Devise a plan to regularly remind people of their pledges, and then remind them again. This is easier than asking in the first place. Don't let unpaid pledges slip through the cracks.

- ◆ Renegotiate everything; the phone contract, the trash collection, the copier service, etc. Businesses are scrambling to keep customers. It's worth a phone call.

- ◆ Spend wisely. We need to spend money to do our ministry. But maybe there are other ways to do things. Try to look at the expenses with fresh eyes and come up with creative solutions to save little bits here and there. If you can save \$25 a month on four items that adds up to \$1,200 over the year. It adds up fast. Cultivate a wise spending culture in your church.

- ◆ Know where you stand financially each month. Don't be surprised. It's a lot easier to fix problems soon after they show up than if you wait.

I know it's not easy, but it is very rewarding work. Keep at it! You are all in my prayers.

Archdeacon William Coyne: Reflections on the Clergy Conference Keynoter 2009



Dr. Nancy Ammerman, a professor at Boston University, has spent much of the last two decades studying American congregations. She shared some of that learning with the Western Massachusetts clergy gathered in Farmington, Conn., in May. Nancy invited the clergy to reflect on three important "A's": *Artifacts*: Every congregation expresses certain things in its sacred space and focal points; *Accounts*: Every congregation tells stories to explain and transmit God's story and movement in the lives of the members; and *Activities*: Every congregation has rituals to gather and form the faithful and equip them for mission.

And so the clergy engaged questions in small groups around such topics as: What does it mean to lead a vibrant community of faith at this time? What does religious leadership look like? Nancy closed her presentation by offering up habits of effective leadership seen in mission-focused congregations, including these:

- ◆ Curiosity: The discipline of paying attention, opening our eyes.
- ◆ Honest Self-Assessment/inventory of resources: Calling forth the gifts of the people.
- ◆ Entrepreneurship: Imagine where to find capital to do something new.
- ◆ Playful experimentation: Take a Holy risk to move into the future.
- ◆ Inventing new rituals: Sanctifying/symbolizing who we are becoming.

... AND ORDINARY NEWS

Mission Partners

By Rebecca Everett, an intern from Westfield State College.

The Diocese has awarded \$13,500 in 2009 Partnership for Missional Church grants to nine congregations in Western Massachusetts. Holy Trinity, Southbridge; St. James, Great Barrington; St. John's, Ashfield; St. Andrew's, North Grafton; St. Luke's, Worcester; Epiphany, Wilbraham; Good Shepherd, Clinton; Trinity, Whitinsville; and Christ Church, Sheffield, all received grants of \$1,500.

Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) grants are a unique kind of grant given in the Diocese. The PMC program, part of the work of Church Innovations, seeks to help churches discover God's mission for them and act to complete it.

Each congregation selected to take part in the program commits to a three-year process of discovery, experimentation, interaction and embodiment of the mission. The cost of the program is \$3,000 a year per parish, and churches may apply for the PMC grants to cover half.

St. John's, Ashfield, is already delving into the program wholeheartedly. "We feel a growing need to connect with the spiritually hungry people around us," Vicar Eliot Moss says.

Eliot says that in today's world, many churches like St. John's risk fading into the background of peoples' lives. The new mission, he says, gives the parish hope. "We have to find where God is already active in the world around us, in Ashfield and the other Hilltowns, and go there, not just sit with our doors open waiting for people to wander over our threshold," Eliot says.

Eliot stresses that St. John's is not overly concerned with the number of worshippers they have or hope to have but are focused on



Parishioners from St. James', Great Barrington, meet at Crissy Farm.

building relationships with the community. "We'll probably make a lot of friends who will never enter our church, but we'll be richer for them. And we might make some friends who will enrich us and transform us by coming to worship and joining us, but numbers are not the goal. The goal is building relationships," Eliot says.

In Great Barrington, St. James' is also beginning its work on the PMC program, and is doing so "on the road," the Rev. Francie Hills says. The congregation has been worshipping at various spaces such as a local banquet facility since a stone wall in the church collapsed in July of 2008.

Francie says that not having a physical church may actually help them to answer some of the questions necessary to start work on the PMC program. "We are already learning that the church is the people, not the building, and it is essential for us to focus and get on with our ministries. We believe doing the PMC process is exquisitely timed for where St. James' happens to be," Francie says.

"St. James' is wonderfully positioned to embrace some essential questions: What is the Church? What is our deep-felt mission?" Francie says. "This is a time to 'think outside the box' in a way we might not have been ready to do before the 'fall of the wall.'"

The church's time in transition has sharpened the congregation's eye for God's mission, Francie says, because it is clearly a time of change. "We believe God has a preferred future for St. James', and we are eager to discern it."

Feeding the Flock

By Rebecca Everett, an intern from Westfield State College.

The Rev. John Betit says that the Eucharist and the hospitality of Christ's table were the inspiration behind the Feeding the Flock program at St. John's, Sutton.

St. John's recently received a \$4,000 Congregational Development Investment Grant from the Diocese to develop the program, which encompasses an existing food pantry program and a brand new pastoral care ministry.

With the grant money, St. John's can now purchase a freezer and refrigerator to store food, thus allowing parishioners to expand their Community Cupboard program and create a new pastoral care ministry, through which parishioners in crisis can receive meals at home.

John says the new ministry was developed because the pastoral care team wanted to find ways to connect with parishioners experiencing life transitions and crises. The committee proposed to help those parishioners by having home-cooked meals delivered to them with words of consolation when they experience loss, illness or other challenges.

St. John's parishioners will meet three or four times a year, John says, to cook and freeze meals for future use, something they are now able to do because the grant funds covered the cost of a new freezer.

"A member of the parish will simply bring the meal to the home of the person or family in crisis or transition as a way of extending love, support and care from the community," John says.



A Diocesan Congregational Development Investment grant will help St. John's, Sutton, expand its pastoral care programs.

The grant money did not just pay for a freezer, though, as St. John's Community Cupboard will also benefit from the funds. Community Cupboard is a food pantry in the basement of the church that provides non-perishable groceries to needy residents of Sutton and surrounding towns.

The food pantry, which is open three days a week, is run, stocked and supported by members of the parish community, John says.

In the same hospitable spirit as the pastoral care ministry, Community Cupboard also sought to extend a helping hand to neighbors in need. "The members of the pastoral care team shared this idea with members of our Food Pantry Committee to see if they would be interested in collaborating in some way," John says. "They were excited."

In the past, Community Cupboard has only been able to offer mostly non-perishable groceries to the hungry because of a lack of refrigeration to store perishable items. John says that it was unfortunate that the food pantry could not provide fresh produce simply because it was hard to keep. "We live in the Blackstone Valley and are surrounded by gardens, orchards and farms," John says. "Folks are often asking if we could use fresh grown produce for our food pantry, but in the past we've had to decline some of these offers because we lacked the proper refrigeration."

With the help of the grant money, St. John's will now be able to purchase a commercial refrigerator to store the fresh produce that is so appreciated by the impoverished people who frequent the basement food pantry.

Rose Hartman and Cynthia Hill of the Pastoral Care Committee, who spearheaded the project and wrote the grant, say that in the past, a grateful recipient cried when they were given a fresh tomato from Community Cupboard. With the help of the development grant, St. John's will be able to provide fresh produce like this much more often, without fear that it might spoil.

Rose, Cynthia and John – and the other passionate parishioners – will see their hard work pay off with the forthcoming delivery of their new appliances, and residents of Sutton and the surrounding communities can look forward to seeing the fruits – figurative and flavorful – of St. John's charitable work, as well.

Grant Allows Expansion of Godly Play Program

By Rebecca Everett, an intern from Westfield State College.

Cynthia Allen says she knows that the Godly Play Sunday School Program at St. John's, Northampton, is successful because parents tell her their kids are the ones making them attend church every week.

Cynthia is the director of Godly Play at St. John's, which is just one of the many churches of various denominations that have adopted the innovative religious education program. The parish recently received a \$2,000 Congregational Development Investment grant from the Diocese to expand the curriculum and size of the program.

Godly Play is the brainchild of Episcopal priest and teacher the Rev. Jerome Berrymen. Since it was created in 1972, Godly Play has used hands-on learning to teach parables, sacred stories, liturgy and other lessons to youth in church. "They're basically learning the stories of our faith but in a playful, curious and engaging way," Cynthia says.

The grant has allowed St. John's to expand Godly Play to include more young people. The program, previously just a classroom for 3 to 6-year-olds, now also offers materials to teach 7 and 8-year-old children as well.

Godly Play encourages children to play and work with any of the physical representations of parables, stories or liturgical actions, so having beautiful, engaging materials is important, Cynthia says.

"It's expensive to start up – the



Cynthia Allen watches children in St. John's, Northampton's, Godly Play program. (Photo by Dick Fish, also of St. John's.)

materials last a long time, but it's a lot to buy," says Cynthia, noting that classroom resources are creative items that range from a wooden ark to figurines that help illustrate the parables. "It's about \$6,000 to set up a classroom, plus the cost of training teachers."

Since Godly Play requires unique teaching techniques, such as memorizing the stories so they can be told instead of read, teachers must attend intensive three-day trainings to become accredited.

Also, because the program will now include older students, it will adopt new curriculum appropriate to the age group. "It's a spiraling curriculum, so you get deeper and deeper into the work," Cynthia says. "The older kids will be able to get more out of the lessons." The curriculum for the 7 and 8-year-old children will also add enrichment

lessons, such as stories about saints.

Cynthia says that when she first heard about Godly Play five years ago, she knew immediately it was the program that St. John's had been looking for. "I was certain we had to do it," Cynthia says.

Cynthia's passion for Godly Play is obvious, and she says the church and the Diocese supported her in the start-up of St. John's first Godly Play classroom.

One of the most important aspects of Godly Play, Cynthia says, is the independence it allows children when learning the stories of the Christian faith. "It's not just told to them. They're shown it, and then can work on it on their own. They can play with anything in the room," Cynthia says, adding, "Empowerment at that early an age is wonderful."

Cynthia says she thinks that freedom to explore spirituality is one of the main reasons the program is so successful. "We've found it's been the curriculum that is most effective in engaging the kids and having them really absorb material," Cynthia says. "If a 3 or 4-year-old can tell me the seven days of creation – that's fabulous. That's successful."

There are currently 20 to 30 students in the 3 to 6-year-old class, and 12 in the new first and second grade class. The classes continue to grow, Cynthia speculates, because of word of mouth. "The kids keep coming," she adds. "The vestry is thrilled." In the future, Cynthia says St. John's will continue expanding Godly Play to include even older children.

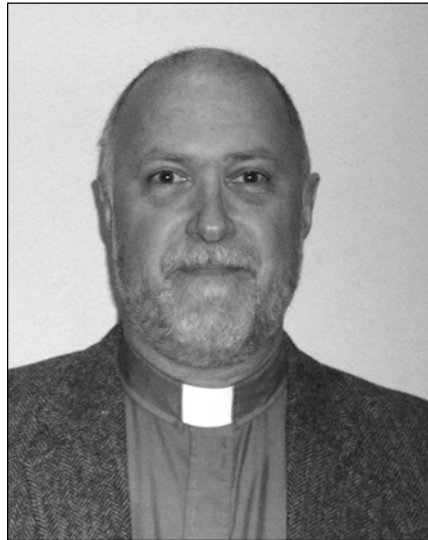
Meet the Rev. Darius Mojallali

Name: The Rev. Darius Mojallali, priest-in-charge, St. David's, Feeding Hills (Agawam)

Former parish: St. Stephen's, Delmar, Diocese of Albany, N.Y. (ordained in Albany in 1983)

Educational experience: Bachelor's degree in philosophy and religion, Connecticut College, 1975; master's of divinity, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981.

What in your experience/background has prepared you for this new calling? What is most important to me is that God loves his church and has a deep investment in our success in the mission he has placed before us. My conviction about this has driven my ministry for the last 25 years. After 20 years at St. Stephen's, I realized a new mission field was calling me at St. David's, where the people are eager for strong leadership and deep relationships – with Jesus Christ and with each other. The challenge of growing a church in this cultural and economic time appeals to me, and I have the zeal and determination that will help make for growth at St. David's. I have been a priest long enough to have a sense of how parishes operate, to have a steady, joyful, and loving leadership style while also being proactive and authoritative. My former parishes both grew in numbers and in levels of spiritual commitment during my times there, and I believe that God has brought me and my family to Agawam so



The Rev. Darius Mojallali is the new priest-in-charge at St. David's, Agawam.

we can be used by him to prosper his work at St. David's. It won't be easy, but I believe that God only calls us to work for which he is ready to provide.

What are your goals in mission in your new parish? The first, to help people of St. David's move from membership to discipleship. Second, enlivening our worship so people come into the presence of God in a way that excites and empowers us for our mission field (the community around us). Third, to identify two or three forms of community outreach that can give us a way to share God's love in practical ways with people in need. Fourth, to establish a sense of the urgency of our moving forward into growth. Fifth (and as a result of all of the above), to balance our budget so we can continue forward with a

full-time rector and have ample resources for ministry in and beyond the parish.

What excites you about your new role and service? I love a challenge, and I love meeting new people, so the challenge of helping lead St. David's into a new time, and the joy of meeting the people of the parish are very exciting to me.

What made you feel called to priesthood? I grew up in the Episcopal Church, and I also grew up in a family that was torn by the conflict between my parents. I found a place of refuge, safety and friendship at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Geneseo, N.Y., where my mother, my brother and I attended regularly. My early sense of call came from a desire to create and share the same place of safety and healing that God had provided for me as a child in the church. I had a profound experience of spiritual awakening when I was 20, which led me into a deep intimacy with God, and I soon began to sense that he wanted me to serve him as a pastor and priest. So far, I still think I heard the call right. I hope so.

Family: My wife is Stephanie. Between us we have four children.

Hobbies? I am a musician. I fix stuff – such as bikes, cars, plumbing, kids' toys. I love to read and listen to fiction. My wife and I love gardening. Playing with my 5-year-old gives me great joy, though it is more important than a hobby.

Welcoming the Stranger

Could our congregations grow? That was the question that teams of congregants from St. Paul's, Stockbridge, St. James', Great Barrington, and St. Paul's, Holyoke, sought to answer in a series of workshops and visits that began last summer and concluded this January. The workshop series, called Welcoming the Stranger, was offered by Ed Farrell, a member in Holyoke who is also a senior associate at the NCE Consulting Group, a resource provider to churches and educational institutions.

If you have the same question – could our congregation grow? – the answer begins with a look around your community or neighborhood. Do the people you see there believe in God? If you think the answer is yes, you are probably right. Well over 80 percent of Americans claim a belief in God. Now ask yourself if these same people go to church? Probably not is the correct answer. Fewer than a third of adult Americans regularly attend church. These two facts together tell us that the mission field for evangelism is right where we already are.

But they also tell us why it's important to invite and welcome strangers to our congregations. The people who we will be inviting to join us are in one important way fundamentally not like us – since they rarely go to church it is very likely that they really don't know how church is done. They don't know where to park or which door to use. They don't know what seat to take or what book to use or what the numbers on the hymn board mean. They don't know when to sit and when to stand and when to kneel. All this not knowing – this uncertainty – produces anxiety, and research shows that an anxious visitor is one unlikely to return.

So what to do? Workshop participants learned that intentionality is the key to a successful church growth campaign. The first step was a “welcoming audit” – teams of participants from each church made Sunday morning visits to each of the other congregations as a



This team of Diocesan congregants participated in a workshop series called Welcoming the Stranger.

way of providing a fresh perspective on what the Sunday morning experience felt like to someone who hadn't been there before. The good news was that all three churches felt welcoming to the visitors, but auditors had specific suggestions for each church to work on. From that feedback, congregations were able to develop frameworks for becoming intentionally welcoming worshiping communities.

But is a good welcome enough? A subsequent workshop taught participants how to become an intentionally inviting community as well – through sharing of church space, creating and managing media plans and designing effective invitation campaigns. Each of the participating congregations had pieces of this triad in place, but none had all of them.

The sessions concluded with a workshop on intentional incorporation, the process of “keeping them coming,” including new member follow-up processes, education for new Episcopalians and the use of small groups as incorporating tools. The final session also allowed time for each congregation to begin to develop a formal welcoming, inviting and incorporation plans.

Welcoming the Stranger is easily adapted to any congregation or – even better – group of congregations and is an easy way to begin to develop a systematic approach to church growth.

To learn more contact Ed Farrell at efarrell@ncecongregations.org.

All Saints', Worcester, a Good Neighbor

By Dick Baker, the senior warden at St. Barnabas' and All Saints' Springfield.

They certainly couldn't put the fire out, but members of All Saints', Worcester, helped extinguish the fears and fill the immediate needs of 80 residents from a nearby burned-out apartment building in early March.

The devastating blaze took place at 167 Pleasant St., a location that All Saints' business administrator Harold Stevens describes as "a stone's throw from our church."

All Saints', which offered space as a shelter, played a major part in the rapid neighborhood response.

"That evening people from the church just showed up and asked, 'What can we do?'" Stevens said. "They brought food. One person who lived in the building was a chef, and everyone came together to put together a pasta dinner. That part was magic."

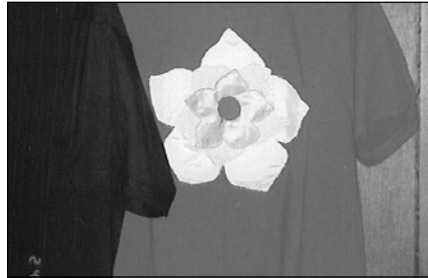
The Rev. Kevin D. Bean said that the displaced residents were in "all sorts of states of mind" when they arrived at All Saints'. "They had to get out extremely fast - some had to be rescued by fire ladder," Kevin says. "Everyone lost basically everything."

Some pets made it over to the All Saints' shelter.

"We also had nine cats and a parrot," Kevin says.

The nearby Pleasant Street Baptist Church was affected, and All Saints' hosted their next Sunday morning service following the fire.

"There were three or four of us in the office at the time the fire started, and we heard sirens, and



The "Fun and Fab Fridays" official T-shirt at All Saints', Worcester.

then more sirens," Harold recalls. "There was lots of smoke, and for a moment it jumped to the steeple at the church (Pleasant Street Baptist) next door. That was scary."

Kevin explains that the firemen tried to put the fire out with water from the outside of the steeple, but that it didn't work. So they had to attack the problem from the inside of the church.

"And what goes up must come down, so their church not only had damage from the fire but water damage as well," Kevin says. "We were happy to host their worship service and some of their other gatherings as well. They were able to get back into their church rather quickly."

All Saints' responded to this neighborhood crisis because being neighborly is a regular part of its ministry. Every Friday evening, it sponsors an ongoing outreach to roughly 50 youth in the neighborhood called "Fun and Fab Fridays." The "Fun" group is for children from grades 1-6; the "Fab" is for those in grades 7-12. There are activities such as Native-American storytelling, snow-tubing, science, movies and cookouts for the

younger children while painting, photography, bowling and walks for the homeless are examples of activities for the older group.

All Saints' also participates with other local organizations in a feeding program for Jeremiah's Inn, a Worcester-based residential recovery program for addicted men. Jeremiah's Inn, which has served the community since 1982, also operates as an Emergency Food Pantry.

Another neighborhood ministry is the affiliation with the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Worcester, which is a nonprofit organization that works in partnership with religious congregations to provide shelter, support and assistance to families with children who are homeless, regardless of income and family structure. A number of churches participate in actually setting up shelter for a family for a period of one week. At All Saints', they convert classroom space into living quarters two or three times a year.

All Saints' also sells supermarket cards to aid the homeless. For example, a person buys \$100 worth of groceries with the card, and the store donates \$5 to the homeless.

All Saints' also works with other churches in supporting enrichment programs for Elm Park Community School's extended summer school program in a partnership between the school system and area churches. The school system can afford 14 days of summer school, and with the help of the churches, that period is extended. In terms of ministry, All Saints' fire never goes out.

Helping to Launch a Free Health Service

By Lois Coffey, the senior warden at Church of the Atonement, Westfield.

The vision started over two and a half years ago. In July 2006, Dianne Legalos, who volunteers at the Pioneer Valley Free Health Service in East Longmeadow, saw the need for another like facility in the Westfield area where she is a parishioner at the Church of the Atonement. Inspired by then-rector Rick Bellows, Dianne started planting the seeds to make this a reality.

From seeds to fruition was a long journey of networking, fundraising and getting visionaries on board. Dianne started attending the meeting of local nonprofit agencies to bring her ideas forth and to determine if the need was truly there. Atonement became the support structure through initial meetings with its Outreach Team.

With the support of Atonement and a grass-roots effort started by a seven-person steering committee this exciting project really began.

Atonement parishioners Candy Oyler, Bob Legalos and Gene Giacometti became steering committee chairperson, clerk and treasurer, respectively, and The Greater Westfield Free Health Service (GWFHS) was in the making.

How do you start a free health clinic? Well, you need doctors, nurses, equipment, volunteer office help, financing and a location. A proposal was presented to Noble Hospital, and Dr. Frank Horrigan

saw the need, knew the statistics and agreed to be GWFHS's medical director. Through the efforts of Todd Lever, vice president of marketing and public relations for Noble Hospital, the effort got a financial boost through a grant from the Community Foundation. Kate Johnson, head of nursing for the Westfield school system, recruited school nurses to give their time, and she and Connie Kelly serve as head nurses.

In spring 2008, realtor Jayson Falcone donated a location in the center of town and the local electric company donated electric power. The space needed complete renovation. Dianne's husband, Bob Legalos, recruited a faithful and determined group of volunteers who transformed a former tanning salon into a health facility that has a 15-seat waiting room, two examining rooms, a small medical office and a reception area. Again, a lot of networking resulted in many donations of office equipment, medial equipment and funding.

The GWFHS opened its doors in January 2009.

GWFHS provides health care to uninsured and underinsured adults. With a professional staff of physicians and nurses, the clinic is open every other Wednesday from 6-8 p.m. Those in need can come to the clinic for basic medical care, women's health care by appointment and prescription drug access assistance, as well as off-site access to specialty referrals, laboratory testing and X-rays. The clinic also offers Mass Health and

Commonwealth Care enrollment assistance.

The clinic has transformed lives. Not only has the reward of reaching out to a community in need enriched the lives of the entire parish, but the medical community is also grateful. In addition to Dr. Horrigan, four more physicians are now donating their time and talent.

After an April visit at the clinic, Kate Johnson, RN, wrote the following in a letter to founder Dianne Legalos:

"I met a 51-year-old woman last night who lost her insurance in January and was not able to visit her primary care provider. She arrived at the Greater Westfield Free Health Services clinic with tears in her eyes and seemed so sad. A few minutes after she registered at the front desk, I introduced myself and escorted her into our nurse's room.

She gently sat down and answered all my clinical questions. I could see her eyes fill up with tears again. I asked her why she was crying and she told me this story: 'I hadn't been to church in many, many years. I decided to go back on Palm Sunday, and I saw one of your brochures on the table. I thought maybe God was sending me a message, so I decided to visit you tonight. Thank God you are here. I don't know what I'd do without you.' "

This is why we are here. This is why we exist. I want everyone who reads this to understand that God is working through us with this ministry, and I am so blessed to be a part of it.

Talent Experiment Reaps Rewards



The Rev. William MacDonald "Mac" Murray, rector of Trinity, Milford, has a talent for teaching. To teach the Gospel of

giving last November, Mac used a reading of the "Parable of the Talents" from Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 25:14-30) – and envelopes full of money.

Mac says that Jesus challenged us all to use the gifts we have been given to the glory of God, expanding the Kingdom: "For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance."

To live out this parable, at a service in November 2008, every member of the congregation was given an envelope that held either \$10, \$20 or \$30, and Mac asked parishioners to find a way to increase that gift and then use it to spread the kingdom of God.

All Mac asked for in return was a brief written summary of the experience. Those summaries have since been pouring in, in the form of stories in the church's monthly newsletter.

Mac says the idea for the experiment came out of a Bible study discussion on how to put the parable of the talents into practice. After revisiting the idea several times, the church randomly filled envelopes with \$10, \$20 and \$30 – a total of \$2,000 in \$10 bills.

Nearly half the \$2,000 has been accounted for so far, resulting in

\$3,060 of benefit to the greater community.

"My goal was to get the congregation thinking outside the box concerning both the mission and ministry of Trinity Church and the way we reach out to the greater community (local, national and international), and the possibilities for their own personal ministry and how they might make a difference in the world," says Mac. He notes that everyone – including the children – at both services received envelopes, and the family discussions alone made it all worthwhile.

Here are some of the stories that illustrate how a little money can go a long way to help people in need:

■ "The first thing that popped into my head when I saw the amount in my envelope was "that will buy a flock of chicks." Heifer International will provide a flock of chicks to a family in an underdeveloped country. This will supply the family with enough eggs to eat, share or sell. They tell me that one hen will lay up to 200 eggs a year. I have added another \$20 so that two families will get some chicks. This makes me feel good."

■ "I counted 46 days from the Sunday that talent envelopes were passed out and decided to give a dollar for each day through Dec. 31 (a \$50 donation to the Discretionary Fund and \$4 extra.) My only talent is saving on groceries and personal items, which may come to half of \$50. I have no preference where you would pass this money."

■ "I donated the \$10 from the envelope to the Lawrence Boys and Girls Club. Lawrence is located in a

very depressed area of Massachusetts. The club does so much to encourage the youth of the area to strive for self-esteem, and the club helps many young people to receive a college education. I feel that this \$10 will increase a hundredfold by helping this group."

■ "I doubled my talent and gave to the Mendon Food Pantry."

■ "I decided to double it myself and send to Episcopal Relief and Development, but when I told a friend about this, she gave another \$10 to include. Together we purchased a share of a flock of chickens and a share of a fish farm for a total of \$50."

■ "I received \$10 and got some donations and made a donation of \$100 to Ronald McDonald House."

■ "This is what we did with the talents that your faith invested with us. We added two envelopes labeled 'seeds' to gift baskets to be sold at the Christmas Fair. Along with the contents we placed this note: 'This envelope contains a seed of faith planted by our pastor. In faith, we've added our own to help it grow. If you need it, use it and thank God as we do. If you don't, please add your own seed of faith and pass it on so that it can get to the one(s) for whom God intends the harvest.' "

■ "My stewardship gift of \$30 went toward making outside baskets for our Christmas Fair. Trinity made \$225 in sales. As a result, I personally invested \$150 in a micro-credit loan through Episcopal Relief and Development to give others a chance to earn an income for themselves and their community."

Hope, In Hard Times



Earlier this year I came upon a little booklet published by the Office of Stewardship of The Episcopal Church entitled *Finding Hope in Hard Times – Seven Spiritual Practices: A Faithful Steward's Guide*. The title certainly attracted my attention. As one who has just retired and is dependent on retirement funds that are now worth only about half of what my wife and I expected when we planned for retirement, this little booklet seemed to be an answer to prayer.

At the outset, the booklet offers the reader this prayer: Lord God, we live in disturbing days: across the world, prices rise, debts increase, banks collapse, jobs are taken away and fragile security is under threat. Loving God, meet us in our fear and hear our prayer: be a tower of strength amidst the shifting sands, and a light in the darkness; help us receive your gift of peace, and fix our hearts where true joys are to be found, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The eight-page booklet is divided into sections. Each section begins with a short passage from Scripture, offers a short reflection on the reading, and then invites the reader to do some personal reflection.

The first section is entitled "Count your Blessings." Other sections include "Learn to be Content," "Keep on Giving, Rebuild Generous Communities," and "A Financial Downturn can be a Spiritual Upturn."

Given these uncertain financial times when all of us have been affected by what is happening in the national and world economies, there is much uncertainty. In an attempt to address that uncertainty in the Diocese, we gave copies of the booklet to all who attended the Wardens, Vestry and Leadership Gathering back in March.

To download a free copy, go to www.episcopalchurch.org/stewardship. Click on "Response to Economic Crisis." I commend it to you.

Another booklet that you might find helpful is one entitled *Spirituality and Money – Seven Questions that Saved my Spiritual Life*. To obtain a copy, go to the Web site of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship [TENS] at www.tens.org. Open the drop-down menu entitled "Teach Stewardship" found at the top, select "Booklet Resources" and follow the ordering instructions.

Bruce Rockwell serves as Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship. He can be reached at brockwell@diocesewma.org or at (413) 746-9614.

Bishops' Legacy Gathering Grows

By E. John White, missionary for Legacy Stewardship in the Diocese.

Not surprising, but very encouraging, we had the largest gathering of Legacy Givers in our Diocese for the annual appreciation dinner and concert in April. Well over 70 people gathered in Christ Cathedral to hear a wonderful music program sung by Trudy and John-Arthur Miller, with Peter Beardsley, canon precentor, playing the piano.

Both Trudy and John-Arthur are accomplished classical singers, having toured with leading opera companies around the world. Trudy for the past decade has been the president and CEO of the Berkshire Choral Festival in Sheffield. They attend Christ Church Episcopal/Trinity Lutheran Church in Sheffield, where John-Arthur is the senior warden.

Their program, "Love in Spring," offered a wide variety of selections. They began with sacred music from Italy and Germany. Later we heard Lerner and Loewe's "I Remember it Well" and Rodgers and Hammerstein's "People will Say We're in Love." Two of the most stirring pieces were Copland's "Shall we Gather at the River" and Gilksyson/Johnson's "Requiem" memorializing the typhoon disaster a few years ago in Thailand. We are very grateful to Trudy, John-Arthur and Peter for sharing their wonderful musical talents with us.

After a brief social time and then dinner in the Kendrick Room the bishop thanked us all for making Legacy Gifts. He underscored that our coming together at the Cathedral was not only a way to honor our commitment to legacy giving but also the future of the Diocese.

We were delighted to learn of the rapid growth of the membership of the Bishops' Legacy Fellowship, which now has 166 members from 41 different parishes. It is of particular note to know that 95 percent of all gifts are going directly to parishes. The fellowship is open to all who make a legacy gift to any Episcopal entity for any amount. See the following pages for a member list.

Bishops' Legacy Fellowship Membership

as of May 1, 2009

Douglas W. Adler	Grace, Amherst	The Rev. Susan	St. John's, Williamstown
Revs. Hannah and Robert Anderson	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	and Mr. Stuart Crampton	
Mrs. R. Bruce Andrews	St. Paul's, Stockbridge	Susan Duncan Dana	Trinity, Lenox
The Rev. Noel A. Bailey	Lisbon, N.H.	The Rev. Dallas	Church of Reconciliation,
Karen Banta	St. John's, Northampton	and Mrs. Cynthia Decker	Webster
Sue and David Barnard	St. Michael's, Worcester	Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Dolby	St. James',
Ruth M. Barton	St. John's, Northampton		Great Barrington
Robert H. Bascom	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	Janith F. Dorsey	St. Francis', Holden
The Rt. Rev. Mark Beckwith and Marilyn Olson	Newark, NJ	Thomas K. Doyle, Sr.	St. James',
Marcia D. Bellermann	Christ Church, Fitchburg		Great Barrington
Pia G. Bellinger	Christ Church, Sheffield	The Rev. J. Bruce	St. John's, North Adams
The Rev. Richard and Mrs. Danielle Bellows	Atonement, Westfield	and Ruth K. Duncan	
Marilyn Berthelette	St. James', Greenfield	Utako S. Dwyer	Christ Church Cathedral
Grant Bond	Southwick Community Church	The Rev. William D. Dwyer	St. Peter's, Springfield
The Rev. Barbara Briggs	Manchester, Conn.	Prudence Dyer	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield
The Rev. Paul Briggs	Manchester, Conn.	Kent W. Faerber	Grace, Amherst
Elliott and Doris Buell	All Saints', Worcester	John H.	St. Mark's,
Constance G. Bullard	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	and Priscilla H. Farquharson	East Longmeadow
Glen Campbell	Nativity, Northboro	Mary G. Fern	St. Paul's, Gardner
John H. Campbell	Holy Trinity, Southbridge	David C. Finch	All Saints', Worcester
Mary Louise S. Carey	Epiphany, Wilbraham	Eve Forbes	St. John's, Northampton
Alice S. Carr	St. Francis', Holden	Dr. Betty L. Forest	St. Michael's, Worcester
John and Lee Cheek	St. James',	Ruth C. Giard*	All Saints', Worcester
	Great Barrington	The Rev. Laura	St. Andrew's,
Nancy S. Cobden	St. James',	and Mr. Todd Goodwin	North Grafton
	Great Barrington	Patricia D. Gulachenski	St. John's, Worcester
Jessie M. Cole	St. Philip's, Easthampton	Allan and Jean Hallett	St. Mark's, Leominster
The Rev. Peter Courtney	St. Mark's,	Robert Harris and Thomas Kreek	St. John's, Ashfield
	East Longmeadow	The Rev. Frances Ann Hills	St. James',
The Rev. Leonard and Mrs. Hallie Cowan	Nativity, Northboro		Great Barrington
Claire Cox	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	Arthur Hines	St. Paul's, Gardner
		Achsah E. Hinckley*	Holy Trinity, Southbridge
		The Rev. Rob Hirschfeld	Grace, Amherst
		and Mrs. Polly Ingraham	
		Joyce Hokans	All Saints', Worcester

The Rev. Raymond and Mrs. Beverly Ann Howe	St. Philip's, Easthampton	Don and Molly Robinson	St. John's, Northampton
Wallace H. Janes*	Christ Church Cathedral	The Rev. Cristine and Mr. Bruce Rockwell	St. Mark's, East Longmeadow
Arthur and Janet Jones	All Saints', Worcester	Jeanette S. Roosevelt	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield
Mick and Barbara Kalber	Holy Trinity, Southbridge	Jon and Gayle Ruscotti	Trinity, Milford
Alice M. Kells	St. James', Greenfield	The Rev. Anne E. Ryder	Christ Church, Sheffield
Karolyn A. Kemp	St. James', Greenfield	Joyce and Ralph Safford	Newport News, Va.
Gladys King	St. Mark's, Adams	Robert K. Sawyer, Jr.	Christ Church Cathedral
Joan F. Kurber	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	William M. Scaife	St. John's, Northampton
Beverly Lavallee	Holy Trinity, Southbridge	The Rt. Rev. Gordon and Mrs. Rebecca Scruton	Christ Church Cathedral
Mary Lou Lavallee	Brunswick, ME	Bob and Marjorie Shaw	St. Mark's, East Longmeadow
Susan LeBourdais	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	The Rev. Canon Sarah Shofstall	St. David's, Agawam
Mark and Deborah Leonas	Grace, Amherst	Richard T. Shotwell	St. John's, Williamstown
Stephen and Joyce Lewis	Epiphany, Wilbraham	Laurel Stewart	Christ Church Cathedral
Crawford and Ann Lincoln	Christ Church Cathedral	The Rev. Nancy Baillie Strong	St. Matthew's, Worcester
Patricia Linscott	St. Mark's, Adams	Richard Storrs	All Saints', Leominster
Mrs. Richard Marcure	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	Diana Sullivan	All Saints', Worcester
Debbie Mathews Finch	All Saints', Worcester	The Rev. Noreen Suriner	All Saints', South Hadley
Bob and Daphne McGill	St. John's, Williamstown	Linda Taupier	St. Mark's, East Longmeadow
Margo E. McMahon	Grace, Amherst	Olaf J. Thorp	St. John's, Ashfield
David C. Melrose	St. Mark's, East Longmeadow	Thomas Tomasian and Carolyn J. Smith	St. Francis', Holden
The Rev. Canon A. Pierce Middleton	Sykesville, Md.	The Rev. Donna J. Trebilcox	St. George's, Lee
John Arthur and Trudy Miller	Christ Church, Sheffield	Irene Tuffs	Nativity, Northborough
Bill and Paula Morey	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	Mary E. Tuttle	All Saints', South Hadley
The Rev. Eliot Moss	Atonement, Westfield	The Rev. Mary Vidmar	Christ Memorial, North Brookfield
The Very Rev. James Munroe	Christ Church Cathedral	Marion B. Waleryszak	Christ Church Cathedral
The Rev. William M. Murray	Trinity, Milford	The Rev. Kathryn and Mr. John White	St. John's, Sutton
Ben and Dolores Neely	All Saints', Worcester	Steve and Clare White	St. Francis', Holden
Lois Lyon Neuman	St. Stephen's, Pittsfield	Russell S. Williams	St. John's, Ashfield
Ed and Susan Olbon	Christ Church Cathedral	Tom and Ann Williams	St. Mark's, East Longmeadow
Frank S. Palano	St. Mark's, Adams		
Jean C. Palano	St. Mark's, Adams		
The Rev. John H. and Mrs. Eleanor A. Parke	Christ Church Cathedral		
Stephen Peters	Trinity, Lenox		
Ronald C. Perera	St. John's, Northampton		
Samuel C. Pickens	All Saints', Worcester		
Robert J. Pollard	St. Philip's, Easthampton		

Ten additional donors who wish to remain anonymous are from:

Christ Church Cathedral
Epiphany, Wilbraham
Good Shepherd, Clinton
Grace, Amherst
St. Andrew's, Longmeadow
St. David's, Agawam
St. John's, Northampton
St. Paul's, Stockbridge

*Deceased

Please note:

The parishes to which people belonged at the time they became members of the Bishops' Legacy Fellowship are listed unless otherwise requested. Please feel free to request changes any time. A legacy gift to any Episcopal entity, your congregation, the Diocese, Camp Bement, The Ark, an Episcopal seminary, Episcopal Relief and Development, etc. qualifies you for membership, no matter the amount.

Doing well for yourself by doing good for God

By the Rev. Dr. Stephen L. White, an assistant priest at St. Stephen's, Pittsfield.

Did you know that you could make money by helping your parish? Like a lot of people, I sometimes while away time surfing the Internet. And lately I've spent quite a bit of time poking around The Episcopal Church Foundation's information-packed Web site. The other day; however, I made a surprising discovery while surfing the Foundation's site. I found myself in a place on the Web site with this address:
www.giftlegacy.com/presents.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0231.

It's a page titled, "Your Plan," and it has several different calculators that generate examples about how people can help various Episcopal parishes by making a planned gift. There are all kinds of ways to make a planned gift, like designating your parish in your will. To see for myself how such a gift might work for me, I clicked on a link called "Charitable Annuity Trust." I love playing around with calculators, and it was by using this one that I made my remarkable discovery.

A Charitable Annuity Trust is a custom-designed and individually managed trust that enables you to retain a fixed income, claim a current income tax deduction and make a future gift to charity. So as a trial, I wanted to know what would happen if I took \$25,000 I have in a CD (Certificate of Deposit) and used it to make this kind of a gift. Here's what I discovered:

I realized an annuity rate of 5.2 percent, the highest I can get given my age and the amount of money involved. So, if I transfer \$25,000 to the trust and name

my parish as the charitable remainder beneficiary, the trust will pay me \$1,300 each year for my lifetime, no matter how long I live. The CD I have pays me only 3.4 percent or \$850 per year. That means I can make \$450 more per year by giving the money to my parish than I could by keeping it in the CD. But it's even better than that!

Since my parish will receive the remainder of the assets in the trust at the end of my lifetime – a whopping \$29,153 – a portion of which is deductible for income tax purposes. So, my gift of \$25,000 would give me a charitable deduction this year of \$7,651.

What if I were 65 this year? The top interest rate goes up to 5.7 percent, translating into \$1,425 a year in income for life-\$575 more than I would get from a CD, and I'd get an immediate tax deduction of an eye-popping \$8,637.

So, tell me this: Why would those who care about helping all their parish's wonderful ministries keep their money in CDs when they could make a gift to their parish that can actually make them money every year for the rest of their lives?

This article was re-printed from St. Stephen's newsletter, *First Order*. Since it was published in November 2008, annuity rates have been lowered. If you are interested in using the Episcopal Church Foundation as a resource, contact Matt Freeman at Matt@episcopal.foundation.org at (800) 697-2858. Also feel free to contact E. John White regarding any Legacy Stewardship matters at ejwhite@diocesewma.org or (860) 928-3705.



Diocesan travelers are welcome to teach English and travel in China this summer.

Experience China

Travelers are welcome to visit Yunnan Province China this Summer. Yunnan sits on the Himalayan Plateau and is bordered by Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam with Thailand, Bhutan and Northeast India not too far off. This unique location makes Yunnan an ethnically and environmentally diverse region. It is the home of over 20 different ethnic groups and hundreds of flora, fauna and animals that are particular to only this area.

Come and visit, study Chinese and teach near the Myanmar Border. Study Chinese for a week in Kunming, the large, very busy capital city of Yunnan Province. The school will introduce you to the culture and basic survival language.

Teach English for one to two weeks. Travel to the Myanmar Border to teach English at a multi-ethnic Christian Training Center. You will be working with students from families thankful to earn \$100 a year. They are a vibrant group from the ages of 15 to 40 years of age.

Then Travel within Yunnan/Greater China or Southeast Asia. An exciting route for the adventurous is through Southwest Yunnan across to Laos and into Northern Thailand – a good chance to see wild elephants and enjoy other once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

Individuals and groups are welcome, and your itinerary can be very flexible. For more information please contact Don Engstrom or the Rev. Jane Griesbach at frontierproductions@charter.net.

A leaner, greener Convention

Current budget realities are challenging the Diocese to be leaner and greener at our 2009 Diocesan Convention. While all the details are not yet settled, we are planning:

- To have a one-day Convention on Saturday, October 24, in Springfield.
- To have pre-Convention materials available on the Diocesan Web site only. Paper copies will be mailed only to those who request them.
- To substantially reduce the registration fee for delegates and the amount spent from the Diocesan budget for Convention.
- Sadly, to eliminate workshops and almost all special orders that have so enlivened our recent Conventions.

Specific details are still being worked out.

For several years now, we have had signed contracts with the Sheraton Hotel for more than one year at a time. The management of the Sheraton has been extremely gracious in allowing us to scale down this year's Convention without paying a penalty. Cancelling the contract completely, and holding Convention in a church as we did years ago, would result in the Diocese being charged a sizeable penalty to the hotel for cancelling the contract.

Partnership for a missional church

Twelve congregations have discerned a call to participate in the Diocesan collaboration with Church Innovations by agreeing to be part of a learning cluster that will meet three times in 2009 and into the future. This Partnership for Missional Church is a major new initiative in congregational development for our Diocese. The first training cluster was held in March. The following congregations are participating: Epiphany, Wilbraham; St. Luke's, Worcester; Christ Church and Trinity Lutheran, Sheffield; Holy Trinity, Southbridge; St. Andrew's, North Grafton; St. James' Great Barrington; St. John's, Ashfield; Good Shepherd, Clinton; Trinity, Whitinsville; St. John's, Vernon, Conn.; St. Mary's, Manchester, Conn.; and St. Mark's, New Britain, Conn.

Film offers support for LGBT community

St. Luke's, Worcester, was host for the showing of the award-winning and moving film, "For the Bible Tells Me So," an event coordinated by Integrity, a grassroots organization within the Episcopal Church working for the full inclusion of all the baptized in all the sacraments.

Attendees were provided with references to the Scriptures and resource information supportive of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. Following the session, a contemporary worship service was conducted.

The film, written by Daniel Karlake, introduces viewers to five ordinary Christian families and shows how these people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child or family member. Intermingled with these five stories, religious leaders and scholars explore how the Bible has been used and misused in response to homosexuality, as well as describe the impact that Biblical misinterpretation has had on individuals and families.

The film's intent is to offer healing, clarity and understanding to anyone affected by this issue – in other words, everyone.

The facilitation of the showing can be either a Saturday workshop or a simplified week night showing and a short dialogue following the film. If you would like to see the film at your church or find out more about Integrity, please contact Steve Symes at swsymes@msn.com.

The Bishop on The Examen of Consciousness

Bishop Scruton has shared numerous times with clergy and congregations during his episcopate the value he has found in the spiritual discipline called The examen – or The Examen of Consciousness. The examen is intended as a short daily period of reflection. St. Ignatius believed that he received the examen as a gift from God that not only enriched his own Christian life but was meant to be shared with others. The examen was a "method," a way to seek and find God in all things and to gain the freedom to let God's will be done on earth.

The examen traditionally has five steps:

- Recall you are in the presence of God. No matter where you are, you are a creature in the midst of creation and the Creator who called you forth is concerned for you.
- Give thanks to God for favors received. Pause and spend a moment looking at this day's gifts. Take stock of what you received and gave. Notice these clues that guide living.
- Ask for awareness of the Holy Spirit's aid. Before you explore the mystery of the human heart, ask to receive the Holy Spirit so that you can look upon your actions and motives with honesty and patience. The Spirit gives a freedom to look upon yourself without condemnation and without complacency and thus be open to growth.
- Now examine how you are living this day. Recalling the events of your day, explore the context of your actions. Review the day, hour by hour, searching for the internal events of your life. Look through the hours to see your interaction with what was before you. Ask what you were involved in and who you were with, and review your hopes and hesitations. What moved you to act the way you did?
- Pray words of reconciliation and resolve. Having reviewed this day of your life, look upon yourself with compassion and see your need for God and try to realize God's manifestations of concern for you. Express sorrow for sin, give thanks for grace, and praise God for the times you responded in ways that allowed you to better see God's life.

United Thank Offering News

The combined United Thank Offering (UTO) in the Diocese for 2008 was \$14,091, with 41 churches participating.

The UTO Committee would like to remind everyone that in 2009 all churches are invited to mail in their spring UTO offering. The National UTO Committee suggests the Sunday after the Ascension, this year May 24, as an ingathering date for parishes. Please make checks payable to the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, with UTO in the memo, and mail to: The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, attention Esther Barker, Diocesan accounting manager, 37 Chestnut St., Springfield, MA 01103.

There will be a fall ingathering during the Diocesan Convention Eucharist, the weekend of Oct. 23. The National UTO Web site has information, at www.episcopalchurch.org/uto.

Supporting mission through the Alleluia Fund 2009



In celebration of the Great Fifty Days of Easter, every household and congregation is invited to participate in the annual offering that benefits the Diocesan ability to fund venture capital for mission.

The Alleluia Fund 2009 will support the domestic mission project in Southwick - the Southwick Community Episcopal

Church – as the newest mission congregation of the Diocese. Ten percent of the offering will go to underwrite overseas projects in the dioceses of Liberia and Kumasi (Ghana).

Each congregation should have received a packet that included posters, additional brochures (a brochure is being mailed to every household in the Diocese), and a DVD featuring Diocesan leaders and voices you could share at parish meetings, coffee hour, etc.

Be as generous as you are able. Gifts can be mailed to Diocesan House at 37 Chestnut St., Springfield, MA 01103, or they can be made on line at www.diocesewma.org.

Bishop Gordon Scruton says that one way that he and his wife, Rebecca, express their gratitude for Christ's resurrection is through their gift to the Alleluia Fund. "It gives us great joy to see the ways in which our offerings support mission initiatives which could never have happened without the generosity of a great number of people throughout the Diocese over the past six years," the bishop says.

Thanks to God's grace and the people who contributed to the Alleluia Fund, Southwick Community Episcopal Church is now a mission congregation of the Diocese. Gifts to the Alleluia Fund are helping people without church connections to find a life-giving relationship with Jesus and his mission in a needy world. "This is the final year of Alleluia Fund assistance for Southwick, so I invite you to give generously to help them become a self-supporting congregation," Bishop Scruton says.

"I invite you to join us in prayer and giving to support the ministry of Christ in Southwick, Liberia and Ghana," he adds. "May God multiply our gifts, as Christ multiplied the five loaves and two fish, to provide for the needs of more people than we can ask or imagine."

Bishop: Let's think, live in new ways

Jesus often asked people challenging questions, inviting them to think and live in new ways. At this time, we all need to recognize the challenging questions Jesus is putting before us. We also need to recognize the questions we are avoiding or denying. God is urgently presenting us with an opportunity for learning, mission and spiritual growth. Will we dare to seek and follow the guidance of Christ and explore new patterns of living as prayerful, mission-focused communities in the realities of this generation – or will we insist on maintaining old patterns as we continue to decline and wither away?

Please take time to read and reflect on this letter, which begins on Page 2 and concludes on Page 19, several times. Discuss your responses with other people. What creative changes do you sense God might be calling you to make personally and in your congregation?

The last words of the Risen Jesus urge us on: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:18-20, MESSAGE)

- Bishop Gordon P. Scruton

Blessings

From Page 2

approved by our Convention last October. As the Diocesan Council prayerfully makes these budget cuts, they will ask what priorities best help us develop healthy, mission-focused Christians and congregations. (Council will communicate more details about budget cuts and their implications for us all.)

◆ Parish buildings are becoming a liability. Many are prohibitively expensive to maintain, insure and heat as cost of fuel increases. Now, more than half of our congregations (34 of 67) are unable to financially support their building and a full-time priest. We cannot realistically expect that many clergy will move to this Diocese and work for a part-time salary. Like all other denominations in New England, we will need to do our ministry with fewer buildings and fewer clergy.

◆ Because of these changes, it is imperative that congregations in each deanery or region begin to have conversations with each other to explore ways of sharing clergy, merging congregations, training lay leaders and developing cooperative ministry among Episcopal and ecumenical congregations. God has provided enough resources for each area of the Diocese if we learn new patterns of sharing resources.

Some of these changes leave us feeling the pain of grief and loss. Yet at the same time, our Risen Lord is very active in the midst of all these changes, inviting us to follow him into new ways of being his Church in this generation. He has promised to be with us and guide us into God's preferred

future. God is pruning us, not to kill the vine, but so that we can bear more fruit for God's mission.

Our capacity to live God's mission as people of faith, hope, love and joy is not dependent on our income or our familiar pattern of having 67 congregations and buildings, each led by a different priest. I have seen Christians in Africa and Latin America who have very few resources or buildings, yet they live enthusiastically the mission God has given them with contagious faith, hope, love and joy. Their congregations keep growing even when there is only one priest for every five or 10 congregations. Remember, for the first 300 years of the Church, there were no church buildings and few full-time clergy. Christians were primarily poor people who were vibrantly alive with love for God and neighbor. During this time Christianity expanded most rapidly. The Holy Spirit worked through the mission lifestyle of the church to transform the people and societies of the world.

If we look around, we can see that already, in every corridor of our Diocese, there are congregations who are following God's creative guidance and discovering new ways to live their mission. We have congregations who are attracting new members, growing in spiritual depth, expanding their mission outreach. We must break out of our congregational isolation and intentionally learn from and share with each other. We have inspiring examples among us.

In this new season, God urges

us to be willing to change our familiar patterns so that Christ can live out his mission more effectively through us. God's Spirit is eager to help us become more creative and innovative for the sake of God's mission. We can follow the example of The Church of England and explore fresh expressions of living as congregations in different settings, perhaps renting secular facilities as gathering places for God's people.

We will be tempted to withdraw from the needs of our neighbors both locally and globally to take care of ourselves first. Jesus will keep urging us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. As our needs increase, so will theirs. We cannot neglect our mission to care for people in need around us and around the world. God invites us to tell our neighbors stories of how God and our relationships in Christian community are sustaining us, providing fresh perspectives and inspiring new ways of living during this challenging time.

As we walk through this uncharted territory, we will need to deepen our relationship with God through the daily practice of Holy Habits, like prayer and reflection on Scripture. We cannot find our way through this wilderness with our own wisdom and strength alone.

We need God more than ever. As disciples of Jesus we will need to make time to gather in small groups to deepen our relationship with God, with each other and with the mission to which Christ calls us.

FINAL BLESSING



‘Fore’ Alleluia Fund 2009

The Sixth Annual Alleluia Fund Golf Tournament was held on May 30 at the Southwick Country Club in Southwick. Proceeds from this event will augment the Diocesan Alleluia Fund Offerings, which support both the Southwick Community Episcopal Church and efforts in Liberia and Ghana. See story on the Alleluia Fund 2009 on Page 18.

For Diocesan calendar listings, visit www.diocesewma.org and click on “Calendar.”

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