



The Forward

April 2008

Letter from the Bishop

Alleluia! Christ is Risen.

We are an Easter people—a people who embrace the resurrection of Jesus Christ and have the spirit of the resurrected Christ dwelling within us. I hope that we can take these exciting fifty days of Easter to continue to discover our vision and mission for the Diocese as One Church serving God together. Once again, I encourage you to attend one of the focus group meetings and participate in our ongoing discernment.

Over the next several months, in addition to our recent ordinations, we will welcome a number of new priests to the diocese. St. Stephen's in Fairview will welcome their new rector, Fr. Geoffrey Howson,

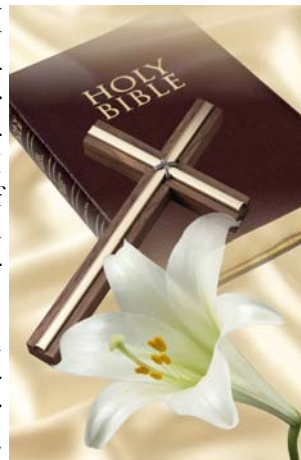
on June 15th (see the story later in this edition of the *Forward*) and St. John's, Franklin and St. Clement's, Greenville will begin interviewing candidates soon. These new priests will come as priests of the Diocese of

Northwestern Pennsylvania who serve particular congregations. Often we think of a priest as 'our priest' rather than a priest of the diocese. The priests of the diocese, though, are not a collection of individuals but a college of priests who serve with the bishop for the advancement of the Kingdom. In a similar way, our parishes and missions are part of a larger diocesan community working together to make known the Good News. The more that we begin to see and understand ourselves as a community, the more we will be able to make God's reconciling love known with one voice of unity. We will be

strengthened in our mission as we welcome new priests into our diocesan community and, later, new congregations.

I know that you will be richly blessed during these Great Fifty Days.

Bishop Sean



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The House of Bishops



Bishop Sean along with other newer members of the House of Bishops

The bishops of The Episcopal Church met at Camp Allen in the Diocese of Texas from March 6-13. The purpose of the meeting, which was grounded in worship and prayer, was for the bishops to be on retreat together to consider matters of reconciliation, to hear about mission initiatives from around the church, to prepare for the Lambeth Conference, and then to take action on business that comes before the bishops of the church.

We Are God's Family by the Rev. John Wesley

I remember the spectacular baseball season of 1979 when the Pittsburgh Pirates won the World Series. I was blessed to be living in Pittsburgh at that time. Every morning during that glorious season the clock radio woke me with the Pirates theme song, sung by the Pointer Sisters: "WE ARE FAMILY!" And indeed, for that one glorious season, virtually everyone living in Pittsburgh actually felt like one gigantic family. We were united by our love affair with baseball and the amazing team, anchored by Willie Stargell, surrounded by such greats as Dave Parker and Omar Moreno, coached by Chuck Tanner. What a year. But, like most things in sports, the glow faded quickly and life went back to normal. But, the one family that is supposed to last forever is "the family of God". One of the verses selected as an opening sentence for Morning Prayer is from Ephesians 2:19 – "you are...fellow-citizens with the saints and *members of the household of God.*" The Collect for Good Friday asks: "Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your *family*". The opening declaration in the Examination of an Ordinand for Priesthood reminds us: "The Church is *the family of God.*" In these and other passages from our Book of Common Prayer, we are reminded that God thinks of his church as his family and (the logical extension of that idea) that he must expect to find the same sense of being "family" among his people in the Church. Two things are afoot in our Diocese to help us to better be a family of Episcopal believers.

The first is the focus groups coming up next month. These groups are being offered as an opportunity for representatives from every congregation in our Diocese to come together and talk about what we ought to be trying to accomplish together. Let's really get behind this and let all our voices be heard. Remember the dates and locations:

April 16	6:30-8:30	St. John's, Franklin
April 20	3:00-5:00	Grace, Ridgway
April 21	6:30-8:30	Saint Mark's, Erie

Second is an all-out effort to improve communication throughout the Diocese. This already includes the Diocesan website and the restoration of the Diocesan newsletter, *The Forward*. But we are also interested in hearing from you about non-electronic forms of communication and especially how to improve two way communication. Vehicles for an exchange of ideas on this topic will be forthcoming.



Diocesan Health Team Prayer Request

This month, we continue to ask your prayers for the implementation of the April focus groups. Pray that both the structure of the event and the questions raised will lead to an open and honest exchange of ideas about the direction of mission and ministry in this diocese. Prayer is foundational to all that we do. We are asking that you pray and that you ask others to pray on our behalf. Thank you.

St. Stephen's, Fairview, Calls New Rector

St. Stephen's, Fairview, recently called a new rector. The Rev. Geoff Howson, currently at Grace Episcopal Church in Kingston, PA, will join St. Stephen's in June of this year.



Fr. Howson, who holds a Master of Divinity from the University of Toronto and a Master of Arts in Medieval History from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, has been a priest for 25 years and has held positions at both large program size churches and small multicultural parishes in both Canada and the United States. He has served in the Dioceses of Ottawa, Toronto, and Bethlehem.

He and his wife, Jan, have six children ranging in age from 15 to 22.

If you get the chance to see Fr. Howson or his family, please welcome them to our diocese.

Daughters of the King: Who Are They? By Robin Murray

The Order of the Daughters of the King is a spiritual, praying order for women who are communicants of the Episcopal Church. We take vows pledging a lifelong commitment to prayer, service and evangelism.

The Grace Chapter of the Daughters of the King was established in July 2005 with six members. Mrs. Grace Miller was a Daughter at Large for many years and brought together a group of women with one common goal: to serve God to the best of their abilities. Mrs. Miller also established the Jr. Daughters of the King in the 1970s while Fr. Calvin Miller was rector of St. John's, Franklin.

The Grace Chapter now has twelve members with several more ladies interested in learning and joining our chapter. We are committed to active intercessory prayer as a service to our parish and community. We have seen prayer in action - what a wonderful and fulfilling experience that is! Our members serve their own ministry by the projects they are active in, such as a healing ministry, Eucharist Lay Ministers, Food Pantry, cards to the sick, etc. Throughout the year we work on several service projects and we've been doing a reading and study from the book, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* by Joanna Weaver which is an excellent book.



If a life of prayer, service and evangelism sounds right for you, you may find you are living that life already and didn't even realize it! If a chapter of the Daughters of the King is something the women of your church would be interested in, please feel free to contact Robin Murray at St. John's, Franklin. There is a twelve week training program we would go through with you and then you would be installed as your own chapter.

Please feel free to call me at 814-374-4046 between 2pm and 7:30 pm or email me at ral-finy@zoominternet.net. Please put Daughters of the King in the subject line.

St. Stephen's, Fairview, Kids' Bible Club Takes Off

Earlier this year, St. Stephen's, Fairview, initiated a Kids' Bible Club that runs on Saturday evenings. Since its inception in February, the program has taken off, averaging 30 children a week, including many children who are not members of St. Stephen's.

The program, designed for children ages 4-10 and running for ten weeks, includes learning a bible story, doing a craft, playing a game, and sharing dinner together (a favorite meal being French toast and ham). The kids rotate through the stations over the course of two hours.

There is a nominal fee of \$10.00 per child, which covers all of the dinners, activities, as well as a t-shirt.

Currently, 75% of the children enrolled in the program are from the community, and not members of St. Stephen's. It



has been an excellent way for the families in the community to get to know one another.

With the program's success, St. Stephen's has decided to continue the program in the fall with another ten week session and another next spring with a week long Vacation Bible School in the summer.

Caryn Franz, St. Stephen's Christian Education director, welcomes the opportunity to speak to other churches and youth leaders on how to start their own programs to reach out to their parishes and their communities. For more information, contact Caryn at St. Stephen's by calling 814-474-5490.



Grace, Ridgway

Bishop Sean's & Canon Martha's Visitation Schedules April 2008

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| April 6th | - Canon Martha - St. Mark's, Erie |
| April 13th | - Bishop Sean - Emmanuel, Emporium |
| April 20th | - Bishop Sean - Church of the Holy Trinity, Brookville
- Canon Martha - Grace Church, Ridgway |
| April 27th | - Bishop Sean - Church of the Holy Spirit, Erie
- Canon Martha - Cathedral of St. Paul, Erie |

Diocesan Council Reminder

Diocesan Council members, please remember the council meeting on Thursday, April 17th. It will be at 7:00 PM at St. John's, Franklin. Please let Vanessa know whether or not you are able to come to the meeting either by phone (814-456-4203) or by e-mail (vbutler@dionwpa.org).

If you have news, story ideas, or pictures that you would like to share with the diocese, please contact Vanessa at the Diocesan Church Center at 814-456-4203 or at vbutler@dionwpa.org.