



Steven Boston photo

St. John's, Boonton, hosts a variety of programs at its new storefront ministry, Light on Main.

Shining faith's light on Main Street

By Cathie Studwell

"If our church is not the building in which we worship, how is God calling us to be 'church' in the town of Boonton?"

The vestry of St. John's, Boonton, asked that question as it tried to discern what God truly was calling its members to do. The answer is now embodied at 506 Main Street in a new "storefront ministry" offering people an opportunity to experience spiritual and secular activities in a relaxed atmosphere.

Light on Main officially opened Sept. 27.

The vestry came to realize that the church was being called to be a presence in the center of town and to be a place where anyone seeking knowledge, fellowship and a sense of community would be welcome. "Our place is in the town of Boonton among the people, investing in their lives in meaningful ways," said the Rev. Laurie Wurm, rector.

Light on Main programs focus on civic and social forums, spiritual development and

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Disciples called to ministry of transformation

By Sharon Sheridan

Christians are a subversive lot, biblical scholar the Rev. Walter Brueggemann recently told a gathering in the Diocese of Newark. "Every time the church prays, 'Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,' it is praying for a new order. And from time to time in the [church's] long history, the prayers and the hymns and the meals take hold, and newness erupts."

An ordained United Church of Christ minister who worships in an Episcopal church, Brueggemann spoke about the call to ministry and disciples' "transformative energy" during the keynote address at an Oct. 25 workshop on "Becoming Disciples – How Will We Create a Culture of Call?" at St. Andrew & Holy Communion in South Orange. A prolific author, he formerly served as professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga.

"He's an academic prophet," Bishop Mark Beckwith said in introducing him. "[He] takes the Old Testament Scriptures and presents them to a modern audience with a sense of urgency that has compelled

me and compelled many others I know to respond with a different level of intention and orientation to how we do our ministry."

We create a "culture of call" by telling stories, Brueggemann said: "stories of all those incredible people that the world does not want to remember but we continue to draw life from them because they continue to be alive with their energy and expectations of us."

For his lecture, he mostly focused on Elisha, beginning with his call by Elijah. "To become a disciple, somebody has to find you," Brueggemann said, adding, "when Elijah found Elisha, he didn't say anything to him. He threw his cape over him. He threw his mantle over him, and that defined his existence.

"So the question that I want you to think about while I talk is: Who threw the mantle over you, and what did they expect of you, and how are you doing? And if you've been at this faith business for awhile, you are permitted to ask: Over whom have you thrown a mantle of empowerment and expectation? Because the matter of apostolic succession is not just with bishops and priests. The matter

Council works to put mission into action

By Sharon Sheridan

Working to put the new diocesan mission statement into action, Diocesan Council plans a diocesan-wide listening campaign, a "vestry university" program and new Christian formation opportunities, while the Budget and Finance Committee reported it had organized its preliminary-budget recommendations along the mission priorities of equipping congregations, empowering people and engaging the world.

As part of their Nov. 11 meeting at St. Agnes', Little Falls, council members met in three action teams aligned to the mission statement, and discussed their objectives and next steps in living out the diocesan mission.

The Engaging the World Action Team will participate in a training day Dec. 12 led by Joe Morris from the Industrial Areas Foundation to prepare for launching a listening campaign following a presentation on it at Diocesan Convention, reported Elizabeth Moss, team co-chair. The campaign will be voluntary, with team members meeting with leaders of each congregation in the diocese interested in participating.

"What we're inviting them to do," said the Rev. Joseph Harmon during the team discussion, "is share with us what their hopes and dreams and fears and disappointments are to help them build up their congregation."

Team members will be there to support congregations, not judge them, he said. "By supporting the congregations, we're looking at therefore being able to build up the diocese."

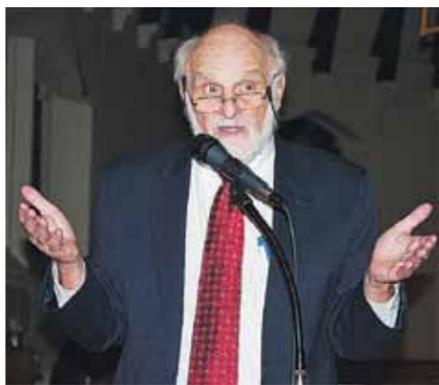
The Equipping Congregations Action Team plans to host regular training days – a "vestry university" – for newly elected vestry members, wardens and clergy, reported the Rev. Vicki McGrath, team co-chair. These would cover issues such as polity, canons, conflict resolution, stewardship, triangulation and communication within the Anglican framework, she said.

This would help set norms for vestry-clergy relationships in the diocese and provide opportunities for participants to tell stories and learn from each other, she said. The goal is for all elected vestry members, including wardens, to participate in this training along with their clergy, she said.

A pilot program is scheduled for March 27, followed by an October program open to the entire diocese.

Working to help people become disciples in their lives and communities, the Empowering People Action Team is setting up a blog for interaction by those who attended biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann's "Becoming Disciples" program and will provide audio of the presentation on

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Nina Nicholson photo

Scholar Walter Brueggemann discusses the call to discipleship.

of apostolic succession concerns the whole body of believers, and it is an intergenerational thing in which we are always casting the mantle on somebody else."

Having received the call, Elisha had to leave home – his "comfort zone," Brueggemann said. The knowledge of that reality is causing much of the anxiety in the church that leads to quarrels, he said. "We are all of us being called to a new place, and it would be wonderful if liberals and conservatives

in the church understood together [that] we are all wrapped in anxiety about having to leave home and go to a place that is outside of our comfort zone."

Disciples also must find resources among themselves to be faithful, he said, noting how Elijah leaves Elisha soon after calling him and how Jesus also leaves his disciples.

"The amazing thing of the whole history of the church, the Book of Acts and then on through the centuries, is that the church has always been surprised that the Spirit does surge among us and the church is capable of doing more than we ever thought we could do," he said.

He described several stories of Elisha's ministry, including helping a poor widow by miraculously providing olive oil – so much that it took all the village's women to gather it. "This guy is an amazing pastoral type who has the capacity to move in where people have specific personal, intimate needs, and by his presence he transforms their circumstance into abundance and well-being," Brueggemann said.

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The Bishop's Message

Moving from functional atheism to faithful waiting

Christian writer Parker Palmer refers to it as *functional atheism*. A functional atheist is someone who says he or she believes in God, but lives as though God doesn't exist.

I suspect that many of us fit that description from time to time. I certainly do. I profess my belief eagerly and readily, but when it comes to Christian practice, I often cut corners. I rely on my ability, my gadgets and my energy to get me through the thickets of life, sometimes pausing to draw on God's mercy at the beginning or to give thanks for God's presence at the end of a problem or task. But in the middle? I tend to count on myself. Besides, God is busy. There is Afghanistan, Iraq and the economy to worry about – and no end of tragedies large and small.

Yes, God is busy. And so am I. So are we all.

And that is a problem. Because our busyness – our business – can take over, and God is then crowded out. Or it is lost

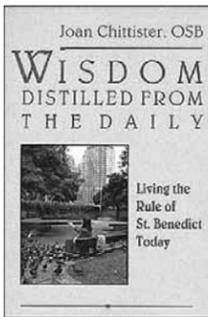
altogether. And functional atheism creeps in.

Advent was originally a season of preparation – not for Christmas, but for the coming one and the end time. It was a season of spiritual preparation. It has become – at least in the secular world – a make-or-break time for many businesses. Perhaps in response, it is a time of rampant busyness for most of the rest of us – and it all can make for a starved soul.

Our spiritual ancestors set aside Advent as a time to wait: to wait with God for a new manifestation of God in the world.

Waiting takes discipline. It is hard to wait, especially when there are so many things begging for our attention and activity. Multitasking is seen as a virtue; waiting is not.

At a diocesan workshop and at the clergy conference held at the end of October, biblical scholar extraordinaire Walter Brueggemann issued an invitation to live with spiritual disciplines that challenge the culture's overwhelming orientation to



scarcity – and to be open to the moments of God's unending abundance. He made a particular plea to honor the spiritual discipline of keeping Sabbath, which opens us up to the reality of God's abundance and announces – for a day anyway – that we are not beholden to the world's production/consumption system. At the same clergy conference, David Rynick, who has helped train clergy and warden peer coaches in the diocese, remarked that “discipline is the courage to follow what you love.”

This Advent, I have invited people in the diocese to take up a spiritual discipline of action and/or reflection: to be more intentional about the practice they already have, to add something to a current practice or to start something new. I also have invited people to join me in reading a book about spiritual discipline – *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily* by Joan Chittister – and then to

use my blog (forgatesofhope.blogspot.com) to write responses to the book and/or the practice. Joan Chittister is a Benedictine nun who has written widely on the opportunities and challenges of living an intentional spiritual life.

My hope is that, over time, we are able to develop a community of practice in the diocese. The goal is not that we would have the same practice, but that we would develop a culture of spiritual discipline that would support one another in following what we love and that will draw us closer to the One who loved us first. And that it would move us deeper into the mystery of God's abundance – and away from the frenzy of functional atheism.

— Mark M. Beahm

Moviéndose del ateísmo funcional a una espera llena de fe.

El escritor cristiano Parker Palmer se refiere al ateísmo funcional. Un ateo funcional es aquel quien dice que el o ella cree en Dios pero vive como si éste no existiera.

Sospecho que a muchos nos aplica esa descripción de vez en cuando. Ciertamente a mí me aplica. Yo profeso mi creencia con ansia y prontitud, pero cuando se trata de prácticas cristianas busco atajos. Confío en mi habilidad, mis herramientas y mi energía para abrirme paso por los matorrales de la vida; algunas veces deteniéndome para tomar algo de la misericordia de Dios al comenzar o para dar gracias por su presencia al terminar una tarea o solucionar un problema. Pero, en la mitad del recorrido? Yo tengo la tendencia a contar solo con mis propias fuerzas. Además, Dios esta ocupado. Ahí están Afganistán, Irak y la economía como motivo de preocupación y tragedias sin fin, pequeñas y grandes.

Sí, Dios esta muy ocupado, así como lo estoy yo y como lo estamos todos nosotros.

Y ese es el problema; pues tantas ocupaciones, nuestros asuntos, nos abruma y entonces Dios resulta desplazado. O simplemente se pierde. Y así se cuele el ateísmo funcional.

Adviento fue originalmente una estación de preparación, -no para Navidad, pero para el único final de los tiempos. Era una estación de preparación espiritual. Se ha convertido, al menos en el mundo secular, en la mejor oportunidad para que muchos negocios mejoren. Quizás como respuesta es un tiempo exuberante de negocios para la mayoría del resto de nosotros supliendo, de alguna manera, las necesidades de un alma hambrienta.

Nuestros ancestros espirituales asignaron el adviento como un tiempo para esperar: Para esperar con Dios por su nueva manifestación en el mundo.

Esperar requiere disciplina. Es duro esperar especialmente cuando tenemos tantas cosas mendigando nuestra atención y nuestra actividad. Hacer múltiples tareas al mismo tiempo es considerado virtuoso; esperar, no.

En un taller durante la Conferencia del Clero al final de Octubre, el erudito bíblico Walter Brueggemann, extendió una invitación para vivir de disciplinas espirituales que retan la abrumadora cultura de la escasez, - y para permanecer abiertos a los momentos de la abundancia infinita de Dios. El hizo una petición particular para honrar la disciplina espiritual del Domingo, lo que nos abre a la realidad de la abundancia de Dios y anuncia –por espacio de un día- que no estamos atados al sistema de producción/consumo del mundo. En la misma Conferencia del Clero, David Rynick, quien ha ayudado a entrenar clero y guardianes mentores en la Diócesis, comentó: “Disciplina es el coraje de seguir lo que usted ama”.

En este Adviento he invitado a las personas de la Diócesis a practicar una disciplina espiritual de acción y/o reflexión con el fin de poner más énfasis en lo que ya practican, a agregar algo a lo que ya tienen o a comenzar algo nuevo. También los he invitado para que se unan en la lectura de un libro acerca de disciplina espiritual- “Sabiduría destilada de lo cotidiano” de Joan Chittister – y luego, para usar mi blog (Forgatesofhope.blogspot.com) con el fin de escribir respuestas sobre el libro y/o sobre la practica. Joan Chittister es una monja benedictina que ha escrito ampliamente acerca de las oportunidades y retos de vivir una vida espiritual con propósito.

Mi esperanza es que, con el tiempo, podamos desarrollar una comunidad de practica en la Diócesis. La meta no es que todos tengamos la misma practica, sino que desarrollemos una cultura de disciplina espiritual que apoyaría a cada uno en el seguimiento de lo que ama y que nos acercaría a Aquel que nos amó primero. Y que nos movería mas profundamente en el misterio de la abundancia de Dios,- y lejos del frenesí del ateísmo funcional.

— Mark M. Beahm

Traducido por el Rev. Rubén D. Jurado. Comisión de Ministerio Hispano.



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Church leaders act on Uganda's 'anti-homosexuality bill'

By Sharon Sheridan

Executive Council will hold a special meeting via teleconference Dec. 7 to discuss the Episcopal Church's position on a proposed Ugandan bill that, if passed, would extend prison sentences for homosexuals and introduce the death penalty in some cases.

Sixteen council members attending meetings of the church's Committees, Commissions, Agencies and Boards in Chicago Nov. 17-20 – including Martha Gardner and the Rev. Canon Sandye Wilson of the Diocese of Newark – signed the petition required to call a special session, Episcopal News Service reported.

"We do feel a real urgency to respond in some way," Gardner told *The Voice*. "It's all come up since our October Executive Council meeting."

As the *The Voice* went to press, council members were working on the details of how best to conduct the meeting and to gather information to allow for an informed discussion, she said.

Other church groups already have spoken out against the proposed bill.

On Nov. 20, the Chicago Consultation called on four prominent church leaders to raise their voices in opposition to the bill. In letters sent to Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and Archbishop Henri Orombi of Uganda, the consultation called

the bill "draconian anti-gay legislation" and urged the leaders to speak out against it.

Bishop Mark Beckwith is on the steering committee of the consultation, which has worked for full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the life of the church.

"I was on the conference call that designed this strategy," he said. "We need to keep the witness going – and keep the pressure on for anything that threatens to violate the dignity of every human being."

Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda and carries a penalty of up to 14 years imprisonment. If passed, the proposed bill would extend the punishment to life imprisonment and introduce the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality." It also proposes prison sentences for belonging to a gay organization or advocating gay rights.

On Nov. 15, the Anglican Church of Canada's Council of General Synod expressed its dismay and concern about the draft legislation, saying that it "would severely impede the human rights of Ugandan citizens both at home and abroad" and that it "would impose excessive and cruel penalties on persons who experience same-sex attraction as well as those who counsel, support and advise them, including family members and clergy."

Gardner attended the most recent meeting of the synod council, which is similar to Executive Council, as liaison from the Episcopal Church council. "It was just fabulous to be there for their three days of meetings," she said, noting the Canadian

church is addressing similar financial challenges and staff cuts. The Canadian council, which meets twice yearly, paid much attention to indigenous ministries at the meeting, she said.

At October's Executive Council meeting, the group formally divided its work into five new standing committees called Local Ministry and Mission, Advocacy and Networking for Mission, World Mission, Governance and Administration for Mission, and Finances for Mission. Splitting the previously combined administrative and financial functions is a good idea "because the financial part takes so much time at every meeting ... a lot of the governance issues were not looked at," said Gardner, who will serve on the finance committee.

Gardner also is liaison to the Committee on the Status of Women, one of the "CCABs" meeting in Chicago. The CCABs receive resolutions from General Convention and set policies for their implementation during the interim three years until convention meets again. Each has a mandate from the body to which it reports and also reports to General Convention.

Other Diocese of Newark members attending the first CCAB meetings of the



Mary Frances Schjonberg photo

Martha Gardner, left, and the Rev. Canon Sandye Wilson at the October Executive Council meeting in Memphis, Tenn.

triennium included: Wilson, Executive Council liaison to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music; diocesan Chancellor Diane Sammons, chair of the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons; Bert Jones, member of the Standing Commission on World Mission; Laura Russell, secretary, and the Rev. Geoff Curtiss, member of the Standing Commission on Social Justice and Public Policy; Linda Curtiss, member of the Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church; Kim Byham, member of the Executive Council Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility; and Canon to the Ordinary Greg Jacobs, member of the Board of Transition Ministries.

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Acolyte Festival

Members of St. Matthew's, Paramus, including, front from left, Erin Hahn, Deacon Jacques Girard and Liam Coohill, participated in a procession in downtown Newark as part of a recent Diocesan Acolyte Festival sponsored by District 4.

Council

Continued from page 1

the diocesan website, said the Rev. Stuart Smith, co-chair.

During Lent, Donald Romanik of the Episcopal Church Foundation will lead three Thursday sessions at Grace, Madison, to help lay leaders identify their gifts. "It'll be an opportunity for people to be empowered and to look at how they are engaging their faith in their life," Smith said.

The team also will promote the bishop's Advent online book discussion; gather for a quiet day on Jan. 9; and plan a fall book study of *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church* by Loren Mead.

Budget and finances

Also at the Nov. 11 meeting, the Budget and Finance Committee presented a preliminary draft of the 2010 diocesan budget to the council. Council members were invited to suggest any budget changes to the committee before the council's Dec. 16 meeting, when it will discuss the budget in detail and vote upon the budget it recommends for passage

at the Jan. 29-30 Diocesan Convention.

After the Dec. 16 meeting, the budget will be distributed to deputies and posted on the diocesan website (www.dioceseofnewark.org). Presentations on the council's recommended budget also will be made at pre-convention meetings Jan. 5, 7 and 14.

The proposed balanced budget is organized along the priorities of the new mission statement, said the Rev. William Parnell, committee chair. "We want money to follow mission."

Through the end of October, the diocese is current in its 2009 monthly payments to the Episcopal Church, according to the written finance report distributed to the council.

Congregational pledge payments have continued to lag behind projections, with 78 percent of expected income received through the end of October, the report said. Investment income was 25 percent below budget but expected to increase following the posting of third-quarter dividends, it said.

"Program income for the year is above projections in part from additional income/sources not included in the original council budget," the report said. Expenses have been

under budget for most of the year, with 78 percent of the budget spent through 83 percent of the budget year, it said.

Budget process

Diocesan Council will discuss and finalize a recommended 2010 diocesan budget at its Dec. 16 meeting, which begins with dinner at 6 p.m. at St. Agnes', Little Falls. Copies of that budget will be posted on the diocesan website (www.dioceseofnewark.org) and mailed to Diocesan Convention deputies.

Budget presentations will be made at three pre-convention meetings, which are open to anyone interested:

- Jan. 5, St. Elizabeth's, Ridgewood
- Jan. 7, Saviour, Denville
- Jan. 14, Christ Church, East Orange

The final budget will be approved at Diocesan Convention, meeting Jan. 29-30 at the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark.

Healthy ministries

Churches promote wellness, provide patient advocacy

By Solange De Santis

The concept of “health” takes on a broad meaning at St. Paul’s, Chatham, and St. Luke’s, Montclair, where, respectively, parish nursing and patient advocacy are seen as part of a Christian community’s responsibility.

“Health ministry is a living witness of the healing activity of God through the local congregation,” according to National Episcopal Health Ministries, an Indianapolis-based organization that supports congregational health activities.

At St. Paul’s, four nurses volunteer in various areas of expertise. “One nurse is a neonatal intensive-care nurse, so if there is a mom who had a baby that was premature or the birth was difficult, we can offer her services,” said St. Paul’s

rector, the Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton. A visit from the nurse – for which there is no charge – provides a checkup on how things are going and can be a source of reassurance for the mother. Barbara Conroy, who is a hospice nurse and coordinates the program, can provide counsel and advice to patients and families affected by a terminal illness, said Kaeton.

The church holds regular blood-pressure, flu vaccine, diabetes and foot-care clinics. “It’s more about

wellness and helping people be good stewards of their bodies,” Kaeton said. “It fits with the theology of creation, and as a congregation we’re involved in environmental justice and we observe the seasons of creation.”

Trained as a Registered Nurse, although her license has lapsed, Kaeton said parish nursing began about four years ago with a flu-vaccine clinic (patients pay for the shots, although some are subsidized), then developed into a blood-pressure clinic. She received an ACTS/VIM (A Commitment To Serve/Venture in Mission) grant of \$4,000 from the diocese.

Advertised via the church’s weekly ad in the local newspaper, the clinics usually are held in the large parish hall after Sunday services and represent a “wonderful opportunity for evangelism,” Kaeton said, adding that she greets and “schmoozes” with clients.

Kaeton said she’d learned of special needs among members of the congregation who might tell the nurse that they need gluten-free Communion wafers, but “don’t want to be a bother” to the rector. And she knows of at least one life that has been saved due to parish nursing.

“A couple of years ago, the nurses said, ‘Your staff needs to train in CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation].’ So we all finally got certified, and shortly after that, one of my dear parishioners, a 92-year-old man, had a heart attack at the Sunday

8 a.m. Eucharist,” Kaeton recalled. CPR was started before the paramedics arrived, and “he’s still around,” she said.

Although the parish nurses volunteer in addition to their regular paid work, they view it as a ministry and she sees it as “raising up people to the full stature of Christ, empowering nurses to do what they love to do,” Kaeton said.

A call to advocacy

At St. Luke’s, Janet Chisholm is blossoming into a new field, that of patient advocate, after experiencing a layoff two years ago in the world of finance. St. Luke’s rector, the Rev. John Mennell, asked her: “What will it take to make you feel whole? What are you passionate about?” Chisholm had just navigated various health-care systems on behalf of her



Chris Knoeller photo

Nurse Stacey Osucha administers a seasonal flu shot at a clinic at St. Paul’s, Chatham.

elderly mother and wondered at the time, “What happens to people who don’t have a bossy daughter to speak up for them?”

St. Luke’s, which received a \$5,500 ACTS/VIM grant, set up what it calls a Health Advocacy Ministry. Chisholm goes to bat for some of the most vulnerable people who come to the church, helping them fill out forms and find health providers.

“I recently started working with the guests at Toni’s Kitchen [a St. Luke’s ministry that serves a free lunch three times per week], helping them access the health system,” she said. “We had a

homeless gentleman hospitalized in poor condition. I went to the hospital, spoke to the social worker and the case manager to tell them that releasing him on his own recognizance was not a safe situation.”

They were trying to find options for the man when he died in the hospital, said Chisholm. “It was important to step in; just because this is a homeless man doesn’t mean nobody’s paying attention.”

Ironically, Chisholm, who is 60 and too young for retirement, needs health coverage of her own. Because her position is a volunteer one, St. Luke’s is using some of its grant money to pay for her health insurance.

Always interested in the world of medicine, Chisholm has trained as a hospice volunteer and is taking clinical pastoral education courses. “I love working with patients, hearing their stories, letting them know God is with them on this journey.”

She doesn’t miss the world of foreign-exchange trading. “I used to say that what I do for a living has no social redeeming value, because your basic job is to make money,” she said. “I am doing a complete career change. It is very, very exciting. I never really understood what the word ‘call’ meant. I really feel called to this work.”

Solange De Santis is a New York-based writer.

Stopping flu’s spread

From those serving its youngest members to those housing its oldest, various Diocese of Newark institutions are taking measures to contain the spread of the H1N1 and seasonal flu viruses.

The diocesan website (www.dioceseofnewark.org) offers information for individuals and congregations, including tips on preventing the transmission of disease, resources such as posters and guides, and links to websites such as for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov).

At All Saints Episcopal Day School in Hoboken, a big part of the campaign against the flu is “keeping people calm,” said Head of School Jill Singleton. Last spring, when the H1N1 (then called swine flu) virus first appeared, people seemed more panicked, she noted. But now, since more information has become available, “parents are being calmer.”

Singleton said she was keeping parents updated and All Saints was stressing such precautions as hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer. The school has seen absences due to flu – in mid-November at one point “more than 10 percent of our population was out” – but the outbreak is also an opportunity to emphasize that school and parents “are really in partnership raising this kid,” Singleton said.

St. Philip’s Academy in Newark has had no absences because of flu, said Head of School Miguel Brito. Seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines are being made available for faculty, students and parents, he said. “We’re also employing the usual best practices - encouraging kids to cough into their sleeves or elbows and wash their hands.”

The school has plentiful supplies of hand sanitizer available, he said, and volunteers such as parents on lunch duty are wearing plastic gloves to minimize germ transmission.

Christ Hospital in Jersey City is engaged in what Public Relations Manager Eileen Videtti called “an all-out effort to protect the health and safety of our patients and staff.” In November, the hospital announced that visitors younger than 18 would not be allowed to see patients because the H1N1 flu has hit young people harder than adults. As of press time, the restriction was imposed until further notice.

The hospital’s lobby now displays a poster asking that adult visitors who may not be feeling well share get-well wishes by sending a card or making a phone call. Visitors also are advised to wear a mask, and the hospital is making them available, Videtti said. Christ Hospital is urging staff and physicians to be vaccinated for both seasonal and H1N1 flu, Videtti added. As of mid-November, the facility did not have any patients hospitalized with the H1N1 virus.

At Heath Village, a retirement community in Hackettstown, residents and staff are being offered free seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccinations, said Vivian Blandura, director of clinical services. “We are encouraging everyone to get it.”

The facility also has distributed pamphlets to all staff concerning proper hand-washing procedure and other methods of infection control.

– Solange De Santis



Cathy Miller photo

Keara Sax, 7½, from Westchester, Pa., holds Bishop Mark Beckwith’s crozier during his rededication speech. Keara’s grandfather George is a resident of House of the Good Shepherd.

Good Shepherd nursing center renovated

Bishop Mark Beckwith raised his crozier before more than 100 people in the newly renovated Skilled Nursing Center at the House of the Good Shepherd Continuing Care Retirement Community outside Hackettstown and gave his special blessing to officially mark the rededication of the center.

Residents, family, staff and friends of Good Shepherd gathered for the Sept. 27 ceremony, which also included board members, clergy and other guests.

“The Skilled Nursing Center has a whole new look,” said a smiling James McCracken, executive director, as he looked over the changes. “We are very excited about it – and so are the residents who can now enjoy all the new amenities available to them.”

The dining room and recreation areas were upgraded and remodeled in bright fresh colors. Resident rooms also received a fresh look, with newly redecorated features such as flat-screen TVs and other modern conveniences.

“Our recently completed renovation project for the Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Centers offers those in need the opportunity to flourish with state-of-the-art amenities in a friendly, personable and caring atmosphere,” declared McCracken.

The center provides long-term nursing care, including memory support, subacute short-term recovery and/or rehabilitation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and hospice, based on an individual’s needs.

The staff of nursing and rehabilitation professionals provides around-the-clock nursing care.

To schedule a visit to

the remodeled center, call Mary Collani, at 908-684-5927. More information is available at www.hotgs.org.



Cathy Miller photo

Passing the peace during the rededication service.

Storefront

Continued from page 1

worship experiences, community support programs and social events. Specific programs range from career-networking groups where participants learn about resume writing, interview preparation and job-searching skills to art classes on papermaking, painting and bookmaking.

Prayer meetings feature contemporary texts and Scripture readings to help guide people in their spiritual journeys. Bible studies aim to help those who are seeking a deeper connection to the gospel. Zazen Buddhist Meditation is offered to help people deal with the stresses of daily life.

Programs for children include homework assistance, Bible story time and movie nights. Light on Main also offers a cyber café and book exchange.

Jeanne Rohach came to know the Light on Main community through its Finding Faith Forums held in October. Offered weekly, each consisted of a dialogue on different faith traditions with a light meal.

"If every church had a storefront, the world would change for the better," Rohach said.

The forums helped her connect to her faith and walk with God while not stressing any particular religious practice, she said. "Stepping out of the walls of the church building and

extending a welcoming presence to the community is how the church can meet people where they are."

Rohach's positive experience led her to offer her services as a self-esteem and wellness counselor to develop programs to be offered at Light on Main.

Future program offerings will be determined by those participants and volunteers from St. John's who feel called to share their gifts with the Boonton community.

Light on Main project is a concrete way to show love for their neighbors, Wurm concluded. "This is a place where no one is served, because we all serve each other. That is what evangelism is about."

For more information, call 973-334-3655 or visit www.lightonmain.com.

Cathie Studwell attends St. John the Divine, Hasbrouck Heights.



Steven Boston photos

Top right, Members of St. John's, Boonton, begin a procession from the church doors to the congregation's new storefront ministry on Sept. 27. Above, the Rev. Laurie Wurm, St. John's rector, sprinkles holy water during the service dedicating Light on Main.

Grant to fund internships

By Carole Ann King

The Diocese of Newark recently won a \$25,000 grant from Trinity Wall Street in Manhattan to start a Young Adult Urban Internship Program in Newark, a program for which Bishop Mark Beckwith has been laying the foundation for almost two years, according to Kaileen Alston, director of youth and young adult ministries for the diocese.

Beckwith and several diocesan clergy, who are members of the team helping to design the program, were part of a group seeking to develop a social justice-oriented urban ministry program in the New York Metropolitan area, including the Diocese of Newark. The internship program is a result of their efforts and those of Alston, who met with the director of a similar program in New York and applied for the grant.

Starting in August, Newark's internship program will give five 19- to 27-year-olds a year-long residential internship to discern their "calling" while serving in social justice-oriented jobs in the diocese and living in "intentional community," with the common purpose of developing servant leadership skills and deepening spiritual awareness.

"Through the program, we hope to nurture community leaders who have a heart for ministry, an understanding of the complexities of daily urban life and the desire to integrate their spirituality and desire to serve into their very being," Alston said.

Trinity Wall Street gave five grants to similar young-adult internship programs affiliated with Episcopal Service Corps, bringing the total number of such programs to 13

nationwide in places as diverse as Spokane, Wash.; Omaha, Neb.; Los Angeles; New York; and Chapel Hill, N.C. Those interested in participating can apply through the ESC website (www.episcopalservicecorp.org) and, if selected, have the opportunity to serve in any one of the locations. ESC is also affiliated with Americorp, which means that there is the opportunity for forbearance on federal student loans and end-of-the-program educational grants. The Newark program also is affiliated with the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service.



Kaileen Alston

The diocese has been working with St. Andrew's Church, Newark, for the possible use of its vacant rectory as a residence for the five interns, Alston said. The rectory is in the Clinton Hill section of Newark, where the diocese is involved in community rebuilding.

The interns will be selected by May 1 and will arrive in Newark in late August. Currently, however, one of the biggest tasks is finding appropriate employers in social justice arenas – such as day-care centers, foster-care programs, health and wellness agencies, foreclosure programs, nutritional ministries, and environmental-justice and immigration programs – willing to pay the interns an average base salary of \$21,000 each. The internship program will pay for health benefits and a small stipend for each intern.

The program also will need mentors and spiritual directors for the interns.

For more information, contact Kaileen Alston, at kalston@dioceseofnewark.org or 973-430-9991.

Carole Ann King attends St. Peter's, Morristown.

Deacon Kathleen Ballard, prison committee honored

Offender Aid and Restoration of Essex County recently honored the Rev. Kathleen Ballard with the 2009 PATCH (Parents and Their Children) Humanitarian Award for her volunteer work as a mentor and teacher of children whose mothers are incarcerated in the Essex County jail. OAR also presented the Prison Ministry Committee of the Diocese of Newark with its 2009 Humanitarian Award for its support and commitment to its mission.

At the Oct. 28 event, Ballard was recognized for her many years of service to the Saturday morning program, Learning By Experience, which tutors youngsters ages 7 to 15 in basic academics, as well as activities in creativity, teamwork and leadership. Ballard is a deacon at House of Prayer in Newark and treasurer for the Prison Ministry Committee.

Committee president the Rev. Pamela Bakal, rector of Grace Church in Nutley, received the award on behalf of the committee. In the past year, the committee raised more than \$3,000 for OAR by hosting an off-Broadway production of *The Castle*, performed at St. Michael's, Wayne. Every year, the committee hosts a back-to-school drive to fill new backpacks with school supplies and a Christmas toy party. It also contributes to the transportation of PATCH children to visit their moms in jail. For the past five summers, the committee has supported OAR in sending 12 PATCH kids to a one-week overnight camp.

Top right, the Rev. Pamela Bakal receives the OAR award on behalf of the diocesan prison committee. Right, the Rev. Kathleen Ballard holds the plaque for her Humanitarian Award, accompanied by her granddaughter, Dawn Julian.

OAR's mission is to help stop the cycle of crime through offender rehabilitation by providing a variety of intervention and support services designed to promote individual responsibility through housing, education, employment and counseling. OAR also works with offenders' children through its Patchwork Family Center.

For more information about the Prison Ministry Committee, contact the Rev. Pamela Bakal at ftbrpam@optonline.net or the Rev. Audrey Hasselbrook at ahasselbrook@optonline.net.



Epiphany Literacy Program honored

The Church of the Epiphany Literacy Program in Orange was among five satellite programs honored at the Literacy Volunteers of America Annual Awards Ceremony held Oct. 22 at the East Orange Public Library.

LVA is a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to providing free adult-literacy services. Parishioner Lauren Harrison, Ph.D., initiated the program at Epiphany last year when looking for opportunities for congregational development that would provide value to the community and increase the church's visibility.

More than 300 people attended the awards ceremony, themed Together We Succeed, where Epiphany tutors Harrison, Beverley Hamiton and Carol Taylor and Epiphany English as a Second Language students Oswald Brown, Hagi Dukureh

and Babouche Nouioua were recognized for their achievements.

Brown was the program's first student. As a result of his progress, he was able to fill out a job application without assistance and subsequently was hired as a cook. Dukerah, originally from Gambia, and Nouioua, a native of Algeria, are making progress towards their goals of gaining U.S. citizenship. Harrison and Hamilton received certificates for tutoring more than 50 hours in 2008-2009.

Epiphany's literacy class is held Wednesdays from 6-8 p.m. Anyone interested in participating as a tutor or a student can contact the church at 973 676-8887 or e-mail Harrison at Lauren.harrison@comcast.net for more information. Prospective students are required to be tested for placement with a tutor at the LVA offices on the campus of Bloomfield College.

Lilly grant provides 'Sabbath time' for Atonement's Weber

Church of the Atonement, Tenafly, recently received a grant of \$36,755 to enable its rector, the Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber, to participate in the 2009 National Clergy Renewal Program funded by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment. It is one of 149 congregations across the country that will support their ministers in the program.

Now in its 10th year, the program invites Christian congregations and ministers to consider and plan a period of intentional reflection and renewal. It provides a time for ministers to take a break from their daily obligations and gain the fresh perspective and renewed energy that a carefully considered "sabbath time" of travel, study, rest and

prayer can provide.

The purpose of Atonement's program, as described in its proposal, is to "provide an opportunity for both the rector and congregation to more deeply consider how art, creativity and Celtic traditions can further inform and inspire our Christian identity, worship, spiritual formation for all ages and commitment to environmental justice." Beginning in May, Weber will spend about seven weeks traveling to Celtic sites, museums and retreat houses in the British Isles, as well as visiting family members she never has met in Alsace, France. The grant will allow her to travel with her husband, Dean, and to travel one week with her mother and nephew in Alsace. She

then will spend five weeks incorporating her findings in paintings developed in her studio at the rectory, as well as developing a blog on beauty, creativity and ethics.

As part of this process, Atonement has formed a "Sabbath Team" chaired by Deacon Joanne O'Neill to suggest and implement ways of incorporating sabbath time into Sunday mornings and everyday life. The grant covers travel costs for Weber as well as funds to pay for supply clergy and parish events before, during and after the sabbatical.

Nearly 1,300 congregations have received clergy-renewal grants since 2000. "We have heard wonderful stories from these pastors who already have experienced their

sabbaticals," said Craig Dykstra, endowment senior vice president for religion. "Their time away has freed them up to pursue personal interests and needs in ways that have given them new energy for ministry – and their congregations have discovered that they didn't fall apart without their minister around. Indeed, they, too, experienced refreshment and a new-found sense of their own strengths."

"We hope to strengthen the efforts of today's excellent pastors, because it is no secret that pastors who have reconnected themselves to the passions that led them to the ministry in the first place are more likely to lead healthy and vibrant congregations," Dykstra said.

Brueggemann

Continued from page 1

"I have come to think that that atmosphere of abundance that is generated by the gospel may be the most important ministry because we live in a culture of anxious scarcity," he said. "And if the church is to engage in a countercultural way, then it has to walk and talk like Elijah did for that widow and the women in the village, that there is more than enough because God continues to give good gifts."

"Abundance is not a statistic; it's an attitude," Brueggemann said. "The Creator God is the giver who keeps on giving, and we are on the receiving end of it all. As soon as I forget that I'm on the receiving end and as soon as I start measuring how much I've got to get my hands on, I cease to be

generous, which I think is why that gesture of being given bread is so important."

Disciples, he said, are "recruited to be carriers of newness."

Asked whether everyone receives a "mantle," Brueggemann noted how Elisha had a band of disciples who supported him without having his same gifts. "Where those gifts are given, you need an infrastructure of sustenance to keep it going."

"I don't want to overstate it," he added, "but I do believe that everybody has a measure of transformative energy. It may be a small measure. But pastors who make calls on dreadfully disabled and immobilized people often will bear witness that 'I got energy from being with her' and so on."

This article originally appeared on Episcopal Life Online.

Discussion focuses on 'a culture of call'

By Sharon Sheridan

Hearing God's call can take you by surprise and sometimes means doing things a new way, concluded several participants in a guided table discussion about creating a culture of call.

The discussions followed a keynote address by noted biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann on "Becoming Disciples – How will we create a culture of call?" on Oct. 25 at St. Andrew & Holy Communion, South Orange. After the address and dinner, several tables of laity and clergy from throughout the Diocese of Newark each discussed what call means for them and their congregations.

"God calls us sometimes in very strange ways," said Kathy DeWalt of St. Luke's, Montclair, one of the discussion leaders. Mother of three travel-soccer players, she described how she became a soccer coach because one son's coach was "emotionally abusing" the team members.

"It was a call from God," she said. "Nothing else got me through soccer."

Another St. Luke's parishioner, Janet Chisholm, described her call to a new career following her layoff from a 33-year career in international finance.

"I always considered 'the call' meaning to the priesthood," she said. "I have been pursuing – and it's been a slow slog with a few detours – the path towards becoming a patient advocate. And some months ago, I said to my rector, 'I never really understood what call means, but now I really do.' I feel that I'm good at this, which I never say about myself. I thought, 'This is what God is calling me to do.'"

For Gladys Hughes, a member of Christ Church, Belleville, call involves being open to the Spirit's message. "It's that awareness of being called, of being open to it."

Hughes attended the diocesan event on

the day Christ Church held its final service before combining congregations with St. Peter's, Clifton [see article, page 8], while continuing its soup kitchen and other outreach activities in its Belleville building.

"It's so clear to me that this has been a call," she said of the church's commitment to find a way to continue to serve the community even as it moves its worship services elsewhere.

A call requires room to be heard and flourish, DeWalt's group agreed.

"Leave that space for the Spirit to relate to you," said Virtue Benjamin of Christ Church, East Orange.

Sometimes that means doing something differently.

"As disciples, it's easy to say, 'I've always done it that way' or 'This is how it has to be,'" DeWalt said.

Ministries have to "grow from the people," Chisholm said.

It's important to listen to newcomers' sense of call, instead of just assigning them a committee when they arrive, DeWalt said. Sometimes, she said, "We have a box that we want to put our newcomers in. We don't give them a chance to tell us what they want to do or what the Spirit is telling them to do."

Churches should do more to help members identify their gifts for ministry, so they can pledge time and talent as well as money, said Susan Kynor of Christ Church, East Orange.

It's also important to encourage leadership development and help people move into leadership, she said.

Churches also can share ministry resources, DeWalt said, recalling how St. Luke's borrowed a labyrinth from nearby St. John's. "We can grow ministries by raising up talents instead of saying, 'We can't do that because none of us can afford it.'"

Chisholm added, "We do all play for the same team."

Giving thanks, fighting hunger



Kathy DeWalt of St. Luke's, Montclair, and Erin Smythe of St. James', Upper Montclair, arrange Christmas items at the "We Are Thankful" Diocesan Buffet and Fair Trade Expo held by members of the Youth Ministry at St. Luke's on Nov. 21. The event netted more than \$1,800 for hunger relief in communities in the diocese.

Diocesan Roundup

Absalom Jones service

Bishop Mark Beckwith will preside at a festive Eucharist celebrating the life and ministry of the Rev. Absalom Jones at Trinity and St. Philip's Cathedral at 3 p.m. Feb. 7. The Rev. Darryl F. James, priest-in-charge at Grace Church, Jamaica, N.Y., and a former national Union of Black Episcopalians president, will preach. Diocesan clergy are invited to vest and walk in the procession wearing white stoles. Choirs and musicians from around the diocese are encouraged to participate in a combined choir.

Jones was the first African-American ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church. Born into slavery in 1746, Jones was ordained in the Diocese of Pennsylvania in 1804 and became the rector of the historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Philadelphia.

For more information, contact the Rev. Joseph A. Harmon, liturgical coordinator for the celebration, at 201-434-4810 or Lyric7@comcast.net. Those needing signing for the hearing impaired should contact Deacon Kathleen Ballard at 973-762-4226 or kathleengrammak@verizon.net before Jan. 25.

Arts milestone

Grace Church Van Vorst, Jersey City, recently celebrated its 20th Annual Cathedral Arts Festival, the largest and longest-running celebration of artists and the arts in Hudson County.

"Twenty years ago, Grace Church had just completed a renovation which opened up the sanctuary so that it could be used for – among other things – performance, banqueting, dancing and gallerying art,"

recalled Grace parishioner Bayla Kallstrom, a festival founder. "As soon as we recognized the possibilities, we soon discovered that Jersey City was a cornucopia of talent."

"Originally, the festival was called the Cathedral Arts Market," Kallstrom said. "It was based on the concept that, once upon a time, cathedral spaces belonged to the entire community and served it in many ways – places of worship, socializing, commerce, etc. We wanted to create something that reflected our congregation's theme of 'Community, Diversity and Creativity.'"

A percentage of artwork sales support the church and its ministries.

Anniversary event

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori will preach at the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist Jan. 17 in the culminating event of the year-long 150th-anniversary celebration of St. Andrew & Holy Communion in South Orange. Several prominent church leaders have visited the parish during the anniversary year, including the Anglican Communion's first female bishop, Barbara Harris, and North Carolina Bishop Michael Curry.

The parish began as Church of the Holy Communion and first met in a local Methodist church before its Gothic Revival building was constructed. In 1973, it consolidated with St. Andrew, founded in 1892.

For more information about the Jan. 17 celebration, call the church at 973-763-2355.

Staff change

Katie Palmer, financial and systems analyst, will be leaving the staff of Episcopal House because her husband accepted a job out of state.

God continues to call throughout our lives

By Lucy Ann Dure

Before I was in the womb you knew me – and so I said, “Here I am.”

In today’s world, many don’t feel comfortable with the idea of a “call from God.” Maybe this is justifiable. A personal experience of God’s call seems to suggest that individuals can hear the voice of God like a personal telephone call that no one else hears. And it also conjures a voice of authority, stirring concerns that the individual’s experience of a call can’t be questioned without questioning God, too.

How does one distinguish an individual’s own inner voice from that of God? The difficulties of discerning one from the other are the work of prayer and, most of all, a faithful community, listening together.

But we can not dismiss the idea of a call from God as fanciful and out-of-date. For one thing, the Bible is replete with stories of God calling people to act on God’s behalf to further the plan of salvation, the healing and wholeness of the world.

How can we make sense of those “call stories” if not by reflecting on our own experience? Think especially of the calls of Abraham and all the patriarchs, the call of Moses at the burning bush, the call of Isaiah and all the prophets in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Jesus himself answers God’s call

at his baptism with his answer to the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me ...” (Luke 4:18-19). Are we to read about these calls and say, “That was then ... but now God is finished calling?”

My own experience of calls from God – yes calls, in the plural – to ordained ministry, to be a partner in marriage, to be a parent, have not happened anything like the calls of Moses or Abraham or Jesus, and yet they seem to me to substantially fulfill the biblical characteristics of calls from God.

For one thing, like in those stories, at first I always am unwilling, even unable, to hear and pay attention to something that is deeply true about myself and what I need to become. Not only am I seemingly deaf to God, but I also can not seem to hear what others are hearing or seeing or saying about me. So it seems only God can get through to me to make the change that will fulfill God’s plan for my own healing and wholeness.

As an example, I would describe my decision to become a parent as answering God’s call. At first I did not want to hear it – or could not hear it. Why? Like the



The Rev. Lucy Ann Dure with her husband, Davis, and their daughter, Eliza.

stories of God’s calls in the Bible, I felt unequal to the task, because I so grieved at not being able to have a biological child with my husband.

But one day, it dawned on me that my grief might be an indication that I could not let go not only of having a child, but also of wanting to become a parent, because God would not let me let it go ... because that was who God had designed me uniquely to be.

Biblical faith in Jesus is trusting his promise of being more, the abundant and transforming life of being made in

the Father loves the Son, as God’s adopted children. My grief became unacceptable to me when I really heard and believed that God promises us and even me personally this abundant life. When I became a parent and adopted our little girl Eliza six years ago, I answered God’s call to become who I was designed by God to be, and I since have learned again and again the joy of his sustaining help.

The Rev. Lucy Ann Dure is rector of Holy Spirit, Verona.

Joint mission trip benefits hurricane survivors

By Marie Panton

For three congregations in the diocese, a desire for mission led to a collaborative adventure.

Last July, nine youth and three adults from St. Paul’s, Morris Plains, St. Gregory’s, Parsippany, and All Saints’, Millington, traveled on a mission trip to Bay St. Louis, Miss., just east of New Orleans, and worked for six days to help with the Hurricane Katrina cleanup that continues four years after the storm ravaged the area. Stationed at Mission on the Bay, an ongoing ministry on the grounds of Christ Episcopal Church, the group shared the camp with about 100 Episcopal, Lutheran and Reformed youth group members from North Dakota, Georgia, Connecticut and Michigan.

“Many of our congregations have small youth groups, so joining forces to create a critical mass for a mission trip was a powerful draw,” said the Rev. Paul Olsson, St. Paul’s rector.

The St. Gregory’s youth constantly asked when they would do a mission trip, said the Rev. Susan Sica. “We have done several things over the years, such as a combined Lector Series, Easter Vigil with a few kids. But three kids does not a mission trip make.”

“We finally said, ‘Let’s just do it,’ and divided up responsibilities, held a fundraiser and then just made it

happen,” she said.

According to Olsson, the Rev. Vicki McGrath, All Saints’ rector, helped lay the groundwork because of her extensive experience shepherding youth mission trips. “She and I explored options and decided to work through an Episcopal Church-funded group that offers a variety of pre-packaged mission trip opportunities.”

“I have always participated in trips with two or more parishes,” said McGrath, “but this trip was different because it was the first time I assisted with cleanup after a natural disaster.”

The churches shared the planning and preparation and held a joint fundraiser, Olsson said. “St. Paul’s had the space to hold a spaghetti dinner that St. Gregory’s did not. St. Gregory’s had mouths to feed that St. Paul’s did not.”

All the youth attended prep sessions at the three parishes and had an opportunity to meet youth from other parts of the district. “During our time together, enduring bonds were created between the youth,” he said.

St. Gregory’s member Myles Persaud, 16, said he wanted to participate in the trip to explore his faith while contributing to the reconstruction of the Bay St. Louis community. “Helping to repair a house which was damaged by Hurricane Katrina was very meaningful [to me], and the people were appreciative for the help that they received.”

For Rebecca Sica, 18, daughter of Susan Sica, participating seemed like the right thing to do. “I always wanted to help others in a large way, but somehow I never could get around to it,” she said. “When this opportunity arrived, I seized it.”

The work involved rebuilding in Bay St. Louis and Gulfport. They spent one day in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward working through the new Episcopal mission plant, All Souls’. The participants tiled the floor of a home in Gulfport, prepped dry wall, helped to provide day care for children at All Souls’, moved furniture for elderly residents reclaiming their recently renovated home and watered more than 100 newly planted crepe myrtle shrubs. The watering was a seemingly mundane but important task, said Olsson, because it freed the local public works to continue paving roads and supervising the rebuilding of the town’s firehouse.



Helping with post-Hurricane Katrina cleanup efforts during a recent mission trip increased her belief in God, said Rebecca Sica.

Will Wenrich, 18, who attends St. Paul’s, said he was moved by what he saw in the town. “At first I saw a normal town that looked to me like all the rebuilding was already done, but by the time we reached the camp I realized I was wrong. Roads were being repaired as well as a few houses ... the only houses by the coast that were still standing were the select few that were hurricane-proof.

“I also saw people coming together,” Wenrich said. “Strangers came together to help these people and bring their lives back to normal. I saw grown men break down [and cry] because of all the effort people put into the repairs.”

Rebecca Sica said the trip increased her belief in God. “In Mississippi, you could tell that the people had been through so much, yet everyone we met was still so hopeful ... I couldn’t help but to see God in that.”

Freelance writer Marie Panton is a former features editor of Episcopal Life.



Youth and adults from three Diocese of Newark congregations participated in a joint mission trip to Bay St. Louis and Gulfport, Miss., and New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward, where they helped with rebuilding and cleanup efforts.

For four parishes, a time to embrace – and collaborate

By Kirk Petersen

Journalists have been known to turn an old saying on its head by declaring: “Good news is no news.” So perhaps it is not surprising that the coverage of Christ Church in Belleville accentuated the negative.

“After surviving British rule and a fire that destroyed its building, a 263-year-old Belleville church ... facing declining contributions ... is planning to merge its congregation on Washington Avenue with a Clifton church,” St. Peter’s, the *Star-Ledger* reported in late September. A third-generation parishioner was quoted saying, “This is a traumatic thing for all of us.” One month later, the *Belleville Times* reported that Christ Church had closed its doors.

Half an hour to the north, apparently unwatched by the media, two other Episcopal parishes were involved in a transition that had been progressing at a more deliberative pace. In November, following a discernment process that began well over a year earlier, the diocesan Standing Committee approved an agreement to “unify” Epiphany, Allendale, and Good Shepherd, Midland Park. “We have parties ahead of us” in celebration, said Joan Zanotti, a Good Shepherd warden.

The unified church will worship in Epiphany’s sanctuary with Epiphany’s rector, the Rev. Michael Allen, but incorporate

shortfall prompted the initial discussions.

In Midland Park, existing financial concerns escalated when the Rev. Charles Arlin announced plans to retire and lay leaders realized it was unlikely they could attract and afford a full-time rector. In Belleville, Christ Church was deeply in debt and so strapped for income that the church had to discontinue paying the vicar’s salary in the spring of 2009.

Good Shepherd’s discussions about long-term alternatives had started in late 2007, as the parish began developing its 2008 budget. “We realized that we no longer had a critical mass,” said Salim Dallal, a vestry member and former warden. “We were covering costs,” but membership was slowly dwindling.

Following Arlin’s announcement, an Options Committee began informal discussions with other Episcopal parishes in District 10. By several accounts, when the committee sat down with leaders of Epiphany in Allendale, a church of roughly equal size located three miles away, it was clear immediately that the two congregations had very similar values and interests.

“There was a high level of comfort,” said Bernie Milano, an Epiphany warden. “It was apparent to everyone that this was a wonderful blending.”

The Options Committee became the Feasibility Committee, and a network of other committees formed to discuss critical aspects

of parish life, including worship, stewardship, outreach and Christian education. The Rev. Stuart Smith, rector at nearby St. Clement’s in Hawthorne, facilitated the discussions, and the parishes worked in consultation with diocesan Canon to the Ordinary Greg Jacobs.

At one key meeting, Milano brought a list of eight principles that he proposed as the basis for a potential agreement between the two parishes. Quite independently, Dallal had written his own 10-item list. The two documents were virtually identical.

“We really feel like the Holy Spirit was apparent in a lot of this,” Allen said.

Dallal’s list, with a few tweaks, became the one-page Articles of Agreement that both parishes ratified in May. Among other things, it provides that the combined parish will be governed for the first two years, under Allen’s pastoral leadership, by a new vestry with equal membership from the two parishes and that the Good Shepherd sanctuary and parish hall will be retained for at least two years for outreach and rental income.

Working from the agreement, various joint committees developed the 14-page plan



Sarah Smith photo

the Standing Committee approved. If Diocesan Convention approves the plan Jan. 30, Bishop Mark Beckwith plans to install the new Trinity vestry at a ceremony the following day. Allen, who started at Epiphany in September 2007, would become the spiritual leader of a parish that had roughly doubled in size, to around 100 families.

A faster transition

The new relationship between Christ Church and St. Peter’s came together much more quickly but has not progressed as far. The last service in Belleville was Oct. 25, and car-pooling is now provided each Sunday from Christ Church to St. Peter’s, eight miles north.

Christ Church had fallen on hard times, with a congregation of about 40 responsible for a budget that included building maintenance bills of \$90,000 annually, said the rector, Paul Walker, who since has been called to a parish in the Diocese of Bethlehem.

Compared to the methodical process followed by Epiphany and Good Shepherd, “We’re doing it kind of backwards,” said Rev. Peter DeFranco, priest-in-charge at St. Peter’s, which was approximately twice as large as Christ Church. The formal relationship between the two parishes has not been resolved – for now they simply worship together. Christ Church is negotiating to rent its sanctuary to a congregation from another denomination.

For the lay leadership of Christ Church, the key objective has been to maintain the outreach ministry in the Belleville building, which includes a thrift shop and a “Care Closet” that provides personal and household cleaning products to people on food stamps, which cannot be used for those products. A soup kitchen there feeds 70 to 75 people three days a week, said Gladys Hughes, a warden at Christ Church.

Unlike Good Shepherd, Christ Church did not consider other possible partners, Hughes said, because “it was a good fit” with St. Peter’s. “There is no doubt in anybody’s mind that this is the right place to be.” Despite the difference in parish size, the discussions leading to the new arrangement were “a very mutual process,” she said.

Finances and formal governance of the two parishes are separate for now, but DeFranco and the St. Peter’s parishioners

are working hard to welcome their brethren from Christ Church. A chapel in the St. Peter’s building has been renamed Christ Chapel, and historic items from Christ Church are used in each Eucharist. “Both churches’ sacred vessels are used simultaneously,” DeFranco said.

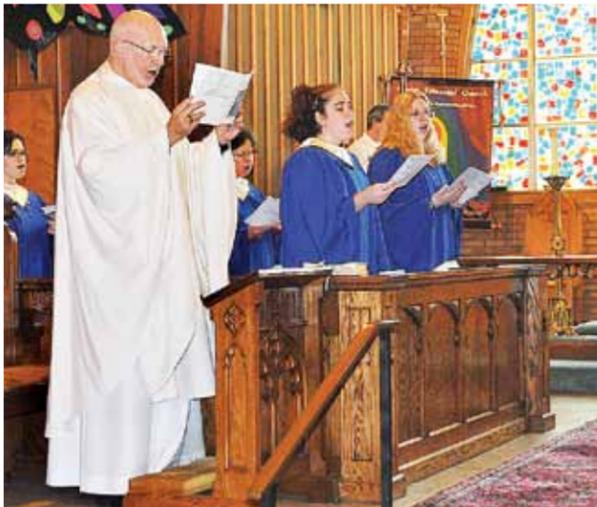
On Nov. 1, the first combined service at St. Peter’s, every worshiper received a yellow rose at the conclusion of the service. At the reception that followed, parishioners from both churches were encouraged to exchange roses with someone they did not know and to begin developing a relationship. “People were crying – it was just such a moving thing,” DeFranco said.

The infusion of people from Christ Church has been “energizing” for St. Peter’s, which in turn will provide a larger pool of volunteers for the Belleville outreach ministries, DeFranco said. “They were a slightly ‘higher’ church than we were,” so the celebration of Christ the King on Nov. 22 was planned in a high-church style.

The discussions between Epiphany/Good Shepherd and Christ/St. Peter’s were driven firmly by the parishes themselves, said Jacobs, the diocesan point person for both arrangements. They represent two of many ways in which churches can collaborate.

Jacobs said he hoped all of the diocese’s 109 congregations continually would look for ways to work with other churches, both inside and outside the denomination. Collaboration shouldn’t be thought of as a stop-gap financial measure, he said, but rather as a way to realize “vital and vibrant ministries” that “offer abundance and refuse to operate out of a theology of scarcity.”

Kirk Petersen attends St. George’s, Maplewood.



Sarah Smith photo

The Rev. Peter DeFranco, priest-in-charge of St. Peter’s in Clifton, and choir members sing during the first joint worship service with Christ Church, Belleville.

as a new parish under a new name: Trinity Episcopal Church.

The two situations – Belleville/Clifton and Allendale/Midland Park – have both striking similarities and striking differences. Together they tell a story of how faith, fellowship and finances can shape the spiritual development of a community of worship.

Financial pressures

While churches do not exist primarily for financial reasons, economic realities can wield a kind of veto power. In both cases, financial



Sarah Smith photo

Sharon Boccadoro, left, and Mayda Median participated in an exchange of flowers at the end of the St. Peter’s-Christ Church combined service.

Clergy comings and goings

The following clergy changes in the diocese have been announced since the last issue of *The Voice*:

Clergy called as rectors

The Rev. **Elizabeth Wigg Maxwell** by St. Peter’s, Livingston

The Rev. **Kathryn King** by St. Alban’s, Oakland

The Rev. **Timothy Burger** (from the Diocese of Rhode Island), by All Saints, Glen Rock

Bishop’s appointments to priest-in-charge

The Rev. **Ramon Aymerich** (from the Diocese of Massachusetts) to Christ Church, Teaneck

The Rev. **Sonia Waters** to Christ Church, Budd Lake

Departures

The Rev. **Scott Holcombe**, rector of Christ Church, Short Hills

The Rev. **Paul Walker**, rector of Christ Church, Belleville

The Rev. **Randy Webster**

The Rev. **Alan French**, interim at Grace Church, Rutherford

The Rev. **Barton Brown**, interim at St. Peter’s, Livingston

Planned departures

The Rev. **Cooper Conway**, interim at St. Alban’s, Oakland, (TBD)

The Rev. **Lynne Grifo**, interim at All Saints, Glen Rock, (Dec. 13)

The Rev. **Diane Riley**, deacon at All Saints, Glen Rock, (Dec. 13)

Obituaries

The Rev. **George B. Davidson**, 96, died on Nov. 11. Born in Bangalore, India and worked in finance before his ordination to the priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada. He served in Pennsylvania and Connecticut before transferring to the Diocese of Newark, where he was rector of St. Peter’s, Bogota, from 1962 until his retirement in 1978. For the past 10 years, he was associated with Trinity, Moorestown. He is survived by his son, Garth. He was predeceased by his wife, Janice, and a son, Ian.

The Rev. **Rex Fliess** died on Nov. 7. An active member of Grace Church, Westwood, he was ordained a deacon by Bishop Jack Spong in 1979. After Spong ordained him a priest in Chicago, he served churches in the Chicago, Milwaukee and Eau Claire dioceses. Brother-in-law of former diocesan Chancellor Michael Rehill, he is survived by his wife, Claire, and son, Robert.