158th Diocesan Convention Passes 9 Resolutions, Elects 29 Offices

By Sean McConnell

The 158th Convention of the Diocese of California, held at San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral on Friday and Saturday, October 19 and 20, passed nine resolutions and elected diocesan officers and deputies to the 2009 General Convention of the Episcopal Church to be held in Anaheim, California.

The week leading up to convention included a Taizé service for diocesan unity held at St. Paul’s, Walnut Creek, and town hall meetings around the diocese featuring the Most Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane, Archbishop of Cape Town and primate of the province of Southern Africa. Members of St. Paul’s, Walnut Creek, held a reception following the Taizé service welcoming Ndungane to the diocese. The reception included proclamations from the mayor and Contra Costa County supervisors and a short speech by the archbishop.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of convention week featured programs that included the Chinyakare Ensemble (a Zimbabwean music and dance troupe), a segment from an HIV/AIDS documentary entitled “A Closer Walk,” and a speech by Ndungane. St. Paul’s, San Rafael; St. Augustine’s, Oakland; and Trinity Parish, Menlo Park, hosted the events. More than 500 members of the Diocese of California attended the events and joined in a conversation with Ndungane about the South African concept of ubuntu, the MDGs, post-apartheid South Africa, and the Anglican Communion.

The convention was called to order on Friday night with an opening Eucharist at Grace Cathedral. The Eucharist included a homily by Ndungane and a sung Eucharistic prayer composed by Christopher Putnam, Associate for Liturgy and Music at All Souls, Berkeley.

In his homily, Ndungane addressed the historical breadth of Anglicanism and denounced the polarization that has caused isolation and division within the communion.

“To follow either extreme is to put at risk the great riches of our Anglican heritage, through which the Lord has blessed us so greatly over the centuries,” Ndungane told the convention Eucharist.

“We must not lose this inheritance, if we are serious about being faithful to the Lord, as he has been faithful to us.

“At the heart of Anglicanism is not one single way of being Christian. Rather, within a broad and fertile territory, there is a breadth of legitimate expressions of faith, which hold to that centre who is Jesus Christ.”

Following the Eucharist, a reception with swing dancing was held in the Cathedral’s gym.

On Saturday, the convention’s business day opened with Morning Prayer and the Bishop’s Address in the cathedral’s nave. During his address, the Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus told how baptism moves us from isolation into a sense of mutuality, and he called on the diocese to share the gifts we have in Christ with the world around us. He pointed out that “it is a fiction, though, that I accomplish anything apart from a great web of creation, to which I contribute and from which I draw my life. Drinking the shared water of the Spirit signifies the process of becoming clear to the sources of our lives, first to the many who participate in life with us, and ultimately to the fountain of all life and creativity, and indeed of individualism properly understood — God.”

“All my episcopal ministry is founded in the ideas of this baptismal reality,” Andrus said in his address. “I believe that the particular ministry of the episcopate calls me to both always seek to discern the reality of our common life founded in God, and point the Diocese to it.”

Following the bishop’s address, the delegates and guests of convention moved downstairs to Gresham Hall for the convention’s business.

Election Results

Standing Committee elected two new members, one clergy and one lay. The Rev. Nina Pickerrell (Deacon), and Ron Johnson were elected to the Standing Committee’s class of 2011. Both Pickerrell and Johnson are from Grace Cathedral.

The Ecclesiastical Court’s class of 2010 added two members of the clergy and one lay person. They are the Rev. Nancy Eswein (Deacon), the Rev. Paul Burrows (priest), and Karen Valenta Clifton.

The Board of Directors added two clergy members and one layperson, although unlike the offices above, there is no canonical requirement specifying a specific number of clergy and lay. The new members of the Board of Directors are Margaret K. “Peggy” Greene, the Rev. Paul Fromberg (Priest), and the Rev. Mary Moore Gaines (Priest). Gaines was nominated from the floor of convention.

The Provincial Synod added one clergy member and two laypersons. The Rev. Anna B. Lange-Soto (Priest), Carole Jan Lee, and Diane Audrick Smith.

Election results are tabulated at Diocesan House. Convention elected four clergy and four lay deputies to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Four clergy and four lay alternates were also elected. The clergy deputies are the Rev. Michael Barlowe (Priest), the Rev. David Ota (Priest), the Rev. Vanessa Glass (Priest), and the Rev. Barbara Bender Breck (Priest). Lay Deputies are Warren J. Wong, Roderick B. Dugliss, Sarah E. Lawton, and Holly McAlpen.

The clergy Alternate Deputies to General Convention are the Rev. M. Sylvia Vasquez (Priest), the Rev. Richard E. Helmer (Priest), the Rev. Katherine (Kate) Salinario (Deacon), and the Rev. John H. Eastwood (Priest). Lay Alternate Deputies are Carolyn W. Gaines, Liz Graves,
God With Us

Isaiah 62:6-7, 10-12
Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have posted sentinels;
all day and all night
they shall never be silent.
You who remind the LORD,
take no rest,
and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it renowned throughout the earth.
Go through, go through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;
built up, build up the highway;
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.

The above is a portion of one of the texts for Christmas Day in this year’s lectionary. I find the idea that the “sentinels” of the beleaguered Holy City are called upon to remind the LORD of the conditions of the city and its people striking. What can it mean to remind the all-seeing God of the world’s woes?

First, I need to remember that for the people of Israel, God was not far away, but had been found to be a God both transcendent and immanent, a God who inhabited, caused to be, and sustained the whole universe, but also a God who traveled with them through the wilderness, who tabernacled with them. For the Hebrew people, unlike many peoples with whom they shared the land, the God of the universe had come near and dwelt among them.

For us, as Christians, the trajectory moves to God taking on human life in Jesus the Christ, and beyond that, to the Holy Spirit taking up life within the life of the earth, within our Christian communities, and within our own hearts.

So understanding the indwelling Spirit of God we can ask about “reminding the LORD” in another way; what does it mean to remind God-with-us?

The New Zealand Book of Common Prayer, in one of its marriage rites, says that prayer is “an outlook, a sustained energy, which creates a marriage and makes love and forgiveness life-long.” Prayer then is the use of our energies in the intentional forwarding of what we discern to be God’s way on earth. So, as we act with godly intentionality, we are praying. Let me suggest that as we so act, we are reminding ourselves of the indwelling Spirit. The prayerful action awakens and renews our sense of God inspiring and animating our lives. You could say that in such moments, the Christ Child is born anew among and within us.

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus

Another resolution called on the diocese to approve the work of the Companion Diocese Task Force and to enter into a companion diocese relationship with the Brazilian Diocese of Curitiba.

The governance of the diocese was also considered, and a resolution calling for a special convention on May 10, 2008, “to consider and give final approval to proposed changes to the Canons of the Diocese of California” was passed.

Convention adopted “The Five-Year Ethnic and Multicultural Strategic Plan” to develop new multi-ethnic and multi-cultural ministries, and calling for the bishop to install a multicultural missioner by June of 2008. This resolution also called on all clergy and diocesan lay leaders to complete two sessions of anti-racism training within the next five years.

A resolution was presented from the floor responding to the House of Bishops’ Statement from September 2007. The resolution, offered by the vestry of St. John the Evangelist, San Francisco, “affirms the unanimous decision of the Standing Committee to refuse to discriminate against partnered gay and lesbian bishops-elect in the consent process as called for in General Convention 2006 resolution B033.” It also points out that discrimination against LGBT persons continues in many dioceses of the Episcopal Church and calls on the Presiding Bishop to establish a listening process within the Episcopal Church.

Certified copies of the convention’s resolutions are now available online at EpiscopalBayArea.com/convention.

Election Results of the 158th Convention
Standing Committee, Class of 2011
Nina L. Pickerell (Clergy)
Ronald C. Johnson (Lay)

Ecclesiastical Court, Class of 2010
Nancy G. Eswein (Clergy)
Paul Burrows (Clergy)
Karen Valentina Clopton (Lay)

Secretary of the Convention
David A. Frangquist

Treasurer of the Diocese
Elizabeth (Betsy) Munz

Board of Directors, Class of 2010
Margaret K. (Peggy) Greene
Paul Fromberg
Mary Moore Gaines

Provincial Synod, 2008
Anna B. Lange-Soto (Clergy)
Carole Jan Lee (Lay)
Dianne Audrick Smith (Lay)

General Convention Deputies, 2009
Michael Barlowe (Clergy)
David Y. Ota (Clergy)
Vanessa Glass (Clergy)
Barbara Bender Breck (Clergy)
Warren J. Wong (Lay)
Roderick B. Dugliss (Lay)
Sarah E. Lawton (Lay)
Holly McAlpen (Lay)

Alternate Deputies, 2009
1. M. Sylvia O. Vásquez (Clergy)
2. Richard E. Helmer (Clergy)
3. Katherine (Kate) Salinaro (Clergy)
4. John H. Eastwood (Clergy)
5. Carolyn W. Gaines (Lay)
6. Liz Graves (Lay)
7. Kay Bishop (Lay)
8. Barbara Smith Bisel (Lay)
I am “Dying to Act,” editor Sean McConnell’s recent article on gang violence and faith in action, he asks “Have you listened and begun to act? If so, whom have you listened to? What did you do next? If you are working for an end to violent crime, let us know.”

We chaplains of Sojourn Chaplaincy at San Francisco General Hospital have been listening. We listen to everyone — patients, their loved ones, and Hospital staffers. It’s our job: active listening. But, to Sean’s point, do we listen to gang members — primarily to those gang members who are hospitalized for being on the receiving end of gang violence. What I am struck by is the relative innocence and goodness of most these men and boys (they are primarily young men, but some are young women) whom we serve. For the most part, they remind me of the delinquents (as we called them then) I worked with thirty years ago in Detroit, early in my career as a social worker. They are not “bad actors” — not youth with character disorders. They are people with few to no choices in how to entertain themselves, how to learn a new skill, how to receive respect and how to earn a living.

Take Jeremiah. (I have changed his name and other identifiers in this article to help keep him safe.) He spent most of this past summer at the General, the first three weeks in a coma. He arrived late one Friday night in our emergency department with eight gun shot wounds — six to his body, two to his head. Until he was discharged in mid-September his jaw was wired shut, having been shattered by a bullet. His survival and his recovery are nothing less than miracles. And, Jeremiah knows it. He expresses his gratitude daily. Hospital chaplains witness miracles every day: often in the midst of profound suffering — body, mind, and spirit. Unlike the social worker I was, the chaplain I am does not usually try to fix problems, nor even necessarily to empower people to resolve their own problems. As a chaplain my action primarily involves standing beside people in pain, grief, anger, fear and despair, letting them know their suffering matters, that they are not alone. Standing beside. Praying with.

Like Sean McConnell, I live in a neighborhood erupting many Friday and Saturday nights with gang on gang violence. I live in East Oakland. Unlike Sean’s street in El Cerrito, my street rarely sees scary violence. But, many weekends, and some weekday nights, we hear the rapid fire of a pistol or more, a shoot out. It’s down the hill, usually two or more blocks from my house. My partner and I don’t have children, so I don’t worry for their safety. But, my neighbors do have kids. And, I sometimes worry with them for the safety of their children. Our next-door neighbors’ son was killed by a gun fourteen years ago. We are not afraid for ourselves. But every time I hear gunfire, I think of some mother’s son lying in his own blood in the street.

I am not afraid. Rather, I feel positively helpless. I feel sick at heart. All the years of neighborhood meetings result in nothing more than reassurances the cops will arrive faster on the scene. Hearing that pop pop pop, we call 911. Are we the first caller to speak to the dispatcher this night, or the sixth? How many people don’t call because of fear? Fear of telling what they know or fear of making a tense relationship with the cops in this neighborhood even more tense. Distrust and disrespect between the police and the people are real.

We chaplains are listening. And, we’re acting by standing with young men as they mourn the loss of half their intestines or a leg or a cousin. But, to

PCN Reader Response

The Rev. Will Hocker is Executive Director of Sojourn Chaplaincy at San Francisco General Hospital. Visit Sojourn at www.sojournchaplaincy.org.

Sean’s question, “What did you do next?” I fear I have no answer. I suppose I write this article in hopes that some of you will write to suggest next steps to us chaplains.

For now, I need to believe that listening alone is sufficient action for some of these gangster patients. A week before Jeremiah’s last discharge from SFGH, following jaw reconstruction surgery, there was a knock at my office door. Jeremiah delighted me by grinning broadly — showing off his handsome new smile after months of having his mouth wired shut. “Hey, Reverend Will! How’s it be? I want you to meet my brother, man.” Before I quite knew what was up, Anthony cranked his wheelchair around from the corner of the chapel. “Good to meet you, man. Jeremiah tells me you’re a good guy.” All these months. I had met Jeremiah’s mother many times. She had spent most of his first two months of recovery sleeping in the second bed of his room. I had met his father. He had moved to Davis to take a new job just to get Jeremiah out of the Mission neighborhood where he is at ongoing risk of being tracked down to be finished off for withdrawing from his gang. But, I had never till now known about a brother. Anthony told me that he himself was shot two years ago in gang related violence. He remains in nearly constant pain due to a bullet entering his body near his spinal cord. As he stood himself up from his wheelchair to shake my hand goodbye, Anthony winced in pain. “But, we got each other, man. Sometimes I’m thinking that’s all I need.”

Are you listening?
An Episcopalian in Pain: Reflections on the Diocese of Pittsburgh

By Pat Smith

I moved to the Bay Area in October of 1995. I am a cradle Episcopalian. I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and I was baptized and confirmed in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. I was the third generation of my family to serve on the vestry of the parish where I grew up. I served in the District (Deanery) and attended diocesan conventions. I was a member of the Board of Trustees of the diocese during the time the Rt. Rev. Alden Hathaway served as the Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. A year ago, at the National Cathedral at the Investiture of the Presiding Bishop, I ran into Bishop Hathaway in the nave and we had a very pleasant chat. Now retired and living in Florida, he was dressed in his bishop’s finery and had participated in the ceremony. I walked away, I wondered how the direction of the Diocese of Pittsburgh might be different if Bishop Hathaway were still in charge.

On the first weekend in November, the Diocese of Pittsburgh held its 142nd diocesan convention. The diocese, led by the Rt. Rev. Robert William Duncan, Jr., voted to approve the first of two readings needed to enact a constitutional change removing language from the diocesan constitution that accedes to the Episcopal Church’s Constitution and Canons, as is required by the national church’s constitution. According to the Episcopal Church News Service, the deputies voted 118 to 58 with one abstention to approve this resolution while the clergy voted 109 to 24 in favor.

Nothing changes for now regarding the Diocese of Pittsburgh’s affiliation with the Episcopal Church, unless there is an approval of a second reading of the proposed amendment at the next annual diocesan convention in 2008. The vote approving the first reading on November 2 occurred after our Presiding Bishop Katherine Jeffries Schor’s October 31 letter urging Bishop Duncan not to have the diocese diocese adopt the resolution at the convention. Prior to the Pittsburgh convention, I searched for convention materials on their website. I found it quite interesting that they had adjusted their upcoming budget in the legal fees category. Due to the Diocese of Pittsburgh’s lawsuit with Calvary Episcopal Church, a parish in the diocese, the Diocesan Council in March 2007 voted to transfer $120,500 from the Budget Reserve Fund and the Energy Relief Fund to cover the defense costs of the diocese. (Calvary Episcopal Church, one of the largest churches in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, has withheld paying its assessment to the diocese in a disagreement with Bishop Duncan regarding property ownership. For more information, go to www.calvaryphg.org/ litigation.html.)

At the November Diocesan Convention of 2007 there was a resolution requesting an additional $100,000 from the Budget Reserve Fund, making the total transferred to date $220,500 to assist in the payment of defense costs. The 2008 budget does not have an entry because it is expected that there will be no balance in the Budget Reserve Fund in 2008.

In addition, a secretarial position was cut, 22% of the Episcopal Church’s priorities and decisions regarding justice and hunger that adversely affect the inclusion of people in the life of the Church. Join us February 13 to 16 at the Oakland Airport Hilton.

Millennium Development Goals Leadership and “Fellowship” Training

This day-long event with speakers, workshops, and youth activities provides tools to embrace the MDGs and have them come alive in your parish and your life. Watch for a save-the-date announcement for this event, occurring early fall 2008.

So dispel the doldrums of January and embrace this season of Light. Be inspired to find ways to engage with your church through a direct experience of interdependence across cultural and geographical boundaries within the body of Christ. Tune in to discover how you can change the world. Reach out and make it happen.
Focus on the Diaconate

The Rev. Jan Heglund, Hearing What’s Not Being Said

By Sean McConnell

In the months following September 11, 2001, the Rev. Jan Heglund, then a deacon at the Church of Our Saviour, Mill Valley, could no longer sit and watch what was happening in and around Ground Zero — she had to do something. After a conversation with her husband and a call to the Ven. Dorothy Jones, then archdeacon of the diocese, she volunteered as a chaplain at St. Paul’s Chapel, and within a short time, her trip was arranged.

This trip came a little more than two years after Heglund and a group of emergency responders she worked with founded the West Coast Post-trauma Retreat (WCPR) program. WCPR was established to help those who have suffered from some traumatic incident or incidents. For one week a month, Heglund and the staff of WCPR convene on St. Columba’s Church and Retreat House, Inverness, where they meet with seven clients. These clients come from a variety of backgrounds: they are police officers, fire fighters, dispatchers, crime scene investigators, members of the military, paramedics, doctors, nurses, chaplains — anyone who might have experienced a critical incident or who works with those who have may attend.

“When they come we ask them to rank their incidents,” Heglund told me, “and they always think they are there for the most recent one. But some of them have been on the job for more than twenty years and some of them have hundreds of incidents. Then, before they leave we ask them to rank their incidents again and they always get changed around.”

People’s lives are changed at WCPR. One client called and thanked Heglund. “When I got out of the car,” the client told Heglund, “and my wife saw my face, she started to cry. She had not seen me that peaceful in years.”

Heglund, who serves as deacon at Christ Church, Sausalito, and as chaplain to the San Rafael Police Department and the San Francisco Division of the FBI, thinks of her role as a “non-obtrusive presence.” She is a listener, and she comes at this work naturally. On her first ride along with a young police officer in San Rafael, they drove along for some time in total silence.

“He was so young,” Heglund said of the officer, “and I was looking at him and I said, ‘I bet I know what you’re thinking.’”

He said, “You do?” with eyes wide open.

Heglund responded, “Yeah I bet you’re thinking, ‘What is this woman doing in my car? And worse than that, am I going to have to talk about God in this small space?’”

“And he started to laugh so hard, and I said, ‘All I want to tell you is that everything that is said in this car, stays in this car.’”

“And he said, ‘Everything?’”

“I said, ‘You got it.’

“You know, he didn’t stop talking that whole shift.”

When asked why this is diaconal ministry, Heglund doesn’t hesitate. “As a chaplain, I’m out there in the world. As a deacon, I bring that experience back into the church.”

One way that she connected the church to the world of first responders was to connect people in a retirement community to her police officers. The priest she was working with said to her, “Just because the residents at the Redwoods are old doesn’t mean their life is over. I want you to stir them up. Get them to do something.”

After asking the chief’s permission, Heglund sent an email around to the police officers she works with in San Rafael asking if they wanted someone to pray for them every day for a year. She then took the list to the faithful residents of the Redwoods Community for Seniors and asked them each to pray for one person every day. There was such a great response from those officers asking for prayers that she ran out of Redwoods residents and had to take her list to Our Saviour. Every day for a year, more than 60 officers and the people for whom the officers had asked prayers were prayed for.

Heglund performs all sorts of tasks as police and FBI chaplain. She makes hospital visits, she visits crime victims, she counsels officers, she attends briefings, and she listens.

“I really bank on God giving me intuition,” Heglund says. Every day I pray, “Help me to hear what’s not said.”

Simply being there has deepened the relationship between Heglund and the officers and agents she works with. “They are very slow to trust anyone outside of their families, so in the beginning I just sat being around — all the time. When you start being teased in briefing — I might add, unmercifully — you know you’ve got it made.”

Confidence and a comfort with one’s self are important qualities for any police chaplain. “We’ve had people in the program who are not so sure of themselves,” says Captain Jeff Franzini with the SRPD.

“Jan comes around with a smile, a warm face, and a confidence that defuses situations. Because of her varied experience, she’s coming from a place that is more knowing and reassuring, and she brings all of her experience into play.”

When Heglund arrived in New York after 9/11, Sister Grace, a nun who was coordinating the chaplains, apologized that there were only night shifts left. Heglund told her that she had come to fill in wherever she was needed and that the night shift would be fine. Heglund bivouacked at the YMCA and spent her chaplain time at St. Paul’s Chapel — the little church on the edge of the destruction that became a refuge for responders and relief workers.

Heglund was told by some of the chaplains at St. Paul’s to pray extra attention to one man, a backhoe operator who was obviously not coping well.

“So I watched this guy for a while,” Heglund said, “then walked up to him and asked him how he was doing.

“And he said to me, ‘This is the worst day of my life.’

“And I said, ‘What makes it the worst?’ in this scenario?”

“And he said, ‘I’ve never uncovered so many heads in my life.’

“This man was just one of many that Heglund would listen to during her three-week stay at Ground Zero.

Because of her presence to those who are on the front lines of emergency response, and because of her work with WCPR, Heglund was recently named “Woman of the Year” by the Marin County Chapter of Soroptimists International.

“I’m reminded of the saying,” Heglund tells me, “It’s great when boats are in a harbor, safe. But that’s not what boats are made for.”

That is the life of a deacon for Heglund, to do the work that a deacon is called to do. It is a life on the boundaries. She is a part of the family that is the SRPD, and of another family that is the FBI, but she’s not an officer or an agent. Then there is the liminal role of the deacon leading the church into the world and holding up the world to the church. We don’t always want to see the world that Heglund sees. It is a world where crime and violence and pain and loss seem incessant. And in that world is one quiet and confident deacon, listening for what is not being said.

Diocese of California Receives Award for MDG Work

On October 24, the Diocese of California received the Global Citizens Award from the East Bay Chapter of the United Nations Association of the United States of America. The award was given for the diocese’s work advancing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Rev. Este Cantor from Our Saviour, Mill Valley, accepted the award on behalf of the diocese and the Rev. Marc Handley Andruss.

This is the second year the East Bay Chapter has given out the awards to individuals and organizations whose exemplary work has international impact and is helping to fulfill the MDGs. The theme of the evening was “Water for Life,” and many of the awards centered around international water-based projects.

This year seven awards were given in all, recipients included a religious institution (the Diocese of California), a city (Berkeley), advocacy institutions (the Pacific Institute and the Oakland Institute), students (the Shuar Project), a scientist (Ashok Gadgil), and a civic group acting in the local community (St. Mary’s Center). For more information and to read Cantor’s acceptance speech, please view her blog “shekinah” at estecantor.blogspot.com.
Around the Diocese

Episcopalian Connect with Muslims After Arson

By Amber Sturgess

Aslam-o-alai-kum (Arabic for “Peace be with you”) is becoming a common greeting in Antioch, at least among parishioners in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic parishes, as we build a network of support for our Muslim brothers and sisters.

On August 12, Abdul Rahman, the chair of the Islamic Community of the East Bay (ICEB), received a phone call that there had been a fire at the mosque located in Antioch. At first he was not that alarmed because there had been several break-ins and a drive by shooting over the past year causing minor damage, but as the conversation ensued he realized that the mosque had been completely gutted. Abdul recounted, “I felt like I had just received a call that someone in my family had died.” The news became even more tragic when he learned that the cause of the fire was arson.

Someone had tried to start a fire in the mosque located in Antioch. At first he was not that alarmed because there had been several break-ins and a drive-by shooting over the past year causing minor damage, but as the conversation ensued he realized that the mosque had been completely gutted. Abdul recounted, “I felt like I had just received a call that someone in my family had died.” The news became even more tragic when he learned that the cause of the fire was arson. Someone had tried to start a fire inside the mosque in four different areas before it finally blazing.

The ICEB mosque served almost 500 Muslim families in East Contra Costa County and the fire occurred just one month before Ramadan, the blessed thirty-day observance of prayer and fasting. When news that the mosque had burned became public, several religious communities and philanthropic organizations offered their facilities to the religious communities and philanthropic organizations offered their facilities to the Muslims for a place of worship. Organizations offered their facilities to the Muslims for a place of worship.

When news that the mosque had burned became public, several religious communities and philanthropic organizations offered their facilities to the Muslims for a place of worship. Organizations offered their facilities to the Muslims for a place of worship.

Afterwards, everyone gathered in the parish hall to paint signs and banners for the march. And the younger ones who were not fasting for Ramadan ate pizza.

In preparation for the march, St. George’s Episcopal Church hosted a sign-making day the week before, in which forty-five Muslim, Christian children, youth, and adults attended. Members of the Jewish community had wanted to attend, but were not able to because of Rosh Hashanah.

At the beginning of the day, the youth gathered in the nave for storytelling and song practice. Marilyn McClain, St. George’s organist and children’s choir director, taught them songs for peace, such as, “Let there be peace on earth” and “We shall overcome.” It was a touching moment to see Muslim and Christian youth singing songs together for peace in a Christian church.

Jenelle Mazaris, a drama therapist intern from the Living Arts Center in Berkeley, joined us for the day and interacted with the youth. At the end of the event, we formed a line and walked slowly and silently by the beautiful painted posters and banners, taking it all in, and then we formed a circle. Jenelle led us in an exercise asking each person to express how they felt about the day in a gesture, sigh, or word. Most everyone waved or said, “fun.” But one Muslim girl captured all of our hearts when she said the word, “relieved.”

On Sunday, September 23, at 12:30 PM about 350 people gathered at Antioch City Hall for the pre-march activities of face painting and more sign making. At 2 PM, the march began with a parade of signs representing Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and various other traditions. The Episcopal Church was represented by marchers from St. Alban’s, Brentwood; St. George’s, Antioch; and St. John’s, Clayton. The marchers walked 1.5 miles to the ICEB, where they placed signs on the fence surrounding the condemned building, and then marched on to the Antioch High School auditorium for an educational program on Islam. During the ceremony, the youth sang the songs for peace that they had rehearsed at St. George’s, and several speakers gave their testimonies of the tragic event, principally Mohammad Chaudhry, the president of ICEB, and Maha ElGenaidi, CEO of the Islamic Network Group. Shafath Syed, Council on American Islamic Relations, gave a more global view of Islam. After the program, ElGenaidi commented that she had never seen Muslim youth so energized and wanting to talk and work together for the cause of peace.

ElGenaidi wasn’t the only one to notice. We were all feeling the love, as though we had been buoyed up and were flowing down a deep river of peace. As Chaudhry said, “the overwhelming love and sympathy and the flood of affection we have received from all communities and, indeed, America stands for love, for unity, and diversity, and not for hatred.”

Salam, Shalom, Peace.

East County United has organized several upcoming educational events on Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. For more information visit www.eastcccunited.org or call the Rev. Amber Sturgess at 925.628.5494.

Making signs in preparation for the March Against Hate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Orlo Steele, vestry member of Emmanuel, Grass Valley, presents a home communion kit that is thought to have been originally owned by the Rt. Rev. William Ingrahm Kip, first bishop of California, to the Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus and Mary Judith Robinson, Kip’s great-great-granddaughter, on behalf of the Diocese of California.</th>
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<td>Construction workers add a steeple and cell phone tower to the roof of Holy Trinity/La Santisima Trinidad, Richmond.</td>
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PCN6 | December
Faith On Tap

By Pat Smith

The date and time: October 29, 7 p.m.
The place: Pyramid Ale House, Walnut Creek
The subject: Is There a God Pill?
The speaker: The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, Bishop of California

Our Bishop in a Bar? What is the world coming to? Theologically and historically speaking it makes perfect sense. Go where the people are, and in this case, where the 18 to 35 year olds are. In the Faith On Tap series, this evening’s talk with Bishop Marc was the second in a series titled “Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll.” The goal of this series is to attract the 18 to 35 year old group that is generally missing in most congregations.

When Bishop Marc arrived, by his appearance, one would never have known he was a bishop let alone a member of the clergy. No miter, no crosier, no collar, and absolutely no hint of the color purple – he appeared to be like any other person stopping by a local restaurant to meet with friends and I believe he made quite a few new friends in the Diablo Room of the Pyramid Ale House that night.

In attendance were about 35 young adults. I only counted about 6 who were members from St. Paul’s while the others were either friends of those 6 or friends of friends. In any case, the word about this series is getting out to the community.

Bishop Marc began with a question to the group – “Why is Christianity legal and psychotropic drugs illegal?” It was interesting to watch the groups as they discussed this question. As I observed the various conversations, there was no dominant speaker and everyone seemed to be thoroughly engaged in the discussion.

Bishop Marc made it perfectly clear at the beginning of his talk that he was limiting it to psychotropic drugs such as LSD. He talked about the three levels of mysticism: nature, finding the barriers between self and nature dissolved, at one with all there is; a sense of deeper meaning – “I have a purpose”; and a vision of unity with God, a union between the subject and the divine being dissolved boundaries. He talked about the Vedas, the oldest religious documents from India and the reference to Soma. It was believed that consumption of Soma bestowed divine qualities on human beings via hallucinogenic experience. Bishop Marc compared this to the hallucinogenic experimentation with LSD and other similar drugs in the 1960s with Aldus Huxley, Timothy O’Leary, Huston Smith and the work done at Harvard and MIT.

The altered consciousness as a result of the hallucinogenic experimentation open the door to a religious experience? Bishop Marc posed the questions: What are the religious implications of this type of experience and what does that have to do with our faith?

Bishop Marc stated further that a religious experience is different from a religious life; that a religious life involves moral commitments. Another discussion question was, “Is a religious experience necessary for a religious person?” As this question was raised, Bishop Marc talked about Mother Theresa whose recent published writings revealed that she had a crisis of faith for most of her life yet she was able through her many good works to influence millions. During the discussion, Bishop Marc talked about a trip that he took with his wife Sheila and another couple to the Holy Land. They visited a convent of contemplative nuns. Sheila Andrus described a personal religious experience to one of these nuns and Sheila wondered what this experience meant? The nun said to her that it was not what the experience meant at the moment but what effect does it have on your life? If the church has no way of dealing with the “experience” then it will be forgotten. No one can judge another person’s religious experience. The experience is only valid for the person it happened to and at this time, there is no structure to carry this forward in the church. And that may be one of the reasons why the church has not done a good job of helping young adults.

The discussion moved to imagination. What keeps us from opening the doors of perception and how do we open young lives to other possibilities? Why is our culture so imaginatively impoverished? Why don’t we have the lives of the culture so imaginatively opened to other possibilities? Why is our perception and how do we open young lives to other possibilities? Why is our imagination our English teachers hoped we would have? Why is imagination okay for children but not for adults?

The evening began at 7 p.m. and continued past 9 p.m. How engaging this evening’s program was could be easily measured by the fact that the reporter and photographer from the Contra Costa Times stayed for the entire evening. It was a wonderful evening with our bishop as a teacher and getting to know him a little better as a person and I know he left his “Marc” on a few lives including mine that night.
Christmas Giving
How the Episcopalian Stole Christmas

By Monica Burden

I

n the Dr. Seuss classic How the Grinch Stole Christmas, the Grinch

tries to stop Christmas by stealing all the presents. Thinking about

an “alternative” Christmas — one that

avoids the rampant consumerism

encouraged by retailers — can make us

feel a little like the Grinch. After all,

Christmas isn’t really Christmas without some gift-giving.

Maybe that’s because Christianity is a deeply materialistic

religion. The Eucharist, one of the defining

features of Anglicanism, is a tangible experience of the faith found in

the weekly handling of physical elements.

Giving gifts at

Christmas is an act of generosity and

celebration, a small reminder of God’s

gift to us in the birth of Jesus. It’s also a

re-enactment of the scripture, as the Magi

give gifts to the child Jesus; giving gifts to

each other can be an outward sign that we recognize Christ within each one of us.

But shrewd profit-driven retailers have hijacked these aspects of Christmas gift-giving and turned it into a stressful buying frenzy. Even if we manage to restrain our Christmas buying, the typical store-bought Christmas unfortunately lacks something that Christian materialism tries to cultivate — a sense of relationship.

When we buy Christmas presents

off the shelf, we might think about our relationship with the gift recipient, but how often do we think about our relationship with the people who made the things we buy? Or with the entity that profits from our purchase of the gift? Or with the earth that provides the raw materials for the object?

Buying gifts in a way that encourages a sense of relationship can help us find an alternative Christmas that makes us feel like our hearts have grown three sizes. The suggestions below focus specifically on Episcopal resources, so that Christmas shopping might deepen your relationship with the church. These items have been selected because they convey a sense of relationship can help us find an alternative Christmas that makes us feel like our hearts have grown three sizes. The suggestions below focus specifically on Episcopal resources, so that Christmas shopping might deepen your relationship with the church. These items have been selected because they convey a sense of relationship.

Herbs de provence, from locally grown herbs included in the mix (rosemary, savory, marjoram, basil, thyme, fennel seed, and lavender) are grown in the garden of St. Edmund’s, and the blend is packaged by St. Edmund’s members.

If you are new to using herbs de provence, some introductory recipes are included. A jar of herbs costs $7.50, plus any shipping charges. Funds are used to underwrite St. Edmund’s retreat ministry, so that they can offer reasonably priced day retreats to vestries, bishop’s committees, and other non-profit groups in the area. For more information about the herbs, contact the church (650-359-3364 stedmunsvicar@gmail.com).

The Community of St. Francis still has some jars of marmalade, lemon curd, and pear-ginger chutney available. These delectable concoctions were made when the ingredients were at the peak of ripeness. (If you don’t manage to get any for Christmas, check back next year when the fruits ripen. Sister Jean promises she will have a wide variety of jams available.) For an 8-oz jar, Sister Jean suggests a donation of $5. To check on availability and find out how to get yours, contact Sister Jean (jeancsf@aol.com, 415.824.0288).

Christ Church/Sei Ko Kai, San Francisco, makes beautiful Japanese-style cards, helped of Vicki Mihara Avery from the Paper Tree, an origami paper shop in Japantown. Church members make the cards using origami, Japanese papers, other fiber art, Japanese postage stamps and ink stamps with Japanese designs. These sophisticated cards are available through the church, and funds are used to support their mission and ministry. To buy cards ($3-3.50), contact the church at 415.921.6395. Hand-painted greeting cards by the wife of the associate rector T.C. Yao of St. Anselm’s, Lafayette, can also be found at the bookstore at St. Paul’s, Walnut Creek (925.935.3653, bookstore@stpaulswc.org).

Episcopal goods at The Bookstore, St. Paul’s, Walnut Creek (415.921.0783) is another great way to support the church. The Shop at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, both carry a range of items that might suit an Episcopal palate. At Grace Cathedral, you’ll find elegant jewelry, finger labyrinths, and spiritual artwork. At St. Paul’s, you’ll find ornaments, nativity sets, and items such as flip-flops, dog leashes, and t-shirts with the Episcopal shield on them. They even carry the t-shirt with Robin Williams “Top Ten Reasons for Being an Episcopalian" on the back.

 Anglican rosaries also make great Christmas gifts for Episcopalians on your list. Lani Nelson, deacon at St. Andrew’s, San Bruno, makes exquisite rosaries to order. She prefers to make her rosaries out of 500- to 2,000-year-old glass beads from Dead Sea salts in the Hebron valley, beads made by women in Africa from broken glass, and various other African trade beads. She has made many peace rosaries for the Episcopal service corps with a Jerusalem cross at the center. She says, “To me, the Jerusalem Cross, or Crusader Cross, has become such an icon of hate throughout the Middle East that peace prayers are the only way I like to use them. And when I sell them I donate all the proceeds to peace causes.” Cost varies by materials; Hebron bead rosaries can run $100 to $200. To order, contact Lani Nelson at deaconlani@aol.com. Nelson is also able to point people toward many other resources for praying with rosaries, including instructions on how to make them, and online resources for buying rosaries such as www.atelier-beads.com.

Finally, a great way to think Episcopalian with your Christmas presents is to give books to Episcopal authors. We’ve included in this issue reviews of three books by local Episcopal authors. Take This Bread is a memoir recounting Sara Miles’ conversion from atheist to the running the food pantry at St. Gregory’s, San Francisco. All Saints, San Francisco, member Lindsey Crittenden traces her emerging faith through prayer in The Water Will Hold You. And if you’re looking to not just read but also write, Dr. Sheppard B. Kominaus, also of All Saints, San Francisco, offers Write for Life, an atlas to writing as therapeutic healing.

After the Grinch steals all the Christmas presents, he’s surprised to discover that Christmas comes without packages, boxes, and bags. Alternative buying is one way that we, too, can remember that Christmas comes without packages, boxes, and bags. Alternative buying is one way that we, too, can remember that Christmas comes without packages, boxes, and bags.
I'm a huge fan of movies and books that are set in the San Francisco Bay Area. Watching the 1950 film “D.O.A.” gives me a thrill with its panoramas of a city that had been lain to waste only 44 years earlier. Reading those books by Christopher Moore that are set anywhere from Big Sur to San Francisco always gives me a sense that I might see the characters walking down the street at any moment.

Then there is that connection you make when you read a memoir and find familiar churches and clergy in these pages, while disconnected — personal experiences. And there is one more thing that I like in a book, and that is when an author knows how to make you see what she sees, in a way that is rich and visual, but is not sappy or manipulative. For me, this is done best through sentence-craft — I don’t want to call it poetry — that helps words find a type of musical quality. In other words, it is the type of writing that I love to read aloud and that falls in such a way as to give a perfect picture of the scene.

Every single one of these elements is present in The Water Will Hold You: A Skeptic Learns to Pray, by Lindsey Crittenden. Her journaling travels.

Crittenden is at once gritty, neurotic, poignant, and funny, all while tracing an emerging faith. The book's title reflects a personal theology and a sense of faith that is always in an uneasy relationship with journaling. Countless times in my life I’ve begun a journal, only to stop abruptly a few days later because I think I’m too busy or because I’m too bored by what I’ve written. Sheppard Kominars’ Write for Life comes as a refreshing tool for overcoming those kinds of obstacles.

Kominars, a member of All Saints, San Francisco, advocates journaling as healing. Keeping a journal, he points out, is not the same as writing for publication, or even like blogging, when the writing is meant for an audience. Journaling is a form of self-care, a therapeutic way to connect your mind and body with your feelings.

Kominars began journaling as a way to cope with severe migraines, quickly making it a daily routine. Eventually he began to share the benefits of journaling through workshops with people in recovery from addiction and cancer survivors. This book contains the wisdom and some of the stories that Kominars has amassed over many years of journaling and teaching journaling to others.

The book is extremely accessible, clearly written and well structured. Part One tells you how to write a journal and how to overcome blocks; Part Two addresses writing as a healing process, including what it means to be a survivor, scientific research on the healing properties of writing, and excerpts from other writers’ journals; and Part Three offers fifteen different “journeys” to inspire your journaling. Kominars recommends beginning with the journey of self-caring, when you meditate on being self-caring rather than self-critical.

Throughout the book, Kominars offers exercises and prompts aimed at overcoming the myriad problems encountered when we get in better touch with our feelings. A survivor of both addiction and cancer, Kominars consistently demonstrates compassion and insight into the self-discovery process of journaling.

Kominars’ cure for my excuse-making is a tremendous gift, and makes this a book great to give to friends who are only just starting a journey. Countless people who have fed me, which they did constantly. After six months, fearing for her life because of the fighting, she returned to the United States and settled in San Francisco. One day, five years later, she walked into St. Gregory’s Episcopal Church. She recalls, “I had no earthly reason to be there. I had never heard a Gospel

Great Gift Ideas From Diocesan Authors

**Learning Prayer by SF Bay**


**Journeys in Journaling**


**Food for the Soul**

*Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion, The spiritual memoir of a twenty-first century Christian* by Sara Miles (Ballantine Books, New York, 2007)
I was certainly not interested in becoming a Christian—or, as I thought of it rather less politely, a religious nut. When she joined others gathered around the family table for her first communion, she received “a piece of fresh, crumbly bread” and heard the words “the body of Christ,” then was handed the goblet of wine with the words “the blood of Christ.” She writes, “Something outrageous and terrifying happened. Jesus happened to me.” She cried. She realized that what she had been doing with her life until that moment “was what [she] was meant to do: feed people.” Reflecting on what had happened, she began to understand that “God could be located in experience, sensed through bodies, tasted in food; that my body was connected literally and mysteriously to other bodies and loved without reason.”

Acknowledging that “questions are at the heart of faith,” she found that her first year at St. Gregory’s “would begin and end with questions.” She began to “deacon” at the Eucharist. As she served week after week, “flooded with hunger and gratitude,” she began to be concerned about the people who lived in poverty near where she lived. One day she opened a fund raising letter from the nonprofit San Francisco Food Bank, which said that more than 90,000 people in the city, most of them children and women with families, lived with the threat of hunger. A picture began to develop in the back of her head of establishing a food pantry at her parish. She writes, “It was communion, after all, but with free groceries instead of bread and wine.” And then she knew, “This is it, I thought, what I’m supposed to do: Feed my sheep.”

Driven by this vision she helped establish a food pantry at her parish. She told the people at St. Gregory’s that the pantry would be church and not a social service program. The Sunday after the pantry opened, she was baptized. After several years Sara, after much discussion, argument, and persuasion, convinced the clergy and vestry to open the food pantry after the Eucharist. Her rationale was that “We could feed more people, offer more of our members the chance to serve, and make explicit the connection between Holy Communion and free groceries.”

Near the conclusion of her memoir, Sara shares that she experienced a crisis of faith. She struggled with the question, “What is my faith going to cost?” This question, she writes, returned her to the “fundamental practices that had stayed central for me, such as just following what Jesus did.” She concludes, “As I’d discovered as a student in Mexico, a reporter in war zones, a cook, learning from experience instead of memorizing a formula forced me to pay attention. Doing the Gospel rather than just quoting it was the best way I could find out what God was up to.”

Sara Miles is a member of St. Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco. She’s available for book talks at local churches (sara@saramiles.net).
Moving Through Mystery

By Julia McCray-Goldsmith

It is possible to move right through the middle of a great mystery and not even notice it,” begins a Sunday school story told being told throughout the Diocese of California at this time of year. Guilty as charged, thinks the storyteller (who happens to be me) with chagrin. Just when my attention seemed utterly absorbed by the next thing on my “to do” list, an Advent narrative rendered in the deceptively simple language of Godly play upends my assumptions and leaves me breathless with wonder.

I should have expected this — God’s shameless trafficking in surprise has caught me unaware plenty of times before. Just a few weeks earlier, in the midst of a season dedicated to remembering the dead, I had been given a new understanding of living community. At a retreat sponsored by the Department of Missions, a group of mission clergy dressed the altar at the Bishop’s Ranch chapel with the traditional symbols of the Mexican Day of the Dead. After the vicars placed their own photos and mementos of remembered loved ones on the altar, the collection of sacred objects continued to multiply day by day. We had no idea where this abundance was coming from, as we were the only group in residence at the Ranch that week. It wasn’t until most retreatants had departed that a member of the housekeeping staff shyly approached me and asked if ours was the group that had created the altar. “Era muy hermosa” — it was very beautiful, she said. “We were so surprised when we went into the chapel and saw it set up that way,” she said, “that we all went home and brought our own mementos to place on it.”

The prolific altar itself was not itself the miracle; rather it was the cross-cultural community of devotion it engendered. Nevertheless, the setting reminded me that objects have particular power to draw community together and invite our heartfelt stories. And nowhere is this truer than the season of Advent, its rich array of traditional sights and symbols and sounds.

The prolific altar itself was not itself the miracle; rather it was the cross-cultural community of devotion it engendered. Nevertheless, the setting reminded me that objects have particular power to draw community together and invite our heartfelt stories. And nowhere is this truer than the season of Advent, its rich array of traditional sights and symbols and sounds.

Moving Through Mystery

How does your household get ready for the mystery of Christmas? A recent query of parents yielded suggestions both traditional and surprising. Light the Advent wreath and say a prayer before dinner — but don’t stop there. Set the table with purple napkins, suggested one mother, to remember that we are preparing for the coming of a king. Or borrow a Jewish Sabbath tradition and set the table without any knives to express your faith in the coming of God’s reign of peace.

And then there are those traditional domestic symbols of Christmas. Many families mentioned crèche figures — the holy family and the three kings, especially — that they move deliberately around the house in purposeful journey towards a designated Bethlehem. Myself, I might actually have gotten my act together to do that last year, but a funny thing happened on the way to setting up Bethlehem. A group of neighbor children visiting our home for our annual Christmas tree decorating party found the box where I keep my various crèche sets. These were not children who attended church or had any formal Christian education, but they were happy to play with the figurines, and I was happy to watch them out of the corner of my eye. Like children anywhere, they used the figures to act out the social dramas they knew best, grouping and regrouping them by size and color and gender. And the segregation and stratification might have continued all evening, but for the ministry of one soft-spoken 7-year-old, who had learned the rudiments of the nativity story from her grandmother. Gently pointing out the smallest infant figurine, she began to tell of a vulnerable family on an arduous journey towards the place where a long-awaited child might be born. And as her narrative unfolded, the clusters of figures spontaneously desegregated. Other children moved their characters into a circle surrounding the baby at the center of Clara’s story. The result was an aesthetic mess — animals and parents and kings and angels of different sets and sizes clustered haphazardly around the smallest of three available babies. Jesus had several siblings and lots of odd looking aunts and uncles present at his birth that year — and I didn’t have the heart to move a thing.

We are walking right through the middle of a great mystery. Let us pause for a moment this Advent season and notice it.

Clergy Conference 2007 was attended by nearly 200 clergy members. The program on environmental justice was organized by the Environmental Commission. Festivities during the conference included cajun dancing and a birthday celebration for former bishop of California, the Rt. Rev. G. Richard Millard (pictured bottom right). Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori spoke with the clergy on the final day of the conference.
By Este Gardner Cantor

On Saturday, October 27, a long-planned coalition peace march took place in San Francisco. There were parallel marches all over the country, and although two other significant ones took place in Los Angeles and New York, the San Francisco march was by far the largest at 10,000 marchers. This was a coalition of 180 groups, including faith groups, students, labor, women’s groups and many more coming together under one banner only: Stop the war in Iraq.

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus decided that the Diocese of California should participate in the San Francisco march, gathering at the Cathedral and marching... Of the march, and a large and moving interfaith service was held at Grace Cathedral on October 25 to further that effort.

The Episcopalians met at Grace Cathedral at 10 a.m. and marched down to the Civic Center on a truly beautiful day, singing all the way. They met an enormous crowd at the rally, which included a huge interfaith group of Buddhists, Quakers, Baptists and many other denominations.

Our own Bishop Marc was one of about ten people who addressed the crowd, and he spoke movingly about the importance of being witnesses to the deaths and injustice in Iraq, as the women by the cross and the beloved disciple had witnessed Jesus’ death. He spoke of the unreliability of the media, and the importance of telling... to those not often heard — to learn information so often suppressed — and he mentioned the church as one likely forum.

After he spoke, a burly man approached him and said repeatedly, “Are you the head of the church?” After the bishop clarified who he was, the man said wonderingly, “I’ve seen people who go to church here at these marches, but I have never seen the head of a church here!” The man shook... Code Pink, who led the crowd in song, and a wonderful Philipino rapper named Kiwi, who had everyone dancing.

We all marched together to Market Street where everyone lay down on the street for a short, legal, very affecting three-minute die-in — a demonstration of the loss of... The process of Churchomp was simple, but the results were profound.

The power of these marches can be seen in the work of...