

The e-Vangel

A Monthly Summary of Diocesan Outreach and Service Activities

April 2008



Roger Stone in San Pedro Necta, Guatemala

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BISHOP BROOKHART'S MESSAGE:

When I have a conversation with vestries in the diocese, it is usually not far into the conversation before the topic of assessments appears. Remember that an assessment is the amount that the diocesan convention asks each congregation to remit to the diocese. That rate is currently 18.5% of income.

But before I address the issue of assessments, we need to step back and try to get a grasp on the concept of "diocese". The Episcopal Church, indeed, all of the catholic churches, are not congregational; that is, we do believe that an individual church is "big" enough to represent the fullness of the Church. In our tradition, the diocese is the basic unit of the church. This way of envisioning the church goes all the way back to the New Testament. If you read the letters of St. Paul, you will note that he sees himself as an apostle/bishop who is responsible for the lives of many churches, none of whom exists by or for themselves alone.

Maybe some images will help. Think of a flower. It is a single entity made up of a number of petals; no one petal is enough. Or think of the bones in a skeleton. It takes over six-hundred bones to make up the structure that will hold up and shape a human being; no one bone is sufficient for the task. Or think of the components of a motor. There are many parts that together make the motor work; no one part can supply energy alone.

Assessments are used to carry out the work that we do together as a diocese. Your church is part of the system of the diocese, a member of the family, and these monies help do what the Risen Lord calls us to do. Most of the assessments go for salaries or for expenses involved in meetings of the leaders of the diocese. The Commission on Ministry is a good instance. This is a body of lay people and clerics who advise the Bishop on matters related to ordained and lay ministry. Much the time of the CoM is spent working with people who may have a call to Holy Orders. It simply costs money to hold these meetings, which help insure that we have ordained and lay leaders in the diocese. This is work done on your behalf, and work from which you benefit.

I am asking that you see assessments not so much as an expense but as your share in the mission and ministry of our diocese. The Risen Lord has called us to work together in Montana to do the work of the Reign of God. And in this society, that involves money.

+ Franklin



Coincidence or Divine Intervention?

By Jené Matzkanin
St. Mark's, Anaconda

Envision for a moment that you are driving down the highway doing 70 m.p.h., when a car pulls out in front of you going 45 m.p.h. Of course, this is a two lane highway, where the road curves so often that you can not see if it is clear to pass. Do you become enraged at the lack of concern exhibited for the immense hurry that you are in to arrive at your destination? Do you accept it for what it is and enjoy the drive? Is it coincidental that this vehicle interrupted your hurried pace, or could it be divine intervention?

I used to be sure that the person in front of me knew that I was in a hurry. When I prayed for more patience, I did not mean that I wanted to wait on other people, I meant that I wanted the patience to be supernaturally instilled in my character. Isn't it interesting how things don't work out that way? Instead, God gives us a different route that is more beneficial to our well being. As I have grown closer to my Savior, I have learned that the persons who have gotten in my way had no idea that I might have been in a hurry, they simply saw an opportunity to go and they took it. It wasn't malicious or out of spite, and it had absolutely nothing to do with me and my circumstances.

I know that when I approach a road block or an obstacle of sorts, it is because God is doing something in me, in my life. He is teaching me to be patient, that I may one day exhibit God like characteristics. He is showing me how to put my trust completely in Him, having faith that He will get me where I need to be according to His divine time table. In the same way God will also put detour signs out, that I may avoid venturing down a path of destruction. The detour may appear dark and un-traveled, but I know that He will be faithful to light my path.

It is not a coincidence that we rely upon a bible which was written ages ago, yet eternally speaks to us and applies to the here and now. God desires our attention, when we become too busy to notice the tugging at our hearts, He reaches down and puts a car in our path, (metaphorically speaking) creating the need for us to slow down, that we may hear His beautiful voice whisper to us. It is in hearing His voice that we know that it's okay to slow down, regardless of the whirl wind of chaos surrounding us. There is so much that God needs us to hear from Him, so much He wants to tell us but we have to take the time to listen. Personally, my driving time is my quiet time, I get to listen to my worship music, I can hear God speak to my heart so clearly, that I know it's His divine presence. Once I get home, or get to work the hustle and bustle continues again. No wonder God extends the drive sometimes.

Is God trying to get your attention? Is there something He needs for you to see or experience? The next time that you encounter a delay, a change in your plans or daily routine, I challenge you to consider the possible reasons why.



Jené

OUTREACH AND SERVICE:

(At Diocese House, we strongly believe in accountability to you, our constituents. As is often the case at this time of year, Barb Hagen and Roger Stone are out and about in and out of the country. Roger was a self-funded member of a mostly Lutheran Construction & Pastoral Mission to Guatemala March 24-April 2. This edition of the e-Vangel is lengthy enough, so the Guatemala report was omitted. But his trip to Seattle is included).

2008 EPISCOPAL COMMUNICATORS CONFERENCE

By Roger Stone

Trip dates: Wednesday, April 9 to Saturday, April 12.

Conference: 2008 Episcopal Communicators.

Location: Hotel Deca, 45th and Brooklyn, Seattle.

The official version of our event as written by one of my more able colleagues is below. Our conference theme was “Emerging Communications for an Emerging Church” – this topic specifically includes online blogs and videos. Bp Brookhart has expressed interest in starring in an irregular series of online videos. I now know how to make an online video – stay tuned!

One group discussed Best Practices programs as a way to make better use of available resources – essentially identifying what we do well and sharing it with each other. And on the other hand, sharing what we have tried and not been quite so successful.

Another group talked about identifying the gifts God has so graciously given us. Do we know what they are? Maybe others see gifts in us that we don’t see ourselves? What do we do with them? How about putting your gifts in a congregational bank?

Given our limited resources, and having seen other diocesan web sites, for the time being, I am satisfied that we are moving in the right direction with our web site. However, complacency is not one of my virtues so I have asked a friendly neighboring diocesan director (professor, no less!) of communications to take a no-notice look at the site and send me his critique. I found out about a couple of interesting web site technical tools that I will start using to analyze site traffic.

In the e-Vangel, I plan to start a regular feature about our Episcopal/Anglican jargon called ‘ChurchSpeak’ – defining, in as light a way as I can, what some of our more esoteric terms mean. Bishop of Olympia Greg Rickel very strongly exhorted us to use plain language wherever possible; our church needs to be far more user friendly than it is. Someone should be able to come in off the street and by reading the service bulletin or Book of Prayer, know exactly what was going on. It is difficult to convey the sense of power and sincerity with which he spoke, words which many of us gathered there had previously discussed in diverse situations. I do not think there was one of us who did not agree wholeheartedly with what Bp Rickel said. In this and in other meetings with him, I found him to be authentic, genuine and accountable. I’d be interested in reading your thoughts about what he said.

Several presenters made specific reference to the need for the church to become more involved with politics. Given the significance of our power in the pews, we could have a major impact on any issue, even more so if we allied with another denomination, either on a national or regional level. **"If not us, then whom?"** as Bishop Steven Charleston said.

In that same context, we need to be more involved with the Helena metropolitan area media by such things as having Bishop Brookhart issue letters about issues such as teen suicide, environmental changes, mental health, etc., stressing how he feels about this on a personal level.

We ended the Episcopal Communicators conference late Saturday morning. After lunch, nine of us were shuttled over to St. Margaret's Episcopal Church for the wrap-up of the Heal Our Planet Earth conference. Bishop Steven Charleston, Dean of the Virginia Theology Seminary was the post-lunch speaker. What an absolute delight and joy to listen to him – he is so practical, sincere and authentic. He had us in tears of laughter and shouts of acclamation as he spoke about his message of reconciliation with the earth which we have so badly abused (visit his new web site: www.genesiscovenant.com). Presiding Bishop Katharine and Bishop Greg Rickel were there, and they clearly enjoyed listening to their colleague. Truly a wonderfully energizing way to end the week J

Read on if you have time

Roger

Episcopal Communicators meet in Seattle

Annual conference explores 'Emerging Communications for an Emerging Church'

By Mary Frances Schjonberg April 10, 2008 [Episcopal News Service]

As the 35th annual meeting of [Episcopal Communicators](#) got underway April 9 in Seattle, Washington, participants began to experience the conference's theme of "Emerging Communications for an Emerging Church."

They gathered for an emerging Episcopal Church Eucharist led by members of [Church of the Apostles](#), a Seattle congregation that describes itself as an "incarnational, monastic, Christian community, affiliated with God, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit." It also claims affiliation with both of what its website calls the Episcopal Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America "tribes."

The Eucharist, held in the ballroom of the [Hotel Deca](#), included guitars and drums, lyrics of new and traditional music projected on a screen above the conference-table altar and an "Open Spaces" time of meditation and prayer stations in place of a traditional sermon.

In the conference's keynote address, author and scholar [Diana Butler Bass](#) told the gathering that communicators, as people who tell the story of the Episcopal Church, can be the "bards" of a historic chapter in the denomination's life.

[Episcopal Diocese of Olympia](#) Bishop Greg Rickel, speaking during the conference's April 9 opening banquet at the [Burke Museum](#) on the University of Washington campus, told participants that he prayed they would not be "mere spectators" to the changing Episcopal Church but that they would teach the church.

During the morning of April 9, participants attended workshops on topics ranging from technology issues to theology and communications.

Prior to the official start of the conference, House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson hosted a reception for the communicators on the evening of April 8. Anderson encouraged communicators to educate their dioceses about how the Episcopal Church works, saying that the story of the church's governance "is important not as a political reality but as a theological truth."

Diana Butler Bass

When considering new congregations that are emerging from mainline Protestant denominations (in which she includes the Episcopal Church), Butler Bass suggested asking "from what are we emerging" and "toward what are we emerging." She noted that the two questions are connected because every group or individual carries everything from the past on the journey to the future.

The Episcopal Church is emerging, she suggested, from "a place of cultural prominence" that was connected to its "racial prominence," from the liberal theology of the 20th century, and from a sense of "the church as a religious corporation."

Butler Bass said that the part of the Episcopal Church's cultural prominence that it will carry with it toward the future is the fact that "we're not afraid of power." Episcopalians know how to use their knowledge of how the political sphere works to effect real change in people's lives, she said.

As Episcopalians move into what is being called the era of "post-liberal theology," she said, they can take with them liberal theology's openness of questioning and exploring faith as they try to renew the sense of transcendence and mystery that often got lost in the previous era.

Thirdly, Episcopalians' sense of the church as business has taught them "how to structure communities" and "how to shape religious work," Butler Bass said. This knowledge includes skills such as governance, how to run capital campaigns and how to fairly compensate people for their work. "It's actually a gift to know how to do this," she said.

Butler Bass was project director of a [Lilly Endowment](#) study of mainline Protestant vitality from which emerged the best-selling book "The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church" (Alban, 2004). The research, she said, showed that emerging vital congregations have flattened-out structures that operate in three overlapping spheres. She labeled the spheres practice, tradition or memory, and wisdom or mission.

Observation and interaction with some 450 members and leaders of 50 such congregations showed that the Christian practices most commonly lived out were theological reflection,

hospitality and an embracing of diversity. Such practices were linked to what people saw as the tradition of the church in ways that renewed the tradition and made it come alive, she said. The congregations tried to operate with a sense of wisdom that was not a completed certainty but "actionable knowledge" that helped give people a meaningful way of life that they could not find elsewhere in the world, Butler Bass told the conference.

Butler Bass suggested that those with the ministry of communications have a role to play as "bards of the emerging church" who "can lead change by the stories we tell."

"Words lead," she said. "We are the storytellers -- the storytellers of the place we once were -- and we can be storytellers of the place where we are going."

Greg Rickel

The world is watching two churches -- the established church and the emerging church -- "trying desperately to speak to each other," Rickel told communicators.

One part of the struggle, he said, is the tension between authenticity and loyalty. "We have forgotten how to be ourselves," he said, and in the process have wrung mystery "completely out of our existence."

Those attracted to the emerging church -- and those skeptical of the established church -- look for what Rickel called "the authenticity of 'maybe' and 'I don't know.'" They are not skeptical of institutions in general but only of those that cannot be introspective and self-critical, he added.

There is also a tension between authority and leadership, Rickel said, explaining that leadership is the quality that can call the established structure to task, and move beyond it when needed. Such movement can push people "beyond the boundaries of where we have been," he said.

It is not that authority is not needed, he said, but that it can stifle growth when it is wielded for its own sake.

Rickel cited a third tension between what he termed the center and the edges. "The emerging church is at the edge and they have so much to teach" those who are at the center. Yet the center wants to remain the same. "We continue to use our code...ECW...narthex...815...even the word Eucharist," he said, calling such language "the code for insiders."

He urged communicators to help those at the center listen to the stories of those at the edges because the established church tends to stay focused on the center and "mired in our discontent."

"The church needs to travel to the edges," he said. "You can take us there" by hearing and seeing the emergent church and helping to tell its story.

Bonnie Anderson

During the April 8 reception, Anderson told communicators that "it's not just the outside that doesn't understand how we're governed; it's us," She added that both the Episcopal Church and

the Anglican Communion would benefit knowing that the Episcopal Church values the voices of all orders of ministry.

Communicators ought to educate their dioceses about the connection between the Baptismal Covenant's call to ministry and the participation of both lay and ordained people in the governance of the church, Anderson said. "Tell the story of the authority of the laity" in the Episcopal Church, she urged the communicators.

She also suggested that they look for ways to make the story of governance interesting and to watch for opportunities to portray the work of both houses of the church's bicameral system of governance. "Very often we only hear about the events of one of the houses of our bicameral system," Anderson said, noting that she was not calling for the House of Deputies to meet outside of General Convention as does the House of Bishops.

Anderson encouraged communicators to find ways to include the voices of their diocesan General Convention deputations and to tell the story of the ministry that goes on every day between General Conventions.

Communicators need to know the right mix of media for their specific audiences, Anderson said, and advocate for that mix. During a time of budget cuts and the ongoing debate about print versus digital media, she said, communicators need to be able to show that the best way to deliver news and information "isn't always the cheapest."

The Episcopal Church's infrastructure, especially in terms of communications technology, has lagged behind that in other parts of society, Anderson told the communicators, adding that she would like to see a commitment in the next triennium to reversing that lag. The work of communications and the infrastructure needed to deliver news and information ought to be seen as a mission priority, Anderson said.

About 120 people, including 43 first-time attendees, gathered for the April 9-12 meeting. Episcopal Communicators includes nearly 200 people with communication responsibilities in the Episcopal Church at congregational, diocesan, regional, and national levels in both print and electronic media.

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On April 10, [David Domke](#), head of the University of Washington's Journalism Department in the [School of Communications](#) and author of "The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon," opened the day's sessions with a presentation on the fusion of religious and political rhetoric in the U.S.

Domke told conference participants that politics in the United States today "is defined by a calculated, deliberate and political use of faith that is unprecedented in American history."

The Rev. Matthew Moretz, who is known for his church-related "webisodes" posted on YouTube [here](#), told the conference on April 11 that the communicators can help the Episcopal Church embrace what he called "the new social world" of the internet in ways that "incarnate the Gospel in this virtual space."

"We're all fumbling about how to be present here," Moretz said of the world of YouTube and social networking. "We're all God's children here -- mediated but real."

Domke told the conference that his research is motivated by U.S. politicians' use of references to God and faith that culminated in George W. Bush's post-September 11 speeches. He noted that politicians who "put the stamp of God" on their positions can effectively close down all debate about those positions, in part because "when you disagree politically today you are -- to some degree -- disagreeing about faith."

Tracing what he argued as the deliberate decision of conservative politicians and people of faith in the late 1970s to more explicitly fuse historic ties between faith and U.S. public life, Domke said that campaign "changed our country fundamentally." The fusion was at first a phenomena of conservative elements in the Republican Party, but Democrats are now forced to respond in kind, he said.

"Today's religious environment is highly politicized on both sides of the aisle," Domke said.

Domke contended that this environment is contrary to the landscape envisioned by the founders of the United States. The founders saw faith -- what he described as a bland deism -- as only part of the story of the new nation, not its defining quality, he said. He noted that many early citizens did not want to repeat their experiences of the religious oppression from which they had fled.

While the [Declaration of Independence](#) is what Domke called a "prophetic document" grounded in references to God's call, the [U.S. Constitution](#) is devoid of mention of God. "They kept faith at arm's length in that governing document," he said.

Domke also criticized the linkage of political and religious rhetoric in response to terrorist acts, contending that "we have stepped right into the 'clash of civilizations' mythology" in ways that he said must please terrorists such as Osama bin Laden.

He argued that skillful people with access to the media must begin to break that linkage so that the founders' vision can be restored. He said progressive people, especially those of faith, must learn how to frame the debate in the ways that conservatives have for the last several decades.

Noting that "language does create reality," Domke argued that "it's not going to change if we're just thoughtful and concerned."

Moretz told the conference that people who operate in the virtual world of the internet's social-networking sites are not opting out of reality. They experience real social interaction and real emotional reactions. They experience community, he said.

"We should be embracing this social fact," Moretz said, arguing that both lay and ordained Episcopalians can preside over these new "gathering[s] of humanity" in ways that can show what it means to be the body of Christ in new places.

"The story is the same but the territory is new," he told conference participants, alluding later during a workshop to the way that St. Paul used the infrastructure of Roman roads to spread the Gospel.

Moretz suggested that communicators who want to operate as people of faith in what he called the frontier territory of the internet must have an online persona that is authentic and points to "the real you" so that they can bring a sense of being places of stability on the web.

"Our gift to these other worlds is our integrity," he said.

To be what Moretz called "the amplified presence of the body of Christ" in the virtual world requires mastering the language of short-form video, he said. His scripts are about 400 words long for videos that run three to four minutes.

"It takes focus and clarity to be brief," he said. "Acquiring this capacity is valuable -- worth developing."

Video bloggers must also be willing to exist in what he called "the refiner's fire" of comment and criticism that results almost immediately from any posting to the web, Moretz said. Criticism "is a great blessing" that "can shape us and improve us" and the work, he said.

Incarnating the Gospel and being authentic spiritual leaders in the virtual world does not necessarily mean bringing new members to a specific parish, said Moretz, who was ordained in 2006, is curate of [Christ Church](#) in Rye, New York, and does his online ministry from that base.

He said video blogging can be a way to tell the story of the Episcopal Church's vision of Christianity that works because of its traditions, not despite them. In addition, his YouTube videos have "created relationships and energy on another level" that he admitted he still doesn't fully understand.

For instance, Moretz said he wrestles with the implications of the pastoral relationships that develop through his online contacts with people who respond to his videos. While priests normally terminate their pastoral relationships when they leave a congregation, he said he wonders when such online relationships should end.

In the end, Moretz said, any work Episcopalians do in the online world ought always to point to the community of the body of Christ, the face-to-face contact and human touch that comes with people "gathering together in reality."

-- The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg is Episcopal Life Media correspondent for Episcopal Church governance, structure, and trends, as well as news of the dioceses of [Province II](#).

ST. LUKE'S, BILLINGS:



Several of St. Luke's (Billings) youth prepare dinner at the Montana Rescue Mission under the supervision of The Rev. John Wilson, Deacon.

St. Luke's, Billings, Youth Serve Dinner at Rescue Mission

On Sunday, April 20 St. Luke's youth served dinner to 250 people at the Montana Rescue Mission in Billings. Thirteen young people were involved as well as some adults. The youth

raised the \$300 for the meal, bought the food, cooked it and served it at the Men's Shelter and at the Women and Families Shelter.

St. Luke's buys cooks and serves a Sunday dinner at the Rescue Mission every two months. Those unable to participate make desserts. The parish also makes 200 sandwiches every other week for the Rescue Mission Outreach Van.

The Rev. Canon Gary Waddingham

THE PINTLER CLUSTER:



Susan Bartlett is presented to the congregation of St. Mark's by Bishop Brookhart in a Commitment to Christian Service. Since August 2007, Susan has been working as the Pintler Cluster Youth Coordinator and recently took on the position of Diocesan Risk Manager for the Church Insurance Corporation. Following is the statement she read for the commitment she was making as Youth Coordinator: "With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through the examples set by our church's generations, I give you my word that I will contend for His chosen ones. I will help build the foundation that will bring our youth the love of Jesus' heart, the strength of our Father's wisdom, the knowledge of God's desires, and without judgment, I will be a vessel to the narrow yet

glorious path to His most heavenly kingdom.”

Seen right is the 2008 Confirmation class at St. James' Episcopal Church in Deer Lodge. Pictured with Bishop Brookhart and the Rev. John Toles from left to right are Tristen Meagher, Kathleen Stavlo, Kadeshia Meagher, Jackie Stavlo, Caitlyn Seaton, Nichole Nash, and Taylor Nash. Each Confirmand received a personalized Book of Common Prayer. Postulant for Holy Orders Martha Winford assisted in preparing these youth for this special day.



The Rev. John Toles

ST. MARK'S, HAVRE:



Tiffany O'Connor and Bishop Brookhart on her Palm Sunday Confirmation! God bless you, Tiffany.

EPISCOPAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT:

By: Barb Hagen

April 10-13, I had the opportunity to attend the Episcopal Relief and Development network meeting. ERD staff and Diocesan Coordinators from all over the country attend this meeting each year and it is always a valuable time of learning and sharing.

This year's meeting was held in Minneapolis and I arrived a day early to help with meeting logistics. We always begin with an orientation for the new coordinators and then a reception. This year, we also had Evensong at the hotel.

We heard from Rob Radtke, ERD's president about the status of ERD. We are helping a lot of people with the malaria nets, and we are working with other groups that offer nets so we are not duplicating efforts. ERD uses a different model with our nets than some other organizations. We involve the community and look at making long term behavior changes. ERD now has an overseas office in Ghana.

Next, we had a session on "branding." This involves our identity and how we tell our stories. It helps us to tell them more clearly. We discussed the importance of using plain language. ERD also changed its logo. The website will be updated with the new logo, so watch for more information!

Following the branding discussion, Bonnie Anderson, the President of the House of Deputies for the General Convention addressed our network. She talked about the role of the laity in the church and that the diocesan coordinators are the "home team." She asked us to think about three things: 1) our call, 2) mission morality, 3) knowing our stuff. Then, she expanded on those areas. She reminded us that laity also has a call to ministry. Our baptismal covenant is really our "marching orders" and we are all called to honor that covenant.

She challenged us to think about mission work and why we want to do it. We need to remember to listen to the needs of the people and work on projects that are sustainable. It is not about us! We need to be informed about our work and to know what our mission really is.

And, last but not least, Bonnie said that we need to remember to bring good news. She shared with us a Hindu prayer,

"If you would give your flowers to the God of the altar
Give them to the person on the street
And the God of the altar will get them."

Abigail Nelson the Vice President of Programs shared information about the Millennium Development Goals and how they are a small expression of what people of faith have known for a long time. She reminded us to listen, pray, and act.

We heard a presentation about the financial status of ERD and looked at some of the beneficiary stories and how they were tied to the gospels.

Friday evening, we had Eucharist at St. Mark's Cathedral with Bishop Mano Rumlshah, Bishop of Peshawar and Multan, Church of Pakistan as the preacher. There were many inspirational words to think about over these few days.

On Saturday morning, the Provincial Coordinators (I am the Coordinator for Province 6) met with Rob Radtke, ERD's president. We are now called the "Council of Advice" and over the last year, we have had conference calls about every six weeks or so with our network director to talk about ways to improve communication and new ways to do the work of ERD. It was helpful to have time with Rob to get his input as well.

We heard a Katrina update from the diocesan coordinators in Mississippi and Louisiana. They are so grateful for the generosity of all of the ERD's donors. They reminded us there are still many needs. If people are interested in volunteering, they should look at the following website, www.campcoastcare.com.

We then had a number of workshop choices and one that was mandatory. I did not get to attend any of the workshops because I was coordinating one on Parish Relationships. In that session, one person presented on "Recruiting Parish Reps," one on "Training Parish Reps," one on "What your Parish Rep wants from you" and mine was on "Making Parish Visits." The most difficult part was trying to stay within our time frame! We had some very helpful discussion and sharing of best practices.

We had a chance to meet with our provinces. I always enjoy meeting the coordinators in our province. We had coordinators from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wyoming, and of course, Montana. We were only missing the coordinators from Colorado and South Dakota.

Our network director gave his report on the goals we've accomplished as a network since we last met as well as the goals we have set for this year. We ended with Evening Prayer and a commissioning service. Each year, we are sent forth by the chair of ERD's board to do the work of Episcopal Relief and Development.

I enjoy this meeting each year and always learn from it and feel full of ideas when I return. So, be ready!

EPISCOPAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT PROMOTES THE "GIVE IT 4 GOOD" CAMPAIGN

In May, many Americans will be receiving "economic stimulus" checks from the federal government in the hopes that the money will be spent to bolster the languishing economy. With a national debt of \$9 trillion, the United States is arguably the most consumer-oriented society in the world. Far more goods than are needed, or that can be produced in an environmentally-sustainable manner, are purchased by people who already live lives of material plenty.

To highlight the global imbalance of wealth and to help direct the stimulus checks to people who can truly benefit from this money, Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation (EGR) launched the "Give it 4 Good" campaign www.giveit4good.org to encourage people to give all or part of the stimulus check (or a similar amount for those who don't qualify) to an organization working to

advance the Millennium Development Goals, a set of benchmarks established by the international community to cut rates of global poverty.

The “Give it 4 Good” campaign aims to redirect funds to organizations working to alleviate suffering while highlighting the unequal distribution of wealth in the world and the harmful environmental impacts of over-consumption and consumerism. Part of achieving Millennium Development Goal 7 -ensure environmental sustainability- begins with people who live in western countries limiting their consumption behavior.

“I am excited about Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation’s campaign to challenge the Church to raise it conscious regarding global distribution of wealth,” says Robert W. Radtke, President of Episcopal Relief and Development. “In the Prayers of the People, we pray that God would give us a ‘reverence for the earth’ and that ‘we may use its resources right in the service of others.’ The “Give It 4 Good” campaign is one way to put this prayer into action while allowing us to live in solidarity with those who are in want.”

In partnership with Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation, Episcopal Relief and Development is encouraging the Church to pledge all or part of their “economic stimulus” checks to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Inspiration Fund, which was launched to promote health and fight disease by working to achieve MDGs 4, 5 and 6.

To support the Millennium Development Goals Inspiration Fund through this campaign, make a gift to Episcopal Relief and Development online at www.er-d.org , or call 1-800-334-7626, ext. 5129. Gifts can be mailed to: Episcopal Relief and Development “Millennium Development Goals Inspiration Fund”, P.O. Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058.

To record your gift with Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation, please visit www.e4gr.org and complete the form, indicating your pledge to Episcopal Relief and Development and the Millennium Development Goals Inspiration Fund.

STEWARDSHIP

By the Rev. Jane Smith, Rector of St. James’, Lewistown.

One of the Gospels appointed during April was John 10 and believe it or not this gospel holds a strong message of stewardship. If you doubt that then just follow along for a little while here and see if you don’t agree with me on this. That lesson begins with these words. **“The sheep follow him because they know his voice”**. Unfortunately, there are times when we human sheep fail to recognize that distinctive voice of God – when we human sheep don’t come right away – don’t respond to God’s call. Four legged sheep are a lot like that too – they don’t always recognize the voice of their good shepherd.

I don’t know if this story is absolutely correct but I was once told by a monk friend of mine that old time shepherds had a unique way of dealing with a lamb was a particularly slow learner. He claims that the shepherd would actually drape the lamb around his neck and carry it with him for a period of time. That way the lamb would hear the shepherd’s voice again and again all day

long until finally it had no difficulty recognizing him and answering his call. Actually what he really said was that the shepherd would break one of the lambs legs so it had to be carried – making it totally dependent on the shepherd. So not only did it learn to recognize the voice but it also came to understand that it was reliant on that shepherd for everything it needed to stay alive. For me that’s a good story to hear because – even if the breaking the leg part is not true – it helps me understand one very important thing about God. God does not give up on his flock – on us – anymore than a good shepherd would give up on his sheep.

I really like this sheep and shepherd image that John uses throughout this reading and in other places in his Gospel. But in this particular reading he not only used the shepherd but he also merges it with the doorway or gate symbol – again, one that we find numerous times in the Gospels. Here the gate is an old time sheep pen gate. Did you know that those old pens only had one gate? That was for a good reason.

But before we talk about that gate lets look that the “good shepherd” a little more. You know these shepherds had a special relationship with their sheep. Most biblical shepherds didn’t own a whole bunch of sheep. To them a flock of 100 would have been huge. Most flocks weren’t any bigger than 10-20 max and the sheep were more like valued pets. There wasn’t anything about his sheep that that shepherd didn’t know. Now to an untrained eye, that sheep look pretty much alike – but to the shepherd who cared for them - they were all individuals and he could easily tell them apart. He recognized all those unique markings or peculiar traits that made each one stand out as the distinctive individual that it was.

That sounds pretty nice right? But in order for the shepherd to get to know his sheep that well he really had to live with them – which is exactly what they did. They didn’t work a 9 to 5 job – no way. They lived and cared for those sheep 24 – 7. They lived among the sheep. Are you beginning to see a parallel here? God, who loves and cares for us – realized that in spite of everything that He had done for His sheep on in the OT, they still didn’t know his voice that well - they still didn’t understand that he would provide everything they would ever need – all they had to do was depend on Him. He had tried to provide us with ways to keep us safe. But we kept refusing to listen to his voice. So God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus and came down from heaven to be close to His sheep. The Good Shepherd became a sheep, took on our nature, and lived life just like us. That closeness is exactly why we say he is the good Shepherd. Like any good shepherd, He knows the peculiar traits of His flock and watches over us with love and concern.

That love can be better understood when we become aware of power this gate image holds. First, and most obvious, is the fact that the shepherd could stand there in that single opening and to protect the sheep from wolves or thieves – anyone or anything who would try to harm them. But the second reason – and as far as I am concerned the far more joyous one was so the shepherd could stand there and as each sheep came into the pen. He could stop it and check it over. If it was scratched or wounded by thorns, the shepherd would make note of that and when all the sheep were in and safe, he would go around taking care of the ones who had some sort of hurt or injury. By doing that he made sure they would heal up instead of just getting worse. Learning this aspect of a shepherd’s job brings a whole new way of understanding those gospel words **“I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved,”**

Sadly, and much too often these words seem to be used to preach about rejection and exclusion. The idea that only “certain ones” will get through the gate seems to be the more widely accepted interpretation of these words. But if we really understand how those shepherds worked, we will see that it was not a matter of keeping a sheep **OUT** – but of doing something for the ones who needed help. The gate is a place of healing and nurturing not exclusion. A place of acceptance, regardless of our scratches or our needs.

After all those sheep were in pen, and all the wounds and hurts were cared for, the shepherd would actually lay across that opening so no intruder could get in during the night. He literally became the door. Jesus said, “**I am the gate.**” As the Good Shepherd, he becomes the gate/the door that protects and sustains the life of his sheep – our lives. Those old time shepherds would fight to the death to protect those sheep – so why would we expect less from God. Christ laid down His life for his sheep. He saved us from the destroying wolves of sin and death. He gave His life to kill them and take away their power so they couldn’t destroy the flock.

But if the story ended here we’d have a problem. If a flock of sheep loses their shepherd because he died saving them, they became shepherd-less. And even if no more wolves come, those sheep would wander off and get lost and end up dead. Luckily our story continues with The Resurrection. In our story, sin and death are destroyed by Christ’s rising from the dead and continuing to care for us. We live in the light of Easter. We celebrate the risen Christ, who is the good shepherd, the one who gives us victory over death. The one who gives purpose and meaning to our lives. We celebrate that and we celebrate the fact that this Church has survived for centuries when there are far more reasons why it should have collapsed. The body of Christ continues to gather together because Christ rose from the dead. The body of Christ continues to grow in faith because of the apostles’ teachings, because we gather for fellowship, because we break bread and we pray together. We gather together to praise God. Unfortunately, we don’t always do all of these things well, but the Church of Christ continues - sometimes it is in SPITE of us - when we are really being stubborn sheep.

To be Christ’s sheep – the Church that God wants us to be – means that we need to listen to the Good Shepherd – to come to know his voice - rather than the voices of those thieves and bandits. Do you know the Shepherd’s voice? If not and those other voices keep claiming your attention, I hope you will make it a priority to start listening for the Shepherd’s voice. Listening so you will begin to recognize it. When you can recognize that voice, then you going to find that you are safe in that sheep fold he has made for you. When you recognize that voice you will be eager to get rid of the thieves and bandits that rule your life. When you really hear God’s voice you will finally truly understand that all you have, all you are, every fiber of your being is His gift to you – given because of the great unconditional love He has for you.

And when that happens the thieves and bandits will be gone – replaced by a burning desire to put God first in your life – to give back to God all that you can in joyful thanksgiving for all God has given you.

That can happen – that will happen – all it takes is to become smart sheep.

EPISCOPAL YOUTH EVENT

The Episcopal Youth Event (E.Y.E.) will be July 8-13, 2008 at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas for young people who have just finished 9-12 grades that year. It serves as a celebration to inspire a deeper faith in Jesus Christ, and a renewed commitment to mission and ministry. It is the second largest event in the Episcopal Church and the single largest youth event in the Episcopal Church, typically attended by some 1500 young people, adult sponsors, bishops, staff, and resource people.

E.Y.E. is jam packed with fun and excitement! It is an opportunity to meet other youth from all over the world and experience the church on a global level. Participants are lodged in the host facility's dorms and eat meals at the campus dining facilities. The event community gathers regularly as a large group for worship, program, music, and media. Participants also meet daily in an ongoing small group. A variety of other activities, such as carnivals, forums, workshops, sports/recreation, and free time help round out the schedule.

E.Y.E. is a triennial event (held once every three years) as mandated by General Convention of the Episcopal Church. The first E.Y.E. was held in 1982 at The University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. The most recent EYE was held in 2005 at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky.

E.Y.E. is coordinated by the Ministries with Young People Cluster of the Episcopal Church with the help of a Design Team of youth and adults from across the U.S. and beyond.

Each Diocese in the nation is allowed a certain number of students who may represent its Diocese. The diocese of Montana has been allowed 12 student positions to attend EYE. To be considered, interested students must complete an application and submit it to; David Campbell, Episcopal Diocese of Montana, 515 North Park Avenue, Helena MT 59601 before February 22nd of 2008.

To see even more information about the event you can log onto www.episcopalteen.com and click the link for EYE.

I will continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. I will persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever I fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord. I will proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. I will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving my neighbor as myself. I will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

BCP pages 304-5.

CHURCHSPEAK:

catholic:

Main Entry:

cath·o·lic

Pronunciation:

\`kath-lik, `ka-thə-\

Function:

adjective

Etymology:

Middle English *catholik*, from Middle French & Late Latin; Middle French *catholique*, from Late Latin *catholicus*, from Greek *katholikos* universal, general, from *katholou* in general, from *kata* by + *holos* whole — more at [cata-](#), [safe](#)

Date:

14th century

- 1 a. *often capitalized* : of, relating to, or forming the church universal
- b. *often capitalized* : of, relating to, or forming the ancient undivided Christian church or a church claiming historical continuity from it
- c. *capitalized* : [roman catholic](#) 2: [comprehensive](#), [universal](#); *especially* : broad in sympathies, tastes, or interests <a *catholic* taste in music>

Correction to the March e-Vangel. The Finance article by Sarah Breathnach about tithing and abundance was submitted by Ms. Mariel Cole of Holy Trinity, Troy.

And, finally, something to ponder upon . . .

By Roger Stone

While I was in Guatemala, I had the great pleasure of spending an hour each with two Guatemala families in their homes, as well as working with several of the locals. In reading Charles Schultz's philosophy below, I was reminded of my own thoughts on my 18 hour flight home. We think the indigenous folks are so impoverished, poor and needy, yet you wouldn't know it to actually meet them on their own terms, in their own homes. Not once did I think they were in need of anything I had – in fact, I found myself in need of what they had: a very real and tangible closeness with God. They have so little material stuff between themselves and God and we have so much. They are so close to His creation, they see Him in everything they do and are. They care very deeply about each other; as children, they do not squabble or fight or bicker, they simply take care of each other in so many delightful ways; the homes are homes for all the family generations, each taking care of the other.

I am grateful to Manny Hoag of Trinity, Jeffers for the following thoughtful inclusion in their church newsletter. Thanks, Manny ☺

The following is the philosophy of Charles Schultz, the creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip. You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just read the message straight through.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America Contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

The point is that none of us remembers the headliners of yesterday. They are not second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.

Easier?

The lesson: **The people who make a difference in your life are NOT the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones who care.**

