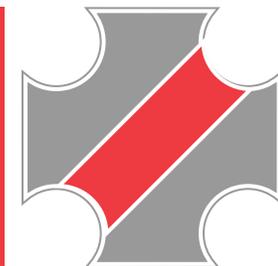


diakoneo

SERVING DEACONS AND ALL SERVANT MINISTERS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH



WE DID IT!

by Dn. Susanne Watson Epting, Executive Director

We know the strength of the community of deacons.

We know the ways in which individual deacons seek to strengthen their gifts and skills for ministry, and their partnerships with others in ministry.

We know how to identify those who can help in building those skills, strengthen partnerships, and look to new models of ministry.

We know deacons and others who are making a difference in the church, both through engaging in diaconal ministry and

through helping others develop their own gifts for ministries of service.

**And that's why we needn't worry about
Where we would be . . . Without AED?**

YOU'VE INVESTED

To fund projects in the Larger Church that inspire and equip the *Diakonia* of all believers

AED has developed and disseminated the document *On Engaging the Diakonia of All Believers*, which presents a theology of *diakonia* for the Episcopal Church

AED has responded to the call of The Episcopal Church to address domestic poverty with an initiative to gather resources from the ministries of deacons all over the country

AED has introduced a program called "*The Seven*," which offers young adults an immersion experience in diaconal ministry in their own community. Thanks to your generosity, we're planning a second year.

AED provides connections with deacons in other countries and other denominations and works with seminaries to provide education for and about deacons and diakonia.

AED is planning for a fantastic and unusual presence at General Convention.

AED will soon gather Formation Directors and Archdeacons to consider the place of social media in our ministries, and to look toward sharing more best practices in strong deacon communities.

To strengthen the infrastructure of the organization and put it on a sound financial basis

There is no church-wide organization that concerns itself with the diaconate – that provides resources for education, formation, vocational development, or even a usable directory of deacons. AED fills that gap.

Our Association sponsors gatherings of formation directors and archdeacons, regional and national diaconal assemblies for the building up of the community of deacons

Offers communication and education through its journal, *Diakoneo*, its website, electronic Deacon Updates and Facebook.



ASSOCIATION FOR
EPISCOPAL DEACONS
ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

CONTRIBUTIONS AS OF FEBRUARY 16
\$102,050

THANKS BE TO GOD!



THANK YOU!

A mere "thank you" never seems enough. Know that it comes with the promise to be faithful stewards of your gifts.

We are grateful that you care for the church-wide community of deacons and for all those with diaconal hearts.

Give thanks with us to all who have shared so generously:

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In honor of Deacon Pamela Nesbit
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AED Conference goes “Back to the Future”

2007 marked the 400th Anniversary of the planting of the Church on Jamestown Island in Virginia. Participants in the 2013 AED Conference will be able to experience much of that rich history as they meet, work, and worship in historic Williamsburg, beginning with an opening Eucharist at Jamestown, remembering that first observance which took place under a sail before a crude altar. Since that time, the church in Virginia has continued to serve its people and our Lord through varied and dramatic changes in governance and society.

The history of the Church in Virginia is the history of the Anglican “Via Media” or “middle way” in the Virginia experience, describing how the Church has served Virginia society as a balance point between institutional and cultural extremes. As part of the government of Virginia until the Revolution, all Virginians, no matter their beliefs, were legislated members of the Church, paying taxes to support its operations, and required by law to attend services at least once every 3 months. Responsible for the moral life of the Colony, as an arm of government, the Church managed all social services in Virginia, supervised religious education, worked to better the lives of the Native Americans and slaves, and served as the principal source of education. Visitors to Williamsburg will be

able to tour the historic area and experience something of how life was lived in those times, witnessing tradesmen practice their crafts, attending a trial in the old courthouse, worshipping in Bruton Parish Church, whose Colonial boxes still bear the names of their famous occupants.



Everything changed with the Revolution of course, but through the ministries of James Madison (President and Bishop) and Bishop Richard Channing Moore, among others, the Virginia Church saw a revival, becoming a center of evangelical reaction to high Church traditions found elsewhere. Improving the lot of slaves became a driving issue, culminating in the War Between the States, and after, the subsequent rebuilding of a Church and society

devastated by war. Missionary efforts grew, the Bishop Payne Divinity School (since merged with VTS) was established to train African-American clergy, and the role of women expanded.

Bearing in mind and offering thanks for so much rich history, the Church in Virginia today seeks to respond to the challenges of an ever-changing world, continuing with those historic traditions which reflect and remind us of our ancestors in the faith, yet serving God’s people in places and ways as varied as the state’s geography. The Deacons of Virginia look forward to this exciting opportunity to share some of the history, tradition, beauty and ministry which inspires them. Come to Virginia in 2013!

Mark your calendars now. Don’t miss this opportunity to meet with other deacons . . . and perhaps plan a vacation your whole family will enjoy.

**AED Diaconal Assembly,
Woodlands Hotel and Suites,
Colonial Williamsburg, VA**

13-16 June 2013

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throughout the Episcopal
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God's Work: Project Reports

By Deacon Kyle Pedersen, Project Coordinator

“The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work that you need most to do and that the world most needs to have done.”
Frederick Buechner

Care packages for homeless people. Support for LGBT youth. Small dinner gatherings to talk about love, death, and God. These are just some of the projects that participants in The Seven are pursuing after an intensive Fall of online study, teleconferences, local community assessment, and meetings with deacon mentors. Participants have been doing the hard work of getting to know their communities better while examining how God is calling them to serve. Their self-directed projects reveal, in Buechner's words, ways in which their deep gladness is meeting the deep hungers of their own communities in Connecticut, Iowa, and Washington.

Andrea Banfield, from the diocese of Olympia, will be leading a group from her St. Stephen's Church, Longview, WA, to make care packages for people who are homeless or panhandling in her community. The Ziploc packages will include clean socks, chapstick, a dollar Bible, a ticket to the Portland Rescue Mission, and other personal care items. Andrea got the idea when she made a care package for a man she had seen on the streets and was amazed at how thankful he was.

Andrea observed that many people in her community seem to be overwhelmed about homelessness and don't know where to start. Her deepest desire is for “everyone to come into the light and be whole.” She hopes that by engaging her parish, people will be less overwhelmed and start to care more for the health and wholeness of people in her community. Andrea plans regular debriefings with people in the parish to talk about their engagement with others while sharing the care packages.

Todd Lane from Connecticut and Jason Sierra from Washington are both pursuing projects to support LGBT youth.

Jason hopes for Seattle-area congregations where he lives to become more involved in serving and welcoming the most vulnerable communities and individuals of the LGBT population, particularly youth, transgendered individuals, the indigent, immigrants, and individuals in more conservative religious, ethnic, and racial communities. He cited the personal impact and devastating

blow of losing a close friend and mentee to suicide.

According to Jason: “My primary hope is that in some way, when the project is complete, we as Christians in Seattle will be better prepared to work together to meet the needs of the LGBT community, particularly its most vulnerable elements. I hope that the Episcopal parishes and LGBT communities of Seattle will better understand one another and be better able to partner in their ministries and services. I hope that it will be easier for LGBT individuals to find the spiritual support they need from the faith communities of the Episcopal Church and that leaders, clergy and entire parishes will be better equipped to provide that support.”

In a similar way, Todd Lane will be working in the Greater New Haven, Connecticut, community to coordinate outreach and support to LGBT youth through organized discussions, social events, and service. The program will be modeled after similar organizations run by other denominations.

Todd speaks of the isolation and prejudice he experienced as a young gay man and about the life-changing support and acceptance he once received at a small, rural Episcopal Church. He writes: “As with many other LGBT youth I felt that God was not working in my life and others did not appreciate or understand me. If it were not for a few clergy who exhibit wisdom, understanding and counsel my life would have been very different.”

For Todd, the project has shed a new light on the ministry of deacons. He notes: “As those who serve, we must keep our hearts and minds open to the workings of the spirit. It is at the times when one questions “how will I get this done?” or “how will I accomplish this?” that the spirit comes through and provides guidance.”

Rachel Heath will be organizing communal meals to bring together 5-7 people from Connecticut's New Haven community for food and conversation about death, love and God. Why talk about death, love, and God? Rachel explains: “In the September 2007 issue of *Paste* magazine, Sam Beam (the lead singer of Iron&Wine) explained that he only writes songs about love, death, and God because that's what every human on the planet has in common.”

As an introvert, Rachel hopes to stretch spiritually and interpersonally. She notes, “If I truly believe that God's presence can



from “The Seven”

manifest through the breaking of bread at a common meal, then I should do what I can to challenge myself to overcome my anxiety in order to be welcoming, in order to try to create community.”

Rachel says, “I am fascinated by the idea of a ‘eucharist outside the Eucharist.’” She explains, “I think the community that can form around meals can be a strength of the church - and hopefully strengthen the holistic church - if it’s intentionally enacted. The Episcopal Church is shrinking; most people are not going to simply walk through the doors and realize that the church is what has been missing in their lives. So we, as people of God who want to manifest God’s presence in the world, must do whatever we can outside the church walls. I want to use where I am - and didn’t expect to be, a barista again - as an opportunity to meet (New Haven) community members where they are and infuse an everyday practice (eating) with intentionality.”

Laura Bersos, from Seattle, is studying to be a teacher. When she was 13, she survived a catastrophic car accident and has had to have over 20 subsequent reconstructive surgeries. Among other injuries, the accident left her with a traumatic brain injury that impacted her educational, social, and emotional development. She will be volunteering with adults who have special needs and their caregivers, specifically with the L’Arche intentional living communities (founded by Jean Vanier) and Angel House, a newly created home for adults with special needs.

Laura seeks to model the support she experienced from Josh and Katie, two spiritual guides she met while attending the DO-IT program for high school students at the University of Washington. She described: “Since DO-IT is a program for people with disabilities, when first meeting Josh and Katie, we did something that doesn’t often happen in other first interactions with others: we entered into our friendship showing that we had weaknesses.” She added, “we didn’t hold our strengths over one another or point out the weakness of another, we simply loved one another for the beautifully broken people that we are.”

Laura hopes her congregation and Episcopalians in general will become more aware and intentional about planning programs and events that include people with special needs. She wants to make church services more accessible and is working with her church to have a monthly church service for

families of people with special needs. She believes her project will put her in the position where she must face the injustices of the world and not turn away from them.

Tony Ramsey, a student at Washington University School of Law, is working on ways to help his downtown Seattle parish begin to explore opportunities to welcome people from underrepresented groups in the church. Inspired by Stephanie Spellers’ “Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other, and the Spirit of Transformation” and his AmeriCorps training on anti-racism and anti-oppression, Tony began to ask himself “now that I am married to a woman of color and will have children of color, why doesn’t our church look more like our neighborhood.” Tony’s goal is to gather best practices from other parishes and other mainline churches that fit into the framework of “radical welcome.”

Tony reflects: “As I understand it, the ministry of deacons is to stir up trouble for the church, to build bridges between the church and the world, and to welcome the stranger. Creating a church that is more welcoming to young adults and people of color fits into this so that Trinity can truly reflect the ministry of all believers. If churches just continue to do what is comfortable, parishes will continue to age and fade from the community, I don’t want this to happen at Trinity, or any other parish for that matter.”

Other projects are in the works, including opening a church to children in the neighborhood.

In reflecting on the ministry of deacons, Rachel Heath writes: “Though what happens in the liturgy and in church programming is vital, my understanding of the ‘diakonia of all believers’ and the specific ministry of deacons is that they are more holistic, enveloping our entire lives.”



A CRY FOR JUSTICE

By Deacon Sally Carlson, Diocese of Olympia

“It all comes down to identity.”

Those are the words my young spiritual teacher shared during a conversation about conflict, growth and dis-ease.

“Who are we as a people? A tribe? A band? As people, what do we believe?”

“Who is our voice? Do we even have a voice? Who holds the power and how is that power being used? What changes need to occur to balance that use or abuse of power to bring about positive change for growth into a more whole, healthy corpus?”

These questions in one form or another can be traced to the root of conflict whether it's political or not. The OCCUPY Seattle movement is no different. These are questions that I heard being asked at the beginning of the movement and they are still being asked—even as the encampment has disbanded and been evicted from their home on the grounds of Seattle Central Community College. Whether or not one

agreed with how the movement was born and grew; whether or not one held questions for which there were no immediate answers; whether or not one was frustrated because this movement didn't fit the picture of institutional behavior misses the point. The entire OCCUPY movement across the country has been a cry for justice. I became involved with OCCUPY Seattle as a member of OCCUPY-chaplains. As I spoke of my involvement back in the communities of my life, the continuous questions being posed by those observing were:

“What is the goal? What do they want? Why can't they explain what they're trying to achieve?”

These are questions that are appropriate within an institutional context, where business plans, balance sheets and profit and loss statements determine future directions. However, the OCCUPY movement wasn't born within an institutional environment.

It was born *because* of the powerful institutional environment that exists. Again, this movement is a cry for justice. It's saying: “enough! There is a better way of being. We might not know exactly what that is, but we're taking the first step by standing up giving a voice to change—proclaiming that change is needed.”

I believe it's a little like doing anything—



Deacon Sally Carlson and Fr. Jim Friedrich prepare for Eucharist at Sanctuary located within the OCCUPY Seattle encampment.

CPE comes immediately to mind. Until one does it, one doesn't know how to do it. Some things are formulated and act as a road map for action. Many things in this new world are not. The OCCUPY movement is like that in my experience. It's an organic process that has a basic concept—manifest change through awareness. As my young spiritual teacher stated: “we have to start somewhere!”

“What does that change look like? How do we get there?”

That is unknown until the successes, trials and failures help define the direction. We stand up for our values and make collective decisions based on those shared values. Those collective decisions will define the path along which we need to be moving to bring about the change. Although the world is not perfect, it expects answers and assurances in anything unknown, untried and newly created. It's my sense that fear makes these demands. As for me, I saw Jesus companioning

each person in our OCCUPY camp...companioning and encouraging. There were no crazies in leadership of our local movement. The people I saw as leaders were dedicated people—people who had left the life they knew behind for the duration, however long that might be. The people I saw reminded me of our hymn, “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God.” There was among the people a doctor, soldier, priest, teacher, research chemist, lawyer, Native American chief to name a few.....people of all shapes, sizes, ages, beliefs, colors and faith traditions. And, they all held great hope for our future and the future of the world.

In the OCCUPY Seattle movement a tent called Sanctuary was a holy place—the place of worship, prayer, quiet, meditation, counsel, conflict-free dialogue, visioning. Sanctuary was the place of multi-faith gatherings. The OCCUPY-chaplains were and are from every faith tradition. What we all seem to have in common, however, is embracing and recognizing the gifts that each faith tradition brings. The backbone of the OCCUPY-chaplains group is a couple. They are Sufi, Muslim mystics. Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, people of the Baha'i faith, those

with little faith and those with no particular faith are all a part of the chaplain body serving the OCCUPY Seattle movement. My particular time slot for serving as chaplain was from 5-10PM. Although I have been on sabbatical from parish life for the last few months, serving in this way gave me a parish of sorts, a community and a way to serve. Nighttime was when the camp was most active and when the General Assemblies occurred. It was a time of great learning for me...watching how this community functioned and the democratic way in which they approached the issues and concerns of the encampment. Sometimes we need to lead the charge, sometimes support. This experience was all about presence and supporting. I do wonder at the notion that I wasn't out there leading the charge, however. That wondering gives me great pause.

We have all heard the stories and read accounts reported by the media and nay-

sayers about the drugs, alcohol, and deviant behaviors present in the OCCUPY camps. All those things were true, at least in the Seattle camp. The world within the walls made from the tents of OCCUPY Seattle campers was a microcosm of the world outside in the greater community. One of the differences was that within the camp one could walk up to a stranger and begin a meaningful conversation without compunction. Just six (6) feet away, outside the walls of the tents—on the streets and sidewalks of the city—engaging in this way would have a stranger shrinking back in fear. The sense of people gathered was enormous and satisfying, feeding a longing many people have for community. It's no wonder the power of the camps held so much for so many. That sense of safety in a living, sharing community was visceral.

The location of the camp in Seattle was in an area that itself is a microcosm of the rest of the city and the world. Homeless people, substance dependent people, young people, old people, middle aged people, families, idealists, visionaries, people with mental health issues, hippies, aging beatniks, musicians, students, artists, retailers, street vendors all inhabit this area of Seattle known as Capitol Hill. They are the threads that woven together make this a colorful and vital community. It's not surprising that people who needed shelter and food to sustain their lives gravitated toward the very group giving voice to their needs. There has never been a moment of denial that some of the people who lived at the camp were not a part of the movement. However, to watch and listen to how this issue would be dealt with was a lesson in compassion. There was consensus that no one would be thrown out. Rather it was agreed that structures be put in place to try to bring help to those with personal issues that continued to be a distraction and taint the premise of the movement.

Please remember, the pressure on the people of this camp was huge. Most of the students and faculty of the school where OCCUPY resided were allies, although the administration was not in favor of their presence on the school grounds. Many of the local businesses were also allies. However, there were those who saw the camp as disruptive to their businesses. While the city parks department enforced the no camping regulation in the parks of Seattle (as happened in most other cities as well) there was no regulation in Seattle about camping on school grounds. Although the Seattle City Council voted to support the OCCUPY Seattle movement, legal factions finally prevailed and OCCUPY Seattle was ultimately evicted 10 days before Christmas. However,

the OCCUPY Seattle movement brought to light many issues where financial, institutional and governmental abuse of power has been prevalent in our region, while at the same time raising awareness of the larger more global issues of inequality, racism, injustice and corporate greed.

It happened that a Jordanian peace delegation met in Seattle during the time of encampment for the OCCUPY Seattle movement. Some of our chaplains were present at the meeting. Conversation was shared about the inspiration *Arab Spring* brought to the OWS movement. The reply was:

“No. You are truly an inspiration to us. Please don't give up. You are taking on Wall Street which impacts the whole world. We are only taking on the leadership and governance of our own individual countries. Your movement affects all of us; ours only our own people.”

As you can see, there are more questions than answers surrounding our new world order and its impact on everything we do and have known as security and comfort. It's been my experience that to manifest change one must live in the questions and the discomfort those questions bring—then listen for the answers that apply to the present. At some point those questions might change as well as the direction toward which the answers may be pointing. I believe, however, that the questions and living in them must be a part of making room for change.

This first incarnation of the movement of OCCUPY Seattle is a thing of the past—the first steps haltingly taken, but moving us down the path toward change. OCCUPY is here to stay as a part of our culture. I believe there will be no going back. OCCUPY Seattle is presently taking the time to vision the re-creation and next incarnation of itself. The movement is not dead in Seattle. It is in a time of discernment.

Note:

OCCUPY-chaplains remain involved with and supportive of OCCUPY-Seattle.

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OCCUPY VISION STATEMENT

After four decades of endless war and unbridled greed that brought our country to its knees, Occupy seeks to build a humane society that is fair and just and caring. It will do so by fostering an economy that builds what we need rather than gambling our money on non-productive and risky financial games, that is subject to fair and transparent rules, and that reduces the incredible inequalities between the richest 1% and the 99% who are slipping into poverty. It will do so by ensuring a democracy in which the voices of the 99% are not muted by inadequate access to education or accurate information or by the money of the 1%. And it will do so by restoring the commons – our public space and community, our resources, and, indeed, our very environment – that we all share together as our heritage and posterity.

Editor's Note: The Vision Statement above was drafted for Occupy San Francisco (see article on Page Nine) but is representative of the Occupy movement in general.

Paving the Way for Latino Deacons: A Journey Begins

by Rod Dugliss, Dean of The School for Deacons

When NAAD changed its name to the Association for Episcopal Deacons, it recognized several realities: The Episcopal Church is not a “national” church but is actively present in 16 countries.—many of them in Latin America and the Caribbean. Deacons are found throughout the provinces of the Anglican Communion. The mission of the association extends beyond the United States and Canada.

A concrete way we signaled the reality of the new name was the first Latin Experience, sponsored by the Association in cooperation with our hosts, the diaconal community in the Dominican Republic.

The other reality that we and the wider church face is the steady stream of people from throughout Latin America who continue to arrive in the United States, in our communities and in the neighborhoods of our Episcopal Churches. While this is hardly a new phenomenon, the church is taking it more and more seriously. A bellwether for the diaconal community in the Association is how frequently and more urgently we have discussed the gift and the challenge of changing demographics in Association gatherings and at the annual Archdeacon and Deacon Directors conferences.

The first questions revolved around, how to find Spanish language resources, whether persons or texts, so that Latino men and women could be formed for ordained diaconal leadership. There was some pioneering work done—the program Deacon Diana Luck helped to create in Dallas comes to mind. Efforts, experience, and information were scattered and, to some degree *ad hoc*. As a church and as an Association we are becoming aware of deeper and more profound questions.

- how shall we welcome and include in The Episcopal Church our Spanish speaking neighbors in their own varieties of culture, history, and socio-economic status, authentically and with integrity?

- how will persons be discerned, called, and formed as deacons in and for Latino, bi-lingual/bi-cultural, and other multi-cultural congregations?

Serendipity or Holy Spirit; pick one

Last fall the AED board looked for ways to encourage and support regional gatherings of deacons—an ongoing goal of the Association. In a conference call with some of us on

the West Coast it was agreed that we would try to begin with a very modest meeting of a few folk from the dioceses in the state of California. The idea—which we commend to other regions in the church—was to start small and build on success.

We needed a focal point or theme and I remembered the big response to the ‘open space’ group at last year’s Deacon Directors’ Conference on resources for multi-cultural formation led by Archdeacon Joanne Leslie of Los Angeles. We set the theme and put out the word. Supported by some unexpected funding from the Diocese of California, a small group of persons responsible for deacon formation gathered on the campus of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific [CDSP], January 27-28. We gathered for an intense conversation on developing authentic formation for deacons from and for the Latino community.

Those participating were AED president Pam Nesbit, Joanne Leslie, Archdeacon, and Catherine Wagar, formation director in the Diocese of Los Angeles. AED president-elect Tina Campbell represented the Diocese of Northern California. Kate Salinaro, Sr. Pamela Clare CSF, and Bradley Peterson were there from the School for Deacons faculty. Phyllis Manoogian participated as a student at The School for Deacons doing her field education year in a Spanish language congregation. Rob Sommer, from the Diocese of El Camino Real participated in the planning. Tom Callard, the rector of *Todos los Santos* in Highland Park, CA [LA] and Ema Rosero-Noralm, soon to be the first Latina deacon in the Diocese of Massachusetts, though unable to attend, provided immensely valuable input.

We recognized that those participating in the gathering, with the exception of Tina Campbell, were Anglos and our work would need thorough review and modification to be credible in the audience for which it is intended. And yet, we knew we had to begin. In yet another way, the fields are ripe for harvest and the laborers are few, though willing.

We began with a very open discussion of what I call “the big questions.” These include such obvious, though often unasked questions as, ‘why are we doing this in the first place?’ The also include very specific questions, such as, ‘how is the diaconate seen, understood, practiced in the Latino

cultures of origin? In the Latino expression in The Episcopal Church today? The latter part of our time together focused on a very preliminary cut at defining competencies for diaconal formation under the five canonical areas of the 2003 revisions to Title III.

The Process Begins

We recognized that this is but a start of a process that will take much prayer, thought, and imagination and involve many more folk than the few of us on a January weekend. Still and all, we posited some audacious proposed outcomes.

- 1) that we distill our learning (done and yet to be done) into culturally valid principles to guide the creation of formation processes or the incorporating of authentic bi-cultural formation into ongoing programs, for the benefit of all

- 2) we find ways to collaborate in this work with many partners across the wider church.

- 3) Create and maintain a repository or resource based through AED to be available to all.

I can say that each of us learned a great deal through our conversation. We are still processing this so I can report just a few things now. A primary, and perhaps obvious, learning is that the core matter here is cultural not, or not just, language. Learning and using a second or other language is relatively easy. Forming authentic deacons from and for a non-dominant cultural context is complex and hard work.

What we know, if we still have some trouble practicing, in normative Anglo formation work, is doubly true in the Latino context—Learning in and with the wider community—not just with fellow postulants—is absolutely essential.

We found this affirmed over and over and can see its challenges to incorporating our Latino sisters and brothers in extant overwhelmingly Anglo formation programs.

As large order insights inform principles and guidelines, addressing curricula, pedagogy, and praxis becomes challenging indeed.

And just to put one more big issue on the table, all of this will and must impact the formation of others who must be prepared to be deacons in a multicultural church in a multicultural world.

The opportunity for the Association to take a lead in matters that will shape whatever future our church has is immense. It is exciting. The few who gathered in January can’t do this alone and, I think I can speak for them to say that each of us will work hard to make it happen, and we invite you to join us.

As with the evening news, and always with the Good News --- stay tuned!!!

“MIKE CHECK!”

A DEACON IN THE RANKS OF OCCUPY

by Deacon Vicki Gray, Christ the Lord Church, Pinole, CA

You figure it out together, you take a mike check, and this is how faith comes to you.
Rev. Michael Ellick

BY WAY OF PREFACE

It started in the mid-fifties...my first knowing encounters with injustice...a thirst for justice...a growing conviction that “It just ain’t fair!” Black and white TV pictures from Little Rock, Montgomery, and Birmingham. A 1958 ride from New York to Annapolis to take an oath at the Naval Academy and those signs along Route 40 – “Negro Motel,” “Whites Only.” An August march with Martin. A dream.

And, then, a war...a war I volunteered to fight, a war in which I killed, a war I learned was wrong. I marched again...to songs like Phil Ochs’ “I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore.”²¹ Everything seemed possible. We would end a war. We would free a people. We would free ourselves.

But they killed the songs and, in the rice paddies I had left behind, they killed more brown and yellow people who sought the same dignity and freedom I did. And, in 1968, they killed the dreamer... and the dream.

Martin had just begun the pivot to addressing the endemic economic inequality that affected not only African Americans, but my own white parents in the Bronx. He had gone to Memphis to stand with sanitation workers seeking a decent wage and drawn up plans for a Poor People’s March on Washington.

And, in Washington, I watched the city burn in the wake of Martin’s death and watched Resurrection City, the Poor People’s encampment along the Potomac, sink into the mud, a victim of the spring rains and a “Southern Strategy.” The powers-that-be had again had their way. Those who had dared to dream drifted away, leaderless, rudderless, into our myriad private realms. “Stay low, go with the flow” was the watchword.

And so we began a forty-year-long, dreamless sleepwalk. Our striving for private pleasures morphed into rampant greed, while, beyond our shuttered vision, comfort-inducing drugs, and the distractions of corporate-supplied infotainment, others plundered the public commons.

Then came 2008 – the cold shower that was the collapse of the commons...

and another young African American with soaring rhetoric and an ability to strum the near numb chords of a remembered dream. “Hope you can believe in,” he called it. But, soon enough, we learned that he was no Martin and that an African American from Chicago’s Southside could settle in with the powers-that-be just as comfortably as a white “cow-boy” from Texas.

There’s a funny thing about hope rekindled and quickly quashed – it clears the scales from the eyes, adds anger and determination to the equation, and gives rise to *greater* hope. We used to call it the “Revolution of Rising Expectations.” For three years that revolution quietly gathered steam, as, in disgust and disbelief, we watched the powers-that-be claw their way back, secure, they thought, in a return to business as usual. But the embers had been stirred. The dreamers were dreaming again.

THE EMBERS STIRRED TO FLAME

And, then, in the coldest months, those embers burst into flame in unexpected places – a Tunis street, a Cairo square named “Liberty,” a statehouse in Madison, Wisconsin. The cry was everywhere the same – Basta! Kefeya! Enough!

Soon enough, it was September 17. Creative protestors danced around Wall Street’s bull – that golden calf of greed. A cry was raised: “We are the 99%!” The tents went up in Zucotti Park, and Occupy was born.

I remember thinking “Zucotti Park? Where’s that?” I had been to Ground Zero and Trinity and prayed at both, but knew nothing about Zucotti Park. It was told, a private park...like Bryant Park these days. Oh, my, I thought, “They’re privatizing the commons.” I thought, too, of a seven-

teenth-century English protest ditty:

*The law locks up the hapless felon
who steals the goose from off the common,
but lets the greater felon loose
who steals the common from the goose.*

It reminded me that this struggle for the commons was nothing new and inequitably skewed.

It was a struggle that quickly spread to other cities, including Oakland and San Francisco...to public spaces that are the commons of today - Frank Ogawa Plaza at Oakland’s City Hall and San Francisco’s Justin Herman Plaza where Market Street meets the Bay. My heart beat faster and my soul cried out “At last!” We

had waited forty years. Our situation had reached a crisis stage. There might not be another chance to realize the Beloved Community. This was not one I could sit out.

DIVING IN

During October, most of the “action” was in Oakland. Given my ministries with San Francisco’s homeless and its immigrant hotel workers, however, I gravitated to Occupy San Francisco, working with people I knew in Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE). Early on, we spun off a soon-larger, more focused group – San Francisco Interfaith Allies of Occupy (SF-IAO). I wrote a “theological statement” for the group – “A Call to Shalom” – which was circulated far and wide, including on Episcopal News Service² – and we set about embedding ourselves in Occupy SF, witnessing with our bodies and our voices to our solidarity with it.

That witnessing began peacefully enough on October 24, when about two hundred members of the faith community from both sides of the Bay gathered at Justin Herman

(See “Occupy” on Page Ten)



Dn. Gray marches with the “Golden Calf of Greed.”

“Occupy” from Page Nine)

Plaza for a march up Market Street, carrying a golden calf of greed sculpted by seminar-ians at Berkley’s Pacific School of Religion and stopping at several financial institutions for street-theater burials of that false god.

Two nights later, however, things turned violent in Oakland, when police unleashed a para-military assault on the encampment at Frank Ogawa Plaza, resulting in a night of one-sided confrontations in the downtown area and the wounding – critically – of Scott Olsen, a Marine veteran of Iraq.

Learning that the next night’s general assembly at Occupy San Francisco would center on Scott’s wounding, I made it a point to end my day at that meeting on Justin Herman Plaza.

I filled a shopping bag with bananas and tortillas and headed for the Plaza. The general assembly was just starting. Remembering from earlier visits where the food tent was, I joined the line and emptied the bag on the serving table. A little girl – maybe five - delighted in a banana. I said “Hi!” to her single-parent mom and petted their tiny dog.

All the while, I could hear the stream of announcements from the bull horn and the repeated “Mike check!” from each person moving forward to speak to the bowl-shaped crowd of intent, well-behaved youngsters who mixed comfortably with those joining after work in their suits, cellphones in hand.

I asked the young lady taking notes in front of me whether I too could make an “announcement” to the assembly. “Sure, get on Maria’s lineup of speakers.”

I made my way to Maria. She asked my name and I was handed the bullhorn. I had been there long enough to understand the cadence – short bursts repeated “amen corner”-style by the crowd to ensure that everyone heard the message.

I began...“Mike check!...My name’s Vicki...I’m here tonight to say...[pointing at my collar] *we’ve* heard *you*...and *they’ve* heard *us*...I’m here to wish you *Shalom*... not the silence of the graveyard...but the true peace of justice...No justice, no peace!...the peace of truly shared prosperity...We are with you!”

And from the smiles, “amens,” and high-fives as I melted back into the crowd, I knew that we were, indeed, with each other...that clergy were numbered among the 99% and most welcome in the movement.

FULL IMMERSION

As November dawned I found myself fully immersed in all aspects of Occupy SF, pulled along in the undertow of a movement that was palpably spiritual and that cried out for expression.

Called to “serve all people, particularly the poor” and to “make Christ and his redemptive love known...by word and example,” I felt a need to draw closer to



“This is what democracy tastes like.”

the young people who were speaking - and acting – on behalf of the growing ranks of the poor in ways that the church was not. I joined the OSF visioning group that is trying to shape a concrete statement of demands from the inchoate cry of unfairness and inequality that gave birth to the movement.³ I spoke at press conferences and marched in countless actions – always in collar and diaconal stole. In one, in solidarity with labor, I carried our golden calf of greed down Market to the front door of Wells Fargo. In another, on Human Rights Day, we stopped the cable cars on Powell and occupied Union Square. And in yet another – to mark the infamous Citizens United decision that conferred personhood on corporations – our Interfaith Allies gathered on the plaza before Bank of America with shofars and vuvuzelas to call down its walls of greed.

But it was in the camps...at Justin Herman Plaza (to us now Bradley Manning Plaza) and, later, before the Federal Reserve at 101 Market – in one-on-one conversations and at general assemblies - that I felt truly one with Occupy.

We found our oneness breaking bread together. On Black Friday, when everyone else was at the mall, about two hundred of us – campers and allies - shared Thanksgiving “leftovers” from our congregations in an outdoor feast at Bradley Manning Plaza. We called it “This is what democracy tastes like.” It was the sort of meal we shared again Christmas afternoon on the sidewalk before 101 Market. Unspoken was the prayer “We are all one body, because we share one

bread.”

That sense of solidarity was perhaps strongest that late November evening, as we waited in the drizzle for a rumored police crackdown and sought courage in community – union members, Veterans for Peace, students crushed by college debt, the newly homeless, those long homeless and hungry, some talented musicians, a young lawyer, a fire department paramedic named Rachel, Diamond Dave and Dr. B ...and not nearly enough clergy. It came my turn once more to speak. My words were short and simple: “This is something the church – my church – should have been doing a long time ago. Thank you for leading us. Thank you for showing us what we should be doing. Stay strong. We’re with you!” And the crowd again said: “Amen!”

And, a few nights later, after the police rousted the campers from 101 Market and the Council of Elders, leaders of the 20th Century movements for civil rights and social justice, joined them in the middle of the trolley tracks on Market, I felt myself in the midst of what Josh Griffin, a twenty-something priest in Portland, has called “public liturgy of the finest sort.” Facing a skirmish line of police, the youngsters among us put up five tents and sat silently around a circle of candles, while the rest of us sang “We Shall Not Be Moved.” A retired bishop and I held a private conversation with a self-described anarchist who wanted to know when violence in the face of violence – something that seemed imminent – was justified. The bishop spoke of Gandhi and King, and I added Jesus, explaining the meaning of “turn the other cheek.” And among the preachers that night (that ended peaceably) was a particular hero of mine - Vincent Harding, a close associate of Martin’s who had written several of his speeches. One of those was Martin’s 1967 Riverside speech opposing the Vietnam War. It contains the memorable line: “There is a time when silence is betrayal.” As Vincent spoke into the bullhorn of the humanity of the individual police officers and offered us his “We are with you,” I thought to myself “There is, indeed, a time and it has come again.”

THE SILENCE OF THE CHURCH

The time *has* come again. And, as it has, I’ve been dismayed by the silence of the church and, indeed, the dismissiveness of some bishops.

For my part, I feel that it’s urgent for the church to get off the sidelines and embrace the Occupy movement. For it seeks the same over-arching goal we say we do - a society that is fair and just and loving...a Beloved Community of Shalom. As I said

in an Advent sermon, our legitimacy is on the line. Do we truly believe Jesus' words and ours? Are we prepared to speak and act - dangerously - on our beliefs? Are we prepared to follow those bishops like George Packard and Gene Robinson who are?

Young people, in particular, are waiting for our answers and, I assure you, anxious to embrace *us*. I have found them calling us to do what we as a church should have been doing a long time ago. Are we listening? Are we ready, as people of faith, to act?

WHAT DO THEY WANT? WHAT MUST WE DO?

Probably the biggest excuse for inaction is the contention that it's all too fuzzy. Over and over – from our bishops and the people in the pews – we hear “What do they want?” Wrong question! The proper question is “What do *we* want?” Are we in the church not part of the 99%? Do we not have eyes and ears and hearts to see and hear and feel what Stephane Hessel calls the “unbearable things all around us” – the myriad injustices and indignities heaped upon us by out-of-control capitalism and a democracy corrupted by money. Do we not want to convince even the 1% to join a new, more humane consensus? Must we rely on the courageous campers who have opened our eyes to those unbearable things to also fill our minds, grown flaccid, with ready-made answers? Have we not minds of our own? Can we not engage? Dare we not join the changed and broadening conversation about necessary and, yes, obvious solutions? Can we not exert ourselves, and, through such exertion, tone up our capacity to think for ourselves and, together, shape *our* answers. As Hessel writes in *Time for Outrage*, “The worst attitude is indifference.”

There is, indeed, a time when silence is betrayal. We cannot be silent in the face of a patently unfair economy that devours the poor. Nor can we be indifferent to a political system that ignores our pain. We must speak truth to the powers-that-be, be they on Wall Street, Lafayette Square, or Nob Hill. We must “interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.” Isn't that what our bishops called us to do? Didn't we answer “I believe I am so called”? Aren't we now deacons? Let's get on with it!

(See the endnotes to this article on Page Fourteen.)

Taking a Stand Against Poverty (Part II)

by Dn. Sean D. Krausert, St. Michael's Church, Canmore, AB in the Anglican Diocese of Calgary



“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” *John 13:34-35*

These are powerful words. Powerful words to the disciples long ago, and powerful words speaking into each of our ministries today. To be honest, I don't usually think of it as a new command given that it flows so well as an adjunct to the two greatest commandments. In a way, I see it as an emphasizing, or perhaps a re-phrasing, of the second greatest commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves. Loving God with the entirety of my being, loving my neighbour as myself, and loving one another are right at the heart of *That Poverty Project*.

Since July of last year I have been implementing *That Poverty Project* using social and traditional media to engage thousands of people in awareness and education about poverty issues, and to inspire them to take action to help eliminate poverty at home and abroad. In order to garner attention and attract people to the project, I am participating in three 3-month long high-profile poverty related experiences focussing on three of the major faces of poverty . . . (i) homelessness, (ii) the struggles of the working poor, and (iii) hunger. It is my intent to be a bridge – walking from one who “has” towards those who “have not” in order to create greater understanding about poverty by allowing readers to accompany me on the journey. In other words, *being* a deacon . . . betwixt and between.

During Phase One of the project I focussed on homelessness by living in a sparsely equipped tent without many of the comforts of home. While you can't truly replicate homelessness because of the many complicating factors that often exist (i.e. trauma, mental illness, addiction, chronic fear, etc.), I managed to gain several insights that I shared with followers of *That Poverty Project*. For example, due to limited access to showers and living in the same clothes all the time, I definitely felt like a second class citizen. I also learned that the condition of being in poverty can self-perpetuating . . . resulting in mind games and low self-expec-

tations that keep you down in the “muck” of poverty. Most importantly, I was reminded how every homeless person is a child of God with a unique story, and but for a good break here or there either you or I could be in their place.

Phase Two has just ended and it explored the struggles of the working poor. Of course, such is the plight of millions of Canadians and Americans, and literally billions of people around the world. Thank-



fully, I was out of the tent as I had enough money to put a roof over my head and cover utilities, but not enough to cover all of my other needs. I had to cover food, transportation, clothing, and any other expenses out of an average of \$7.50 per day. I say “average” because like many in the developing world the amount each day fluctuated. This fluctuation was extremely difficult during the first month of the phase as I was unable to plan while being in a constant state of uncertainty as to whether I would be able to afford food on any given day. During the second and third month of the phase, an element of micro-financing (i.e. small loan) was introduced that elevated my standard of living almost immediately even though I was living on the same amount of funds

(See “Poverty Guy” on Page Twelve)

("Poverty Guy from Page Eleven)

given I had to pay back the loan in full each month. With access to credit I was able to budget properly and take advantage of bulk bargains that I couldn't afford previously. It became abundantly clear that a single person could survive on this amount for a time being but if anything went wrong then crisis was unavoidable. Further, if I had to feed a second or third mouth on that amount, it would be entirely likely that someone would go hungry.

While it is not possible to truly replicate an authentic poverty experience unless you are truly in that situation, it has been possible for me to get glimpses of insights into living in poverty. An important facet of the project is to then share these insights with others in order to overcome myths, stereotypes, and other untruths that have come to be associated with those who live in poverty. Four weeks into experiencing the struggles of the working poor, I posted the following blog:

LIVING ON THE EDGE (November 28, 2011 – Day 28, Phase Two)

Living on the edge. It sounds . . . exciting . . . thrilling . . . care free . . . courageous. Guess again. If you're talking about living on the edge of poverty then the descriptions are a little less glorious. Try . . . nerve-wracking . . . often boring . . . burdensome . . . and unfortunate. I can hear the little children now, "Ooooooh . . . Mommy, when I grow up I want to be struggling financially!" **Not.**

I'm essentially one month into Phase II of That Poverty Project - Struggles of the Working Poor. I've been reflecting on my experience thus far, but I can also draw upon my additional life experience in being part of the working poor. Allow me to elaborate on my descriptions above. Nerve-wracking - when you have very little in the way of resources it takes a lot of energy trying to decide what you can or cannot spend your precious funds on, and then being so close to the "line" is like a waiting game for the other shoe to drop. You can drop your whole load (all \$20 of it) on groceries, and then find yourself waiting for "that thing" to arise that you cannot afford but which must be dealt with. Often boring - not surprisingly, I have found that one has way fewer options as to what to eat and what to do when one has little, and so it can get monotonous. Burdensome - everything that could cost money feels heavy . . . very heavy. Things like buying a shovel becomes a major purchase (I had to get one today), and anything bigger becomes unfathomable. Unfortunate - living on the edge of poverty is usually not courageous as usually one doesn't do so intentionally. **Poverty is not really one of those things that most of us would choose as a lifestyle.**

So how does it compare with living in a tent for 3 months? It's different. Whereas my time in

the tent was more difficult physically (colder, more walking, and feeling grungy), my time with really limited resources seems more continuously troublesome from a psychological perspective. Being in the tent certainly brought on mind games that attacked my self-esteem and caused me to be down from time to time. However, I didn't experience much anxiety compared to what I am experiencing right now. That said, a lot of the anxiety comes from knowing that it is worse being on the street, and not wanting to get to that point. So, I guess I would have to choose the struggles of the working poor over being homeless on the streets . . . but not by much.

"Living on the edge" is a very apt descriptor for the struggles of the working poor. It's a constant balancing act. What can I afford? What can I put off paying for the time being? How can I deal with this situation

"What do I want people to do in order to be part of the solution regarding poverty eradication?"

that has just arisen? One could easily argue that such questions are a normal part of life. Yes, but there is a freakishly large difference for those who are around the poverty line as opposed to those who are not . . . NO NET. Most people in the developed world may not like the curve balls that life can throw at them, but they have an ability to absorb them because they have a protective buffer. However, in poverty there is no buffer, no safety net.

That's where we can come in. We . . . society . . . community groups . . . churches . . . you and I. We can be there to help people when they fall. As a group, we can decide that no one will be without their basic human rights being met. It's what we would want done for us if we were in their shoes, isn't it? Simply knowing that someone will help would sure relieve a lot of anxiety that comes from living on the edge.

It was less than a week after posting the above that the double standards often applied to those living in poverty reared its head and stared me in the face. In writing the following blog it was my hope that it would give one reason to pause before jumping to judgment of another.

DOUBLE STANDARDS (December 3, 2011 – Day 33, Phase Two)

Early in the first phase of the project I identified a double standard often applied to those in poverty. I had discovered that some people believe those in poverty should be sad all the time as opposed

to allowing them the full range of experience like everybody else. In other words, if someone is smiling or laughing then they're not really poor. I know . . . it's ridiculous!

Well, I think I've stumbled upon another one . . . poor people are supposed to have iron willpower and perfect decision making. That, too, sounds ridiculous, especially when it's stated like that. However, how often have we judged someone in poverty because of a decision or purchase they made that we deemed unwise given their financial situation. Maybe buying cigarettes . . . or treats . . . or drugs or alcohol. Well, if you have ever done that as I admit that I have, then you are applying a double standard. Unless, of course, you're perfect.

How did this train of thought hit home with me? Well, after a long week of work, yesterday Mrs. Poverty Guy walked into the house with a bottle of wine. She had decided that she would enjoy a nice glass as she relaxed last night. None for me though. Something in me snapped. I wanted some, too. I knew that it wasn't the smart thing to do . . . dipping into my precious funds to purchase something purely for my own enjoyment. I didn't care. I knew that there may be a time later in the month when I may regret it . . . when I may need that \$10 badly. All I knew was at that moment I was miserable and the gap between what was staring me in the face and what I should do was just too much to take. I bought a cheap bottle of wine, and nobody has to judge me about it because I judged myself enough for everyone. Eventually, I recognized the double standard I was applying unfairly to myself and had to lighten up . . . give myself a break.

Rich or poor . . . we are all people with wants, needs, hopes and gifts. We all have weaknesses and strengths. We all make mistakes because we're all human. And real people, just like us, give into temptation or succumb to addiction . . . and that doesn't negate the need for compassion and helping others where we can.

One of the most important questions asked of me has been - "What do I want people to do in order to be part of the solution regarding poverty eradication?" The answer to this question has been changing over the course of the project, growing organically with each step I take. Initially, my response was to choose that area of poverty that most speaks to your heart, and then do just a little bit more than you are right now. However, it became clearer by the day that to ultimately eradicate poverty we must change our way of thinking. We have to change our priorities, or perhaps it's actually re-aligning our priorities with our values. Therefore, this requires adoption of a plan and changes at a systemic level. As discussed in the following blog entry, to accomplish this we must each raise our voice in support of poverty eradication.

DEAFENING NOISE (January 9, 2012
– Day 70, Phase Two)

I was recently asked what I'd say if, when meeting with a CEO about poverty alleviation, I was then asked, "Okay . . . who do I make the cheque out to?" I actually surprised myself by my response.

At first I thought to let the CEO know that she could write the cheque to whatever poverty cause resonated most with her heart. There are certainly many, many worthwhile potential recipients who are battling poverty close to home (addressing homelessness, lunch programs in schools, seniors in need, people with disabilities, First Nation programs, etc.) OR abroad (combating hunger, clean water, AIDS orphans, micro-finance and rural agriculture initiatives, universal education, etc.). However, what ultimately came out of my mouth shocked me, and in doing so also helped me re-focus my efforts in That Poverty Project.

"Keep your cheque . . . I want your participation." And then I elaborated, "I want to provide a letter writing workshop for your thousand employees to ask their elected officials to make poverty elimination at home and abroad a top priority. I want you to tell your friends at the country club to get their companies involved, too. I want you to use your resources to help others think differently about poverty. **I want your voice . . . not your money.**"

I don't mean to discount giving to any number of the wonderful charitable organizations. Donations to those organizations are appreciated and typically used well to improve the lives of people. Similarly, I don't want to discourage anyone from volunteering their time or talents to help others. However, if you could do only one thing, I would encourage you to raise your voice. Let it be known amongst your family, friends, co-workers, and our leaders that poverty anywhere is simply unacceptable in a world of abundance such as ours. Poverty eradication is a numbers game . . . we need more people involved.

Poverty eradication starts with changing our thinking. We must open our eyes to see that we live in a world of abundance, not scarcity. We must recognize that in order to ensure our own human rights, we need to protect the rights of others. We must treat others as we ourselves would want to be treated. We must fix our system so that it doesn't merely treat the symptoms of poverty, but rather eliminates or prevents the causes. We must not be afraid of change, but rather recognize that change can actually save us money while improving the lives of everyone. We need to say we've had enough of people not having enough.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu summed it up nicely when he said . . .

"If everyone who wants to see an end to poverty, hunger and suffering speaks out, then the noise will be deafening."

Enough of us raising our voices won't be able

to be ignored. It will bring about the change needed for billions of people in satisfying their basic human rights. It will eradicate poverty.

God knows how I yearn to hear that deafening noise!!

As for Phase Three, it starts on March 1st and is the experience about which I am the most nervous. For the entire 3 months, my daily food intake will be based upon food rations as provided by the World Food Programme to refugees (a combination of rice, corn soya blend with multi-vitamin, pulses, sugar, salt, oil, and water . . . 2,100 calories). I am a big 6'2", and well over 200 lbs, and so there is no doubt that I will lose some weight. I've decided that it is best to approach this final phase as spiritually as possible. I'm thinking of it as an extended Lent. Of course, I will be doing this entire project under the care of a physician, and will adjust the calorie intake if needed to avoid any permanent harm.

At the end of the day, I believe that

working together we can make a world of difference for those in poverty . . . and that's what That Poverty Project is all about. It's my belief that everyone has a right to have their basic human needs met – food/water, shelter, basic health care, basic education, and freedom from fear. And, I believe that we are called to be God's hands and feet on Earth ensuring that everyone has those basic needs. The good news is that we live in a world of abundance (despite whatever the economic forecasts are), and that there is plenty for everyone to have enough. And for that I say, "Thanks be to God."

More information about That Poverty Project can be found at www.thatpovertyproject.com, where one can connect and follow the project through blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Anyone wishing to support the project can do so by (i) lifting it up in prayer AND (ii) spreading the word about the project.

The Diaconate of Young Adulthood

By Jason Sierra, the Officer for Young Adult Leadership and Vocations at the Episcopal Church Center.

Jason is based in Seattle, Washington in the Diocese of Olympia and is a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. (He is also a participant in *The Seven* - see related article on Page Four.) This article was part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Connecting Generations](#) (July 2011) and is reprinted here with permission from ECF Vital Practices www.ecfvp.org.

Three years ago this Pentecost I found myself worshipping at an open-air church on the Garden Island of Hawaii: Kauai. I had flown down to interview for the position of youth and young adult minister at one of two Episcopal Churches on the island. I was 25. As it was a half-time position I spent much of my visit seeking out other part-time gigs: outreach coordinator for an HIV/AIDS service organization, Spanish teacher at a local private school, hula dancer . . . Meanwhile, I knew my brother was driving the streets of Houston, Texas dropping off small bundles of the first-ever issue of a photocopied 'zine we were calling [Episcorific](#). Inside the front cover it read:

"The big idea? Young adults are not big churchgoers generally. Our lives are hectic and often unstable. We are at the mercy of the education system, budding careers, frequent moves, and our own indecisive-

ness. We are justifiably self-involved as we try to make our place in this world, define the bounds of our lives. But for many of us the church is an important site for that self-creation, a place of expanding the me-box to let God in. So, this is just another attempt at bringing the few, the brave, the young adult Episcopalians of this diocese into closer communion."

Self-effacing, folksy, and tongue-in-cheek, the 'zine nonetheless was an honest call for community, if community "in transition." Tired of waiting for our generation's "faith manifesto," we decided to build a forum from which it could be written, a space carved out within the church for us to speak: openly, honestly, creatively, together.

Thirteen issues later, I've finally realized that the creation of the forum itself and not the words written there was in fact the manifesto, the manifest reality, for which we were looking: a space for young adults to authentically and fully engage the church even while they wrestled wholeheartedly with the questions of young adulthood: Who am I to be? Where am I to live? With whom? Where do my values lie? Who can I trust?

We, as a church, often see the double-commitment of young adulthood—fully immersed in the world and struggling to make sense of faith—as a weakness and a challenge. We all too quickly assume the attitude we developed fifty years ago. We're afraid and overwhelmed, under-formed and content,

(See "Sierra" on Page Fourteen)

“Sierra” from Page Thirteen

and so we say, “Let them drift. They’ll come back.” But in reality, they won’t, and both they and we will be poorer for it.

The reality is that the socially acceptable options for authentic spiritual life today are infinite. If young adults prioritize spirituality at all, they will have the world’s religions to choose from, and in the end they’ll probably develop their own path, built from bits and pieces they’ve collected along the way, often with only episodic guidance, mentorship, and community. As a young adult, I know this is not satisfying. It is not enough.

As Episcopalians we struggle with the word “right.” We call it humility to deny an “exclusive” hold on truth, but all too often, in an attempt to be accommodating we underplay the tremendous gifts we have to offer, and we forget the transformational nature of sustained commitment to community and the spiritual processes that happen therein. We forget that through the structures of our tradition we actually do create space for the Spirit.

One such structure we’ve undervalued in the latest iteration of our tradition has been the [diaconate](#), a station of incredible freedom and commitment. In [Acts 6](#), the Seven were sent out to share the word of God. The diaconate is commissioned to lead the charge outward, to authentically and courageously forge the connections between the world and the church, to care for the widow and orphan on behalf of the church, and to challenge and expand the limits of the church’s embrace to include that same widow and orphan within the holy community. The diaconate is that liminal space where the world and the church overlap in a single process of integration, of blurring the boundaries, exchanging and translating information, practices, and values. In essence, it is the rightful place of the people of God, ever widening the embrace of Christ’s body on earth.

In some ways young adults cannot help but to occupy just such a process and a social location. Perched precariously on the border between an institutional culture trying to uproot itself from the 1960’s and find fertile ground in the 21st century and the popular and evolving cultures in which they have come to consciousness, theirs is necessarily a work of translation. Of both world and church, and we would do well to affirm both identities. Now, embracing and making space for that reality is a scary thing for many in our communities, the earnestness and the immediacy of the struggle of young adulthood is fiery and often unsettling. We’d rather keep it at arms length until the flames

die down, until the iron is forged, the metal cooled.

Our society is so outcome-driven that it can become difficult to sit with any process, especially one so unfinished. But that is precisely what it means to be sacramental people, to allow the mundane, immediate, and unfinished to become the holy and eternal.

Young Adulthood is a sacrament, and I’d venture, a sacramental diaconate. Young adulthood can and should represent for us an outward and visible sign of the grace that is continually tearing down our temple walls to build the kingdom broader and wider than we could ever have imagined. Young adults can be a living sacrament of the community’s

Young Adulthood is a sacrament, and I’d venture, a sacramental diaconate.

vocation as a process; a reminder and a call to engage the world with passion and excitement, knowing full well that God’s kingdom lies just over the horizon.

Like the formal diaconate, the sacramental diaconate of young adulthood does not somehow absolve us of our responsibility to serve, sending “them” out to build houses and work in food pantries, while we finance and pray. Instead, as sacrament they remind us of the way in which we are called to engage the world: to proclaim the Gospel in our own voice, to call out from the back of the Church “Yay God! Now let’s go!”

Our call in working with, ministering to, and alongside young adults is to honor their vocation, to create forums for exercising that vocation, and to feed the depth of their curiosity with the richness of our traditions. This is done knowing full well the dangerous consequences - for both young adults and the church more broadly - that we might, just might, be carried into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Resources

[Episcorific](#): A web ‘zine for and by young adults. Read back issues [here](#). The publication is currently going through a period of re-formation and will relaunch in Advent 2011.

The Seven: Sponsored by the [Association of Episcopal Deacons](#), The Seven is a pre-discernment discernment program for young

adults interested in exploring the diaconate. Over ten months, participants will meet regularly with a cohort and mentor, engage in theological exploration, and develop a project in their community.

[Episcopal Leadership Institute for Young Adults](#): A new initiative of the Office for Young Adult and Campus Ministries, the institute is currently working to create short term immersion experiences for small groups of young adults around areas of advocacy and ministry of particular interest to them. Past topics have included Gender Justice and Middle East Peace; upcoming topics include Immigration, EcoJustice, Art and Faith, and Public Health. Find out more at http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109462_107663_ENG_HTM.htm

[Young Adult](#) and [Campus Ministries](#): Check out other great opportunities for 18-30 year olds and those who serve them in the Episcopal Church. http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109462_ENG_HTM.htm <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/campus-ministries>

[Resource Library](#): Offers resources related to [curricula](#) and [vocational discernment](#) as well as a link to [Broadcast](#), the e-letter of the Office of Young Adult Ministry. http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109462_43859_ENG_HTM.htm

Endnotes to the article “Mike Check” on pages Nine to Eleven

1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5pgrKSwFJE>

2 http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/80050_130332_ENG_HTM.htm

3 We are still trying. Internally, we have come up with a list that satisfies us, but that probably could not get general assembly approval. The consensus process can be frustrating. I used to worry about that and about the absence of concrete demands for public consumption. I don’t worry anymore. For the national conversation has qualitatively changed. It is thickening and broadening, and, from it, the demands will emerge, as some have already in the State of the Union address. And, when they do, they will have behind them a consensus broad enough, deep enough to bring them to fruition.



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Mail this form to: AED, PO Box 1324, Paso Robles, CA 93447-1324



Calendar of Diaconate Events

22-25 March 2012 *Archdeacons and Formation Directors Conference, Maritime Institute, Baltimore, MD*

13-16 June 2013 *AED Diaconal Assembly, Woodlands Hotel and Suites, Colonial Williamsburg, VA*

“... the only gospel”

By pam nesbit

“you may be the only gospel your neighbor ever reads.” st. francis of assisi

Well, so now I can confess. When we decided to set the goal for the 25th Anniversary fundraiser “Where would be we... without AED?” at \$100,000, I thought we were crazy. No way did I think would be *ever* be able to raise that much. Of course, I never said that aloud, but I certainly thought it. And thank God I never said it, because, despite my unbelief, we have met and exceeded our \$100,000 goal! Our thermometer, indeed, runneth over.

As I was preparing to write this column, I began to think about what this might mean. AED in its 26th year and with its shiny new name has had its first fundraiser and we successfully raised \$100,000 with no corporate sponsorship in a difficult economy and from a community of people the vast majority of whom are not paid for their work. So, my first thought was that one of the things that this means is that ours is a community of pretty terrific people. We should all be madly twisting our arms around patting ourselves on the back. Or, even better, patting each other on the back for doing a difficult thing successfully and well. So, to everyone who participated in the campaign, by contributing, by soliciting, by talking about it to friends, by being involved in any way... I want to say thank you. Really, thank you from me and from the board and staff and from your fellow deacons. Thanks.

But what does this mean? How did we manage this? Clearly we can do things that we didn't (at least I didn't) know we could do. But how? What magical, powerful thing did we do that resulted in our raising more money than we ever thought we could? Well... we *asked* for it. And there perhaps is the meaning that I've been looking for. We asked you for money to support the mission of AED. We asked our friends for money. We asked you to ask your friends for money. We just kept asking. And you just kept responding. And that's how it worked. “Ask, and it will be given you...” says Jesus. Perhaps because by asking we are opening our imagination to a new possibility and then committing to it by bringing someone else into our dream. Clearly asking is an act of faith.

The AED board and staff brought you into our dream by asking you to help make new initiatives possible in our mission to engage the diakonia of all believers. We spoke of the past 25 years in which we have supported the fledgling community of deacons as we have lived through this rebirth of the modern diaconate. We spoke of the new initiatives we are beginning this year: the Seven, the Domestic Poverty Initiative, the Latin Experience. We are looking into new ways to communicate, new ways to gather deacons together, new ways to make resources available to everyone in our far-flung church. I was privileged last month

to travel to Berkeley to meet with deacons from the dioceses in the state of California to begin a discussion about welcoming Latino/Latina people into the diaconate. As I listened it was clear to me that AED has a role to play in this task. As a church-wide organization of deacons, we can gather and distribute resources and ideas about this and other ministries so that we can all benefit from the experiences of all of us.

And now, perhaps it's time for you to dream with us. It's time for you to tell us about your dreams and visions for the Association for Episcopal Deacons. What would you like to see us do? What do you need from us? What possibility for our association calls to you, excites you, makes you smile? Let us know. Ask. Post on Anglo-deacons or write me directly at pamelannesbit@gmail.com. Dream, hope, ask, and we will continue to do the same. Let us have faith in one another, because, with God's help, anything we can do, any dream we can bring to life, can only be done by all of us together.



Pam Nesbit
President