



The Forward

August 2008

Letter from the Canon

This month's Forward is focused on the ministry of healing and the many expressions of it already present throughout the diocese. Even a cursory reading of the Gospels reveals Jesus' deep engagement in this ministry and his desire for it to continue. I count it a privilege to be able to witness to the awesome power of God working in ways that heal, strengthen, and empower those who seek his grace. I have seen God at work in and through and around those involved in this ministry as they go about doing what God has called all of us to do.

There are many books written on healing, the premier example being *Healing* by Francis MacNutt, which was published by Ave Maria Press in 2001. There are training seminars; I've been to several. There are dos and don'ts and cautions. For me, it is an exciting ministry and I continue to learn as I engage it. But at the end of the day, I always remind myself that it comes down to this: we are called to pray and it is God who acts. We are called to pray and it is God who acts. With this simple statement of faith, I do not take on more than I should. I am not responsible for what does or does not happen. This frees me to boldly ask God to meet the needs of whomever I

am praying for confident that God will indeed respond. God always responds.

There are times when God responds exactly as I was hoping. The specific thing we were praying for does come to pass. There are other times when a seemingly unanswered prayer resulted in gifts and blessings far beyond my wildest expectations. There are also those times when I am unable to discern that God has indeed heard or responded in any way. But I cannot let those times prevent me from persisting in prayer. It may be that in those times, God is doing his mightiest work and it is simply not mine to see.



Throughout the diocese there are many regularly scheduled healing services. I have two requests. First, if you or your congregation has such a service, please make it known to us at the Diocesan Church Center so that we might refer folks in need to one in their area. Second, the bishop and I have wanted to make healing services a regular part of our ministry and we have not yet successfully worked it into our schedule. Please pray for the time and space to be released so that we are able to engage in this ministry.

Blessings,

Canon Martha

Inside this issue:

Health Ministry	2
Prayer for Healing	3
Diocesan Convention Reminders	3
Health Benefits Partnership Conference	4
Healing Service at Emmanuel, Corry	4

Lambeth Updates

For ongoing coverage of Lambeth, go to our website at www.dionwpa.org. From there, you will be able to link to the Episcopal Church's news coverage, as well as the Bishops' blogs on Lambeth, which Bishop Sean is participating in. Also on the website are photos that Bishop Sean and Carly have sent back already; the photo pages are updated on a fairly regular basis, so keep an eye on them.

The Forward

Health Ministry by Joyce Wilhelm, NEHM Diocesan Liaison

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them the power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. - Matthew 10:1

Health and healing are as much of a part of parish life as is teaching and preaching. Parishes in our Diocese will be able to become more vital and enlivened as parishioners are mobilized to better care for themselves and one another. Health ministry in a local congregation is an intentional ministry focusing on both healing and health by combining the ancient traditions of the Christian community and the knowledge and tools of modern health care. Today the health care system and the church offer an opportunity for health-care professionals and laity to work together to keep people well, to empower them, to educate them, to advocate for them, to teach them, and to care for them. Below are some commonly asked questions about Health Ministry.

What is Health Ministry?

Health Ministry focuses on health promotion, health maintenance, wellness, and disease prevention. It holds the spiritual dimension to be central to the practice, but also encompasses the physical, psychological, and social dimensions of the faith community. It is a living witness to the healing activity of God through the local congregation, encouraging whole person health.



Where is Health Ministry practiced?

Health Ministry is practiced within a faith community and is based upon assessed needs of the congregation or group within that community.



What is a Parish Nurse?

The Parish Nurse, a Health Ministry facilitator, collaborates with clergy and pastoral care. The role varies depending on the needs of the parishioner. The Parish Nurse: supports parishioners as a wellness advocate; develops seminars related to health care; teaches short courses in health and health care; screens for existing or potential health problems; clarifies physician directions; initiates health and safety assessment; listens; offers prayer; and maintains confidentiality.

Will the congregation as a whole benefit from Health Ministry?

It raises the awareness of the congregation to its ministry's effect on the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of the whole Christian community. It has been shown that, in a congregation committed to Health Ministry, a deeper sense of Christian community exists than ever before!

How would my congregation start a Health Ministry?

If you or your parish are interested in Health Ministry and need more information, please contact me [Joyce Wilhelm] either by phone (814-474-5490) or by e-mail (jwilhelm001@aol.com). If you would like to discuss this topic further or establish a Health Ministry in your parish, please contact me; I have many resources to share with you. May God richly bless you!



Prayer for Healing By the Revs. Larry & Sue Scofield

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. - James 5:14

We have been praying for healing at Emmanuel Church, Corry, as part of our regular Sunday worship for eleven or twelve years now. For about three years, Emmanuel has been offering quarterly public services of prayer for healing on Sunday evenings. In addition, we have been participating in similar "Healing Services" conducted in other congregations whenever we were able to attend. All that is probably why we were asked to write this article, though we do not claim to be experts. Although it has become uncommon, we read scripture as instructing that this should be an ordinary part of the life of faith for maturing Christians.



About four or five years ago there was a dramatic change in the way the prayer takes place. While distributing the communion bread, whenever Larry was aware of a need and a desire for prayer, he had been anointing people and laying a hand on them while saying a brief prayer of unction (prayer for healing). In seminary his professor had said not to do that, but since then the Holy Spirit said do it, so he did. He still does it. What changed is that a few lay folks began to reach out and also lay a hand on their neighbor who was receiving prayer. The effect has been marvelous to watch.

Communion time at Emmanuel has grown into a marvelous community of neighborly love in which God is at work. A similar pattern of anointing and community laying on of hands is now growing at St. Francis, Youngsville. Some find peace and strength to keep going through difficult circumstances. Some have experienced quite surprising recoveries. Some have surprised their doctors. One doctor actually told the patient, "I do not know why you are doing so well. It is nothing I am doing." God is at work through communities of love.

At a recent School of Healing Prayer, Judith MacNutt taught us, "If you cannot feel God's love for the person, then don't do anything." That atmosphere of love surrounding the prayer seems to be essential, which is not surprising, since the basis for our prayer is that Jesus taught us we could approach God as children approach a loving daddy and ask for what they want. We approach our loving Abba and ask to be made well, or that one we love be made well.

We have no special skills or tricks. We simply listen to the need, with concern, with love. Then we follow the instructions in James 5:14, anointing with olive oil and praying for the person. God does the rest.



Photo by Mike DuBose, UMNS, 2005

Diocesan Convention Reminders

This is a reminder that nominations for the elections to be held at Diocesan Convention are due no later than Tuesday, September 8. Resolutions that will affect the constitution or canons are also due no later than September 8. Resolutions that do not affect the constitution or canons are due by October 7. Please send nominations and resolutions to the Secretary of Convention at SecCon@dionwpa.org or by mailing it to the Diocesan Church Center at 145 West 6th St., Erie, PA 16501.

Diocesan Convention will be held on November 7-8 at the Madera Fire Co. Community Building in Madera, PA, and is being hosted by Holy Trinity, Houtzdale. Information is available on our website at www.dionwpa.org/diocesanconvention2008.htm.

Health Benefits Partnership Conference By Mary Bowers

For the past few years the Episcopal Church Medical Trust has hosted an annual Health Benefits Conference for their clients and, although we have carried insurance for our retired clergy through the Medical Trust for many years, as many of you know, we have just recently signed on with them for our active clergy and lay employees. Consequently, I attended this conference for the first time.

Being a first time attendee I had no idea what to expect and knowing in advance that the theme of the conference was “wellness and healthy lifestyles” I was hoping that it wasn’t going to be a boot camp where we were woken up in the morning by a drill sergeant banging on a metal garbage can. Then, after calisthenics and a six mile hike each morning, they would feed us alfalfa sprouts and water for breakfast. I couldn’t have been more wrong. It was a week full of workshops for new as well as more experienced administrators, daily sessions with a professional personal trainer and nutritionist, presentations by industry experts about the state of health insurance in the U.S. and what the future holds, and presentations that focused on our health benefits and the programs that are available to us as members.

With escalating health care costs spiraling out of control the Medical Trust is researching ways to keep our costs down without sacrificing coverage. In order to be successful at this endeavor we learned that it has to be done in partnership with the members. We are all living more sedentary lifestyles and unless we understand that until we get age appropriate preventative screening and care on a regular basis, make time for exercise and work towards striking a work/life balance, our utilization will continue to drive the cost of our premiums up. The good news is that the Medical Trust will be right there with us providing educational tools needed to motivate and change behaviors to encourage healthy lifestyles.



We had discussions about the struggle of being caught between two cultures— one based on the “super size me” mentality with a pill that cures all that ails us and the other life with a healthy diet and exercise being the foundation where less medical and pharmaceutical assistance will be needed. The choice is ours. We can start by making one or two healthier choices each week, building up to daily choices and hopefully then transitioning to a lifetime habit. If we make the transition as individuals this will positively affect our families, our workplace, our churches and our communities. What an impact we could have!



Please look for additions coming soon to our website, under resources, that will provide detailed information about our retiree and active insurance coverage as well as additional programs offered by the Medical Trust with our coverage, such as the Employee Assistance Program and Health Advocate. The presentations on the health and wellness initiatives from the conference will also be available on our website and I encourage all of our churches to share this information with their congregations. This could plant the

seeds for a culture of wellness for all our parishioners. I will work hard to relay any information I receive in the coming months as the staff of the Medical Trust and the conference attendees work together to ensure that we are a healthier church. Please share with me your stories of wellness initiatives in your church.

Healing Service at Emmanuel, Corry

Emmanuel, Corry, will be holding a healing service on Sunday, August 24, at 7:00 PM.
All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

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.