

The Forward



March 2009

Letter from the Bishop

The Lenten season always sneaks up on me. I think it's probably because I try to avoid Lent even though I know it comes about this time every year. Sometimes I wish we could just skip the whole Lenten discipline and move right to Holy Week and Easter. Then I realize that I know better. The preparation that comes with our Lenten disciplines of fasting, prayer, self-examination, and self-denial is invaluable. These disciplines allow us the privilege of walking the entire way with Jesus and keep us from getting 'shorted' by jumping in at the end.

For the most part, Lent is a time of fasting. We fast from



or economics or our lack of adequate music or whatever it is that we think keeps us from reaching fully into the mission field? What if, instead, we were motivated to pray for God to release the power of the Holy Spirit on us in new ways—ways that we cannot ask or imagine?

Lent isn't just about fasting, though. In fact, if you count the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter you will discover that there are more than forty days. In our Western Christian tradition, we observe Sundays in Lent as Feast Days. How about for these forty days we feast mightily on the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Through our

fasting, prayer, self-examination, and self-denial we can intentionally open ourselves to what God has in mind for us and for our communities of faith. If we agree to make ourselves open to God without our excuses, then we are sure to be surprised by the power of God.

what our prayer books names as 'our self-indulgent ways and appetites' and from all of those things that keep us from fully embracing our relationship with God. Whether it's chocolate and potato chips or lack of prayer, it's worth examining and giving up.

This year, I would like to suggest that the Church, as a whole, fast from making excuses. In some ways, we have become professionals at making excuses. I observe, though, that our excuses about our sometime inability to achieve excellence in the promoting of the Gospel of Jesus Christ allows a kind of apathy to take root. What if we agreed that, at least for Lent, we would not makes excuses? What if we agreed not to point to sociological reasons or demographics

We are in the business of transformation, brothers and sisters. We are being transformed and changed and we are transforming the world around us. I will be interested to know how you are transformed this Lenten Season.

Feast on the grace of God. Fast from excuses.

Blessings,

+ Sean

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Notes from the Diocesan Health Team

Saint Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the growth.” The **Organic Quality Management Diocesan Health Team (OQM)** has begun work in our Diocese using the **Natural Church Development (NCD)** process.

Natural Church Development is a process designed to foster church health. The goal is **not church growth**, per se, **but to help churches develop** a rich, vibrant, godly and healthy life. NCD’s research shows that when churches are **healthy**, church growth naturally occurs.

In an effort to invite the whole of the Body of Christ into dialogue, the **Organic Quality Management Diocesan Health Team** will begin providing an article in *Forward* each month—the purpose being three-fold: 1) to **encourage dialogue** to, through and from each parish or mission body, 2) to begin **defining terms** in a clear manner to provide a prayerful and intentional opportunity to solidify the mission statement and goals of the Diocese, and 3) to request your **prayers** for the OQM’s continued work in, with and for the Diocese.

We will, in the coming months, be looking at the eight quality characteristics of growing churches, as well as defining terms of the proposed Diocesan Mission Statement.

QUALITY CHARACTERISTIC 1: EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

The first we will focus on is **empowering leadership**. Please notice that the first quality character-

istic is not called “**empowered**” but “**empowering**” leadership.

Leaders of growing churches do not try to build up their **own power** to become all-powerful—instead, exactly the opposite. They consider it as one of their most important tasks to help Christians develop greater degrees of empowerment, which according to God’s plan already belongs to them.

Leaders of growing churches do not have to be superstars.

In fact the superstar model can be a hindrance for church growth. God generally does not fulfill His plans through super-gifted stars. If someone plays this role (or has to play this role because the church expects it) it is usually a sure sign that something is not going right in this church.

Prayer for the OQM 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*

Please contact the Rev. Adam Trambley at atrambley@trinitywarren.org 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>.



Healing Services Scheduled

Two healing services have been scheduled for this spring.

The first will be held Sunday, March 22, at 7:00 PM at St. Mark’s, Erie.

The second will be held Sunday, May 31, at 7:00 PM at St. Mark’s, Erie.

The bishop will preside at both services. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

2008 Convention Minutes Posted

The minutes from the 2008 Convention have been posted on the diocesan website on the Diocesan Convention 2008 page (www.dionwpa.org/diocesanconvention2008.htm).

Also available on the website is the site information for the 2009 Diocesan Convention. That can be found at www.dionwpa.org/diocesanconvention2009.htm.

Diocesan Waldameer Picnic Scheduled

Mark your calendars! The Diocesan Waldameer Picnic is being brought back due to popular demand. The date is set for June 21st. More information will be coming as the date gets closer.



Bishop Sean's Travels



This month, Bishop Sean will attend the House of Bishops at Kanuga Conference Center in North Carolina from March 12th-19th.

He will also be traveling to Richmond, VA, from March 30th-April 4th. He will be the featured preacher for the week as a part of St. Paul's, Richmond's Lenten Preaching Series.

Welcome Workshop to be Offered at Ascension, Bradford

Church of the Ascension, Bradford, will be hosting a Welcome Workshop March 27th-March 28th at their church. It will last from 6:00 PM- 9:00 PM on March 27 and will resume on March 28 from 8:45 AM-2:30 PM. Dinner will be provided Friday, as will a continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday. The workshop is intended to help congregations learn about the important steps involved in welcoming newcomers: inviting, greeting, orienting, incorporating, and sending.

The workshop will be led by the Rev. Carolyn Lumbard. She has served as a parish priest and as the Canon for Congregational Development and Communications in the Diocese of Rochester. She is trained in conflict management, Appreciative Inquiry, managing change, and team/small group development. She is also a Church Development Institute trainer.

The workshop is open to and intended for vestries, bishop's committees, ushers, greeters, committee and team leaders, and anyone in your churches interested in reaching out and growing the body of Christ. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to Ascension by calling 814-368-8915. There is no cost for the workshop, but a goodwill donation would be appreciated to help cover meal costs.

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.

Flower Bulb Sale at St. Mark's

St. Mark's, Erie, is holding a flower bulb sale from now until March 22. They are offering a wide variety of flowers and plants from Dutch Mill Bulbs, including a variety of lilies, hostas, strawberry plants, and Persian buttercups. All of the bulb or plant packages are \$6.00 apiece and will be delivered prior to Mother's Day.

Part of the proceeds from the sale will go to benefit the Africa 6000 Diocesan Well Project. The goal of the well project, being done in the Northwest Deanery, is to raise enough funds to sponsor the digging of a clean water well in Africa. The remainder of the proceeds will go to supporting St. Mark's ministry.

Orders must be in by March 22 and all orders must be prepaid. An order form is available at the Diocesan Church Center or you can order by calling Barb Miller at 814-899-0877.



Chrism Liturgy

The annual Chrism liturgy with a renewal of ordination vows will be held on March 26th at 11:00 AM at the Cathedral of St. Paul. The service will again be held in conjunction with the clergy of the Lutheran Synod. There will be a lunch following the service.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Vanessa by March 17 by phone (814-456-4203) or by e-mail (vbutler@dionwpa.org).



Aspirants' Retreat Reminder

A reminder to aspirants and COM and Standing Committee members: the Aspirants' Retreat will be held March 27-28, starting with dinner at 6:00 PM on Friday. If you have not registered yet, please go to the diocesan website's calendar page and click on the link. To make your hotel reservations, call the Comfort Inn Presque Isle at 814-835-4200.

If you have any questions, please contact either Canon Martha or Vanessa at the Diocesan Church Center.

Diocesan Council Schedule

Diocesan Council members, the March meeting has been cancelled. The next council meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 23, 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).

Bishop Sean's & Canon Martha's Visitation Schedules - March 2009

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| March 1st | - Canon Martha - St. John's, Sharon |
| March 8th | - Bishop Sean - Christ Church, Meadville
- Canon Martha - Holy Trinity, Brookville |
| March 22nd | - Bishop Sean - Cathedral of St. Paul, Erie
- Canon Martha - Holy Trinity, Houtzdale |
| March 29th | - Canon Martha - Grace, Ridgway |



Grace, Ridgway