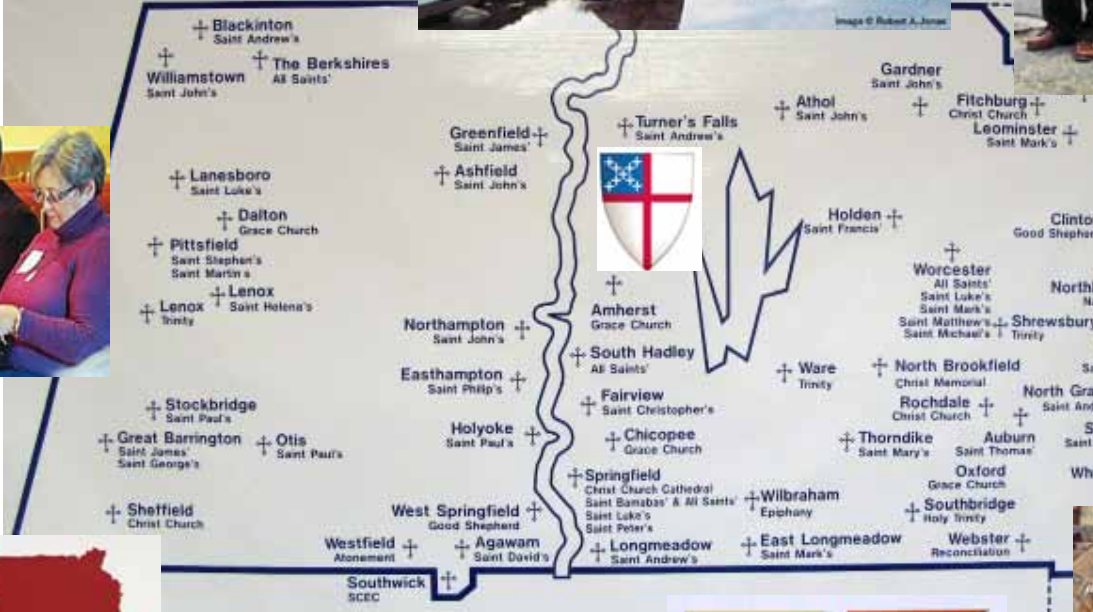
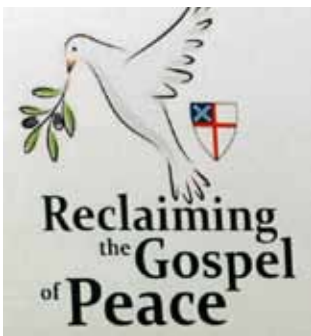


CELEBRATING GOD'S ABUNDANCE

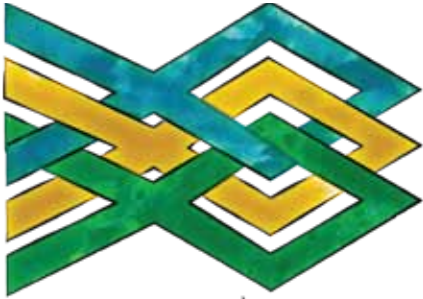
# ABUNDANT *Times*

A PUBLICATION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

## GAINING MOMENTUM



SPRING 2014



CELEBRATING GOD'S ABUNDANCE

ABUNDANT TIMES IS THE OFFICIAL NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS, 37 CHESTNUT ST., SPRINGFIELD, MA, 01103-1787, (413) 737-4786. WWW.DIOCESEWMA.ORG.

### AT DIOCESAN HOUSE

**The Rt. Rev. Douglas J. Fisher,** Bishop of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts  
**The Rev. Pamela J. Mott,** Canon to the Ordinary  
**The Rev. Dr. Richard M. Simpson,** Canon to the Ordinary  
**Steven P. Abdow,** Canon for Mission Resources

### MISSIONERS

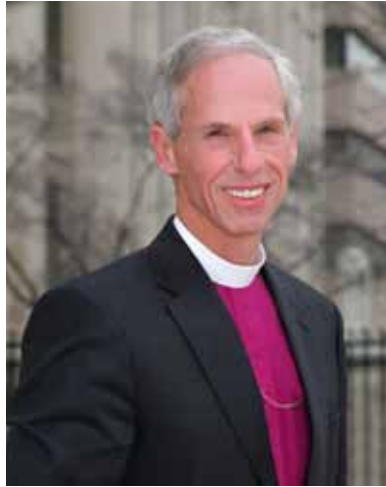
**Bruce Rockwell,** Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship  
**E. John White,** Missioner for Legacy Stewardship  
**The Rev. William H. Coyne,** Missioner for Congregational Vitality  
**The Rev. Canon Tom Callard,** Missioner for Hispanic/Latino Ministry  
**The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas,** Missioner for Creation Care  
**Victoria Ix,** Communications Director and Missioner

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ON THE COVER: MAP OF THE DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASS COMMISSIONED FOR THE CENTENNIAL IN 2001.

# BLESSINGS ...

## The Living God Wins



Russ Ro Photography  
*The Rt. Rev. Douglas Fisher.*

*“I don’t believe people are looking for the meaning of life as much as they are looking for the experience of being alive.”*

**Joseph Campbell, philosopher**

Welcome to Abundant Times, the Easter edition. By the time you read this you will have experienced the great drama that is Holy Week. I was blessed to take part in many outstanding liturgies that week in several of our churches. I will always remember the power of the moment when all gathered for the Clergy Renewal of Vows turned to one another, and on the same place on the forehead where ashes had been imposed 40 days

before with the words “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return” anointed each other with the oil of baptism saying, “Remember Love is stronger than death, and to that Love you are returned.”

I thought of that as I walked the streets of Springfield in the Stations of the Cross led by our dean, Jim Munroe. Jim brought us to places of death in the city. Places marked by drug addiction, gun violence, poverty and the exploitation of women. He told those stories of death, and in the same places he told stories of resurrection, of hope, of new life, of faith. We did not say these words, but we all came away believing that “Love is stronger than death, and to that Love we are returned.”

At Easter we are told that the Living God wins. Death could not hold Jesus. In the days that follow Easter Day, we get to see in Jesus and in his followers what a Love stronger than death looks like. Just read the Gospels. In John’s account, a Love stronger than death looks like a life that cannot be contained (“don’t hold on to me Mary”) because it is so dynamic. It looks like peace (20:19) and forgiveness (20:23). It looks like a gathering of the wounded of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

# Easter and the ‘Invisible Gorilla’

By the Rev. Dr. Richard M. Simpson, Canon to the Ordinary



Have you seen the video of the Invisible Gorilla? (You can find a link here if you have not: [http://www.livescience.com/6727-](http://www.livescience.com/6727-invisible-gorilla-test-shows-notice.html)

[invisible-gorilla-test-shows-notice.html](http://www.livescience.com/6727-invisible-gorilla-test-shows-notice.html).)

It’s an experiment that makes a pretty interesting point about what

we see and don’t see, sometimes right before our very eyes. The subjects are asked to watch a video and to count how many times a group of people pass a basketball back and forth. Back and forth. Once, twice, three times...focus.

And then a gorilla walks by. (Or rather, some guy dressed up like a gorilla.) But half of the people don’t see him because they are so focused on the people passing the ball.

Half of them do not see the gorilla! I know that seems unbelievable. I know you assume you would. But would you? What do we not see, right before our very eyes, because we are focused elsewhere?

Easter is a 50-day season, not a day. And in this liturgical context

and in our journeys we rightly keep our eyes on Jesus. We are Christians after all. We walked through Holy Week and Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey, washed his disciples’ feet, and then died on a cross. On the third day we discovered the tomb was empty, but there is still more to come as the lectionary moves us through encounters with this risen Christ. Concentrate. Focus!

But here is the thing: In the meantime, Peter is kind of like that 300-pound gorilla walking by us, but maybe we don’t even see him. The broken man who denied Jesus three times before the rooster

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

## An Easter Discipline

By the Rev. Canon Pam Mott, Canon to the Ordinary



Many of us make room for Lenten disciplines, but I have begun to wonder why we set aside Lent for a time to deepen our faith.

How about an Easter discipline? After all, we are disciples of a Risen Christ, and, while we follow him for a few weeks into the wil-

derness, we walk in the light of the resurrection as a way of life. What would it look like to see Easter as a time of deepening, a time of soul movement, a time of service? So, some suggestions:

**Keep a journal of gratitude.** Sit down every single day and list the people and things for which you are grateful. Assume you are grateful for your family and friends and go beyond that to begin to see with the eyes of your heart the grace of God all around you.

**Explore online resources.** Instead of listening to the news (often bad) on the radio on your way into work, download some prayerful podcasts. One of my favorites is [www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org), which

can be downloaded from their website or subscribed to on iTunes. Listen to the weekly Taizé podcast, or the Compline service from St. Mark’s Cathedral, or listen to a great preacher (besides your rector!) at Day1.org. You can subscribe to all of these for free on iTunes.

**Begin the Bible Challenge** ([thecenterforbiblicalstudies.org/](http://thecenterforbiblicalstudies.org/)). A plan for reading the entire Bible in a year. You can do that, or you can simply choose to read the whole New Testament or the Psalms. Everything you need to begin is online. You can also purchase a book of daily meditations to go along

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At top, Annie Rodgers. Above, St. Mark's was the perfect venue for this "Un-quiet" Day.



Bishop Douglas Fisher, at left, with The Revs. Laura Everett and The Rev. Canon Rich Simpson.

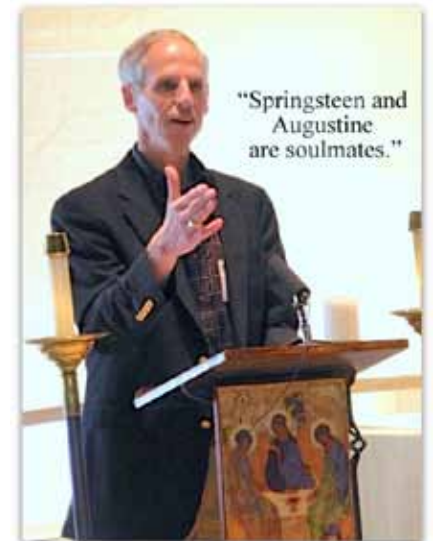
# 'Unquiet Day'

*Springsteen retreat day  
sets hopeful tone  
for Lent*

**By Annie Rodgers  
St. Stephen's, Pittsfield**

From time to time I have tried to share the "Good News" as written and sung by Bruce Springsteen, only to receive a blank stare as a response. Imagine how I felt when I saw the offering of an "Un-quiet Day—Bruce Springsteen: Prophet of Hope." I couldn't wait!

Finally, the day arrived. As soon as I entered the building and heard the music coming out of the sanctuary, I got so excited. There was a



Bishop Fisher giving his conference on "Growin' Up: The Theological Vision of Bruce Springsteen."

# Maintenance to Mission

By The Rev. Canon Tom Callard,  
Missioner for Hispanic/Latino  
Ministry

The “Wardens, Vestry, Leadership Day” was a wonderful opportunity for me to interact with Diocesan leaders from more than 25 congregations. Almost everyone who attended my workshop expressed a desire to be more involved in Mission Development.

Everyone wanted to know what we can do to be involved in mission, not just maintenance. That’s a key to helping our churches grow and to thrive. While there is no easy answer, one simple thing we can do is ask ourselves: What is our mission as a church to this community?

Not just to the people already attending our church, but what is our mission to those around the church in the nearby towns? Are we living that mission?

Hispanic Ministries is about churches reaching out to minister with their neighbors who are Hispanic. However, all churches need to minister with their neighbors. It’s how we grow. It’s how we stay alive as churches and Christians. It’s how we proclaim God’s love.

The subtle change from maintenance to mission in our focus makes all the difference in the world. And so part of the Hispanic Ministries in this year is to help all churches find ways to be more missional in their communities.

If you are interested contact me at [Tomcallard@gmail.com](mailto:Tomcallard@gmail.com).



*The Rev. Laura Everett, Bishop Fisher and Canon Rich Simpson celebrate the Eucharist with participants at the end of the retreat day.*

“As soon as I entered the building and heard the music coming out of the sanctuary, I got so excited.”

Annie Rodgers,  
St. Stephen’s, Pittsfield

pretty good sized group of people all coming together to explore the theology of the Prophet Bruce. Some, like me, had come for a deep drink of the living water. Others came out of curiosity. Before long, we gathered together to celebrate the spiritual richness of Bruce’s music.

The workshop portion of the day invited us to break into small groups to dig deeper into song lyrics to find biblical references.

In reading the lyrics like prose, the messages become clear. Some of us heard a psalm; some heard the prophet Isaiah, while others found references to New Testament passages.

The lyrics, using 20th and 21st century language, retell stories that go back centuries. Woven throughout the many songs written by

Springsteen are messages of hope, promise, forgiveness and God’s love. It is an invitation offered to all, and no one is left behind or excluded.

Christ taught the disciples how to carry on the work he had begun. Bruce hands back to us Christ’s teachings in 21st-century language in this song “This is Your Sword” from the “High Hopes” album:

*This is your sword  
This is your shield  
This is the power of love revealed  
Carry this with you wherever you go  
And give all the love that you have  
in your soul.*

Amen, brother Bruce.  
Keep preaching.



*Dean Munroe, left, prepares the assembly for the journey ahead; Canon Tom Callard, at right, translated into Spanish.*



*Off to places where suffering and death have reigned to be a witness for hope.*

## Bishop Fisher Joins Cathedral Procession for ‘Stations in the Streets’

### *Good Friday ‘Way of the Cross’ through downtown Springfield*

Bishop Fisher joined the faithful for the ancient liturgy known as the “Way of the Cross” on Good Friday, April 18, at noon. For centuries, Christians have marked Jesus’ journey from condemnation to crucifixion with pilgrimage and prayer. Travelers to Jerusalem walked and paused 14 times from the city to Golgotha – the site of Jesus’ execution.

Each stop was an opportunity for reflection and reverence. Since Medieval times someone has been designated to carry a cross in imitation of Christ. What became a prayer form bound to the interior of

a church has now been returned to its historic roots.

Now, in many cities all over the world, Christians pray the 14 “stations” in the city streets.

Christ Church Cathedral Dean, the Very Rev. Jim Munroe, sponsors “Stations in the Streets” and plans the route the procession will take.

The procession began in the parking lot outside Christ Church Cathedral with hot coffee and “hot cross buns.” The pilgrimage ended in prayer across the street where the whole downtown is visible.



*Beauty is often found in unexpected places.*



*A bullhorn was used to counter the sounds of the city.*



*The cross is our hope for, by his death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed the world.*

For centuries, Christians have marked Jesus' journey from condemnation to crucifixion with pilgrimage and prayer. Travelers to Jerusalem walked and paused 14 times from the city to Golgotha – the site of Jesus' execution.



*At each station, the true story of death and resurrection was shared. Below, abandoned buildings and barbed-wire fences are barren and desolate places.*



# Spirit Stirs Ecumenism

By Victoria Ix,  
Communications Director

We could think the story was the gathering – six Christian churches of different denominations inviting a great theologian to preach at a shared Eucharist. It was a defining moment for the churches in Northampton. Never before had they shared the Sunday celebration in one place. The opportunity to hear Diana Butler Bass, a scholar of American religion, professor and author, was the impetus for collaboration. But the real story here is the context in which this idea emerged.

Every Tuesday morning there is an ecumenical Bible Study in which priests and pastors pray the Sunday

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



*Clergy from six churches at prayer moments before the shared Sunday Eucharist at First Churches in Northampton.*

## Pittsfield Christians Knit for Needy

By Marcie Nevin  
St. Stephen's, Pittsfield

Share the Warmth: A Community Knit-a-Thon was hosted by St. Stephen's, Pittsfield, on March 3 to raise money for the Pittsfield area Council of Congregations Emergency Fuel Fund.

Twenty-eight people came together to knit hats, scarves and mittens to be given to local feeding programs to distribute to those in need.

There were also people who stopped by to drop off items they had made and wanted to pass along.

From the lively conversations that took place during the afternoon we discovered that 8 to 10 of the



*Marcie Nevin, the Rev. Cricket Cooper and Anne Rodgers knitting at the Diocesan "Un-Quiet" Day.*

people who joined us were from different congregations throughout Pittsfield and one woman who came from St. Raphael's in Williamstown.

Each of these people made a

donation and/or went out into the community to ask family, friends and neighbors to make a donation to the Emergency Fuel Fund.

There were also many businesses who were happy to support the cause. Several people donated yarn, knitting needles and crochet hooks to be given to those who wanted to participate but had neither.

Patterns were provided as well. There were beautiful skeins of specialty yarns and incredible chocolate donated to use as door prizes. Not to mention snacks and goodies given to us through the afternoon as we knitted and crocheted away the day. In the end we were delighted to present the Council of Congregations Emergency Fuel Fund with \$5,050.





*Clockwise from above: Choirs from six Northampton churches sing together; Diana Butler Bass giving her sermon from the historic pulpit of First Churches; Jonathan Edwards.*

Gospel together. It’s an informal gathering of like-minded friends – women and men committed to the mission of Christ. The purpose is to listen together, to share an insight, to tell a story that might open up the Word in a new way. No one takes the lead but the Holy Spirit, and it was the Spirit that nudged the group to plan this momentous event.

In a piece published in *The Gazette* in advance of the event, the genesis of the event was recounted: “Knowing Bass would be in the area, [the Rev. Catherine] Munz brought forward the idea of having her come to Northampton, and felt blessed during one of the weekly meetings with her fellow clergy that they supported the idea. There was also additional inspiration for the visit, she said. “All of a sudden a giant wind blew through the room and we all had the same idea at the same time,” Munz said.

Dr. Butler Bass gave a powerful sermon that Sunday from the pulpit of First Churches – the same church

where Jonathan Edwards preached his “Great Awakening.”

She said, “It might surprise you but this Episcopal lay woman can’t help but think that Jonathan Edwards would have loved today.” Dr. Butler Bass talked about a lesser-known sermon of Edward’s called, “A Divine and Supernatural Light.” “Light became for him [Edwards] the image of revelation, the inflow of divine grace, the active awakening dimension of spiritual enlightenment,” she said.

The sermon that we remember – the one about the “angry God” – was delivered in Northampton and it’s effects were minimal, Dr. Butler Bass asserted. “The good sermon, the amazing sermon, the light sermon came earlier.” And it was Edward’s theology of light that moved hearts and grew the church in New England into something gracious, democratic and free. From there, Butler Bass moved deftly into the feast of the day – the Transfiguration. Light – that thing which makes the beauty of God

known to us – revealed the beauty of God in Jesus Christ.

It was a great day. The sight of six congregations gathered for the worship of the one Lord seemed to touch many hearts. The energy of the Spirit was palpable in the voices of a massive blended choir. The children – gathered below the sanctuary – enjoyed Godly Play together. For two hours on a Sunday morning, they all *were* one.

# Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace

## *An Episcopal gathering to challenge the epidemic of violence*

**By Bishop Douglas Fisher as posted in “The Bishop’s Blog” on April 11, 2014.**

I’m writing this blog from Oklahoma City where 230 of us (including 33 of my brother and sister bishops) have gathered to bring an awareness to the epidemic of violence in our society.

That sounds so shallow – “bring an awareness.” But Jesus himself reminds us that awareness is powerful. In the gospels, we hear Jesus say “look,” “be alert,” “stay awake” far more than he says “love.” (And he says “love” a lot.)

We have become immune to violence. In the United States, 30,000 people die every year in incidents involving guns. Another estimated 100,000 are shot every year, many of whom will carry permanent injuries and others suffer from different types of violence.

We paid attention for a little while after the massacre at Sandy Hook, but then our immunity set in again.

This humble conference could be a new beginning of awareness and action. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said this morning: “I think this conference has a sense of birthing about it, of an impulse of the Spirit.”

There have been Spirit-filled presentations that have raised my awareness.

Eugene Sutton, Bishop of Mary-

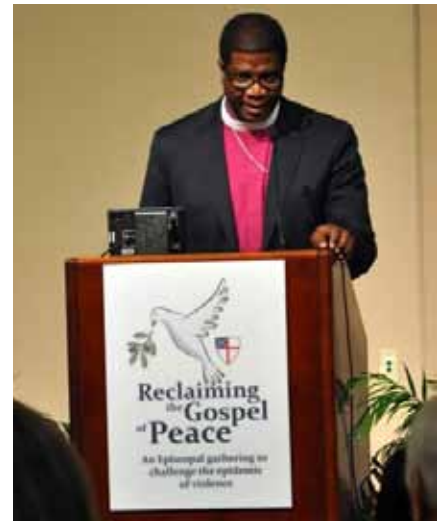
land, started his talk by singing, “Come by here, my Lord, come by here. Someone’s dying Lord, come by here.”

He told us the purpose of this conference: “The Episcopal Church aims to model at this gathering a civil and respectful conversation about violence in general and gun violence in particular – a dialogue that our society has not been able to accomplish.”

Sutton took apart the “mythology of violence.” He traced its roots to “the unchecked human need for control that arises out of fear of a chaotic and unsafe world.” He reminded us that “the agenda of God is not to control but to love.”

Sutton stressed the power of “soul force” that was evoked by Dr. Martin Luther King — a “soul force” that changed our country. Read the full text of Bishop’s Sutton’s inspiring address here: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2014/04/10/maryland-bishop-eugene-sutton-challenging-the-mythology-of-violence/>.

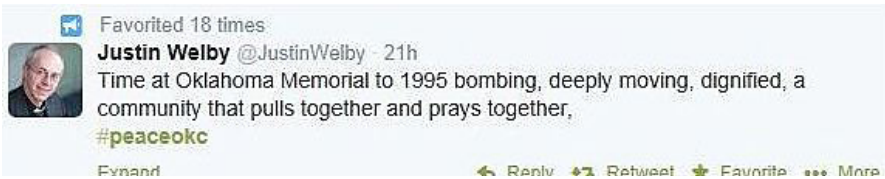
I thought Archbishop Justin Welby was simply coming by to “bring greetings” as visiting dignitaries often do. I was wrong. Welby gave an in-depth theological presentation about the nature of humanity and of God, the addiction of violence, what forgiveness and redemption actually mean. It could have been an entire seminary course on “theological anthropology.”



*The Rt. Rev. Eugene Sutton, Bishop of Maryland.*



Photo by Episcopal News Services  
*The Most Rev. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury.*



*Tweet from the Archbishop of Canterbury.*

Welby is no flower child. He is not a pacifist (and I believe we need the witness of pacifists).

He travels throughout the world, and he has seen the horrible things human beings can do to one another. According to Welby, “Violence is intrinsic to being human, and I have to say in particular to being human and male, or human and powerful, over against minorities of all kinds.”

He spoke about the addiction of violence and how we become hardened by it, referring to a nation at war who said “at first we fought like humans, then we fought like animals and finally we fought like demons.”

Welby asked “what is all this violence doing to our soul?” Welby finds hope in a “redeemed humanity”— saved by Jesus who takes up the Cross and walks with the poor, “preferring their cry to that of the powerful.”

Read the Archbishop’s speech here: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5295/archbishop-justins-speech-at-the-reclaiming-the-gospel-of-peace-conference-oklahoma-usa>. It is long but worth your time.

The bishops had lunch with the Archbishop in a closed session. That means what was discussed there is confidential. Without breaking that confidentiality, I can say I sat next to him and discussed soccer instead of baseball. And I

can say he reminded us that we are not only the bishops of our dioceses (as important as that work is) but we are also bishops of the Church throughout the world.

We bring our local experience to the world and the experience of the world to our local dioceses. It is one of the ministries of a bishop to be that link. My inclination is to focus on what I am called to do locally in Western Massachusetts, but I hope I am growing in my understanding of what it means to be a bishop for the whole Church.

There are many presenters and workshops. Addressing violence is multi-dimensional. One of those groups is BPeace — a ministry sponsored by our sister diocese in Massachusetts that is collaborating with other organizations to create jobs for young people (violence goes up dramatically among unemployed urban teens in the summer), addressing on the ground community issues and advocating for better laws. We have a lot to learn from them in our part of the Commonwealth.

The tone of this gathering is the solemn reality of the world of violence in which we live. And there is an energized, Spirited hope for the world God wants for us, already given to us in the non-violent faithfulness of Jesus. In our souls and in our Church, we hold both together.

+Doug



*Dean Jim Munroe and Canon Tom Callard offer Easter prayers in downtown Springfield.*

## Cathedral Canon Reflects on Street Ministry

**By the Rev. Canon Tom Callard**

Our second venture out to the streets of Springfield, following “Ashes To Go,” was on Wednesday of Holy Week to offer a simple message: Easter is this Sunday so we will offer a prayer for you. What can we pray for?

It was early afternoon and Jim and I probably talked with fifty or sixty people and maybe a quarter or a third of them gave us things to pray for: themselves, family members, marriages, the weather, someone’s grandmother who just died, a healthy baby who is about to be born, someone heading off

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

# Missioner Leads Church Back to Earth

By Victoria Ix,  
Communications Director

The following is an excerpt of an interview with the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Missioner for Creation Care. Margaret was called to this new Diocesan ministry by Bishop Fisher and began her service on January 2.

As part of her ministry, Margaret is writing a “creation care blog.” You can read Margaret’s posts through the Diocesan website or on her personal website [www.reviv-ingcreation.org/](http://www.reviv-ingcreation.org/).

## Why is “creation care” the responsibility of the Church and its members?

I see creation care as having a spiritual and ethical dimension to it. The spiritual dimension springs from our perception of the sacredness of all things. It springs from the discovery that the divine mystery we call, “God,” shines through everything. We live in a sacramental universe – a universe that is showing forth the glory of God. So it’s partly a spiritual call because when we damage or spoil creation, it’s an act of desecration. It’s an act of rebellion against God. It’s a sin... So there’s a spiritual or sacramental dimension to creation care. It’s about honoring and reverencing the creation as a way of honoring and worshipping our Lord. And there’s also an ethical dimension to it. I am particularly interested and concerned about climate change... It affects the poor disproportionately. The poor individuals and poor countries are those most vulnerable, who are affected first and are least



*The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas leads a workshop on creation care at Wardens, Vestry Leadership Day.*

responsible for all the greenhouse gases pollution that we are throwing into the atmosphere... So it’s a justice issue. It’s an issue of caring for “the least of these.”

## What are your responsibilities as Missioner for Creation Care?

Preaching, teaching, trying to help people connect care for creation with their faith or beginning to understand that this is central to faithful discipleship as a Christian. I love to lead retreats... I very much enjoy helping people learn about not only ways of prayer, but how do we pray with and for the natural world and how do we invite

it into our prayer? Networking. I know there are other people in the Diocese who have this on their heart as well and so I’m hoping we can find each other. It’s partly turning toward the Diocese... and it’s also turning toward the outer world or the environmental movement to bring the voice of the Church into the environmental movement. And, I’ve been finding that personally very moving. People who’ve been long-time climate activists and environmental activists, many of them are quite discouraged. They’re acutely aware of the enormity of what we’re facing and I think many people are beginning

to reach for spiritual sustenance and they need a spiritual word. Like, “how do I keep going without falling into despair?” “Where do I find hope?” I think hope is a key word... People become more hopeful as they become more active.... “Is there something I can do today or this week?” It gives energy. It gives hope. Even though the facts on the ground may be exactly the same, somehow our relationship to the facts is different.

**Where does a parish begin to evaluate their care for creation?**

I’d like to encourage every congregation to become a member of “Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light.” There’s a very concrete hope. They have a website. It’s a nonprofit group. For a modest fee based on your church’s budget – and it’s very modest – it’s all about supporting and mentoring and guiding the process of becoming more faithful environmental stewards. So it’s everything from getting an energy audit for your buildings — very basic — all the way through education to advocacy. It’s a wonderful group and there are [IP&L] groups all over the country. It’s also a way of building the religious environmental movement. I think it would be great if there were teams of people in each parish who would work together on this. Ideally, caring for creation should be part of the worship life. We need to lift it up more in prayers. It needs to be central to preaching... People generally don’t understand how urgent the situation is. It needs to become part of the preaching life of the Church and the prayers. Adult education programs... Let’s learn the basic science. Let’s learn some basic Scripture, some basic

theology. There are some good Adult Ed curricula that put together Christianity and creation care. I would love to have creation care be just part of the whole life of the church. Children’s education – Sunday School – we learn from the beginning that we find God in the natural world...to be a good Christian means, “I love the earth. I take care of it.”

**How will this ministry use your gifts and challenge you to grow?**

**In some sense this is just so organic in your own life of ministry.** It’s perfect. Everything I’m doing is stuff I would be doing anyway but I’d be trying to fit it in to my life as a parish priest. It’s an amazing thing to finally be focusing on what really been a growing passion for me over the years – especially with the sense of the growing urgency in the outside world. It’s a topic I care passionately about. It’s what wakes me up in the middle of the night. I bring a very sincere concern about the health of the planet and a deep conviction that God is with us in our efforts to protect life and the possibilities for life to continue. A growing edge is going to be continuing to trust that this is God’s work. I’m definitely where I’m supposed to be. I deeply feel that. I’m just starting now to be on the road preaching in different places. And it’s really different to be preaching to a community that you don’t have relationship with. Definitely challenging... I have to find different ways of reaching out to people and trying to communicate with people.

**I intend to keep your ministry in my prayers and I think you can be a wonderful model of respectful dialogue, of real contempla-**

**tive dialogue that listens to the other – that allows for challenging conversations with people of good will who may feel differently about this.**

It’s interesting where God calls us. I don’t like conflict. So, it’s not my favorite thing to be in the middle of something that’s controversial... I think one reason that people don’t get active is because they’re – in a hidden way – they’re overwhelmed... That’s where I hope churches would step in. I would love to see churches as places where people can weep together and grieve together what we are losing and have already lost and reclaim their hope.

**Is there anything else you’d like to say to the churches as you begin this ministry?**

It’s important that individuals and congregations do everything they can to reduce our carbon footprint and to support each other to make these changes. We all know the drill – drive less, walk more, turn off unnecessary lights, switch to energy-efficient lights, turn down the heat, and so on. Individual actions make a difference and help us align our lives with our values. But what we can do as individuals is not sufficient or adequate to address the size of the problem. We can’t recycle ourselves out of the environmental crisis. We need to work for the systemic changes that only political leaders and policy makers can accomplish. This is where advocacy comes in, and where we need to build a strong and effective climate movement.

**Invite Margaret to speak or preach by contacting her at [margaretbj@aol.com](mailto:margaretbj@aol.com) or (413) 586-0818.**



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**By Joan E. Gilchrist**  
**Education for Ministry**  
**Coordinator**

When I went to the Re-Visioning Education for Ministry (Efm) Conference in Sewanee, Tenn., last summer, I was very pleasantly surprised. Even though I only knew a few people, I felt as though I was on common ground with everyone. I was most impressed when the director of Efm said that an average educational program lasts about seven years. Efm is going into its 40<sup>th</sup> year! It was very exciting to hear about all the new materials and everyone's reaction to the revised curriculum. Some recent Efm graduates want to take another year or two just so they can experience the re-visioned program.

If you are interested in learning

**Efm is an excellent  
theological  
education program  
open to all...**

how Efm could enhance your ministry in the Church, I encourage you to visit our new Efm page on the diocesan website. [<http://www.diocesewma.org/parish-clergy-resources/training-education/education-for-ministry/>] It is very exciting that you can click on a link and go directly to Sewanee. The page also shows our current active Efm groups. There are testimonials from graduates of Efm who share what it has meant to them. One graduate told me, "It completely changed my life!"

If you are interested in becoming an Efm mentor or joining an Efm group, please contact me at joan.elizabeth.gilchrist@gmail.com or (508) 254-9135. I would love to talk with you. I would even love to help start groups around the Diocese. I don't have a group right now, and I miss it!

Efm is an excellent theological education program open to all but crafted especially for lay persons engaged in parish ministry. I still reflect on something said in an Efm video by a Canadian priest. She observed people beginning the program saying, "We believe," and at the end of their formation saying, "I believe." Now is the time to think about fall classes and beginning a journey that will deepen and even transform your life in Christ.

# Creative Partnership Celebrates 25 Years

By The Rev. Charles R. Summers

For 25 years, St. Barnabas and All Saints' Church in the Forest Park area of Springfield has maintained a partnership with the Drama Studio.

The studio teaches the fundamentals of dramatic production and has an enrollment in excess of 200 students per week. Each year, several plays or musicals are presented – most of them in the parish hall theater.

Amelia Hays-Rivest, one of the present directors and teachers of the Drama Studio, recently wrote the following letter to the Parish Vestry; the communication was also signed by the studio's Dan Morbyrne and the children it serves:

“Many churches can claim a vibrant youth fellowship ministry, but how many congregations can state that they make possible a program that serves over 300 youth a year? That they have provided a true sanctuary for thousands of children over the years? That they do transform lives?”

“We have children here who have been bullied, put down and ostracized everywhere else. We have children who have special needs that feel that they are a failure and not valued elsewhere. Here they find a home and a place where they can ‘flourish and blossom’ as cherished, valued, and loved members of a community.

“Over 900 Springfield students attended free school performances of ‘Pinocchio’ at CityStage. Their teachers wrote to tell us how much it meant to the children, many



*The Drama Studio, which operates in St. Barnabas and All Saints', Springfield, is celebrating its 25th year.*

of whom are at risk, and how it engaged them with words, stories, magic in a way that nothing else did. When the pre-school children from Square One come here in the summer, their teachers tell us that what they see here stays with them all year and makes them want to read and write.

“Last year was especially moving. A child who wouldn't talk at all spoke at the shows, and brought the teachers to tears. Our own students had their eyes opened and their compassion stirred when they realized that many of these children have no books of their own, but felt they had been given ‘stories to keep’ upon seeing the performances.

“One of our parents is now looking into starting a book drive so that

these children who have so little can take home a book of their own. Teachers have told us often that our school tours in Springfield schools provide the students not only with a positive arts experience, but also with important youth role models, and the inspiration that they too can succeed.

“We believe that because you have allowed us to use your facilities for over 25 years, that the congregation of St. Barnabas and All Saints' truly embodies the words of St. Francis' prayer.”

We praise God for the 25 years that the property and congregation at 41 Oakland St., Springfield, have provided the base for one of the most effective community ministries in the Diocese.

# Spotlight On Blogging

By Victoria Ix,  
Communications Director

Blogging. Ten years ago most of us were unfamiliar with the term. Today, writing a weblog or, “blogging,” is a commonplace medium for communicating information, conveying opinion or sharing one’s experience.

Our Diocese is blessed to have several wonderful blogs, and it is our hope that a regular focus on one of our writers will encourage new visitors or, we hope, subscribers. At the time of publication there are five blogs available on our website. There is another in the works. They each appeal to different interests and explore a variety of ministries. It seems right to give our first “spotlight” to Bishop Fisher. Bishop Fisher has been blogging since 2012. Here is an excerpt from his first entry on December 13, 2012:

“In a time long ago when I was in seminary, we were told in homiletics class to make one point and never divert from that point. Then in my first assignment I worked with a wonderful priest named Diarmuid McGann. He disagreed with my seminary professor. He said (in an Irish brogue): ‘The preacher should make several points (in 10-12 minutes). Give your listeners plenty of places to jump off and pray. If you said something, anything, that gave people an opportunity to go into their souls and pray a while, the Holy Spirit worked. Who cares if they heard the rest of the sermon or not? They were holy daydreaming.’ That wisdom is always with me when I prepare a sermon. And now I am going to bring that strategy to this blog.”

Bishop Fisher’s blog gives us a rare opportunity to better understand the ministry of a bishop.



One of the advantages of a blog over a good sermon is the option to sit with the text and read it slowly – allowing the words to settle. [Bishop’s sermons are also available on the website menu so you can print those out, too!]

This diocesan blogger writes a new post about every two weeks. Sometimes, Bishop Fisher’s message will speak to the liturgical season. At other times, he might reflect on an event or an experience. Many posts have been about Bishop’s travels on behalf of the Diocese. These give us a rare opportunity to better understand the ministry of a bishop and to “go with” Bishop Fisher when he writes from the road. It’s never too late to catch up – to read from the beginning of his ministry. All the past posts are archived so you can read one or read them all.

<http://blog.diocesewma.org/>

A portrait photograph of Bishop Doug Fisher, an older man with white hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a magenta clerical shirt. He is smiling and standing outdoors in front of a stone building.

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Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

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# Forming Stewards at the Font



**By Bruce Rockwell,  
Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship**

Many of us may have attended the Easter Vigil at which there may have been one or more baptisms. Often times during a baptism, I find myself wondering if the congregation knows that we are forming stewards as the persons are being baptized.

Early on in my own formation as a steward, I learned that being baptized means that we are stewards. As we strive to live into our baptismal promises, we are being stewards, since good stewards strive to do all those things we promise (or that were promised on our behalf by our God parents) when we are baptized.

We promise to persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, to repent and return to the Lord. That means we will strive to resist the societal disease of affluenza ... of wanting more and more material goods, of thinking that if we just have enough (money, property, ... fill in the blank), we will be happy and feel fulfilled. As Christians we know that God has already given us all we need for a full rich life in God's household. But as people who live in a material society, we hear messages that we don't have enough, that if we only had a little bit more, we would have it made, whatever that means.

We promise to renounce all sinful desires that draw us from the love of God. Again, by chasing after the false promises of our secular society, we are drawn away from God and make ourselves the center of our world, rather than God the center.

We promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. That's a really difficult one, especially for introverts who are too shy to talk about their faith, or New Englanders who think it might seem to be boasting if we spoke about how we experience Christ and the Holy Spirit working in and through

# Letting Go

**By E. John White,  
Missioner for Legacy Stewardship**



Now that I have recently turned 70, I am looking at life with a different perspective. I am noticing more the many things in my life. So much stuff just seems to accumulate on its own. It became obvious to me this winter when we cleared out a number of our rooms before the painters came to work.

For my Lenten reading I've been focusing on the daily emails from Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) office. The one that caught my attention that has "stuck with me" is the parable about "The Rich Man" in Matthew 19. Jesus' response to his question about becoming more faithful is sobering: "Sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. I can easily thin out some of my possessions, but quite frankly I cannot "sell" the more important ones. I am too much part of our secular world that over-values material possessions. If you are like me you might be wondering what one might do about our over reliance on our possessions.

The commentary that ERD provides is written by Sister Claire Joy. She reflects: "Did the Young Man come to understand that his things were not himself... For it is a journey, and very few of us get it right away. It takes some time...time to think, to grieve, to be alone with God, to get over ourselves."

I believe that making a legacy gift can open the door to the journey of letting go of our over-valued possessions. When we make a legacy gift, we make a decision about giving away funds and possibly stuff (to the church and to others) that will be passed on after we die. Through reflection and prayer we can make a purposeful shift by planning on leaving behind our possessions, focusing on living without them and, then, thinking more about our "treasure in heaven." Making

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

# Opening a Ghanaian Center for Women



*The Rev. Annie Ryder with the Rev. Lovia Owush Asiedu, the first female priest in the Diocese of Kumasi.*

**By the Rev. Anne E. Ryder**

It was the funding of the Women's Vocational Training Center in the Anglican Diocese of Kumasi that brought our two bishops, the Rt. Reverends Daniel Sarfo and Gordon Scruton, together. Both were invited by Trinity Wall Street, the funder, to a meeting on worldwide mission in Spain.

In the winter of 2010, shortly after arriving in Ghana, I was told there was to be a big celebration and my presence was expected. I was to wear my priestly vestments and take part in the opening of the Women's Vocational Center.

These events are not a mere couple of hours, but usually at least five, and often more, hours. Plastic chairs are arranged in a big "U," or square and awnings are put up to provide shade. There is a liturgy, of sorts. Some of it was very familiar and other parts were all new for me.

Scripture was read and preached upon. Dignitaries were introduced. At least an hour was for fundraising, and every donor's name was announced over the loud speaker. There was singing, dancing, and rejoicing. Several of the diocesan women's groups, who had competed against one another, came together to help fund and build this new center to help women learn job skills and become small business owners. Every graduate would leave, not only with the schooling and training necessary, but with the tools needed for their craft: sewing machines, hair dryers, pots and pans.

At the end, the crowd of about 600 dispersed, and the Vocational Center was open for business. I had had my first taste of a big event, Ghanaian style!

# Goal Reached for Teaching Kitchen

*"Ubuntu is (an African philosophy that means) the essence of being a person. It means that we are people through other people. We can't be fully human alone. We are made for interdependence, we are made for family. Indeed, my humanity is caught up in your humanity, and when your humanity is enhanced mine is enhanced as well."*

**Desmond Tutu**

**By the Rev. Betsy Fisher**

Ubuntu – this has become my favorite word. And in the past six months I have had a profound experience of Ubuntu with many of you throughout our Diocese.

It started in October at our Diocesan Convention. I spoke to those present about Doug's and my trip to Ghana last summer and the wonderful people we met and amazing work being done. I invited those present to have their humanity caught up in the humanity of the people of Ghana. I shared with them the work of the Women's Vocational Center, a place committed to lifting women and their children out of poverty by training the women in a profession – seamstressing, hairdressing, or catering. I told them about a teaching kitchen that they needed to build to allow more women to be trained. I invited those present to tie their joy to the joy of those women and donate what they could to help make the teaching kitchen a reality; the goal was \$30,000.

The response was unbelievable! From \$5 to \$5,000, from New Hampshire to California, donations poured in from all over the country, accompanied by the most inspiring and touching notes – notes saying thank you for the opportunity to give; some saying they wish they could give more; others requesting to know more about these women.

This past March, we reached our goal of \$30,000! I called Bishop Sarfo and let him know the money was on the way. I will keep you informed as I know more.

Thank you to all who made this dream a reality. Thank you for believing in Ubuntu and enhancing the humanity of the women and children of Ghana!

Thank God  
Easter is not a  
day but a season.  
A way  
of life  
and not a theory.

world to God (20:27). It looks like breakfast on the beach (21:12). In Matthew it looks like a life without fear (28:10) and an invitation to risk going out in love to the whole world (28:19) with the promise that Jesus will never leave us (28:20). In Luke it looks like it like a journey from confusion and grief to enlightenment, hope and action (24:13-36).

Mark's gospel ends with the women at the empty tomb afraid and speechless (16:8). Not because Mark does not believe in the resurrection but because he wants us to live beyond fear and silence and continue the Good News of Jesus that has only just begun (1:1).

Now why we would want to restrict all that dynamism, creativity, forgiveness, hope, peace, fearless living and Love that is stronger than death to one day? Thank God Easter is not a day but a season. A way of life and not a theory. Let's embrace Resurrection and experience being alive.

Together.

+Doug

crowed finds his voice. On Easter Sunday he is there, boldly preaching about the God who "shows no partiality." We get a glimpse of the community that he helped to shape in Acts: a community where no one claimed private ownership and all things were held in common. There was not a needy person among them. Can you imagine that? And then we see him healing in the same way that Jesus healed.

Peter has changed. And the Bible is clear about why: Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit. He's not so scared anymore. He's stopped twitching every time the rooster crows.

He (and the other disciples) are now doing the work Jesus called them to do in the first place when he called them by the Sea of Galilee. They really are fishing for people, healing the sick, bringing good news to the poor, announcing God's salvation for the world. The old Peter, who said, "I don't know the man" is now saying, "Let me tell you about the living God revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus."

Now here is the thing about this 300-pound gorilla. I think it's the Easter story we need to start telling with our lips and in our lives. Because until the world starts to really see us, the Church, living as Easter people, Easter will be nothing more than a children's fantasy.

Yes, Easter is all about Jesus. But it's also about us, as we find our true voices and begin to live lives rooted not in fear, but trust.

with the daily Scripture readings. (The Bible Challenge, by Marek Zabriskie).

**Take a step outside of your comfort zone.** Introduce yourself to someone new, knowing you will find the presence of Christ; go to serve at the soup kitchen that you have been meaning to go to for 10 years; consider tithing your groceries — for every \$10 you spend on your own food, spend a dollar for the food pantry.

Take five minutes of silence, asking God to show you the way through the day. End with the Lord's Prayer or a simple thank you!

These are disciplines that call us not to the obligation of the discipline itself but rather to the well of abundant life and the grace so freely given in resurrection.

a Legacy Gift is one way to begin this spiritual journey – a journey too difficult for the "Young Man" and also for me.

I invite you to consider opening the door to a spiritual journey by making a legacy gift. There are many ways to make a Legacy Gift, such as making a bequest in a will, taking out a Charitable Gift Annuity, signing over an Insurance Policy.

Please feel free to contact me at [ejwhite@diocesewma.org](mailto:ejwhite@diocesewma.org); 860-928-3705. For resources go on line to [www.diocesewma.org](http://www.diocesewma.org).

# Ministry to Our Veterans

STEWARDSHIP  
FROM PAGE 17

**By the Rev. Chris Carlisle**

Doug Fisher's commitment to military veterans ministry long preceded his election as Bishop of Western Massachusetts. His parish work across the road from the gates of West Point, coupled with his parish focus on socially and economically marginalized peoples, undoubtedly led to a recognition that the church is called to address the critical needs of men and women who have served our country.

Over the past year, on the Bishop's behalf, I have undertaken a process of discernment to identify the specific needs of veterans within the Diocese and to begin to imagine how the Diocese might incarnate this Christian responsibility.

Having visited church-sponsored veterans housing facilities, met with people from the U.S. Veteran's Administration and such nonprofit organizations as Soldier On, I have also engaged military chaplains, municipal employees responsible for veterans in the region – and most importantly – veterans themselves.

I have begun to conceptualize a regionalized veterans ministry plan to involve the whole Diocese in this critical ministry. I have learned how our culture's care for military veterans – especially those who have served in combat and come back changed, often for the worse – is sadly inadequate. It is thus not a coincidence that the homeless community of our Cathedral in the Night street ministry in Northampton is at least half-comprised of military veterans.

Yet by such sadness can come hope; the Diocese's expanding street communities – Church Without Walls in Springfield and West Springfield, for instance – offer a chance to address the plight of veterans.

Whether we know it or not, as citizens we made a social contract with our veterans. Regardless of our political views, the protection our veterans gave to us asks for a reciprocal commitment to take care of them when they return home from war. It is a commitment we are failing; yet rather than feeling guilty for this sin of omission, we have the chance to redeem our sins.

A pilot project is beginning in Northampton this spring whereby veterans will meet once a week to break bread, tell their stories and recognize that their God has not given up on their often tragic lives.

Several Vietnam veterans have already stepped forward to assume a leadership role. It is the Bishop's intent to see this veterans ministry burgeon across the Diocese – wherever there are two or three.

If the secular world invokes "social contract" to define our responsibility, in the language of the church this responsibility is best defined as a "covenant," literally, a coming together; in our biblical tradition it implies a commitment that is made in the presence of God.

So it is ours to come together in thanksgiving for what our veterans have given and to express our gratitude to a God who promises that by our giving we will know God's own abundance.

our lives.

We promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. How can we do that when we put our own needs and selfish desires first? How can we do that when we grasp for and hold on to far more of the riches of the earth while our sisters and brothers, both in foreign lands and here at home, don't have enough?

We promise to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. Again, how can we do that when we abuse the good earth, this island home, this Garden of Eden that God has entrusted to our care and stewardship?

All of these promises, I submit, are stewardship questions. As we strive to put God first in our lives, as we attempt to become more generous and less self-centered, we become more loving stewards. We become more the people God created us to be. We become more the people we have promised to be as baptized children of God, as disciples of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for the gift of baptism that forms us as stewards!

*"Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and for ever. Amen."*

**Book of Common  
Prayer, 306.**

# Young Adults to Experience What It Means ‘to be Church’

By The Rev. Tanya Wallace

The parish of All Saints’ Church in South Hadley, originally founded as a ministry for and with college students at Mount Holyoke College, is embarking on an extraordinary project set to begin in September.

The Lawrence House Service Corps will be a residential, intentional Christian community for recently graduated young adults. Each year a new community of six people between the ages of 21 and 30 will be chosen to live in Lawrence House. The new community will create and live by a Rule of Life, share prayer and worship, meals and chores, and volunteer full-time in local agencies serving people in need. In exchange, they will receive room and board, health insurance, deferment of student loans and a small stipend. The real pay-off will be the experience of living in an intentional Christian community modeled on monastic principles. Participants will be engaging in spiritual direction and vocational discernment, partnering with a vibrant parish community, and working to change the world with a commitment to social justice.

All Saints’ has engaged in innovative campus ministry for almost five years, including the creation of student-parish internships, the development of a biweekly group for students to eat, learn and pray together, and the institution of Midnight Breakfast — free, no-strings-attached breakfast in the midst of final exams each semester to any student who needs a study break between 10 p.m. and 1a.m.

Last semester 533 students were



**Lawrence House**  
Welcome. Worship. Learn. Serve. Give. Connect.

fed, comprising one quarter of the student body. Through the parish’s committed, growing and dynamic affiliation with the college, we have learned a few things about ministry with young adults and about ourselves. We have learned that young adults are hungry for meaning and are searching for ways to engage in making a difference in the world. We have learned that our roots as a campus ministry still inform and empower our mission in South Hadley and equip us to be leaders in innovative ministry. We have learned that the most effective ministry with this population is innovative and synergistic, connecting the needs of the world with the needs of the un-churched.

Lawrence House will be opening up what it means “to be church,” both for people in the pews and for people outside the church looking in at All Saints’. We aspire to transform our own community and young adults’ perception of what church community can be.

The Lawrence House Service Corps, which will likely become part of the broader Episcopal Service Corps program, represents an exciting partnership between All Saints’ Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts. Both the parish and the Diocese have pledged financial support for

the program’s development, and partnerships are already being built to ensure volunteer placements with the existing and developing network of street ministries in the Diocese.

Indeed the parish views this project not as simply an outreach program of the parish, but a groundbreaking program of the Diocese designed to draw together the historic campus ministry, educational and outreach programs of the parish, and a courageous vision of the Diocese of a street ministry network and an innovative campus ministry.

We can try to measure impact quantitatively through the number of lives touched through this program, but it will be the qualitative impact we will most deeply value. If we build community, support vocations, encourage service and prayer, then, lives will be changed. For the community of All Saints’, this new ministry is part of God’s call to transform our little corner of the world.

*The Rev. Tanya Wallace, rector of All Saints’, will serve as the Program Director. Please contact her at [allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com](mailto:allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com) for further information about becoming a Lawrence House intern or about creating a Lawrence House ministry placement.*

# Treasures from the Archives

## *Bishop Vinton's Letter File*

**By Karen Warren,  
Diocesan Archivist**

How does one begin to keep track of business in 1902, in a newly formed Episcopal Diocese? In his new ministry as the first Bishop of Western Massachusetts, the Rt. Rev. Alexander H. Vinton used great organizational skill to track Diocesan correspondence.

The Johnson's Mascot Letter File pictured here contains correspondence received by Bishop Vinton during 1902-1903, his first years as Bishop of the Diocese. Arranged alphabetically, the file box contains nearly 300 letters and notes, some typewritten and some in the exquisite handwriting that was common in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The box itself, made of paper-board, measures 11½ by 12 by 3 inches and contains paper dividers labelled A-Z. This document file was patented in 1896 by Henry R. Johnson, a bookseller, publisher and stationer, the owner of Johnson's Bookstore at 313-315 Main St., Springfield, according to [www.sevenroads.org](http://www.sevenroads.org).

The exterior of the box—front, back and sides—is covered with a charcoal-colored splotchy pattern, perhaps mimicking the pattern of marble, on a tan background. There are rose-colored diagonal stripes across top and bottom. Inside the front cover, a label was added, containing the following subjects: Cities and towns under initial letters;



*The letter file and letters of Bishop Alexander H. Vinton, above left. Bishop Vinton, the first Diocesan bishop, at right.*

Examining Chaplains; Registrar, Secretary, Treasurer and Trustees of the Diocese; Standing Committee; and Board of General Missions.

Displayed with Bishop Vinton's letter file is a sample of the contents. A handwritten letter from the Rev. G. P. Huntington, St. Thomas' Rectory, Hanover, New Hampshire, is dated May 5, 1902 and labelled "concerning Ashfield." Tied up neatly in red cloth tape is a bundle of letters labelled "Milford: Choosing Rector & 1 Candidate for Confirmation," and dated "to May 6, 1903." This letter file is a significant piece of the early history of the Diocese. I hope to inventory the box's contents in the future.

Bishop Vinton's tenure as first Bishop of the Western Massachusetts Diocese lasted until his sudden death at home in 1911. It is a marvel to me that this 112-year

old artifact remained intact and has been preserved through a succession of bishops conducting business at a variety of addresses throughout Springfield. The establishment of Diocesan House in the rectory of Christ Church Cathedral did not happen until 1929. In the 1980s, under the auspices of Bishop Andrew Wissemann, some work was done to create a Diocesan archives in a storage room in the basement of the Cathedral. However, over the years this room became quite damp, and there is much deterioration of the inside and back cover of this correspondence file due to the dampness and changes in temperature. The Archives is presently located at Diocesan House, on the second floor. A summary of the contents of the Diocesan Archives can be found at:

<http://www.diocesewma.org/>

# From the Editor

PRAYERS  
FROM PAGE 11

It's Easter Monday.

All the articles have been edited and the photos uploaded. Everything is ready for our layout editor, Janice Beetle, to do her magic.

The last piece left is my column. I have been Director of Communications/Missioner for almost two months. To say that this ministry has been a blessing in my life – professionally and personally — would be an understatement. Yet, the task of writing this column has loomed large in recent days. What, after all, could you need to hear from me?

I am the behind-the-scenes wizard who moves the levers of Facebook and Twitter. I am the Diocesan messenger – the one who posts “The Bishop’s Blog” and formats “Mission Matters.” I get to craft the press releases and write stories about the wonderful workings of God in our midst. I maintain the website, take lots of photos and get to follow Bishop Fisher here and there.

Yet, I think there is something more to this job – something that touches me deeply. In the sharing of information, in utilizing different platforms of communication, I hope God will use this ministry to touch your heart – to inspire and to turn the mind to higher things. This is a ministry – not as conventional as most, but a ministry of the Word alive and active.



The other facet of this work is to be a translator of sorts. In future issues I hope to explore some of the things that make a Diocese vital in the mission of Christ. Now that I work within one, I have new insight into the gift of having a bishop, the responsibilities and graces given to senior staff, the gifts of those who work “behind the scenes” here to support the bishop and the mission of the Church in Western Massachusetts. I’ve got a window seat now, and I hope to share the view in the days ahead.

So, what do you want to know? How can I help you – in your parish – to share all the good news? My job is here, and it is also with you. So please, don’t hesitate to call or email me. I hope this is just the beginning of a long spiritual friendship and a partnership for mission.

Easter joy and peace!

Vicki

If just one person can see that Christians want to pray for them without any set agenda or expectations on our part, it will be worthwhile.

to rehab, a person in tribulation, people’s finances, someone looking for his brother, etc. We collected their prayer requests and will offer the collection on Sunday.

People seemed to fall into two camps: those who were bothered and those who were grateful. The bothered were not bothered by us in particular; they just seemed generally bothered by things. And those who were grateful were definitely grateful, like the woman who was pregnant and happy we could pray for her and her baby.

The third camp was all the people who knew Jim. Lots of people know Jim.

We are committed to doing this regularly in the hope that people at least recognize that we’re offering them something, perhaps something they can get elsewhere too but it doesn’t hurt to have extra prayers.

If just one person can see that Christians want to pray for them without any set agenda or expectations on our part, it will be worthwhile.

Got news? Contact Victoria at:

Email: [communications@Wdiocesewma.org](mailto:communications@Wdiocesewma.org)

Phone: 413.737.4786, ext. 124

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## ALSO *Inside*

### GOSPEL OF PEACE



Bishop attends conference  
in Oklahoma.

Pages 10-11

### VOICES FROM GHANA



Photo by Grace Fisher

Learn about the Women's Vocational  
Center in Ghana.

Page 18

### LAWRENCE HOUSE



Photo by the Rev. Tanya Wallace

New Episcopal Volunteer Program to  
begin in South Hadley.

Page 21

Donations for the cost of *Abundant Times* are being accepted this year. The cost per household per year is \$10. Gifts can be mailed to Diocesan House at 37 Chestnut St., Springfield, MA, 01103-1787.