What is Area Ministry?

During the past year, the term “Area Ministry” has been heard around the diocese with increasing frequency. It was used in the bishop’s address at Special Convention in May and will be the theme of the 159th Diocesan Convention in October. Diocesan House staffer Monica Burden recently sat down with the Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe to ask him to explain more about Area Ministry. Here are some excerpts of that conversation.

What is Area Ministry?

Area Ministry is a mission strategy for reimagining the church and getting us back to our missional roots. That mission does not take place only in our church buildings or in isolated parochial communities, but rather in the neighborhoods and among the people around us. Area Ministry is also a strategy for evangelism to underrepresented groups in our church, particularly young adults, and to connect with the missional and real-actual reality of our mission environment. The best way to make those connections is by cooperating with one another. We need to open the doors of our churches and look and engage outside. If we’re looking outside of ourselves, we’ll see one another as well. This is our area.

What do you mean by cooperation?

Most Episcopalians experience church as a congregation, and that’s an important aspect, but there are many other kinds of institutions that are part of our historic mission, such as Episcopal Charities, Good Samaritan Family Resource Center, and many other groups. Area Ministry is about connecting people, so it’s also important to be in cooperation with our neighbors and their concerns.

What kind of mission do you see parishes undertaking through Area Ministry?

One thing we might do is to walk our talk a little bit more, and get to know our neighbors and find out what their concerns are. We need to bring the Good News to them, not just by preaching the word but by actually bringing witness through relationships and ministry. What do people need? What do they want? What are their aspirations? Some of it might be social service ministries, and a lot of it might not that far different from what we do already. We’ve been learning from an English priest, Ian Mobsby, about the Fresh Expressions movement in the Church of England, which is finding new ways of being the church. It’s not about worship, the way we Episcopalians usually think, but rather going to where the people are. One church in England went out to a skateboard park, but rather than trying to bring those young people to the church, they built relationships with them. Over time what’s developed around them is really a church, where instead of a nave and pews there’s a skate park. Fundamentally, Area Ministry is about not being pretentious. I think we’re pretty good about opening our doors and then sitting back in our pews and saying “ya’ll come”; we’re not so good about opening our doors and then going out and finding where people are and bringing the church to them.

But many parishes in the Diocese of California are struggling—membership is dwindling, their buildings are falling apart, and they have trouble getting enough people to pay the utility bills. What do you say to a parish like that about mastering up the strength to do this kind of work?

One of the things that Jesus talked about is the reality that the more you give something away the more there is. The quickest way to lose our faith is to conserve it so much that nobody else has it, including ourselves. The quickest way to build strength and energy and faith is to give it away. It’s so subtlety to put all our energy into maintenance. If all we ever did in our homes was to keep the drips from overflowing and plaster from falling in, we’d never be able to enjoy our home and it would be a dreary life. The essence of church is not the building or figuring out how to pay a staff; it really is about our lived faith out in the world. Area Ministry isn’t about figuring out ways to get more people to come in so we can keep the status quo. It’s far more subversive and radical, going back to our roots of not the gathered community, but the dispersed community, bringing the good news of God’s love to all.

What kinds of resources do you envision being shared by Area Ministry teams?

We live in a consumer society, and we’re all consumers. Some families, for instance, might choose the megachurch that offers programs for them and their children rather than the small Episcopal church down on the corner. We don’t want to the closing Eucharist at Canterbury Cathedral. Having journeyed six thousand miles for the occasion, I was almost moved to tears as the Cathedral’s massive West Gate was slammed shut before me. I stood more than a few minutes in the drizzle, contemplating the huge green copper Christ above the gate, his face and out-stretched hands seeming to say “I did the best I could.” To be sure, a degree of security is always necessary at such events and the bishops needed and deserved the opportunity to get to know each other in peace and quiet. Still, the panoply of barriers bespoke symbolically of the exclusion felt not just by members of the LGBT community, but by the laity in general. I for one felt very uneasy … like an object rather than a subject. Having one’s life in the church discussed without a voice or without even being privy to the discussions is alien to being an Episcopalian. But we were there to witness, to convey to the bishops and anyone else who would listen the lived experience of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered in an Anglican Communion that continues to judge us harshly. The opportunities to do so were limited, the venues often imperfect, the responses sometimes hostile. But we did the best we could and I am satisfied that our voice — however faint — was heard … especially in one-on-one conversations that are the stuff of relationship. During my week on Lambeth’s fringes, I had several such conversations with bishops from Africa, Canada, England, and, yes, other dioceses in the United States. And, despite the complaints of folks like Egypt’s Bishop Mouneer Anis, we did not “chase” or “shout” at anyone. We engaged others quietly — in
Lambeth Reflections

Listening Process

The Lambeth Conference came to its conclusion on Sunday, August 3. I would like to thank the courageous — “acting from the heart” — people who came to Canterbury from many places to tell their stories as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered people, as part of the Listening Process called for by Lambeth ’98, the Windsor Document, the Primates, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. As I pointed out in several settings at the conference, the strength and courage of LGBT people coming to a place where it was commonly heard that there were significant negative places of negative energy aimed at them is something to honor.

Tom Jackson, the president of Oasis California was an on-the-ground, tireless manager and encourager for all present. Those telling their stories included the Rev. Vicki Gray, deacon in the Diocese of California; Tom Poyner, chaplain at UC Berkeley; and Rowan Smith, dean of St. George’s Cathedral in Cape Town, South Africa. Cynthia Black, Louise Brooks, and Katie Sherrod produced a powerful documentary of LGBT people telling their stories in Africa that had two showings at Lambeth. Mimi Walters journeyed from Baltimore, and lesbian and gay clergy came from the Diocese of North Carolina. The Rev. Dr. Michael Lapsley of the Institute for Healing of Memories spoke on reconciliation.

While there were barriers to hearing these grace-filled, transformative stories, still the connections were made. The contributions of the above people made to the Lambeth Conference are akin to the dynamism Jesus talked about in his parable about a mustard seed — small, seemingly insignificant, but in the end generous and unmistakable.

Relations

The document that came out of the Lambeth Conference, the final product of which we saw at the last plenary session, is a distillation of the Indaba Group conversations that took place over the length of the conference. All of us were assigned to Bible study groups that met each morning. Five Bible study groups constituted an Indaba Group, which met after the individual study groups.

What has emerged from the extended time in the Bible study and Indaba Groups is relationship. Bishops spoke honestly and deeply. We found places of profound commonality, and we named honestly pain in division that was not erased.

One Sudanese bishop said this: “After 22 years of suffering [civil war], we have learned not to run away based on what we hear, but to come and see, and then decide whether we need to run away. We are not leaving these friendships.”

There was much talk about “what I need to take back to my diocese.” People asked me that quite a lot. Was it moratoria on blessings, on incursions? Was it commitment to the relief of injustices? Were we prepared to convey the reality of our life together to the world? As the Communion teeters to remaining in conversation “to both the unity we all seek, perhaps speeding the point of substantial agreement is the opportunity to build face-to-face relationships, to put a face, hopefully Christ’s, on an otherwise abstract issue. For my part, I left Lambeth with wonderful new relationships and old ones renewed. And I found new strength in solidarity with LGBT sisters and brothers from around the world, gaining immeasurably from their experience in places that are not always as hospitable as the Bay Area and sometimes downright dangerous.

How good to hug Davis Mac-Iyalla of Nigeria upon learning that he had just won asylum in Britain; to bask in the quiet courage of Kenya’s Michael Kamindu; to take communion bread from Uganda’s Bishop Christopher Senyonjo; to hear the fresh perspectives of New Zealand’s Jenny Te Paa; to stand in witness with Nomfudo Walaza; to share poetic insights with England’s Nicola Slie; and to renew acquaintances with old friends like South Africa’s Bishop Rowan Smith, who shared my amusement about lanyards, and Cameron Partridge, a transgendered priest from Massachusetts who has done so much to expand the space for transgendered people within the church and within the LGBT community.

But what of substance? We have to ask: Have we moved forward or backward or sideways on those issues of sexuality that have so divided the Communion? More importantly, can we feel the Spirit moving in our midst? Do we know where that Spirit, blowing ever stronger, is moving us?

I have the feeling that, in his last minute insistence on a Covenant and a tri-fold moratorium on same-sex blessings, the ordination of gay clergy, and inter-provincial “invasions,” the Archbishop of Canterbury “seized defeat from the jaws of victory,” ignoring, it seemed, the bishops’ more pastoral Reflections paper and pushing aside the seeming consensus to kick the most troublesome issues down the road another decade. Moreover, by insisting on a meeting of primates within the next several months to consider these matters, he may inadvertently damage the unity we all seek, all still seek, perhaps speeding up the birth of what Presiding Bishop Katherine has called “something new, which none of us can yet fully appreciate or understand.” She is right in saying that “the Spirit continues to work in our midst.” And Bishop Marc is right in affirming that, at least in this diocese, we cannot turn back on same-sex blessings, and in calling for a “Communion-wide commitment to safeguarding the civil rights and safety of lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgendered people.” But both are also right in calling for patience, generosity, and a commitment to remaining in conversation “to both the unity we all seek, perhaps speeding the point of substantial agreement is the opportunity to build face-to-face relationships, to put a face, hopefully Christ’s, on an otherwise abstract issue. For my part, I left Lambeth with wonderful new relationships and old ones renewed. And I found new strength in solidarity with LGBT sisters and brothers from around the world, gaining immeasurably from their experience in places that are not always as hospitable as the Bay Area and sometimes downright dangerous.

How good to hug Davis Mac-Iyalla of Nigeria upon learning that he had just won asylum in Britain; to bask in the quiet courage of Kenya’s Michael Kamindu; to take communion bread from Uganda’s Bishop Christopher Senyonjo; to hear the fresh perspectives of New Zealand’s Jenny Te Paa; to stand in witness with Nomfudo Walaza; to share poetic insights with England’s Nicola Slie; and to renew acquaintances with old friends like South Africa’s Bishop Rowan Smith, who shared my amusement about lanyards, and Cameron Partridge, a transgendered priest from Massachusetts who has done so much to expand the space for transgendered people within the church and within the LGBT community.

But what of substance? We have to ask: Have we moved forward or backward or sideways on those issues of sexuality that have so divided the Communion? More importantly, can we feel the Spirit moving in our midst? Do we know where that Spirit, blowing ever stronger, is moving us?

I have the feeling that, in his last minute insistence on a Covenant and a tri-fold moratorium on same-sex blessings,
Politics in the Pulpit

By Sean McConnell

On October 31, 2004, the Rev. George Regas delivered a sermon at All Saints Church in Pasadena. It was not an unusual thing to see this firebrand of a former rector in the pulpit, and parishioners had grown to expect a prophetic message with deep social commentary. Regas had preached sermons condemning the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, and this Halloween sermon was preached in the context of increasing violence and a growing insurgency in Iraq and news of US casualties and the insurgent takeover of Fallujah, and it came two days before citizens of the United States would go to the polls to choose between George W. Bush and John Kerry for president.

In the sermon, Regas imagined a debate between Bush, Kerry, and Jesus, and after telling the gathered congregation that he did not intend to tell them how to vote, he went on to say that “God people of profound faith will be for either George Bush or John Kerry for reasons deeply rooted in their faith.” He then preached a sermon that offered critiques from Jesus (based in Christ’s words from the Gospels) of both candidates. But it is fair to say that the policies in existence under the incumbent’s presidency drew the greatest criticism, as they were the policies being debated in the real presidential debates and by the talking heads and pundits throughout the campaign.

The sermon was interrupted several times by applause, and then prayers were said, bread was broken, and everyone went on about their lives. Two days later Americans went to the polls and re-elected Bush for his second term. The following June, the Rev. Ed Bacon, rector of All Saints, Pasadena, received a letter from the IRS that said, “a reasonable belief exists that you may not be tax-exempt as a church under IRC (Internal Revenue Code) section 501(a).” It is IRC 501(c)(3) that gives churches and other non-profit organizations their tax-exempt status, and 501(a) simply states that this is the case. According to the IRS, any organization that holds a tax exempt status may lose that status if, “any of the activities (whether or not substantial) of your organization consist of participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

The code goes on to say, “Whether your organization is participating or intervening, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.” The interpretation of whether campaign intervention did in fact happen at All Saints seems somewhat subjective. In a sermon preached one year after Regas’ sermon, Bacon told parishioners that “the IRS is arguing that they can investigate a church based on a field officer’s subjective determination that a preacher’s sermon implicitly opposes or endorses candidates regardless of the explicit statements of the preacher. This means that any sermon which states a church’s core values when proclaimed during an election season can be subjectively deemed to be campaign intervention.”

On September 10, 2007, the IRS brought the case to a close, stating that “the Church’s actions lead us to the conclusion that the Church intervened in the 2004 Presidential election campaign. We note that this appears to be a one-time occurrence and that you appear to have policies in place to ensure that the Church complies with the prohibition against intervention in campaigns for public office.” In other words, the IRS found the sermon to be an act of campaign intervention, which was satisfied by the policies against intervention that All Saints had in place, and concluded that the church could retain its tax exemption.

In a press release dated several days after the IRS’s letter closing the case, Bacon stated, “While we are pleased that the IRS examination is finally over, the IRS has failed to explain its conclusion regarding

Your church CAN:

• take positions on policy, including positions on specific pieces of legislation.
• urge its members (and others) to vote for or against a specific ballot measure.
• encourage its members to vote and speak to values and positions on issues they believe people should consider when entering the voting booth.
• conduct a voter registration or “Get Out The Vote” drive as long as it’s open to anyone, regardless of party.
• invite all candidates to a debate for your members or the community at large as long as nothing about the debate favors any one candidate.
• invite individual candidates and elected officials to speak to its members, as long as all candidates are invited under similar (audience, length of time, time period related to election) circumstances. You must publicly state that the church does not support or oppose this or any candidate.
• invite candidates or elected officials to events for reasons unrelated to their candidacy for office, but make it clear they are not appearing in their role as candidate.
• allow candidates to use your facilities if you regularly allow civic organizations to do so (charge the same fee and give other candidates equal access).
• distribute unbiased questionnaires that cover a range of issues and publicize the answers without comment on whose answers are better/worse.

Your church CANNOT:

• allow candidates to raise campaign funds on church property UNLESS the candidate is renting church space for a fundraiser on the same terms that all other candidates are permitted to rent. Explicitly or implicitly endorse a candidate, potential candidate, party, third-party movement or candidate draft effort. This includes church leaders speaking in their official capacity.
• make a donation or loan to a candidate, party, or political action committee.
• permit political signs favoring a candidate or party to be posted on its property.
• focus voter registration or other election-related activities to specific geographic areas selected because they are key districts or wards that will determine the outcome of the election. (However, you can focus activities because it’s in your geographic location or the residence of members)
• ask a candidate to pledge support for your denomination’s position on an issue or publicize a candidate’s independent decision to support or oppose your denomination’s position.
• provide anything of value including space, equipment, mailing lists, staff time, without charging full market value and allowing equal access to opposing candidates.
• provide space for the distribution of partisan materials on its property.

Politics: Page 8

PACIFIC CHURCH NEWS

Vol 19, No 9, September 2008

Episcopal Life ISSN 1050-0057
USPS# 177-940 is published monthly by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, Inc. 815 Second Ave, New York, NY 10017. Periodical postage paid in New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Episcopal Life, PO Box 2050
Voorschoten NJ 08043-8000.

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, publisher
Mr. Sean T. McConnell, editor
Ms. Monica Burden, managing editor

The Episcopal Diocese of California
is 27,000 people in 80 congregations, with 40 educational institutions, who speak English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, and American Sign Language, and minister to one another, proclaiming the good news of God’s unconditional love as shown to us in Jesus.

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop
1055 Taylor Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

The Episcopal Church
is a community of 2.5 million members in 114 dioceses in North America and abroad. Organized in 1789.

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop
Episcopal Church Center
815 Second Ave.
New York, NY 10017

The Anglican Communion
is a global community of 70 million Anglicans in 38 member provinces.

The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Dr. Rowan Williams
London, England SE1 7JU
Area Ministry

Area Ministry in DioCal

At the invitation and oversight of the Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus and the Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe, Area Ministry is already underway throughout the Diocese of California. In east Contra Costa County, St. Alban's, Brentwood and St. George's, Antioch, led by their clergy and a discerned Area Ministry steering committee, have teamed together to be “on mission” amidst one of the fastest-growing population areas in the Bay Area.

In San Francisco, Church of the Advent, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Buen Samaritano, Holy Innocents, St. John the Evangelist, the Community of Saint Francis and the Society of Saint Francis, and Sojourn Chaplaincy have formed a large “South of Market” Area Ministry team.

Preliminary work in Area Ministry and exploration of its possibilities has begun among some congregations in the Berkeley–Albany–Richmond area, Oakland, and the Peninsula.

A diocesan formation initiative for Area Ministry, under the leadership of Michael Barlowe and Julia McCray-Goldsmith, is well underway, with major implications for the recruitment, identification, formation and deployment of clergy and lay leaders.

Appointed Area Missioners, both stipendary and non-stipendary, will help coordinate the teams. While the first area missioners appointed (the Rev. Robin Arnold, the Rev. Bertie Pearson, and the Rev. Aris Rivera) have been clergy, laypeople will also be tapped as missioners.

Lambeth: From page 2

Church will have a presence there, along with representatives of provinces and dioceses throughout the Communion. All of this is to highlight the need to reconnect to the MDGs in order to halve extreme poverty by 2015.

This Communion-wide act of witness and advocacy is something towards which I have been working and praying for six years. I believe it is also the fruit of much of Archbishop Rowan’s ministry, the result of his ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury — combining faith and action at a global level. The global church, he said, is not just existent to manage internal conflict, but to aid in the healing of the world’s wounds. Interdependent churches, globally connected, praying and worshipping as the base of their work of healing in the world — in this consists the catholic faith.

We must see September 25 as a starting point, not as an end point. The Diocese of California has been laboring to understand and implement the Millennium Development Goals in our common life. We may view this Lambeth agreement as an opening for greater partnerships and possibilities, an answer to prayer.

Environment. Environmental sustainability is Goal 7 of the MDGs. The environmental crisis, however, was of such deep concern to the bishops gathered at Lambeth 2008 that it was given attention as a separate but related subject area in the final document. In our Indaba Group I heard bishops speak with passion and intimate knowledge of sustained droughts in Australia, degradation from wide-scale and unchecked mining in India, dam building, the pollution of the oceans, and the environmental effects of globalization and “fluenza.”

Area Ministry: From page 1

to be like the megachurches, but how can we meet the needs of these neighbors who are looking for that variety and size of programs? Through cooperation! We could, for instance take the small youth groups at several churches and make a single more active and vibrant youth group that might meet our neighbors needs better. If we think of ourselves as one large group rather than individual churches—that is, if we really start think of our areas, and the whole diocese as being the basic unit of ministry rather than the congregation—we have the resources of the strengths of a whole group of churches. Congregations might also share administrative tasks and resources, together hiring one or two gifted, full-time staff members at just wages rather than a number of part-time personnel each working alone in a specific church.

How do those kinds of changes help people get out into the communities? From our viewpoint, that’s work that has to go into maintenance. If the vestry or bishop’s committee is suddenly freed from worrying about yet another search for a one-eighth time administrative assistant, they might have time to think about how we’re going to go out and be the church in our neighborhood. We spend a lot of time on things that most of us don’t go to church for. People don’t say they love to go to church because they love the management of their pipes and pay for the pipes that just broke. Instead they could talk about: Gee, I really like being part of the Episcopal church because I’ve developed a set of relationships that otherwise wouldn’t have happened, I’ve seen my own life and the life of my family transformed, I’ve seen a slight dismantling of the consumerism that is the bane of our existence as my kids and my family discover new ways of relating to people that don’t have to do with stuff but with love—those are the kind of things people could talk about. Being freed from worrying about maintenance allows us to reconnect with what makes us excited about being Christians.

How does Area Ministry affect membership?
We’re going to grow because of this.

Growth doesn’t come because we have the best theology or the finest liturgy; it really comes through relationships. Many of us come to church because we are invited into it by people we admire or are friends with. We care about them and are in relationship with them, and we learn from them that their faith is part of who they are. That’s intriguing to us and that brings us in. Relational evangelism is something I think Area Ministry is going to really support, so we’re going to grow.

How will Area Ministry be implemented?
If you’re in a congregation that seems to spend too much time just keeping things going, if you’re fatigued because there aren’t enough people to go around and there’s too many tasks to do, you’re probably ready to start turning outside. Any church that’s ready to turn outside itself is ready to start exploring
Area Ministry. We’ve identified some characteristics of churches that might be ready, for instance, churches that are in search processes for new clergy or going through other big transitions, churches that are already cooperating with other churches, churches in areas that are experiencing enormous population growth, such as Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, with spoken to nearly every parish in the diocese about Area Ministry, and we’ve identified some areas that seem particularly ready. But every church in the diocese is now or soon will be ready for Area Ministry. No one is being forced into joining, but everyone is being invited into Area Ministry. 

What will the experience of an individual parish be?

The first thing is to accept the invitation to relationship with other churches and ministries. Then, together -- through formation, through prayer, through ministry together -- you will begin to understand the area and neighborhoods in the area. Out of that comes a discernment about new kinds of ministries and fresh expressions of the church. Every area is going to be different, as the people in every area are different. The team might begin by gathering basic information and finding out about the area. The team in east Contra Costa County, for instance, is talking to real estate people, school teachers, hospital administrators, people moving into the community, and also looking statistics and demographic information that is getting into the neighborhood is also important. One of our churches is having one of their small groups, called a covenant group, not in the church but in a coffee shop, bringing their faith into a public space. Area Ministry becomes a genuine discernment model, that we’re in a deeper engagement with our neighbors so that our neighbors are telling us what they need. It’s not just a social service model, either. As Ian Mobsby reminded us in our recent workshop, spiritual poverty is as great an issue for many people in the contemporary world as other kinds of poverty.

How do you do spiritual ministry without bringing people into the church?

There’s no real magic to it. Most people don’t respond to authoritarian people saying, “This is how it’s going to be.” It happens through my getting to know my neighbor and sharing my own experiences and feelings, and how my faith has helped me during those times. It’s by way of sharing my life with them, not by telling them this is the kind of belief you’ve got to have.

How is Area Ministry different than community organizing?

Area Ministry uses many of the insights of community organizing, and Area Ministry teams will receive training in community organizing. But the primary goal of Area Ministry is not to organize the community around some project; it is to be agents of the Good News, to invite people into relationship with God and one another. If my goal were to teach you how to play basketball, I could teach you the rules of the game and some skills for playing, and then I could say well done, and I can leave and move on to my next student. But if my goal is to play basketball with you, I will still teach you the rules and skills for playing, but I will continue to play basketball with you, and I would never leave you. We want to share our vision and experience of the Beloved Community with others. Area Ministry is a way for us to proclaim that the Beloved Community already exists, to see aspects of the Beloved Community outside the church, and to turn everyone’s attention to one another through God.

The BISHOP’S SOCIETY

Honoring Twenty-First Century Planned Giving Donors
Supporting Ministries of the Diocese of California

Reception with Bishops Marc Andrus and Steven Charleston

Grace Cathedral
October 5, 2008
3 pm Choral Evensong
4 pm Reception & Photos

To receive an invitation, please call (415) 869-7811.

All of these happy people have remembered the church in their wills and estate plans. Won’t you join us?

A last year, the Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe invited St. George’s, Antioch, to create an Area Ministry team with St. Alban’s, Brentwood. St. George’s was established in 1988, when two parishes (St. David’s, Pittsburgh, and St. Barnabas, Antioch) were combined. To complicate matters, Antioch was a rural community that has seen an unprecedented population boom in recent years. Despite the growth around them, attempts to grow St. George’s through traditional methods have not been successful.

In her two years at St. George’s, the Rev. Amber Sturgess has led the parish through a process of healing old wounds and moving forward into Area Ministry. That process, she says, began with the parish working to accept where they are now and contemplate how they cope with transitions and change. Intensive group work moved the parish toward a willingness to change, and they began experimenting with combining services as one way to heal. Eventually they decided to move to a single service, a change that has energized and motivated the parish.

Nevertheless, Sturgess feels that rather than continue to use the traditional models of church growth that don’t seem to be working, it is vital for St. George’s to go out into the world and experience the direct presence of God. In January the parish nominated four laypeople to serve on the Area Ministry team with four laypeople from St. Alban’s and clergy and diocesan leadership.

The major question the team focuses on is, What is God calling us to be in east Contra Costa County? The group brainstormed about the kind of church they’d like to be, allowing themselves to daydream about how they might go out into the world and bring church to the people. Letting the group be creative is a significant component of the work. There is inherent risk and uncertainty to the process, but Sturgess says that “letting things flow” helps move people reorient their priorities and let go of their ideas about the way church should be.

Building a relationship with St. Alban’s is also an important part of the process. The two parishes have started inviting each other to church events and even sharing special services together in a nearby park. “It’s a process of getting people to let go of the way they’ve always looked at each other” and “learning to really love one another in a community that is open and accepting of one another, with all our differences,” says Sturgess.

She looks forward to a time when they will begin sharing small-group faith formation resources together and further deepen their relationship.

Sturgess acknowledges that Area Ministry is not easy. It will take a great deal of education, discipleship, and careful discernment of spiritual gifts. Also, the east Contra Costa team’s efforts were affected by a change in leadership at St. Alban’s, but with the recruitment and deployment of the Rev. Aris Rivera, the new vicar and area missioner, Sturgess is excited about the shape of things to come. She describes Area Ministry as a “movement from a more hierarchical way of doing ministry to a mutual ministry” that involves “embracing what it means to be the priesthood of all believers.” She says, “It’s a radically different way of thinking about doing ministry … It’s really a transformation in the approach to ministry.”

The Gift Planning Office of the Diocese of California
1055 Taylor St.
San Francisco, CA 94110

Tel: (415) 869-7811 • www.EpiscopalGift.org

PCNS | September
Around the Diocese

All Saints rededicates space to service

By Rob Droste

O
t the evening of June 14, more than 125 parishioners and friends of All Saints, San Leandro, gathered to celebrate the completion of its first of six phases of repair and remodeling. The entire project is scheduled between January 2008 and the parish’s centennial celebration in September 2010.

Centered on the theme “Why We Build,” the group came together for Holy Communion and the preaching of Sara Miles, founder of the food pantry at St. Gregory of Nyssa and acclaimed author of Take This Bread. Music was provided by the combined choirs of All Saints and Holy Cross, Castro Valley. After communion, all shared a supper of homemade soups and sandwiches in the style of All Saints’ First Saturday Neighborhood Lunch – the parish’s monthly food program for San Leandro’s Broadmoor Neighborhood.

“It can be easy to forget that we build and maintain facilities for a larger purpose,” said The Rev. Rob Droste, All Saints’ rector. “That’s to be of service to the neighborhood, the larger community and beyond.”

The idea, Droste said, has always been to create a space that supports a mission focus. “We believe that our facilities are a major tool for sharing the good news of God in Jesus Christ, meeting real human needs, and holding up injustice to the light of the Gospel. For us to do that effectively – and not be distracted by building problems – well cared-for, inspiring and inviting space is really important.”

All Saints has raised more than $185,000 in cash and pledges to date. The June celebration marked the completion of more than $100,000 in termite and dry rot mitigation, plus the first major remodel of the worship space in close to 40 years. The next step, scheduled for completion this fall, will include $60,000 in exterior paint, wheelchair ramps and restroom expansion, and a major kitchen remodel to support All Saints’ growing food programs. For more information, check out the parish website at www.saintsalive.net.

Strane shows sympathy and shaves

By Barbara Bisel

L
ast summer when the Rev. Steven Strane, of St. Timothy’s, Danville, went on sabbatical leave from his parish, he decided to forego haircuts as a way of marking his time away. After his sabbatical, his hair was noticeably longer. Shortly after his return to active ministry, St. Timothy’s was about to host their annual outreach fundraiser and organizers asked Strane if they could put the fate of his hair up for auction.

“On the night of the event,” Strane said, “the attendees divided themselves into a ‘coalition to cut it’ and a ‘coalition to keep it.’ The keep it coalition came up with the high bid, and we raised over $5,000 for our three beneficiaries, Options Recovery Services, Operation Second Chance, and GAIA.”

At Easter time he had decided that his hair simply must be cut, and Strane decided once again to ask donations for shaving his head. Supporting the St. Baldrick’s Foundation, he shaved his head and helped raise much needed funds for children with cancer. With a mission of Shaving the Way to Conquer Kids’ Cancer, the St. Baldrick’s Foundation coordinates worldwide head-shaving events, where volunteer “shavees” raise money to support childhood cancer research.

Having gone more than a year without a haircut, Strane was delighted that his head-shaving would help the more than 160,000 children diagnosed with cancer worldwide each year. At a small festive head-shaving reception, he and the St. Timothy parishioners, were able to raise more than $5,000 for childhood cancer research.

St. Baldrick’s has raised over $15.8 million thus far in 2008 – with a goal of raising $17 million by the end of the year. Since 2000, head-shavings have taken place in 18 countries and 48 U.S. states, raising more than $48.5 million and shaving more than 71,000 heads. St. Baldrick’s funding opportunities now include fellowships, career development awards and research grants. Individuals shave their heads to stand in solidarity with the kids who typically lose their hair during cancer treatment.

Bingham to train with Gore

By Barbara Bisel

T
he Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, diocesan Canon for the Environment, has been selected by former vice-president Al Gore of The Climate Project (TCP) to attend TCP’s first faith-based training session in Nashville, Tennessee. TCP is a nonprofit organization working to increase public awareness of the climate crisis at a grassroots level in the United States and abroad. Worldwide, TCP’s 2,300 presenters have reached an audience of at least 4 million people.

The program that Rev. Bingham will attend in October will train an invited group of religious leaders to deliver a faith-based version of the TCP slideshow for adult education programs in congregations.

Gore and Bingham have both been proactive in public education on the moral implications of human-induced global warming. Rev. Bingham is co-chair of the Commission for the Environment and president of The Regeneration Project. She was installed by the Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus as canon in January 2008.

To schedule a climate awareness presentation in your parish, please contact Bingham at sally@thereregenerationproject.org.

COE holds conference for liaisons

In Andrus’s post-Lambeth remarks on his blog, he noted the need for our churches to “respond to [the climate] crisis with intelligence, commitment, and will. It is essential that we not only move into greater action, but that we also see that action as prayer, that we root our action in prayer and theology.” The Commission for the Environment (COE) plans to do just that and urges all of our parishes to utilize the resources offered by the COE.

All COE parish liaisons are invited to attend a Liaison Conference on Saturday, September 27, at Grace Cathedral. The COE will gather the liaisons for a day of sharing spiritual inspiration and a solutions-oriented program of parish success stories, environmental resource education, and inter-parish networking.

Turnery raises $8,348 to combat AIDS

A
long with some 2,500 other riders and a support crew of 500, Archdeacon Anthony Turnery successfully and safely completed the seven-day AIDS LifeCycle 7 Ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Anthony says that more importantly, because of the generosity of the family, friends and colleagues who supported him, he raised $8,348. The total raised by the event was over $11.6 million for HIV/AIDS-related services in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

“The ride is an extraordinary experience that’s hard to describe,” says Turney. “Together, the riders and the ‘roadies’ – all 3,000 of us – demonstrated the power, the resilience, the tenacity and the compassion of the human spirit and what is best about humankind. We all learned that we were capable of making the seemingly impossible a reality – including climbing hills with names like “Quad Buster,” “The Evil Twins” and “The Wall!” We learned that a group of people, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation, can live harmoniously, respectfully and joyfully. We learned that a group of individuals, when united toward a common goal, can accomplish far more than any of us alone might have otherwise managed. We learned to live in the company of heroes. I am so very grateful for all the encouragement and support I received. It was a deep honor and a great pleasure to make the journey that was AIDS LifeCycle 7.”

PCN6 | September
Walking to Santiago

By Daniel Simons

Earlier this summer I helped lead a group of dozens Bay Area Episcopalians walking 150 miles across northern Spain on the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage route that has been traveled steadily since the eighth century. As we trudged at last into the swirl of people on the cathedral square, I noticed a subtle but striking difference between two distinct groups entering the plaza.

From the right side of the plaza groups of tourists, often following a placard on a pole, looked around the square. They took pictures of whatever was pointed out to them by the guide and appeared vaguely bewildered.

From the left side of the plaza where the Camino gate stood, pilgrims straggled in. They invariably walked to the very center stone of the plaza, took a picture of themselves with the cathedral facade in the background, embraced each other, laughing and weeping at the same time. Then they looked around the plaza, also appearing vaguely bewildered.

The tourists’ bewilderment was purely practical: was lunch next or a museum tour? The bewilderment on the pilgrims’ faces was much more existential: Now What? This awareness hits you unexpectedly: the one thing that has totally occupied your every waking minute for the past weeks has suddenly and conclusively come to an end. It’s followed by a wave of awareness that of course it’s not over. You’ll keep walking — out of the plaza and away from Santiago — into the rest of your life.

Most pilgrims arrive in Santiago much changed from wherever they set out, and while the tears and the bewilderment of Now What? might come as a surprise to them, they’ve been weeks in the making and come I think from two very important daily experiences: generosity and adversity.

Generosity is everywhere on the Camino, often in surprising places. The woman in the doorway who wishes you buen camino as you pass by, the priest who shows you his little church and wants to pray with you before you walk on, the fellow traveler who gives you a better way to treat a blister. There is bounty and beauty all around when the luxuries are stripped away and you’re more dependent on the kindness of others.

Adversity, too, is a daily companion — usually around the last three kilometers of the day, or when the third blister engulfs your toe! The Camino invites every pilgrim to walk through adversity, not around it, with their blisters and bad moods. Each ache reveals to them the importance of their mission: I WILL get to Santiago. This awareness hits you unexpectedly: the one thing that has totally occupied your every waking minute for the past weeks has suddenly and conclusively come to an end.

On June 22, 2008, the Diocese of California ran a full-page advertisement in the Datebook section of the San Francisco Chronicle proclaiming “Blessings from The Episcopal Church.” The ad was created by the diocesan Communications Working Group and was funded by generous donations made by clergy and lay members of the diocese.

This was the first ad in what will be a continued campaign celebrating the recent decision by the California Supreme Court recognizing marriage rights for same-sex couples. “The purpose of the ad is two-fold,” said Sean McConnell, communications officer for the diocese. “We are making a public statement that Episcopal Churches in the San Francisco Bay Area respect the dignity of every human being, and we are reaching out to same-sex couples and those who support them, offering them spiritual homes in the churches of our diocese.”

An initial gift of $2,500 for the ad campaign came from the Revs. Jonathan and David Abernethy-Dappe. Following that gift, an email went out to clergy in the diocese asking them for their financial support of the campaign. To date, more than $5,000 has been received supporting the campaign.

The next placement will be a full-page color ad in the Bay Area Reporter’s LGBT Pride special edition. McConnell is in communication with advertising placement companies to see about expanding the campaign to National Public Radio, BART, and other regional transit systems. If you would like to donate to the ad campaign, please contact Sean McConnell by email at seanm@diocal.org or 415.869.7820. To download a PDF copy of the ad, visit diocal.org.

Grace Cathedral goes green with PG&E donation

By Anna Ross

On Wednesday, July 16, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom joined Alan Jones, dean of Grace Cathedral and representatives from PG&E and the San Francisco PUC as the cathedral received a donation from PG&E toward the installation of a new solar photovoltaic system.

In a public ceremony held on the cathedral’s Great Steps, Mayor Newsom informed the audience that as a nonprofit, Grace Cathedral also qualifies for thousands of dollars from San Francisco’s new solar energy incentive program GoSolarSF, which launched July 1.

PG&E and Grace Cathedral were brought together by the Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, president of the California Interfaith Power and Light. The cathedral is a member of CIPPL.

Hitchcock returns to Grace Cathedral

San Francisco playwright, photographer, and filmmaker Lucy Gray is mounting a production of her original work, To Kill For, at Grace Cathedral. The play is a “remake” of Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo, probably the most famous film ever shot in San Francisco. Vertigo celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. To Kill For is directed by ACT veteran Joy Carlin and will be staged in the 99-seat Chapel of Grace as a part of the 2008 San Francisco Fringe Festival. The show is scheduled for September 5, 8, and 9 at 8:00 p.m.

Pictured (above) is actor and Bay Area native Robert Sicilio who portrays “Hitch” in the play. The real Hitchcock visited the cathedral while shooting portions of his 1976 film Family Plot there.

In 1998, Gray presented “Naming the Homeless,” in which she photographed 28 homeless people in their sleeping places, and again after they had been made over to look like fashion models. “Naming” was also shown at Grace Cathedral.

Around the Diocese
Politics: From page 3

the single sermon at issue. Synagogues, mosques, and churches across America have no more guidance about the IRS rules than when we started this process over two long years ago. The impact of this letter leaves a chilling effect cast over the freedom of America’s pulpiteers to preach core moral values. We have no choice but to demand clarification on this matter with the IRS."

To this day, the IRS has not provided more clarification in the case, and preachers from every corner of the Christian spectrum have expressed support for All Saints’ position and their demand for further clarification.

Now we find ourselves in a political season once again. Our bishop and many clergy in this diocese have publicly expressed opposition to California Proposition 8, the ballot initiative intended to overturn the state supreme court’s May 2008 decision granting marriage rights to same-sex couples. The decisions you make when you consider many city and county propositions or ballot initiatives might come from a deep personal consideration of your core Christian values. And even the candidates you consider … do your religious beliefs inform whom you vote for?

Politics: What’s a preacher to do?

According to the Rev. Anne Howard, executive director of the Beatitudes Society, it is simply a good rule of thumb to remember that the people in the pews are smart, thinking people. “You don’t have to hammer people over the head and tell them how to vote.”

The Rev. Anne Howard is executive director of the Beatitudes Society.

“Preachers must always speak prophetically about political issues. If we are going to speak about hunger, or the environment, or healthcare, we need to do so prophetically. To be prophetic is to speak about things in ways that get people to consider them deeply, but we cannot back the candidate who supports specific issues. Speaking prophetically, we can ask people to consider what the issues are as they consider their choice.”

Legally, a church can take positions on public policy, specific pieces of legislation, and even on ballot measures or initiatives. Although it is not a good practice for a preacher to tell people how to vote, it can be beneficial when a congregation comes together to take a public stance that lets politicians and the public know that core Christian values support or reject specific policies or initiatives.

Regas was empowered to preach a sermon critical of the Bush administration’s Iraq War policies because in Iowa the congregation had decided as a body that they were “A Peace Church” and that they would preach that Jesus is a “peacemaker” from their understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Helping sinners learn the skills of translating core Christian values to informed citizenship is what the Beatitudes Society is all about. “It is about being engaged in public life,” says Howard. “That is what we are working on with our students, to help their congregations grapple with public and political issues, and one way to do that is to guarantee safe and open elections. That’s the type of thing that a preacher can preach about, being what Martin Marty calls a ‘Citizen Believer.’"

The Episcopal Church has an office in Washington DC that is focused on government relations and public policy. The Episcopal Church’s Office of Government Relations oversees the Episcopal Public Policy Network (a church-wide network of concerned Episcopalians) and advocates for issues of importance to all Episcopalians (as expressed in our General Convention). There are also groups like Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation that advocate for improving the quality of life of world citizens by advocating for the Millennium Development Goals. Each of these groups looks at the core values of our faith, then seeks to promote passage of law and implementation of policy that promotes these values.

Every Episcopalian is invited to join the Episcopal Public Policy Network and Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation and to help educate your congregation and your community about matters of civic importance. Every person of faith is encouraged to speak publicly about how their beliefs inform their understanding of the issues. And every American has a responsibility to strive for a better life for all of our citizens and for the citizens of the world.

Resources

Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation has used The Interfaith Alliance Foundation’s publication “A Campaign Season Guide for Houses of Worship”: www.e4gr.org/doc/TAIFGuide


The Episcopal Church’s Office for Government Relations and the Episcopal Public Policy Network: www.episcopalchurch.org/cppm


PCN8 | September

DioCal MDG Taskforce
lobbies congress

By Shari Young

On July 16 the group visited Jennifer Tang in Barbara Boxer’s San Francisco office, and in August (after press deadline for this publication) we will meet with Rep. Lynn Woolsey, 6th California district comprising Marin and Sonoma, and a member of Rep. Barbara Lee’s 9th district staff.

In the planning stages are:

September 25: Diocesan involvement in the Anglican Communion-wide day of vigil, prayer, and fasting while the United Nations is meeting in New York to highlight the need to recommit to the MDGs in order to halve extreme poverty by 2015.

Fall 2009: Our second MDG Taskforce Workshop focusing on parish MDG activism and advocacy.

Spring 2009: the third annual “7 Now!” Interfaith MDG Conference. As before, there will be two basic foci: education about the MDGs and workshops on how to organize parishes for charity and advocacy.

Our local interfaith movement to influence Congress for support of the MDGs has been gathering momentum since it began in February. Jewish leaders, Catholics, members of the United Church of Christ, Lutherans, Buddhists have joined and interest is growing. The group seeks to make this unique coalition a model for other geographic areas.

Even if every diocese, every parish, and every parishioner gave .7% of their income, it would be a very small amount compared to the stated intention of the UN Resolution that created the Millennium Development Goals: .7% of the federal budget of every nation. The eradication of extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS and malaria, education for all, equality for women, the reduction of child mortality and improvement of mother’s health, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships to make it all happen is working, but our call is to keep advocating.

You can join the MDG Working Group. We meet next at 12 noon on September 4 at Diocesan House, and encourage phone-in participation! Contact one of the co-chairs, Shari Young (revshari@earthlink.net) or Nina Brooks (nmbrooks@sbcglobal.net).

Every Thursday from noon to 1:00 p.m., a group of faithful people gather in front of San Francisco’s Federal Building to protest policies of war. Janet Jones, a member of St. Luke’s, San Francisco, is a regular at the weekly interfaith peace vigil and all are invited to attend.

T he original concept of the Millennium Development Goals was that prosperous nations re-commit to their moral obligation to reduce the extreme poverty of developing nations by committing .7% of their GNP to the 8 MDG goals. The MDG Taskforce has thus focused on advocacy as the crucial agenda for church MDG activism, in addition to the building of compassion through charity. In February we joined together with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese to found, and now chair, the Bay Area Interfaith Global Poverty Working Group. The purpose of this group is to lobby Congress on behalf of the Global Poverty Act, the Growth Act supporting women, and the Jubilee debt relief act.

The Global Poverty Act, which has passed the House unanimously and “sits” in the Senate, directs the president to review and overhaul our foreign aid mechanisms in light of the MDGs. The Growth Act provides help for women in the developing world, and the Jubilee Act asks for relief for impoverished nations struggling under debt repayment.

On May 28 our group met with Jackie Speier, representative from the 12th California Congressional district. Midge Whittaker of St. Matthew’s, San Mateo, a constituent, was one of those with the group. She writes,

Headed by George Wosolek of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco, we discussed several urgent issues with Rep. Speier, including support of the Global Poverty Act. I found Rep. Speier to be attentive and interested in what the group had to say. Though she has only recently become a member of the House of Representatives, she expressed her support for the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Global Poverty Act. She expressed the opinion that with time, she can have an impact on these issues. I feel that personal visits to all our state and federal representatives in the area could be helpful in furthering support for both the Millennium Development Goals as well as other programs dealing with poverty and hunger.

By Shari Young

The original concept of the Millennium Development Goals was that prosperous nations re-commit to their moral obligation to reduce the extreme poverty of developing nations by committing .7% of their GNP to the 8 MDG goals. The MDG Taskforce has thus focused on advocacy as the crucial agenda for church MDG activism, in addition to the building of compassion through charity. In February we joined together with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese to found, and now chair, the Bay Area Interfaith Global Poverty Working Group. The purpose of this group is to lobby Congress on behalf of the Global Poverty Act, the Growth Act supporting women, and the Jubilee debt relief act.

The Global Poverty Act, which has passed the House unanimously and “sits” in the Senate, directs the president to review and overhaul our foreign aid mechanisms in light of the MDGs. The Growth Act provides help for women in the developing world, and the Jubilee Act asks for relief for impoverished nations struggling under debt repayment.

On May 28 our group met with Jackie Speier, representative from the 12th California Congressional district. Midge Whittaker of St. Matthew’s, San Mateo, a constituent, was one of those with the group. She writes,

Headed by George Wosolek of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco, we discussed several urgent issues with Rep. Speier, including support of the Global Poverty Act. I found Rep. Speier to be attentive and interested in what the group had to say. Though she has only recently become a member of the House of Representatives, she expressed her support for the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Global Poverty Act. She expressed the opinion that with time, she can have an impact on these issues. I feel that personal visits to all our state and federal representatives in the area could be helpful in furthering support for both the Millennium Development Goals as well as other programs dealing with poverty and hunger.

By Shari Young

The original concept of the Millennium Development Goals was that prosperous nations re-commit to their moral obligation to reduce the extreme poverty of developing nations by committing .7% of their GNP to the 8 MDG goals. The MDG Taskforce has thus focused on advocacy as the crucial agenda for church MDG activism, in addition to the building of compassion through charity. In February we joined together with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese to found, and now chair, the Bay Area Interfaith Global Poverty Working Group. The purpose of this group is to lobby Congress on behalf of the Global Poverty Act, the Growth Act supporting women, and the Jubilee debt relief act.

The Global Poverty Act, which has passed the House unanimously and “sits” in the Senate, directs the president to review and overhaul our foreign aid mechanisms in light of the MDGs. The Growth Act provides help for women in the developing world, and the Jubilee Act asks for relief for impoverished nations struggling under debt repayment.

On May 28 our group met with Jackie Speier, representative from the 12th California Congressional district. Midge Whittaker of St. Matthew’s, San Mateo, a constituent, was one of those with the group. She writes,

Headed by George Wosolek of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco, we discussed several urgent issues with Rep. Speier, including support of the Global Poverty Act. I found Rep. Speier to be attentive and interested in what the group had to say. Though she has only recently become a member of the House of Representatives, she expressed her support for the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Global Poverty Act. She expressed the opinion that with time, she can have an impact on these issues. I feel that personal visits to all our state and federal representatives in the area could be helpful in furthering support for both the Millennium Development Goals as well as other programs dealing with poverty and hunger.

By Shari Young
159th Diocesan Convention

159th Diocesan Convention

T

he 2008 annual convention of the Diocese of California will open on Friday, October 17, with an evening Eucharist service honoring the Rt. Rev. Naudal Alves Gomes, bishop of DioCal’s companion diocese of Curitiba, Brazil. The day of business will begin at 9 a.m. on Saturday, October 18, in Gresham Hall. Below are the text of the resolutions and the list of nominees to be considered at convention.

To save paper and energy, we will not be printing booklets for every delegate. All materials will be posted on the web at www.dioccal.org/convention in web-accessible and downloadable format. In addition, two hard copies of the convention booklets will be distributed to each parish. We ask that parishes make these copies available for delegates and parishioners to examine and, if necessary, duplicate. Please bring any materials you need for reference with you to convention. Your cooperation will help us reach our goal of reducing the environmental footprint of convention by half this year. Watch DioBytes for further announcements about convention.

Resolutions to be presented by the Committee on Resolutions

Book of Common Prayer Lectionary

Resolved, That the 159th Convention of the Diocese of California presents the following resolution to the 76th General Convention in 2009:

Resolved, the House of __________ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church affirms the need for both clergy and lay wellness and charges the Ethnic Congregational Development office (ECD) to:

1. develop policies for ethnic congregational wellness;
2. explore and create a national pool of supply clergy for ethnic speaking congregations; and
3. allocate funding for prototype models in the next triennium; and

Resolved, That the General Convention urges dioceses to develop similar programs and policies.

Congregational Wellness: Supply Clergy for Ethnic Ministries

Resolved, That the 159th Convention of the Diocese of California presents the following resolution to the 76th General Convention in 2009:

Resolved, the House of __________ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church affirms the need for both clergy and lay wellness and charges the Ethnic Congregational Development office (ECD) to:

1. develop policies for ethnic congregational wellness;
2. explore and create a national pool of supply clergy for ethnic speaking congregations; and
3. allocate funding for prototype models in the next triennium; and

Resolved, That the General Convention urges dioceses to develop similar programs and policies.

Government Policies for Environmental Stewardship

Resolved, That the 159th Convention of the Diocese of California presents the following resolution to the 76th General Convention in 2009:

Resolved, the House of __________ concurring, That the Church urges the U.S. Government to legislate equitable subsidies of renewable energy (solar and wind turbine power, and research into new technologies), along with reduction of its current subsidies of non-renewable energy sources (oil, gas, coal); and

Resolved, That the Church supports adoption of a federal renewable portfolio standard which would specify that electricity suppliers obtain a certain percentage of their electricity from renewable energy, with that amount to be increased over time; and

Resolved, That the Church supports government programs to practice sound environmental stewardship, for example by converting public buildings to solar, and utilizing renewable, clean energy to operate public transportation, and by saving water through water conservation, efficiency and reuse, thereby reducing the demand for energy-consuming processing facilities.

Moratorium on Executions

Resolved, That the 159th Convention of the Diocese of California opposes the death penalty and encourages representatives from our communities to advocate our opposition in appropriate forums and activities; and

Resolved, That the Convention calls upon the Governor and the State legislature of California to adopt and enact legislation imposing a moratorium on executions.

Support for Marriage Equality

Resolved, That the 159th Convention of the Diocese of California opposes Proposition 8: Limit on Marriage, the state ballot initiative that would amend the California Constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California; and

Resolved, That the Convention commends Bishop Andrus for his leadership in support of marriage equality and urges the clergy, people, and congregations of the diocese to oppose Proposition 8.

Resolution to be presented by the Commission on the Environment

Scientific Integrity and Environmental Policy

Resolved, That the 159th Convention of the Diocese of California presents the following resolution to the 76th General Convention in 2009:

Resolved, the House of __________ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church urges that policy decisions affecting the health and well-being of humans and ecosystems must be based on scientifically evaluated, peer-reviewed data; and

Resolved, That the General Convention supports legislative efforts to maintain the highest degree of scientific integrity, including the ability to conduct thorough, independent, peer-reviewed research, and to communicate the findings of that research openly and accurately for the benefit of all.

List of Nominees

Standing Committee (1 clergy; 1 lay)

Rob Gieselmann (Marin) priest Christ Church, Sausalito
Richard Helmer (Marin) priest Our Saviour, Mill Valley
Paula Nesbitt (Alameda) priest All Souls, Berkeley
John Porter (SF) priest Advent of Christ the King, SF
Bruce Smith (CC) priest Church of the Resurrection, Pleasant Hill
Phoebe Pallet Brown (Marin) lay Holy Innocents’, Corte Madera
Frank Casillas (CC) lay St. Michael and All Angels, Concord
Peggy Greene (CC) lay St. Paul’s, Walnut Creek
Gary Hunt (CC) lay St. Timothy’s, Danville

Ecclesiastical Court (1 clergy; 1 lay)

Barbara Bender Breck (SF) priest St. Luke’s, SF
Susan Champion (Alameda) priest Christ the Lord, Pineola
Ellen Ekstrom (Alameda) deacon St. Mark’s, Berkeley
Jill Handel (CC) priest Grace Church, Martinez
Patrick Talbot Hall (SF) lay St. Aidan’s, SF
Phillip Jelley (CC) lay St. Stephen’s, Orinda
Michal Anne Pepper (Alameda) lay St. Paul’s, Oakland

Secretary of the Convention (1)

David Frangquist (SF) lay St. Aidan’s, SF

Treasurer of the Diocese (1)

Robert McCaskill (Marin) lay St. Stephen’s, Belvedere

Nominations Committee (2)

Mary Louise Gotthold (CC) lay St. Timothy’s, Danville
Walter Holden (Alameda) lay Christ Church, Alameda
Vincent Jang (SF) deacon True Sunshine, SF

Albe Larsen (Peninsula) lay St. Matthew’s, San Mateo

Executive Council (6 at large, but 3 must be lay)

Bob Birrs (Peninsula) lay Church of the Epiphany, San Carlos
Paul Burrows (SF) priest Advent of Christ the King, SF
Shelton Ensign (CC) lay St. Timothy’s, Danville
Vicki Gray (SF) deacon St. James, SF
Peter Jensen (Peninsula) lay Transfiguration, San Mateo
John Kirkley (SF) priest St. John the Evangelist, SF
Chip Larrimore (Peninsula) priest St. Peter’s, Redwood City
David Lui (SF) priest Church of the Incarnation, SF
Lauran Pifke (So. Alameda) priest St. Anne’s, Fremont
Melissa Riddon (So. Alameda) lay All Saints, San Leandro
Dianne Smith (Alameda) lay St. Augustine’s, Oakland
Sharon Gay Smith (Alameda) lay Holy Trinity/La Santísima Trinidad, Rich.
Tim Smith (SF) lay St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, SF
Mark Spaulding (So. Alameda) priest Holy Cross, Castro Valley

PCN9 | September
The Episcopal Way

Meeting our mission at Episcopal Charities

By Sally Coates

Imagine you are a part of a collaboration among several neighboring parishes to provide flu shots to low-income and homeless members of our community. Parishioners who are nurses agree to contribute their services while parishes located in low-income communities provide the sites for the services. After you determine that the program does not duplicate existing programs, you and other members of these congregations design, organize, and set measurable goals for the program. The parishes then apply to Episcopal Charities for, and receive, funding and specific non-financial support (such as research and marketing assistance, financial services, grant-writing support, etc.). The next year, more parishes participate to provide these services in other Bay Area communities. This is just one example of how you can provide equal access to basic healthcare to low income families, which in turn will improve community life for all.

Episcopal Charities’ new vision

The Episcopal Charities (EC) board of directors engaged in a strategic planning process during 2007 that resulted in its decision to implement a new strategic vision. This new vision is centered around engaged philanthropy, defined as providing grants that consist of a combination of financial assistance and specific non-financial support requested by individual grantees. EC seeks to inspire significant progress in improving the health and well-being of the poor, oppressed, and endangered members of our community by focusing the attention and resources of Episcopalians and the broader community on the critical issues of education and healthcare.

Why education and healthcare?

Lack of access to quality education and healthcare is an important root cause of poverty. Addressing these issues effectively makes a critical difference in our cities and communities by breaking the cycle of poverty. The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of California have an extensive history and expertise working in these areas, and many of our congregations are currently engaged in outreach in these fields. In addition, Episcopal Charities oversees and administers a significant endowment fund that is currently restricted to investing in St. Luke’s Hospital, founded in the 1880s by Father Brotherton, the rector of an Episcopal parish in San Francisco.

How will Episcopal Charities accomplish its new mission?

Episcopal Charities will create two community-based impact groups, one focusing on healthcare and the other on education. Each of these groups will be populated with clergy and lay leaders from the diocese, partner agency leaders, community leaders involved in the subject area, board members of Episcopal Charities, and interested members of our congregations and communities. Members of these impact groups will be charged with finding, or creating, organizations that can make a critical difference by addressing a critical need in their respective impact area and will make grant recommendations to EC. In addition, each member of an impact group should be committed to providing support services to grantees within their impact area.

What is Episcopal Charities doing to create impact groups?

EC is currently recruiting membership for the education and healthcare impact groups. If you are interested in supporting EC’s vision of engaged philanthropy by sharing your expertise, or by learning more about either of these areas, we invite you to join an impact group. Contact Sally Coates at scoates@episcopalcharities.org for more information.

New book questions conflict

in the Episcopal Church

A short book, written by the Rev. Rob Gieselmann, rector of Christ Church, Sausalito, seeks to challenge the status quo of the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Call to Love is a little book with big ambitions, as it pinpoints in Gandhi-fashion the core problem facing the Episcopal Church in the United States: the loss of love.

“We’ve become pigs rolling around in our own mud,” says Gieselmann. “We wallow here, we wallow there.” Employing words like these, Gieselmann takes the entire Episcopal Church to task — neither for its approval of Gene Robinson, an openly gay man to serve as the bishop of New Hampshire, nor for the political machinations of conservative Episcopalians who threaten to leave the Episcopal Church in response to Mr. Robinson’s ordination. Rather, Gieselmann makes the point that there is a failure of Christian love throughout the Episcopal Church, a love defined succinctly by the Apostle Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

“Love does not demand its own way,” Gieselmann quotes the Apostle, using words most people associate sentimentally with weddings. “Love is patient and kind.” These words were not written for weddings, Gieselmann claims. They were written to a church mired in conflict. The Episcopal Church is mired in conflict, and, says Gieselmann, it is divided much like the Corinthian Church to which Paul wrote. The love Paul speaks of, he says, compels a type of pacifism — the one who believes he is morally right must yield to his brother or sister who, holding an opposing opinion, believes just as firmly.

Gieselmann is the priest and rector of Christ Church, Sausalito. Gieselmann is also a lawyer, and a single father of two children. “I wrote the book as a Lenten discipline,” Mr. Gieselmann says. “I agonize at the inability of people to get along — not just in the Episcopal Church, but the world over. There has to be a better way — and if our faith does not compel such a way, why do we bother?” Indeed, many people ask this very question, but unlike others, Gieselmann believes the answer can be found in the very faith people bring into question. “For Christians, the answer has been there all along. This is what Paul is talking about!”

For more information on The Episcopal Call to Love, visit www.apocryphile.org or www.amazon.com.

Diocesan Calendar

Monday, September 1
• Labor Day, Diocesan House closed

Sunday, September 7
• Southern Alameda Deanery Meeting, Holy Cross, Castro Valley, 12:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 11
• Maritime Center Cruise, 6 p.m.
• Contra Costa Deanery Meeting, St. Anselm’s, Lafayette, 6:30 p.m.
• Alameda Deanery Meeting, St. Augustine’s, Oakland, 7 p.m.

Saturday, September 13
• Peninsula Deanery Meeting, St. Matthew’s, San Mateo, 9 a.m.
• San Francisco Deanery Meeting, St. Peter’s, San Francisco, 9 a.m.

Tuesday, September 23
• Clergy Conference, The Bishop’s Ranch, 4 p.m. (ends September 25, 12 p.m.)

Saturday, October 11
• Episcopal Charities Walk-a-Thon, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, 8 a.m.

Friday, October 17
• Opening Eucharist for Convention, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, 6 p.m.

Saturday, October 18
• 159th Diocesan Convention, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, 9 a.m.

Thursday, October 30
• Resource Center Open House, St. Thomas’, Sunnyvale, 11 a.m.

See the diocesan calendar at www.diocal.org for bishops’ visitation schedule and more events.
Covenant groups support the spiritual journey
By Susan Champion

As a long-time member of twelve-step groups, the Rev. Susan Champion, vicar of Christ the Lord Church (CTL), Pinole, often wondered why so few of our churches offer the same kind of support and encouragement for spiritual growth. Others on Christ the Lord’s Bishop’s Committee remembered Cursillo Fourth Day groups or other small groups that have helped them on their journeys. By encouraging small groups in the congregation the Bishop’s Committee hoped to help people grow in their faith, help them become more comfortable sharing their faith journey with others, and provide a safe place to invite new people who might feel intimidated by our Sunday liturgy. In 2007, the CTL Bishop’s Committee decided it was time to be more intentional about making small groups a reality and started searching for ways to make that happen. One of the most successful small group ministries in the local area is at St. Timothy’s, Mountain View, in the Diocese of El Camino Real. (Learn more about their Covenant Groups at http://www.sttims.org/community/cov.shtml). After deciding to adapt their model, CTL leaders received training from the Rev. Ann Sullivan, formerly of St. Timothy’s and now at St. Nicholas, Paradise, in the Diocese of Northern California.

At the training, Ann encouraged the church to start with one Covenant Group, but since they already had one Bible Study Group that wanted to try the Covenant Group format, they decided to start with two groups at the beginning of January. Since then, we have added two more groups. One group meets at the church, two meet in homes, and the most recently formed group meets at Starbucks’s in Hercules as a way of reaching out into the community. With an average Sunday attendance of 57 in 2007, there are now 22 people who regularly attend Covenant Groups.

The basic format of a Covenant Group is:
1. Opening Prayer
2. Check-in with highs and lows of the week
3. A short Bible study called a Look, Book, Took, which moves from today’s world, to the scripture passage, to personal response
4. A time to share prayer concerns and thanksgivings and to pray for another

Most of the CTL Covenant Groups meet for one hour, though one meets for longer. The expectation is that members will make a covenant to attend meetings weekly so they can build community, trust, and accountability. New members are encouraged to join and are always welcome to come and check out the Covenant Group before making a commitment. The groups are best at six to eight members and are expected to split when they reach twelve. More information about the CTL Covenant Groups is available at http://www.ctlpinole.org and clicking on the Covenant Groups link.

If you want to try one of the benefits of Covenant Groups now, use the Covenant Group closing prayers at your meetings.
1. Go around the group and ask each person to share prayer requests or answered prayer.
2. Go around again and have each person pray for the person next to them.
3. End by saying the Lord’s Prayer together.

Recently, in studying the Gospel for the third Sunday after Pentecost (Mt. 7:21-29), group members were asked to identify what things or people are “rock” that helps support them in their faith journey. One Covenant group member said, “Covenant group is a rock for me,” and heads were nodding all around.

Feeling out of touch with the diocese?
Subscribe to DioBytes!
DioBytes is up-to-date news and information from around the diocese, delivered to your email box every week.
Visit diocals.org/diobytes to subscribe today.

What are you looking for?
By Julia McCray-Goldsmith

How startling it must have been for those first would-be disciples, tentatively trailing the teacher, when he turned to them and asked, point blank, “What are you looking for?” Their response was not particularly insightful. John’s gospel records that they answered him with a rather evasive question of their own: “Where are you staying?” I imagine them looking at each other in bewilderment, wondering what manner of teacher this was who would offer unsettling personal questions rather than answers. But something about him attracted them enough that they managed to stammer out the one response that would allow them to continue following Jesus, while they figured out what they might really be looking for.

Which leads me to wonder what I would say if I were confronted with that question. Most of the time what I am looking for is my keys or my cell phone or maybe — if I am really paying attention to quality of relationship — I am looking to keep my teenage sons off of YouTube and out of trouble! Not especially deep or meaningful responses to such a potentially life-changing question. As Lyle SmithGraybeal, coordinator of the Renovare ecumenical renewal ministry, observes, “Our culture wants our relationships to stay on the surface.” Guilty as charged!

I had called Lyle to ask him about the workshops he will be offering at the August 23 Equipping the Beloved Community Regional Training Event, generously hosted by St. Mark’s, Palo Alto. In support of the small group ministry initiative being launched by St. Mark’s this fall, Lyle will be teaching a series of workshops on what he describes as “sacred relational space.” Huh!

According to Lyle, sacred relational space has no particular geography — it can occur anywhere that God is and human relationships are — which of course would be everywhere. So for example, our friendships (and, who knows, maybe even our relationships with our teenage sons) can be sacred relational space. “It’s a question of being intentional,” says Lyle, “of living into the reality that every relationship is an opportunity for God to work in and through each other.” In other words, Christian discipleship cannot occur in isolation. We need sacred relationship in order to encourage each other to become the people God calls us to be.

Small groups associated with our congregational life can be one manifestation of sacred relational space, along with intentional community, spiritual direction, and spiritual friendship. And the common denominator for all of these, according to Lyle, is the quality of the questions we entertain and our willingness to be patient in waiting for the answer. “One of the most revolutionary things we can do in the world today is ask a question… and then really listen,” says Lyle.

What are you looking for? Now that’s a revolutionary question — especially if I am willing to take the time to really listen to my own deeper answers. And if I did that — rather than frantically searching for my cell phone or my keys — I would have to admit that I am really looking for integrity, community, and connectedness. Some of the ways I express that search are in driving around the Bay Area to visit congregations I love (now where are those car keys, anyway?), or — looking ahead at the beginning of the school year — in calling and emailing fellow parents of teens to figure out how to manage the lacrosse season.

All good and meaningful things to do. And being a working parent means that there are dozens of other opportunities like this. But the ministry of Renovare reminds us that there is a more excellent way. We can look for personal integrity, community that supports our growth, connectedness to each other and to God in our congregations, in small groups, in spiritual friendships, and in intentional community. We can choose to adopt those habits and practices that encourage us to become friends with God and with each other. In that sense, I wonder if those befuddled disciples weren’t on to something after all. Maybe they couldn’t exactly articulate what they wanted, but they had an idea of where to go to get it. “Where are you staying?” asked Jesus. Who responded “Come and see,” inviting them into the space where sacred relationship could be revealed.
Diocese Celebrates Swing Hospitality Pavilion

On a sunny July 5, hundreds of diocesan parishioners gathered at The Bishop’s Ranch in Healdsburg to dedicate the new William and Mary Swing Hospitality Pavilion. A procession began at the Chapel. Led by the skirls of a bagpipe, participants wound their way to the Pavilion. The Rt. Rev. William Swing praised the inspiring work in the diocese over the last two years and in his homily, remarking that when Jesus fed the five thousand he must have loved how Andrew said, “Let’s just get started.”

The beautiful dedication service was planned and written by the Rev. Jane McDougall. This note of thanksgiving on the back of the service bulletin summed up the message of the day:

We give thanks today…

To all those who made this day possible.

We thank you for your generosity in gifts, matching grants, and pledges. With your help, this hospitality pavilion will allow members of the diocese and the community to gather easily and with joy under one generous roof in all kinds of weather.

Let the party begin!

After the service, the party began… or rather it continued. Ranch guests celebrated with fancy paper hats, HiZeJe!

The Abundant Table.

People of all ages observed animals at demonstrations of owls, hawks, mountain lion, lynx, cheetah, serval, snakes, rabbits, and goats. Visitors also received information about the Ranch’s 160 acres and its many programs.

A beautiful quilt donated by Ranch staff member Eleanor Nichols was raffled off to Bonnie McMurry of St. Mary’s, San Francisco. And a lovely afghan and pillow, created and given by the women of the Yolo County Knitters, was won by Joan Clerk of Christ Church, Alameda. These raffles raised over $2,500 toward the Swing Pavilion Project fundraising goal.

Prior to the dedication service, Bishop Marc announced the wonderful news that an anonymous donor had stepped forward with the funds needed to finish the capital campaign, and he also noted that there were still outstanding projects associated with the Swing Pavilion such as landscaping the Pavilion and new parking area.

If you would like additional information about The Bishop’s Ranch or a copy of the homily, contact Sarah McGowan 707.433.2440 or visit www.bishopsranch.org.