



# The Forward

August 2009

*Editor's note: The bishop's letter this month is his reflections on General Convention. To see others' reflections on General Convention, including our deputies' and the Presiding Bishop's, please see the special General Convention issue of The Forward, also available on our website (www.dionwpa.org).*

## Letter from the Bishop

Discernment. This is always an operative concept in the Church as we seek together to discern (discover, come to a sense of 'knowing') God's will for us. There are various levels of discernment and matters to discern. God does not always grant instant clarity even for a body of believers.

Fasting and prayer and complete submission of our lives to the Lordship of Christ help to give us clearer discernment. Most of the time, the process of discernment is messy. Some of you have sought discernment about ministry or your life's vocation

or an issue in your family. Sometimes we have an instant sense of God's direction and other times we enter a long process and God's direction is revealed to us one piece at a time—all in God's time.

The Episcopal Church is engaged in serious discernment about matters of human sexuality. The traditional and historic teaching of the Church on matters of sexuality is clear. The Church is at a time and place, though, where we are called to consider, in the light, our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. I use the phrase 'in the light' because, as a Church, we are refusing to deal with these matters by keeping them in the dark or asking people to keep their sexual orientation to themselves or by living in unhealthy denial.

The General Convention made this clear in its resolution D025 which reaffirms our desire to remain in relationship with the wider communion while, at the same time, being clear about our particular context. I believe that D025 does accurately reflect the status of the church.

The most inaccurate press has been given to C056 which is the resolution regarding authorization of rites for same sex blessings. This resolution does not in any way author-

ize blessings of same sex unions. It does ask that the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Church Music study the matter and make a report to the next convention.

All of this opens the Church up to attack and ridicule and misunderstanding. This is the cost of facing important matters of theology in the open with laity and clergy participating and not just bishops. This is the kind of Church that I have been called to serve—one that is Christ-centered and transparent in its discernment efforts. As a diocese, it is important that we continue the conversations about human sexuality in ways that are constructive.

The convention considered other important matters of mission and evangelism which, of course, gathered little in the way of media coverage. We adopted a denominational health care plan which will help dioceses like ours contain and reduce health care costs, we have a renewed sense of policy about pension plans for lay professionals, and we adopted a new set of disciplinary canons which are oriented toward reconciliation and greater accountability for clergy in the Church.

The budget of The Episcopal Church was reduced by millions of dollars which means we will have to be creative and do more with less. I think we all are learning a bit about what that means in these times. Even in the midst of budget cuts, we made commitments to planting new churches and engaging in mission both foreign and domestic.

In spite of all that you might read about in the press or on the blogs, The Episcopal Church is continuing to witness to the transformational power of Jesus Christ. In our diocese, we will continue to consider new strategies for mission and engage the task of transformational ministry and evangelism with renewed vigor. The harvest is plentiful, and the laborers few. We have no time to be distracted.

Blessings,

+ Sean



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## Notes from the Diocesan Health Team

by the Rev. Holly Davis

### QUALITY CHARACTERISTIC 5: INSPIRING WORSHIP SERVICE

The fifth quality characteristic of growing churches focuses on worship that inspires God's people to go into the world with the *Good News!* Somehow we believe we have to adopt the worship practices of *other* churches if we are going to be successful and representative of churches that are growing and attracting people.

Research indicates that attracting people to Church is not determined by who we are seeking *or* the use of biblical or secular language. The key factor is whether or not the service is an *inspiring experience* for those who are in attendance—is worship fun!

*Why* is it so difficult for us to see *ourselves* in the same light *others* see us? Fear? Anxiety? Low self-esteem? A victim mentality? Perhaps perspective is in distance. This year I have spoken with dozens of ordained and lay colleagues—from Episcopal and **also** Protestant traditions—who have expressed excitement about the **Great News** from The Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania and the beauty of the *liturgy* of our *Anglican* traditions. They express there is authenticity in our leadership and our liturgy.

And there is the *holy* and *sacred* and *authentic* about the liturgy of our Church and the people of our Diocese. When the sacred liturgy is offered with reverence, with attention to detail, with solemnity, and surrounded by beauty in art, music and vesture, the court of Heaven opens before us, *summoning us* into the **Kingdom of God**.

When it is offered by the people of God, not out of fulfilling our Christian duty through our attendance, but because attending the Mass is such a wonderful experience that we wouldn't miss it for anything, that experience is contagious—attraction, not necessarily promotion—attraction to eternal life in the Kingdom.

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### THE PROPOSED DIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT:

The Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania is One Church under the Lordship of Christ, equipping Transformational Leadership for **Transformational Ministry** through our missionary outposts—our Congregations.

“**Transformational Ministry**” utilizes the same skill set needed for spiritual direction—patience, time, trust and love. Direction—change, or holding course—takes patience. It takes patience to plant a seed and wait for it to grow to maturity. Ultimately it's **not** our efforts that matter but those things we accomplish together as the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We need to take time to build trust before we can venture into new mission fields as *missionary outposts*. We must be willing to experience a full surrender to God's hand in our lives—trusting **God** and trusting our **brothers and sisters**. God is willing to direct and guide us when we are willing to be trusting and patient. **Transformational Ministry** allows space for the hand of God to intervene. **God** raises the stakes all the time. **God's** love breaks in and makes all things new.

**Transformational Ministry** means *listening and hearing* God in order to follow. *Holy Scripture* is **filled** with many stories of people's lives changed by *listening* to God. **Transformational Ministry** can be filled with *joy*—**should** be filled with joy, and *can* be pain free. We need be reminded of only one thing, “*Soli Deo Gloria*—To God Alone, the Glory” to be prepared to accept all that God has in store for us.

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### Prayer for the Diocesan Organic Quality Management Diocesan Health Team:

#### For Guidance:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Book of Common Prayer: 1979*

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Please contact the Rev. Adam Trambley at [trambley@post.harvard.edu](mailto:trambley@post.harvard.edu) for more information.

Also, you may find the Natural Church Development home page to be of assistance: <http://www.ncd-international.org/public/seminars.html>.

## Spiritual Gifts - What Are They?

by Jack Malovich, the Rev. Mary Norton, & the Rev. Brian Reid

In the last issue of The Forward, we talked about how spiritual gifts are “a special ability that God gives, according to his grace, to each member of the body of Christ to be used for the development of the church.” (The Three Colors of Ministry)

The Three Colors program offers the most comprehensive explanation and application of gifts available today. The program classifies gifts into three categories which are:

1. Creation
2. Calvary
3. Pentecost

or

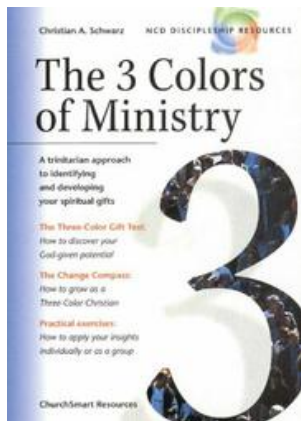
1. Work
2. Word
3. Wonder

The categories are ways for us to understand spiritual gifts better—sometimes we can get a better grip on concepts when we put them into a category. We need to understand, however, that one person may not necessarily have gifts in each category. Within a church, analyzing the categories in which people’s gifts fit can help with future planning. For instance, a church body that has a predominance of gifts in the creation area is not necessarily going to be a church that sees its strong point

as evangelism. So having gifts categories helps us understand gifts better as individuals and helps us use them better—for planning and action—as churches.

The gifts in the Creation category are: artistic creativity, craftsmanship, giving, hospitality, knowledge, mercy, music, organization, voluntary poverty and wisdom. The gifts in the Calvary category are: apostle, counseling, evangelism, helps, leadership, missionary, service, shepherding, singleness and teaching. And finally, gifts in the Pentecost category are: deliverance, discernment, faith, healing, interpretation, miracles, prayer, prophecy, suffering and tongues. So there are 30 gifts, according to this process. And we all have a number of these gifts.

There is one more important way to distinguish gifts: some are active now in our lives, and some are latent...just waiting for the right time and place to come forth to be used to help spread God’s kingdom here on earth. In the next issue, we will talk about how we can identify our spiritual gifts and how we might use them.



## St. Francis, Youngsville Calls New Rector

St. Francis of Assisi, Youngsville, has called a new rector. The Rev. Matt MacDougall, currently a transitional deacon, began work at St. Francis in July. Deacon Matt was previously in the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and recently graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary.

Deacon Matt will succeed the Rev. Sue Scofield, who served St. Francis as their interim priest.

Please keep Deacon Matt and St. Francis in your prayers as they embark on their new ministry together.



Photo by Susan Shillinglaw

## Trinity Memorial, Warren Calls Interim

Trinity Memorial, Warren, has called the Rev. Alan Coudriet as their interim priest. Fr. Alan will begin his official interim duties in September.

Fr. Alan previously served as rector of Christ Church, Oil City.

Please pray for Fr. Alan and the congregation of Trinity Memorial as they embark on their new ministry together.



## Letters from Seminarians



*This fall, the diocese will have two of our postulants for ordination attending Virginia Theological Seminary. Melissa Bruckart, a current member of St. Mark's, Erie, and long time member of St. John's, Franklin, will be entering her second year at VTS. Evan Clendenin, a member of St. James', Titusville, will be starting his first year there. Both were gracious enough to take time to write for the Forward to tell us of their expectations of the coming year.*

Grace and peace to you,

Greetings! As I write, I am currently in a summer learning program called Clinical Pastoral Education in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This program's goals and objectives are to enhance pastoral formation through theological, psychological, and pastoral insights. I have had the opportunity to act as chaplain and also spent time participating in extensive interpersonal interactions with the other students who are here with me. CPE helps students understand themselves better theologically and psychologically in order to prepare them to more effectively minister to persons in all circumstances.

This summer, on top of concluding my first year at Virginia Theological Seminary, in Alexandria, Virginia, has been a whirlwind. Looking back, it seems so long ago that I began my August term of orientation and the classes in Hebrew and Oral Interpretation of Scripture. I can remember the excitement and longing that I felt to be there. I have felt called to seminary and the priesthood since the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and I can remember how it felt to finally be there. But once I arrived at seminary, my fellow students and I had almost no time for reflection as we dove right in to our new lives as resident seminarians.

VTS holds to the belief that priestly formation comes through attending chapel, participating in classes, and sharing lunch as a community. An interesting combination, these three elements help us to live out what we as Episcopalians, and to the greater extent, Christians, believe about how we encounter God and grow- through community. Every day, students have the opportunity to worship with Morning Prayer, Noonday Eucharist, and Evening Prayer. With everything else going on, it is important to take time to read scripture and to worship daily. As our academic lives evolve, so must our relationship with God.

We live, breathe, and move in community, trying to come closer to the God we worship. We participate in classes, chapel, and meals together so that we might dialogue about our faith, our academics, and our lives. Through community, we find new perspectives and insights about who we are and how we interact with others who may be different than ourselves. The true sign of community is the fact that even though individual personal opinions and practices could be different, our goal is the same- "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ."



As I look ahead to the middler year to come, I can't help but look back at all I have learned. I have gained an understanding that learning is a lifelong process. I have taken the classes New and Old Testament, Church History, Foundations of the Spiritual Life, Young Adults in Ministry, the Psalms, and other electives. This year, I will continue to develop through classes in preaching, liturgics, systematic theology, and more studies of the Bible. Also, my field education begins in September at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Annandale, VA. I will be active in their ministries and have a presence in the pulpit and on the altar.

I feel I have grown very much in this past year in seminary and this summer in the hospital as a chaplain, but I recognize that I have so much more to learn. As I think ahead, I am thrilled to begin a new year filled with new challenges and new opportunities to discover God and how God is working in my life and in the lives of others.

Thank you for your prayers and support during this time. I continue to pray for you and the Diocese that the Holy Spirit will guide you in new and wonderful ways to love and serve the world.

Blessings,

*Melissa Bruckart*

## Letters from Seminarians cont.

The other day as I was driving to Titusville, and thinking about what I might write for *The Forward*, I began to mull over two Hebrew words, inspired by old belongings I had uncovered earlier in the day. I had been sorting and packing some of my old papers that I saved from various years of school and work, and I discovered a short paper that got me thinking about *togetherness*. What does it mean for us as human creatures, and as Christians, to be together?

Of course, I was sorting and packing my old papers in preparation for my move to seminary in a few short weeks—and moving into my apartment with my wife. On August 8<sup>th</sup> I will be married to my dear Amy Seese-Bieda, then on August 10<sup>th</sup> I will begin studies at Virginia Seminary—on the whole, these are blessed, and very intense, changes. Specifically this change means new ways of life together to me: the togetherness of marriage, and togetherness of study and preparation for ordained ministry alongside my peers and teachers.

Back to those Hebrew words. *Echad*, translated as “one” (as in “Listen, Israel, The Lord is our God, The Lord is One”) and *Yachad*, translated as “together”, appear to be related in the same root, as if for the Hebrew mind, God’s “oneness” entails a sort of “togetherness.” Or that our God (of whom we Chris-

tians have come to speak as *trinity*) is the depth of the peaceful togetherness we so desire as persons. No easy group identity, not a “we” without differences, but a truly wonderful and powerful communion. Perhaps this thought will serve to guide me and Amy as we live into marriage, as well as signing my way as I study, learn and worship with my brothers and sisters in Christ at VTS.



However challenging or difficult life together may be under certain circumstances, I do believe that in the end God is drawing us into his wonderful order, a sort of togetherness we can see dimly today. As I leave for seminary, I go with hope for what God is doing in our diocese and region, and look forward to my participation in the building up of God’s kingdom, God’s body on earth with those presently and future-ly members of that body (the Episcopal church in particular!)

I am very thankful to my family, St. James congregation, to the diocesan bodies, and all church members for your prayers, support and guidance in the discernment process, and for the opportunity to prepare at Seminary for ordained ministry.

*Evan Clendenin*

## Confirmations at St. John’s, Sharon



*The bishop recently visited St. John’s, Sharon. St. John’s presented its J2A class for confirmation. Left to right: Samantha Erimias, the Rev. Doug Dayton, Jacob Brown, Christian Lowery, Heather Sutley, Bishop Sean, and Ross James.*

**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](mailto:vbutler@dionwpa.org).**

## Installation Service at St. John's, Sharon

The Rev. Adam Trambley will be installed as rector of St. John's, Sharon on Sunday, September 13, at 4:00 PM.

Fr. Adam was called to be the new rector following the retirement of the previous rector, the Rev. Doug Dayton earlier this summer.

Everyone is welcome to attend the installation service.



## Reminder for Resolutions and Nominations for 2009 Convention

Resolutions and nominations for Diocesan Convention have been requested. Information on submitting a resolution or nomination can be found on the Diocesan website's Convention 2009 page ([www.dionwpa.org/diocesanconvention09.htm](http://www.dionwpa.org/diocesanconvention09.htm)).



Also on the convention page are draft versions of the 2010 budget, the 2010 assessments, and the clergy minimum stipend resolution. Diocesan Council is seeking feedback on these documents. Please send comments and suggestions regarding the drafts to Mary Bowers at [mebowers@dionwpa.org](mailto:mebowers@dionwpa.org).

Resolutions, nominations, and feedback on the draft documents are due to the Diocesan Church Center **no later than September 8, 2009**.

Diocesan Convention will be November 6-7 in New Castle, PA, and will be hosted by Trinity Church.

## Healing Services Scheduled

Two healing services have been scheduled in the diocese.

The first will be held Sunday, August 16, at 7:00 PM at Emmanuel, Corry. The second will be held Sunday, September 27, at 7:00 PM at St. Mark's, Erie.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

## Scenes from the Southeast Deanery



Clergy and Donna Ellis from the southeast deanery gathered earlier this summer for a wonderful meal, hosted by the Rev. Joie Baker, some conversation and some business. From l-r: the Rev. Matt Ryan, Donna Ellis, the Rev. Joie Baker, the Rev. Mary Norton, the Rev. Bonnie Skellen, and the Rev. Bill Ellis. Inset is Mickey the Wonder Dog, the Southeast Deanery's 2009 mascot.



St. Agnes Church in St. Marys again participated in the Elk County Relay for Life to raise money to find cures for cancer. The "St. Agnes Saints" had a great time for a good cause!