



The *Adventure*

ADVENT, CHRISTMAS,
EPIPHANY 2004

ONLINE

46th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwest Texas



**Convention Coverage
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The 46th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwest Texas

Growing into the Full Stature of Christ

by Carolyn Hearn, Executive
Secretary

The 46th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwest Texas met in Midland on October 29-31 beginning with a most enjoyable musical prelude to Evensong at Holy Trinity Church under the direction of Darryl P. Knapp, Organist and Choirmaster. The selections included traditional and Celtic music, violin, recorder, bass guitar and flute, the Adult Choristers and the Adult Hand Bell choir. During Evensong, Ms. Claire Cowden was named Canon for Ministry Development by Bishop Ohl. The Rev. Linda Grenz, Publisher and CEO of LeaderResources, preached at Evensong encouraging Northwest

Texans to be "Rich Towards God." The offering of \$1,287.37 was designated for Episcopal Relief and Development for hurricane relief. Following the service a reception hosted by Holy Trinity Church was held in the parish hall.

The 46th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwest Texas was convened by Bishop Ohl Saturday morning at 8:30 A.M. at the Midland Center. The business of Convention included welcoming guests, introducing new clergy and their families who have come since the 2003 Annual Convention, elections of diocesan officers and the 2006 General Convention deputies and alternates, adoption of two resolutions, and reports on the work of the commissions and committees of the diocese. A new experience at Convention was balloting by using scanned ballots which worked very well and sped up the balloting process significantly thanks to the hard work of Mr. Jim Brown of St. Paul's, Lubbock, and his Elections Committee.

The Rev. Linda Grenz addressed the Convention on "Making Disciples," focusing on the need for Christian formation, how education supports formation, how to find and use good formation materials, how to implement program, and shifting from education (information about God, the Bible and the church) to formation (shaping

values, attitudes, belief and behaviors) in a culture that no longer helps to form people as Christians. She also addressed focusing on formation of congregations in addition to the formation of individuals by focusing on Christian practices. Mrs. Grenz encouraged Northwest Texans "to be much more intentional about forming Christians - about helping people on their lifelong journey of being and becoming the people of God" and emphasized the good news that "the Episcopal Church has the gifts, the skills, the people and tradition"... to do just that. In summary, Mrs. Grenz challenged "let's get on with it! We've got a church to grow and a world to save!"

Convention delegates and guests were invited to attend two of three break-out sessions following the Rev. Grenz's keynote address. Each session focused on a specific aspect of Christian Formation. The most popular offering was a "Dialogue with Linda" in which Mrs. Grenz presided over lively conversation on how we can help adult Christians grow in faith throughout their lives, especially given the increasing demands on their time and resources. The two sessions on Growing up in Christ and Maturing in



Christ focused on diocesan resources for formation of Children & Youth and of Adults, respectively. Resource handouts were given to all participants, and a number of church and ministry representatives briefly addressed new and innovative formation initiatives around the diocese. The dedicated members of the break-out sessions planning committee are Mrs. Dedee Boring, Mrs. Amy Kitten, the Rev. Richard Nelson, the Rev. David Mossbarger, Ms. Anna Marie Wanasek, Dr. Mark Waters and Ms. Claire Cowden.

Bishop Ohl's convention address reviewed the past year in the Diocese of Northwest Texas including the anger in the diocese surrounding the action of the General Convention. He shared his fears about the future of the work begun over the previous six years and the possible financial ruin of the diocese. Bishop Ohl noted that the situation became a bit more manageable after the passage of the resolution on redirection of funds from the Episcopal Church budget to other mission and ministry imperatives. He shared his health concerns of the past year and their part in his outlook about the diocese. He reported that \$72,000 was directed to be withheld from the Episcopal Church asking, redirecting one half to be used for mission and ministry within and one half outside the diocese. Bishop Ohl also reported that the \$1,700 offering from the closing Eucharist of the Special Convention has been disbursed to assist the victims of the hurricanes in Florida and the Caribbean. Bishop Ohl reported on the Windsor Report, asking Northwest Texans to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" their Bibles daily and to listen carefully to what the Anglican family is saying in the Windsor Report. He emphasized the need "to be together as this part of the Body of Christ, continuing to work toward wholeness and life for all members

and those God is calling into our midst." Bishop Ohl asked the help of the Convention in leading the diocese to be the Body of Christ, noting that "to continue as we are is contrary to the Gospel." Bishop Ohl's charge is available at www.nwt.org

The convention dinner and dance was held Saturday evening at the Midland Petroleum Club at which the food was delicious. Convention members and guests thoroughly enjoyed the band, aptly named CPR. Dining, dancing, and socializing were enjoyed until late night.

Bishop Ohl reconvened the convention Sunday morning following brunch at the Midland Center. During this session the Convention adopted the 2005 budget and apportionments, heard the report of the Bishop Quarterman Conference Center Board, Education for Ministry Director, and reports from the Seminary of the Southwest, Jubilee Ministry, and the University of the South. The Convention accepted the invitation of St. Stephen's Lubbock, for the 2005 Annual Convention, and approved the final report of the Resolutions Commit-

tee honoring the late Mrs. Harriet Herd's lifetime of ministry in her community and in the Episcopal Church, and honoring the Rev. James Haney as he prepares to retire and the Rev. John Githiga upon his retirement. Bishop Ohl presided and preached at the Convention Eucharist at the Midland Center noting in his sermon that "Jesus' earthly ministry proclaims welcome to all, perhaps especially the outcasts of this world." Mary Collier of Holy Trinity Church was ordained to the permanent diaconate by Bishop Ohl who charged her to "insure that we never overlook the needs of those who we would ignore because of poverty, skin color, sickness, language, smell, or whatever would make them outcasts... remembering most of Jesus' ministry was with the outcast of his day." The sermon is available at www.nwt.org. Music for the service included the Holy Trinity Adult Hand Bells and the Lone Star Brass. The Eucharist offering of \$5,737.60 was designated half for the ordinand's discretionary fund and half for the Niobrara Convocation.



Mary Collier of Holy Trinity Church was ordained to the permanent diaconate by Bishop Ohl

Convention and Deanery Election Results

Secretary of the Diocese

Deacon Melissa Wafer-Cross,
St. Christopher's, Lubbock (07)

Treasurer

Mr. Carrol Holley, St. Stephen's,
Lubbock (07)

Standing Committee Clergy

The Rev. Margaret Austin,
St. Stephen's Lubbock (07)

Standing Committee Lay

Mrs. Linda Scarborough,
Heavenly Rest, Abilene (07)

Trustee

Mr. Gaylon Simmons, St. Stephen's,
Lubbock (09)

Trustee

Mr. Neal Allen, Holy Trinity, Midland
(06)

General Convention Clergy Deputies

1. The Rev. Canon Mike Ehmer,
Diocesan Staff
2. The Rev. Laura Deaderick,
St. John's, Odessa
3. The Rev. Jim Liggett, St. Mary's,
Big Spring
4. The Rev. Dr. Steven Sellers,
St. Paul's, Lubbock

General Convention Clergy Alternates

1. The Rev. Scott Mayer,
Heavenly Rest, Abilene
2. The Rev. Mark Cannaday,
Holy Trinity, Midland
3. The Rev. David Krause,
Canterbury, Lubbock
4. Deacon Melissa Wafer-Cross,
St. Christopher's, Lubbock

General Convention Lay Deputies

1. Mrs. Jackie Batjer, Heavenly Rest,
Abilene
2. Mr. Jack Link, St. Stephen's,
Lubbock
3. Mrs. Pat Russell, St. Paul's,
Lubbock
4. Mr. Cliff Craig, St. Andrew's,
Amarillo

General Convention Lay Alternates

1. Ms Kelsey Kemp, St. Stephen's,
Lubbock
2. Mr. Dick Davis, St. Peter's, Amarillo
3. Mr. Fred Newman, Holy Trinity,
Midland
4. Mrs. Anna Marie Wanasek,
St. Paul's, Lubbock



Jim Brown scans ballots

Deanery Elections to Executive Council

Eagle Cove Deanery:
The Rev. Keith Adams,
Good Shepherd, San Angelo (08)

Llano Estacado Deanery:
The Rev. Steve Sellers, St. Paul's,
Lubbock (07)
Deacon Les Jackson,
St. Christopher's, Lubbock (08)

Panhandle Deanery:
Deacon Jessie Vaughn, Grace,
Vernon (05)
Lay person to be elected (08)

Permian Basin Deanery:
Dona Josie Rose, Holy Trinity and
Santa Maria, Midland (08)

Convention Resolutions

Diocesan Apportionment Resolution

The Diocesan Apportionment Resolution submitted by members of Holy Trinity, Midland, was adopted as amended by dropping "within the diocese" from the end of the second paragraph and adding the third paragraph as printed below.

Resolved, That for the calendar year 2005 any member of a Parish, Mission or Congregation may elect in writing not to have any portion of his or her pledge paid from the Diocese for the benefit of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society ("DFMS"). Notice of such election shall be made in writing on or before January 15, 2005 to the Parish, Mission or Congregation. On or before January 30, 2005, the Parish, Mission or Congregation shall notify the Diocese of the total amount of such elections.

The apportionment payable to the Diocese shall not change; however, the amount payable by the Diocese to the DFMS shall be reduced by the total amount of such elections reported (the "redirected funds") by a Parish, Mission or Congregation. The redirected funds shall be placed in the Surplus and Deferred Expenditure account to be allocated by the Executive Council to areas of mission or outreach.

Be it Further Resolved that the Diocese of Northwest Texas *seek ways of reconciliation to heal our divisions*. That with all generosity and charity toward those with whom we disagree, we again proclaim our *common commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to a broken and needy world*. This common commitment includes full participation in the life of the Episcopal Church at all levels, undertaken in the firm hope and conviction that the temporary divisions which exist among us will soon be overcome by the healing touch of our Lord. To that end, we ask the Bishop, Wardens, Clergy, and People of our diocese to study and review the Windsor Report, in its full and complete statements, convinced that the way forward for us now lies in the spirit and hopefulness of this report.

(Italicized Quotations are from the Windsor Report)

Clergy Compensation Resolution

A resolution submitted by the Compensation Committee of the Executive Council for the adoption of Standards for Clergy Salaries was approved after some discussion and as amended by the Convention to be "guidelines" rather than "standards" and elimination of "...the approval of the bishop for exceptions to the standards recommended."

Resolved, That for the purposes of this resolution "clergy compensation" shall be defined in accordance with the Church Pension Fund definition to include stipend, utilities, housing allowance, and the Social Security offset.

Resolved, That this clergy compensation policy be adopted by the Diocese of Northwest Texas as guidelines for compensation for full-time rectors and vicars in the Diocese.

A complete copy of the schedules are available at the diocesan office and the web site, www.nwt.org

The full text of Bishop Ohl's sermon and charge and the Rev. Linda Grenz's sermon and keynote address are available at the website, www.nwt.org

Rich Towards God

The Rev. Linda L. Grenz

*Sermon preached at Evensong
on October 29, 2004*

Jesus is teaching his disciples when a young man interrupts him to make his plea: "Master," he says, "tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." Jesus does not accept this invitation to intervene in family affairs. "Who set me to be a judge or arbiter over you?" he asks.

Instead of answering the young man's question, he tells a story – a popular technique of his. A rich man got an exceptionally good crop one year. So good that his barns could not hold all of it. And, being a shrewd business man, he did not want to sell at the lower price generated by the good harvest but wanted to save his grain and sell it when the prices rose and he could make even more money. So he tore down the smaller barns, built larger barns, filled them and then sat back with satisfaction. "Relax, eat, drink and be merry," he said to himself, certain that he had ensured his well-being and good fortune for years to come. "Fool," God replies, "tonight you die, and who then will inherit all of this wealth?" And Jesus adds: "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves, but are not rich towards God." But are not rich towards God.

Tonight we are looking at the life of the church as well as our own individual lives and we must ask ourselves: Are we storing up treasures for ourselves but are not rich towards God? Odd phrase, isn't it "be rich towards God." What does it mean to be rich towards God?

Both of these stories, and the familiar injunction to consider the lilies of the fields which follows, are about our relationship with possessions. The young man is dissatisfied with how his older brother has divided the inheritance or perhaps because the older

brother has chosen to keep the family land intact so it can provide for future generations rather than dividing it into increasingly smaller plots. In any case, the younger brother wants his share.

The rich man has gotten more than his fair share! He is satisfied with his ability to provide for himself now and in the future. His satisfaction excludes God from his life: he neither sees God involved in his good fortune, nor does he recognize God's involvement in his future. His possessions are his: he earned them, he owns them and they reassure him that he is set for life. Until he faces death, that is!

Churches are often not unlike people. While we rarely see ourselves as greedy, we do tend to focus a great deal on possessions – we worry about our buildings, we covet more people and we especially look for more money. Unfortunately, these things distract the church from its mission and from its call to be "rich towards God." Each crisis we encounter seems to increase our need and, frankly, our greed.

The crisis-de-jour might be local: a dispute over the rector, the service time, the hymn selections, the furniture arrangements. Or it might be national: the revolutionary war at the start of our nation, the civil war that threatened to divide the South and the North, the civil rights movement in the sixties, the new Prayer Book and women's ordination in the seventies and now the issue of gays and lesbians in the church.

Each of these crises has turned the church's attention from mission to greed. When we feel threatened by change, almost any change, we begin to worry about what we have and what we might lose. As soon as some



The Rev. Linda Grenz

disagreement emerges, someone decides to withhold their pledge! The rest of the congregation then begins worrying about how many people will stop giving money and can we make it financially? If things get worse, we begin arguing over how to divide the inheritance. Who gets which people? And who gets the building, the endowment and other assets? Even if the struggle remains typically Anglican "polite" there almost always is a competition for people – who is on our side and who is against us?

The desire for possessions, be they people, property or money, seems to be fed by conflict. And our church has certainly had its fair share of conflicts. So we are almost always in a state of seeking more – more money, more people, more programs and, in the end, more power. Most of our desire for "more" is, I believe, driven

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by our anxiety about losing what we have. We have unconsciously bought into the world's assumptions that we will be secure if we have more.

Jesus doesn't disagree with that – he simply offers a different definition of what we need "more" of! We don't need more land or barns filled with grain. Our security doesn't depend on getting more people to attend our churches or having a hugely successful pledge campaign. We don't need to have more people on our side or have our own church complete with endowment.

What we need is to be "rich towards God." In other words, what we need is more awareness of and gratitude for what God has already given us. Being rich towards God is being the rich man who knows his good fortune is a gift from God and not just the results of his good work. Being rich towards God is being the rich man who is thankful for what God has given him and confident that God will provide what he needs – not the grain in his newly built barns.

For the church, being rich towards God means knowing that God has given us more than we can ever ask for or even imagine – being deeply thankful for that and having the confidence that God will give us whatever we need to be and do that which God calls us to be and do. That sense of gratitude and confidence in God keeps us from being worried about all the things that distract us from truly being the church.

I don't want to say that all of the issues that have been conflictual in the church aren't important. They are. But they aren't as important as being the church God created us to be.....they aren't as important as fulfilling God's mission in the world. And when any one of those conflicts distract us from being the church, we have given in to our inner greed – our need to hold on to and rely on what we own instead of holding on to and relying on God.

I was ordained in 1977 – at the time when our church had just started ordaining women. I was the baby of

that first generation – the youngest of the first 100 women ordained in this church. I was fortunate. I didn't have to wait for years. I wasn't really involved in the struggles. I was ordained in April and became the part-time rector of a small church that fall. I never preached a sermon about the ordination of women and, frankly, rarely talked about it. I had decided that I simply would BE an ordained woman and not worry about the conflict that issue generated.

People would ask if the ordination of women was the "right" thing for us to do and my reply was always the same. "I don't know. All I know is that this is what I felt called to be and do. I trust the rest to God. If the ordination of women is "of God" it will flourish and grow; if not it will wither away." I didn't need to worry about whether the decision to ordain women was right or wrong. I trusted that God would take care of that. I simply needed to be faithful in carrying out mission and ministry that God had entrusted to me.

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. Our call is carry out Christ's ministry of reconciliation in the world. That's why we're here. That's the reason the church exists. There have been, there are and there always will be many things that we disagree about how to live and work together. But that cannot – it DARE not – distract us from carrying out the mission given to us.

We live in a time when the world is increasingly out of touch with the power and love of God. While most Americans still identify themselves as Christian and engage in some religious behaviors like reading the Bible and praying, many do not have a deep and nourishing spiritual life. While most American live better than the rest of the world, we still have those who go to bed hungry or have no bed to go to. If we move outside of this country, we see millions without food, shelter, health care, freedom or justice.

A teenage girl in Haiti who is mentally ill lives in a wooden pen the

community built to contain her while they give her a random mixture of expired medications donated by our pharmaceutical companies in hopes that whatever they are giving her might help. Down the road villagers drink the only water available since the hurricane – water flowing down the streets covered with dirt, feces and decaying bodies. That's where our attention must be – not on our desire for more people, possessions or power.

A woman in Darfur has already been raped repeatedly, yet struggles to maintain some semblance of family life and protect herself and her children from being slaughtered. That's where our attention must be – not on our desire for more people, possessions or power.

A man has already served 24 years for a crime he did not commit when the state refuses to pay for the DNA test that eventually would prove him innocent. His son, growing up with no father, no family income and no hope is in jail. His child, just entering his teen years, may not be far behind. That's where our attention must be – not on getting more people, possessions or power.

We worry a great deal about keeping the church doors open, paying the ever increasing health care and salary costs, attracting more people and providing more programs. Our conflicts make us more anxious and we worry even more about "making it."

Jesus tells us not to worry about those things. He calls us to be rich towards God – to be aware of and thankful for all that God has already given us. And to be confident that God will give us whatever we need. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be given to you. Focus on the mission. Do not be distracted by anything. Not by crisis. Not by the siren call of greed. Not by others who tempt you to follow them down another path. Focus on the mission. Be the church. Be the People of God. Be rich towards God. And God will give us more than we can ever ask or imagine.



From the Bishop's Desk

There is a quotation from Archbishop William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury in the first half of the 20th century that is paraphrased as follows, "The Church is the only institution which exists solely for the benefit of those who are not members." Too often we, who are members of the Church, forget that our purpose is to serve the world beyond our doors. Too often we look to the Church to serve us, to make us comfortable, to insure that we feel good. In other words, we have fallen into the consumer age notion of seeking what suits us, not what suits God. We attend worship with the mistaken notion that it is the responsibility of the priest, if Holy Communion, or the worship leader, if Morning Prayer, to provide us with comforting words and a scintillating sermon that will not challenge us too much. We forget, or

ignore, the reality that our life in Christ is not 1/168th of our week, the time we spend at church, but it is rather 100% of our lives. If you think I am simply castigating the lay members reading this, you are sadly mistaken. Bishops, priests and sometimes deacons fall into the trap of thinking that since we are ordained leaders whatever we do is "religious." 'Tain't so. All of us are too caught up in our own self-focus that we may miss seeing Jesus in those about us.

A story from my own experience. On a busy day in DFW airport, while rushing to meet a connecting flight and dressed in clerical collar, I was stopped by someone who asked, "Excuse me Father, can I have just a minute of your time?" I replied that I was in a rush and could not wait. As I arrived at my gate, with some time to spare, it occurred to me that I had just missed an opportunity to meet Jesus. Remember in Matthew 25:40 where Jesus says, "...as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." What did that man want? Did he desire to engage me in theo-

logical conversation? Did he want a handout? Did he need prayer? A kind word? I will never know, and his face haunts me.

A friend of mine speaks of allowing ourselves to put our Christian face on only when we are in the safe confines of the "religious ghetto." Once we leave the church building, or some safe place like a fellow parishioner's home where we have been doing our Bible study, we steel ourselves against the outside world and the assaults that we imagine will come our way. If we are ever willing to be vulnerable, it is only within tightly controlled environments.

This is not the image of Jesus that I meet in the Gospels. He is ever ready to be present to those in any need, even when he is exhausted, or beset by detractors, or in a dangerous position. He is always vulnerable and always in the vanguard to challenge "religiosity" and call his hearers to live out their relationships with all they meet as if meeting God himself.

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The Magnetic Church

Evangelism Conference

January 28 & 29, 2005
Midland

Andy Weeks, a lay Episcopalian who runs an organization called "The Magnetic Church", will be presenting an Evangelism Conference at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Midland on Friday evening and Saturday, January 28 & 29, 2005. The registration fee is \$30.00.

While challenging people into new creative ministries, not simply more tasks, Andy will address many issues, including:

m How can we make our signs, property, communications, buildings, website & worship more inviting and welcoming?

m How can we make visitors want to come back to our church and stay?

m I'm private and reserved; how can I "do" evangelism in my church?

m Many members of my church are uncomfortable with 'evangelism' and are resistant to change; how can I help to motivate and interest them?

You can find additional information, including an information & registration flyer at www.magnetic-church.com; once there, click on Event Schedule and select the Midland event by date.

Advent is upon us. We are called in the Collect for the First Sunday of Advent to "cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light," actually to be light in darkness. We have a myriad of opportunities during this season leading to the celebration of the Incarnation to bring light to our world. Simple acts can be the most meaningful. Almost everyone is "stressed out" while we hear repeated calls to slow down, be at peace, and be present. Do you know what it is like to be a clerk at Wal-Mart during December? Why not smile and look a clerk in the eye and say thank you, and really mean it; you might make the week for that person. Stop and visit with one of the ubiquitous Salvation Army bell ringers and thank them for their service. And while you are there put something in the pot. Allow a car into your lane with a smile and a wave instead of honking and scowling. Hug those you live with and tell them how much they mean to you. Praise God in small—and great—ways. Pray every day. Find a minute or two—or more if possible. Use the Prayer Book Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families (pages 137-140) as an entry into daily prayer. Give thanks to the Lord for our life together.

Remember, we are here for a broken and hungry and hurting world. How can you, we, be Christ to our communities? Take your faith out of the Christian "ghetto" and let the light of Christ shine. Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine!

HW Miller



*The Rev. Allan Conkling, Rector,
Emmanuel Church, San Angelo.*

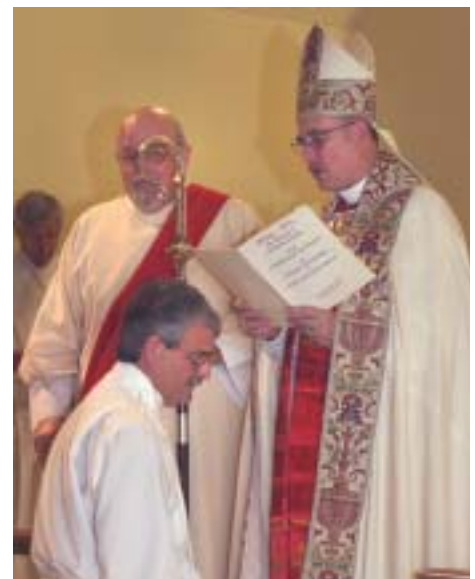
The Rev. Allan Conkling is the new Rector at Emmanuel Church, San Angelo. Allan is a native Texan; he was born in Temple and grew up in San Antonio. His wife, Kelly, is also a native Texan, having been born in George West. They have five daughters, most of them grown and away from home. Allan received his Bachelors Degree from Southwest Texas State University, his Masters Degree from St. Mary's University, and his Master of Divinity from Sewanee

School of Theology. His previous position was as Associate Rector at St. Thomas Church, San Antonio. Kelly is also an Episcopal Priest and previously served in our diocese at both St. Mark's and Church of the Heavenly Rest in Abilene. Welcome to Northwest Texas!

The Rev. Jim Smart was ordained Priest at St. Mark's, Abilene on November 20. The liturgy during which Jim was ordained is titled, "A Celebration of Community Ministry with Commissioning of Lay Ministries and Ordination to the Priesthood." Jim's ordination occurred in the liturgical context of the renewal of baptismal vows and of the reaffirmation of the apostolic, priestly and diaconal ministries in which the whole congregation shares. Please see Loretta Fulton's article on page 15 about St. Mark's experiences with Community Ministry.

The Rev. Amber Sturgess was ordained Deacon (transitional) at St. Stephen's, Lubbock on October 16. Please see Amber's article on page 19 about her experiences at the World Parliament of Religions this summer in Barcelona, Spain.

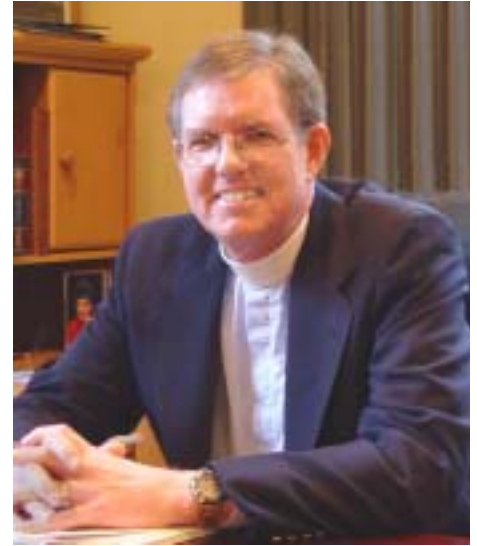
Bishop Ohl has given two Deacons new assignments. **Archdeacon Dana Wilson** is serving at St. John's, Odessa. **Deacon Roland Rose** is serving at Santa Maria, Midland.



Jim Smart is examined by Bishop Ohl prior to his consecration as priest.

The Canon's Comments....

The Rev. Canon J. Michael Ehmer
Canon to the Ordinary



Beginnings

"In the beginning ..." That's normally a good place to start, isn't it? After all, that's the way the Bible starts, "*In the beginning* when God created the heavens and the earth ..." (Genesis 1:1). It's also the way the Gospel of John starts, "*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

It seems that beginnings are important to humanity. They always have been and they always will be. And they are important in all cultures. We mark time—hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, and millenniums—by their beginnings. We denote life experiences with beginnings—birth, school, college, marriage, parenthood, and retirement. Our cultural activities are segmented into beginnings—the start of a new school year, a new fiscal year, a new season (weather, planting, theatre, shopping, etc.), or a new administration (political, academic, head coach, bishop, rector). Let's face it; we are people who like to highlight new beginnings!

Why do you suppose that is true? Certainly one reason is our need for variety. The thought of the same old thing over and over again forever would drive most of us crazy. But

more importantly, I think, is our need to feel that we are starting (beginning) fresh—with a clean slate. What is in the past is gone, whether good or bad. What we need to focus on now is the future.

So what can we do to help us get off on the right foot? Sometimes new beginnings require vast changes from the past. We've all been watching President Bush prepare for his second term by cleaning his cabinet—bringing in fresh faces to help him move forward on his agenda in the beginning of his new administration. At other times beginnings can be more subdued, with very little outward signs of change. Maybe the change is simply a mindset or the inward knowledge that we can't change the past but there's still time to change the future.

Which one of these concepts do you suppose the psalmist had in mind when he wrote, "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10)? That same statement appears in Proverbs 9:10. What kind of "beginning" did these authors intend?

To answer these questions we first have to define the terms "fear" and "wisdom". When the word "fear"

is used in this fashion in the Old Testament it usually refers to a form of reverence, trust and dependence upon God. Rather than being *afraid* of God (as we understand that word today), it really means coming into God's shelter—taking refuge in God.

The word "wisdom" in this context is not just a cerebral exercise. Instead, it means to know how to act. Nor does the word imply a fixed knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to adapt the tradition to individual and varying circumstances—it's not static. And wisdom is always achieved through human experience as a gift from God. The New Interpreter's Bible says, "Humankind cannot find wisdom by searching for it as though it could be mined or purchased. One cannot possess wisdom; one can only embody it" (Vol. IV, p. 533).

So the statement, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" could be stated, "By taking refuge in God one can begin to embody God's ways." Once again we have a beginning. Actually, humanity has lots of beginnings in this regard, because we

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are always falling away from that refuge we seek. After the fall we must return to God's shelter and start again. But that doesn't mean we've forgotten all we have learned before our fall. We will always bring our experiences with us as we seek refuge in God's shelter. And those experiences will effect how we proceed in the future. Those experiences will help us embody wisdom in a new way.

All of this is to say that we are *resurrection* people! We go through our lives dying and rising again and again to a new life. We have new beginnings all the time and in each case we bring with us all of our prior experiences (the good and the bad) to help us more fully embody wisdom in our futures. Consequently, each resurrection experience is different, and we learn (or at least we should learn) from each one.

Remember, however, that wisdom is not just the result of our experiences. It's also a gift from God. What I find so amazing is how surprising God can be. Just when I think I've had enough experience to know exactly what's happening in the world—just when I think I have the ability to predict the way things will turn out—God shows me who is really in charge (and it's not me). When I think I've got life figured out God is sure to surprise me.

As we begin a new Church year this Advent—as we celebrate the beginning of God's new relationship with humanity in the birth of Jesus—as we begin a new calendar year this January—let's also begin again to seek refuge in God and, therefore, begin to seek further wisdom from God. And then be prepared for some surprises!

Certificate Programs Provide Information and Formation for Youth Ministers and Christian Educators at ETSS

by Cathy Boyd

Finding oneself in the midst of a community is a particular joy when one has been accustomed to being alone. And although ministers, by virtue of their work, have many opportunities to be with other people, ministry itself can be a lonely business. The Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest (ETSS) offers an experience of community for youth ministers and directors of Christian education, which is a boost not only professionally, but personally and spiritually.

The Certificate Programs in Youth Ministry and Christian Education at ETSS provide a foundation of theological education and training to develop much-needed skills in ministers who often feel ill-prepared and isolated. The professional-level training goes beyond typical Sunday School teacher training. Basic, associate and advanced certificate courses are designed as a strong, theologically sound alternative to typical methods of training for Christian educators. Study and prayer are both integral to the program. A former participant said, "It's definitely not like learning 20 things to do with a paper plate."

"We all need help in realizing our calling and making sure we are

doing what God wants us to do," says Juanita Sabochick, Director of Children's Ministries at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Beaumont, Texas. "The surprises [in the program] have been overwhelming! The week spent with others who are doing the same job and facing the same problems is comforting. You always think you are in a world by yourself and other churches/ministers are perfect. Just knowing you can have someone to talk to and solve problems with is a relief."

"Our students are a rich mix of beginners and old hands, men and women, old and young, liberal-minded and conservative," says program director Molly Bennett, a 20-year veteran director of religious education. "The one thing they all have in common is lots of creative energy and a devotion to bringing the Gospel to God's people."

Youth ministers and other Christian educators are often hired for their potential and their zeal for the work at hand, but it is less common for them to arrive on the job as professional theologians. And to be honest, the position can be one of the hardest

Continued on page 13

and least-supported spots on the parish staff. But since healthy Christian formation programs are imperative for a healthy congregation, the benefit of such a program can spread a long way.

Now the Certificate Programs Director at ETSS, Bennett's intention is to give Christian educators the skills, theological education and encouragement they need. "Our program is not so much intended to teach folks how to be youth ministers and Christian educators, but to give them the theological underpinnings for the ministry. It's as much formation as information."

Participants come to the program for a variety of reasons, but always get more than they expected. "I thought this program would be a way to get 'certified' in youth ministry, validating what I've been doing with young people for the last 30 years," says Scott Moore, formerly of St. Andrew's Church in Allentown, Penn. "While it does that, the program is so much more – horizon widening, eye opening, and thought provoking, all in a community stronger than any I've ever been in."

Gaye Jones is Youth & Young Adult Minister at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Houston. She was looking for a boost in confidence in something

to which she had already given her heart. The program is not only gives her a solid education, she says, but "it creates such an excellent network for support and ideas, and it gives me the opportunity further to grow my faith, confirm my calling, and stirs an even deeper drive to serve Christ."

The six-year-old program balances instruction in scripture and theology with theological reflection,



practical ministry skills, worship and spiritual formation. The interplay of study and prayer, grounded in worship, is at the heart. Professors from the Seminary of the Southwest and other educational institutions comprise the faculty. One-week sessions take place in the last week of June and second week of January each year. Cost is \$1,500, which is inclusive for both sessions: room, board and tuition.

Current students, who are both lay and ordained persons, are from the Episcopal dioceses of Arizona, Arkansas, Atlanta, Bethlehem, Central Gulf

Coast, Fort Worth, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Lexington, Louisiana, Northwest Texas, Oregon, San Diego, Southeast Florida, Tennessee, Texas, and West Missouri. Also represented are the United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Hershel Hartford, director of Youth Ministry for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, says

"The surprise for me was just how much that original feeling was an underestimation of the benefit of the program. Not only have I received a first class theological education experience, I have also enjoyed the powerful addition of an extended community of colleagues, instructors and

chaplains through which ideas are shared, triumphs celebrated, concerns raised up and communication is strengthened."

For additional information check the program's website at www.etss.edu/youthdre.shtml or contact Bennett at 512-472-4133, ext. 340 or mbennett@etss.edu.

Cathy Boyd is a second year master of divinity degree student at the Seminary of the Southwest

2004 APPORTIONMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

As of November 17, 2004

| Congregation | 2,004 Apportionment | Total Received | Balance Due | Percent Complete |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Abilene, Heavenly Rest | 120,304.00 | 100,253.30 | 20,050.70 | 83.33 |
| Abilene, St Mark's | 10,263.00 | 8,327.63 | 1,935.37 | 81.14 |
| Albany, Trinity | 1,110.00 | 1,110.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Amarillo, St Andrew's | 91,734.00 | 76,445.00 | 15,289.00 | 83.33 |
| Amarillo, St Peter's | 55,801.00 | 51,150.88 | 4,650.12 | 91.67 |
| Andrews, St. Matthias | 1,790.00 | 1,790.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Big Spring, St. Mary's | 37,325.00 | 31,104.20 | 6,220.80 | 83.33 |
| Borger, St Peter's | 16,380.00 | 13,650.00 | 2,730.00 | 83.33 |
| Brownfield, Good Shepherd | 5,289.00 | 5,289.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Canyon, St. George's | 8,212.00 | 6,158.97 | 2,053.03 | 75.00 |
| Childress, St. Luke's | 973.00 | 892.00 | 81.00 | 91.68 |
| Clarendon, St John's | 1,620.00 | 1,620.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Coleman, St. Mark's | 7,131.00 | 7,131.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Colorado City, All Saints' | 3,468.00 | 3,468.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Dalhart, St. James' | 19,128.00 | 17,534.00 | 1,594.00 | 91.67 |
| Dumas, St. Paul's | 4,069.00 | 3,740.00 | 329.00 | 91.91 |
| Hereford, St. Thomas | 9,782.00 | 1,000.00 | 8,782.00 | 10.22 |
| Kermit, St. Peter's | 680.00 | 0.00 | 680.00 | 0.00 |
| Levelland, St. Luke's | 3,835.00 | 3,200.00 | 635.00 | 83.44 |
| Lubbock, St. Christopher's | 40,293.00 | 8,500.00 | 31,793.00 | 21.10 |
| Lubbock, St. Paul's | 71,263.00 | 65,324.38 | 5,938.62 | 91.67 |
| Lubbock, St. Stephen's | 52,431.00 | 48,052.62 | 4,378.38 | 91.65 |
| Midland, Holy Trinity | 183,680.00 | 153,066.40 | 30,613.60 | 83.33 |
| Midland St. Nicholas | 105,808.00 | 88,173.30 | 17,634.70 | 83.33 |
| Monahans, St. James' | 3,867.00 | 3,220.25 | 646.75 | 83.28 |
| Odessa, St. Barnabas | 40,377.00 | 37,015.00 | 3,362.00 | 91.67 |
| Odessa, St. John's | 41,567.00 | 38,103.09 | 3,463.91 | 91.67 |
| Odessa, San Miguel | 1,541.00 | 0.00 | 1,541.00 | 0.00 |
| Pampa, St. Matthew's | 39,564.00 | 36,267.00 | 3,297.00 | 91.67 |
| Perryton, All Saints' | 1,070.00 | 1,152.00 | -82.00 | 107.66 |
| Plainview, St. Mark's | 12,158.00 | 10,131.66 | 2,026.34 | 83.33 |
| Quanah, Trinity | 1,074.00 | 574.00 | 500.00 | 53.45 |
| San Angelo, Emmanuel | 87,395.00 | 94,677.96 | -7,282.96 | 108.33 |
| San Angelo, Good Shepherd | 49,940.00 | 45,196.67 | 4,743.33 | 90.50 |
| Shamrock, St Michael's | 204.00 | 204.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Sweetwater, St Stephens | 25,761.00 | 23,620.25 | 2,140.75 | 91.69 |
| Vernon, Grace | 3,082.00 | 3,082.08 | -0.08 | 100.00 |
| Totals | 1,159,969.00 | 990,224.64 | 169,744.36 | 85.37 |

These figures reflect all apportionment contributions received as of November 17, 2004. If you have any questions regarding the figures shown, please contact Diana Pierce, assistant administrator at 806-763-1370 Ext 201.

Sparks of Life & Shared Blessings: St. Mark's Continues its Journey in Community Ministry

By Loretta Fulton

Peggy Valentine was leading her regular Wednesday night Bible study when she heard a voice say, "How about me?"

Turns out that question came from Peggy herself. She wasn't speaking out loud and she was the only one who heard the question.

"It didn't even feel like my voice," Peggy said.

But it was, and Peggy knew the question wasn't going to go unanswered. She eventually gave in and announced her answer to the congregation of St. Mark's in Abilene on Sunday, Sept. 19.

"I am grateful to every one of you for enabling me to take steps toward the diaconate," Peggy told a surprised and very happy group.

She also credits her decision to St. Mark's move toward community ministry that began in September 2001 under the able guidance of Claire Cowden, Canon for Ministry Development for the diocese.

Community ministry, which also is known as "total" or "mutual" ministry, means the church's ministry is lay-led rather than clergy-focused.

It is a form of ministry favored by small congregations that may not be

able to afford a seminary-trained rector. A key component of the journey toward community ministry is the discernment process whereby church members discern their own gifts and those of others.

It was through that process that Peggy's name came up in January 2002 at the church's annual meeting. Claire led the congregation through the process, and several members were identified for specific ministries.

Peggy said she accepted because she was called from within the community. She doesn't believe she would have arrived at the decision on her own but felt truly called when a fellow church member named her.

Peggy isn't the only one at St. Mark's who was called to a specific ministry. Jim Smart was ordained priest on Nov. 20. He had been serving as a transitional deacon, which allowed him to celebrate the Eucharist using elements consecrated by a priest.

It's a role that Jim, an Abilene attorney, wears well.

"Getting up there and doing the liturgy is absolutely what I was born to do," Jim said.

Even members who haven't been called to a specific ministry are feeling the effects of the church's move toward community ministry.



Jim Smart, right, prepares to get class under way on a Sunday morning at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Abilene. Among the class members are from left Jim Turkett, Dawn Caldwell, and Michael Caldwell.

The words "Holy Spirit" frequently pop up when members talk about the journey toward a new way of doing things.

"We are trying to bring back an understanding of what the Holy Spirit wants us to do," said Deacon Greg Sinclair.

Jim Smart's move toward the priesthood and Peggy Valentine's journey toward the diaconate are two visible signs of the Holy Spirit's desires for St. Mark's. But many other members of the congregation are feeling the blessings as well.

Dawn Caldwell is a relative newcomer to St. Mark's. About six months after she arrived, St. Mark's began the journey toward community ministry. Dawn saw the difference right away.

"Once it started, I started feeling more a part of St. Mark's," Dawn said. "It's been a place for me to connect."

Her husband, Michael, is a life-long member of St. Mark's, and he sees the difference, too.

Michael noted that St. Mark's has been lay-led for a long time due to its small size and lack of funds for a full-time rector. But something changed with the move to community ministry.

"This empowers us," Michael said.

A noticeable drop in the energy level of the church occurred before a new direction was chosen, Michael observed. The congregation seemed to be "stagnant and fear-driven," he said.

"And now I feel there's life to it—at least a spark," he said.

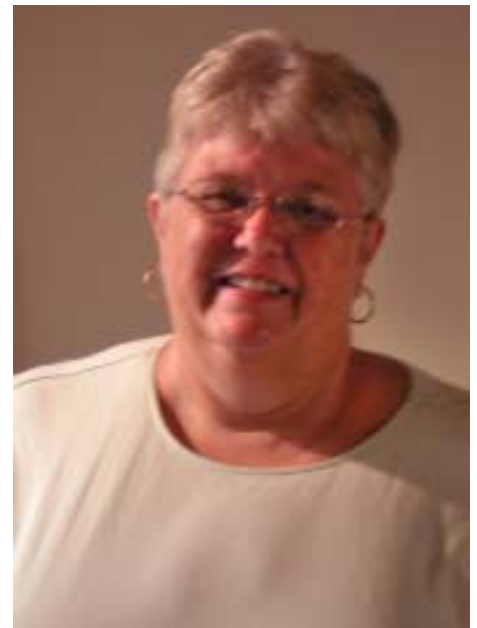
Once the discernment process took place and members were identified for ministries, a new endeavor began. Once again with the help of Claire Cowden, about 15 members began a study of books in the New Church's Teaching Series.

That process took about a year, and now another part of the journey has begun. Claire introduced an adult formation class to the church known as LifeCycles. Anyone who is familiar with Education For Ministry would instantly recognize LifeCycles.

The two educational and spiritual development courses are similar except that LifeCycles is conducted in a morning class on Sundays at St. Mark's and isn't as broad in scope as EFM.

The class is well-attended and several facilitators have emerged. It's just one more sign of the Holy Spirit working at St. Mark's.

Peggy Valentine was speaking for herself recently when she de-



Peggy Valentine is in the diocesan Deacon Formation program.

scribed her decision to begin study to become a deacon. But she easily could have been describing the entire congregation at St. Mark's.

"I can feel a change in me already," Peggy said. "There is a path now that I am on and it just feels so good."

Loretta Fulton is a member of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Abilene.

Stephen Ministry at St. Barnabas

Faith of Mind and Heart Migrating to Hands and Feet

by Deacon Judy Cobb

It started with a click on the Stephen Ministry website. I had been looking at different ministry programs that would use the experience and compassion of a group of people at St. Barnabas who were ready to do more to make a difference in the lives of others. The vision was to minister to people both within and without the parish. The idea of a one-on-one ministry with the sick, the lonely and the dying seemed to be exactly what was needed. I was excited about the possibilities of Stephen Ministry and made a presentation to the Vestry requesting the necessary funds. The Vestry stepped out in faith, and St. Barnabas began the process of becoming a "Stephen Ministry Church."

At the time, St. Barnabas was in the search process for a rector. When the Rev. David Mossbarger was interviewed, one of the questions asked was, "Are you familiar with Stephen Ministry and would you support it if you were called to St. Barnabas?"

He replied that not only was he familiar with the program but that his mother had been a Stephen Ministry leader for many years. He would strongly support it. That was an essential ingredient, clergy support. Many programs have died without it.

With the enthusiastic support of Fr. David and myself, another bridge had been crossed.

In February of 2003, I attended the intense eight day (and night!) training sessions for Stephen Ministry Leaders held in Corpus Christi, Texas. The next few months were spent in preparation for the training of St. Barnabas Stephen Ministers. An informational meeting was held, pamphlets were distributed, sermons were preached in an effort to let the members know what Stephen Ministry involved and urge all to be a part of it, whether in an active role or a supportive role. Fr. David and I began the process of interviewing prospective

Stephen Ministers. The expectation was for five or six Stephen Ministers. The reality: Eleven people began the training in August of that year! Only two dropped out, due to death and illness in their immediate families.

On January 11, 2004, nine people were commissioned as Stephen Ministers in the parish of St. Barnabas. Eight of those people were members of St. B's and one was an "honorary" member of St. B's and a regular member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. These nine people represented approximately 10% of the average Sunday atten-

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*Back Row: David Jackson, Jim Murphy, Fr David Mossbarger
Middle Row: Deacon Judy Cobb, Pauline Morrison, Dorothy Johnson, Sondra Hubble
Front Row: Donna Hicks, Pat Brown, Kay Rhodes, Joann Jones*

dance! What a blessing to have that percentage of your congregation involved in this very caring ministry!

The training process lasted almost five months and covered such areas as maintaining our own spiritual disciplines that enable us to “abide in Christ” as we seek to do his will, understanding feelings (our own as well as those of others), understanding the importance of listening and identifying it as the most important skill used by a Stephen Minister. We talked about maintaining boundaries, and especially about the absolute necessity of confidentiality. We called on mental health and medical professionals (both inside and outside our group) to give presentations on ministering to those who are grieving, to those who are depressed, to those who are sick and to those who are dying. We explored the resources that are available in our area for people whose needs exceeded our reach. We took a tour of Hospice House, a lovely non-institutional bed and breakfast type environment where people who are unable to be at home during their last days can die in comfort under the care of compassionate physicians, nurses and support staff – and with family, who are also being cared for, at their side. All in all it was a great learning experience – for me as leader as well as the participants!

Because confidentiality is a cornerstone of Stephen Ministry, I am not able to tell you some of the wonderful stories of how it enhances the lives of our care receivers. But I can let you know how it has enhanced the lives of St. B’s Stephen Ministers – in their own words. After almost a year of care giving to people inside and outside our parish, this is what some of them had to say:

“While I was hoping that my being involved in Stephen Ministry would be of some assistance to someone else, I didn’t anticipate the

benefit to me personally. Going through the training and meeting regularly with the rest of the group has really opened my eyes to the needs that surround all of us. Acquiring needed skills is as useful in my personal life as it is in Stephen Ministry. I realize just how fortunate I am to be a part of a caring church family; my heart goes out to those who do not have the support of groups like ours. The diversity of personalities within our group helps meet the diverse needs of those we encounter. I feel really blessed to be a part of this group.”

Sondra Hubble

“My involvement as a Stephen Minister is very gratifying. I believe it allows each of us the opportunity to maintain and promote the closeness of the St. Barnabas family. The members of the ministry share very common concern for those within and outside our congregation, and for each other.”

David Jackson

“My experiences as a Stephen Minister have been very rich, worthwhile and rewarding.”

Dorothy Johnson

“As I entered Stephen Ministry, I began to realize that listening is much more important than talking. It seems to me that our group of Stephen Ministers is a trustworthy and compassionate community. At our bi-monthly meetings we receive not only support, but new ideas to help solve problems. We always close our meetings with Compline and feel that God in Christ is present to us.”

Joann Jones

“I was uneasy to start with – being the only Catholic and only one of two men in the program, but I enjoyed the training and have found the ministry rewarding.”

Jim Murphy

“When the literature about Stephen Ministry was being presented to our parish, I thought this was something I could do and perhaps it was what God was leading me to do. Little did I know how valuable the training would become! During the time of our once a week training sessions, one of my closest friends was diagnosed with pancreatic, liver and lung cancer. Another close friend was battling Parkinson’s disease. The three of us had been like sisters growing up and had retained that closeness. Believe me, this taxed every bit of the training I received, and I returned to the manuals for guidance many times. But the most important issue to be emphasized is the support I received from the other Stephen Ministers in our regular meetings. Being able to share my experiences with them helped to reinforce my actions and encourage my resolve to be the best long distance care giver possible. The blessings I have received far outweigh any blessings brought to my care receivers. I am so very grateful that we have this ministry here at St. Barnabas.

Donna Hicks

“This year’s theme at Diocesan Convention, “Growing into the Full Stature of Christ,” included linking both what we learn in Adult Christian Formation and where our feet carry us in Christian ministry. The Stephen Ministers have been St. Barnabas’ standard bearers for this link between Christian Study and Christian Action. They are a power asset in our pastoral ministry.”

The Rev. David Mossbarger

If you or someone in your parish has an interest in learning more about Stephen Ministry, please contact me: juliacobb@aol.com

The Parliament of the World's Religions - 2004

by the Rev. Amber Sturgess,
seminarian at Church Divinity School
of the Pacific

This summer I had the opportunity to attend the fourth Parliament of the World's Religions.

About eight thousand people, from 75 countries and diverse religious and spiritual traditions, converged in Barcelona, Spain to reunite with old friends and to build new relationships around the theme, "Pathways to Peace: the Wisdom of Listening, the Power of Commitment." The Parliament took place in conjunction with the Universal Forum of Cultures, a five month long event addressing conditions of peace, cultural diversity, and sustainable development. The Forum

hosted expositions, concerts, and theater productions on a 100 acre Mediterranean seafront complex and throughout the city of Barcelona. Visitor interactive expositions helped the public to discover why a minimum wage is not enough, what happens to women and children in war torn countries, how biodiversity protects and improves environmental quality in tandem with the conservation of natural resources, and how international trade regulations adversely affect producers in the southern hemisphere. Attending the dialogues at the Parliament and walking through

the Forum gave me the impression of being in an entirely different world, one where everyone seeks to care for the earth and for his/her neighbor – it was one delightful neighborhood of diversity.

Participants were encouraged to commit to creative "simple and profound acts" in their communities as a response to the following societal issues of religiously motivated violence, universal access to safe water, the fate of refugees worldwide, and the international debt crisis. Over 400 programs and workshops offered intrareligious and interreligious opportunities to learn about the teachings and practices of diverse religious and spiritual communities. The programs also fostered the means for effective dialogue and collaboration. In the early mornings prayer, meditation, and worship groups introduced participants to the practices of a particular community. Interspersed throughout the day were musical ensembles, previews of documentaries, and fun interactive activities.

History of the Parliament

In the past 101 years the Parliament has met four times seeking to build bridges between peoples of diverse religious and spiritual traditions. An unprecedented gathering of Eastern and Western religious and spiritual leaders comprised the first Parliament of the World's Religions in



Universal Forum of Culture - Barcelona, Spain

1893. The Parliament coincided with the World's Columbian Exposition celebrating the scientific and technological innovations of the 19th century. It was the beginning of globalization. No longer did people, religious communities, and countries exist in isolation. At the closing of the Parliament, the Hindu Yogi, Swami Vivekananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, shared his renowned vision for a world united in diversity as they approached the 20th century: "If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if any dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.""

One hundred years later the second Parliament convened in Chicago to carry out the theme and spirit of the 1893 Parliament vision of a world united in diversity. A document drafted by Dr. Hans Küng and Parliament council staff was endorsed, *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*, which essentially advocates and expounds on the Golden Rule that runs through all the major religious traditions, "We must treat others as we wish others to treat us." The declaration affirms four essential principles, respect for life, economic justice and solidarity, tolerance and truthfulness, and equal rights and partnership between men and women. *Towards a Global Ethic* continues to

serve as a guide for global ethical understanding and consensus.

The third Parliament met in Cape Town, South Africa in 1999, just seven years after the mandate ending apartheid. In his Parliament address, Nelson Mandela recounted how religious institutions played pivotal roles in abolishing apartheid and urged participants to enter the 21st century with faith, "We shall have to reach deep into the wells of our human faith as we approach the new century. No less than in any other period of history, religion will have a crucial role to play in guiding and inspiring humanity to meet the enormous challenges that we face."

Purpose of Parliament

At a time when religious extremism receives the bulk of media coverage the Parliament brings exposure to the positive roles religious and spiritual communities play in our world. Essentially, the Parliament acts as a facilitator to bring groups together for dialogue. It does not take a position on any issues nor does it bring about an agreement on issues. Instead, the Parliament encourages everyone to make a commitment to "simple and profound" acts in his/her community, to make resources available, and to create awareness. The Executive Director of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Dirk Ficca, says that the emphasis on commitment distinguishes this event from other interreligious gatherings, "when people of faith commit to address religious violence and other pressing issues facing the global community they follow through. We make a commitment not only to the world, but out of a deeply rooted religious or spiritual conviction."

Highlights from the Parliament 2004

The most talked about event at the 2004 Parliament was the Sikh *langar*. News spread quickly that the Sikhs were serving a free lunch at the Gurdwara tent. The *langar* was a most magnificent display of hospitality and generosity. The Sikhs served a vegetarian Indian meal to over 5,000 people every day. We gratefully lined up outside the Gurdwara, removed our shoes, and then stepped in line for the ablutions. Both men and women were given a white kerchief to cover his/her head and were led into the tent and



seated in long rows on the floor where they were immediately served. Each server graciously doled out an entrée of curried chick peas, lentils, yogurt, vegetable stirs, salads, and *chapatti* (flat bread). And, as if that was not enough, second and third helpings were encouraged followed by dessert. The food was excellent! Who knew that the feeding of the five thousand plus would have been so delicious?

Another highlight was the Sacred Music concert held in front of the neo-Gothic Sagrada Familia Temple, designed by Antonio Gaudi. The concert featured an array of musical performers from flamenco singer, to whirling dervishes, to the Japanese Sumei Taiko Ensemble drummers.

The parliament's many notable speakers included, Dr. Hans Küng, Swiss theologian and President of the Foundation for a Global Ethic; Shirin Ebadi, Iranian Nobel Peace Laureate; Dr. Raimon Panikkar, theologian and philosopher; Dr. Diana Eck, Professor of the Comparative Study of Religion and Indian Religion at Harvard University and founder of the Pluralism Project; Karen Armstrong, religious writer and speaker; Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (Amma), humanitarian and spiritual leader in India; Jane Goodall, primatologist; Ela Gandhi, social activist and granddaughter of M. Gandhi; Rabbi Michael Lerner, founder of *Tikkun*; and Dr. Abdullah Bin Omar Nasseef, President Emeritus of the World Muslim Congress.

Episcopal presenters and participants included Bishop C. Christopher Epting, deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations at the Episcopal Church Center; Sonia Omelepu, Interfaith Education Coordinator; Bishop William Swing, Diocese of California and founder of the United Religions Initiative (URI); The Rev. Charles Gibbs, Executive Director of the URI; and the Rev. Gwynne Guibord, Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer in the Diocese of Los Angeles and President of the Board of Directors of the Interfaith Alliance.

Dr. Raimon Panikkar, one of the most interesting and inspiring presenters, embodied the oneness of diversity. Born to a Hindu Indian father and a Spanish Roman Catholic mother he grew up in a family of interreligious



The Rev. Dr. Raimon Panikkar

dialogue. Dr. Panikkar emphasized that plurality is a fact and a right for all peoples and we need to embrace plurality by opening our hearts to the other. In dialogue, as in prayer, we are seeking to make something welcome. "Dialogue is an ascetic activity. I have to purify myself – empty my mind in order to listen." And through deep listening the human heart is transformed.

How to Get Involved in the Parliament of the World's Religions

We have the opportunity and the responsibility, whether formally or informally, to meet and serve our neighbors in the most religiously diverse country in the world. If you would like to become involved the

Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions staff, based in Chicago, can assist you and your community in organizing intrareligious and interreligious dialogues, services and community exchanges. All the information you need is listed in the CPWR web site below. You can also visit the Parliament 2004 online and access the Parliament program book, photo album, articles, and press releases. Plan to attend the next Parliament; it is a most rewarding and transformative interreligious experience. The venue and time for the next Parliament has yet to be announced. The next Universal Forum of Cultures will take place in Monterrey, Mexico in 2007 and will focus on the encounters between Amerindian and Anglo-Saxon culture.

There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions.

Dr. Hans Küng, 1993 Parliament

Internet Resources for Intrareligious/Interreligious Dialogue

Parliament of the World's Religions
www.cpwr.org

Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
<http://gc2003.episcopalchurch.org/eir.htm>

Universal Forum of Cultures
United Religions Initiative
www.barcelona2004.org/eng
<http://uri.org>

The Pluralism Project
www.pluralism.org