

thrive!



FALL 2017

EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
OF CHICAGO
MAGAZINE

A space for Christ on campus
What leadership looks like
When eating lunch is evangelism



Letter from Bishop Lee



“Campus ministers reach out to young people who are skeptical of organized religions, eager to have an impact on their communities and less familiar with the Christian story than were generations past.”

If you take everything you read on social media seriously, and I advise against it, you'd believe that millennials are ruining everything from Applebee's to Home Depot, beer to fabric softener, and paper napkins to the automobile industry. And all because of their love for avocado toast. Or so I am told.

Our campus ministers get beyond these kind of crazy clichés in their work with young people who face the frightening world we have created for them. At Columbia College, DePaul University, Northern Illinois University, Northwestern University, Robert Morris University, Roosevelt University, the University of Chicago and Western Illinois University, they reach out to a generation that is skeptical of organized religions, eager to have an impact on their communities and less familiar with the Christian story and tradition than the young people of generations past.

Our cover story explores how three ministers cultivate relationships through an ever-evolving blend of prayer and worship, meals, conversation, service and activism. And in a column on page 29, the Rev. Stacy Alan, our longest-serving campus minister, tells us about the work she is doing at Brent House, the Episcopal campus ministry at the University of Chicago, to introduce students to the spiritual concepts and techniques of St. Ignatius of Loyola. If you really want to know what millennials care about, (and no, they are not killing the cereal industry) their hopes, their fears and the nature of their faith, take it from the people who accompany them every day.

As you may have learned in a previous issue of Thrive!, I like to talk about leadership. In fact, I'm speaking about it in some detail in my address at our diocesan convention. I believe that casting a vision and setting a tone are the essential elements of good leadership, and I am always excited when I see clergy and

lay leaders who do these things well. On page 12 we hear from an impressive trio of leaders who know that their job is to set the course and to identify and cultivate the gifts of others.

At a previous convention, I suggested that congregations could begin the process of evangelism by inviting their neighbors to lunch during my visitation. St. Elisabeth's in Glencoe thought this was a good idea, and I had the honor of sharing a meal with parishioners and their neighbors in June. On page 22 you can read about how St. Elisabeth's planned the gathering and how the afternoon unfolded. I hope other parishes will follow suit. And if you are shy about reaching out to your neighbors, the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, canon to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry for evangelism, reconciliation and stewardship of creation, has some suggestions in an interview on page 26.

Leaders cannot help but focus on the future, and I am grateful for the work that Peter Willmott has done to focus us on our financial future. On page 27, he sketches out his vision for what people in the fundraising world call a “mutual benefit” capital campaign. You'll be hearing more about this next year, but Peter's column provides a preview.

Finally, some stories are better told in pictures than in words. So cast your eyes over the joyous photos on pages 18-21 that were taken at the annual Hispanic Liturgy of the Diocese of Chicago held last month at St. James Cathedral. These are fellow Episcopalians who need our support now more than ever, and I hope you will keep them in your prayers and offer assistance in whatever ways you can.

In Christ,
+ Jeffrey

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On our cover

The Rev. Stacy Alan reads the gospel at Brent House, the Episcopal campus ministry at the University of Chicago.
Photo by Rob Hart

SAVE THESE DATES

MIQRA at St. James Cathedral
January 13-14

Diocesan Council Retreat
January 19-20

Province V Campus Ministry Retreat
February 16-17
Hosteling International Chicago

Peer Ministry Leadership Training
March 10
St. James the Less, Northfield

Camp Chicago
July 1-20
Stronghold Camp and Conference Center

College for Congregational Development (CCD) Weekends for Year A

February 9-10, May 11-12, September 21-22
and December 7-8

Signing up for the weekends means a person will attend all four sessions in order to receive credit for Year A. Held at the Nicholas Center.

Fierce Conversations Training

June 3-6
Nicholas Center

CCD Summer Intensive for Year A

June 10-16
Loyola Retreat and Ecology Campus in Woodstock, Illinois.



FEEDING FAITH

Fear, doubt and a hunger for hope inform the life of faith on campus

By Lu Stanton León



“Across the church, we can’t assume that people know some of the common stories that were part of the culture before. It isn’t a bad thing; it’s just different. It is probably accurate to say that people are suspicious of institutional Christianity.”

— the Rev. Stacy Alan

If media accounts are to be believed, pundits, psychologists and professors all agree that millennials—people born since 1980—are fragile, lazy and entitled. Ask many Episcopal leaders about young adults and you’ll hear that getting them to come to church is both nearly impossible and essential to the denomination’s survival. But campus ministers in the Diocese of Chicago, who stand at the crossroads of the culture’s assumptions and the church’s anxiety about young adults, say the reality of working with college students is both more complicated and rewarding than people might assume.

The Rev. Stacy Alan, the longest-serving campus minister in the diocese, became chaplain at Brent House, the Episcopal campus ministry at the University of Chicago, in 2005. She says that the world is a more difficult place for college students now than when she began.

“There is a lot of rhetoric about the fragility of this generation,” Alan says, “but there is something to it being a harder world to live in that it was 12 years ago in a way that I’m just beginning to understand. Since I’ve been here, Westboro Baptist Church—that’s the

‘God Hates Fags’ church—has shown up three times. They came back last fall and were demonstrating against gender-neutral bathrooms. I have a couple of transgender students and assorted LGB [lesbian, gay, bisexual] students. There was a level of fear in the arrival of this group to campus that surprised me. People were scared. They know that their lives are at risk. The public rhetoric of the last year has made the hate of groups like Westboro seem more mainstream.”

Her job, she says, is to provide a safe space that says, “you need not fear here.”

But these days, many students don’t assume the church is safe.

“I think fewer students come from institutional religion,” she says. “Across the church, we can’t assume that people know some of the common stories that were part of the culture before. It isn’t a bad thing; it’s just different. It is probably accurate to say that people are suspicious of institutional Christianity. We have a lot of assumptions to overcome with folks coming in, especially after all that’s happened in the country this past year.”





“I actively avoided campus ministry or religious affairs. It wasn’t anything I wanted to be a part of until I did a community meal at Grace Place.”

A few miles across town, the Rev. Ben Adams, a Lutheran minister in his third year as campus pastor to the shared Lutheran-Episcopal South Loop Campus Ministry, encounters the same attitudes among students at Roosevelt University, Columbia College, Robert Morris University and DePaul University.

“I think the question I hope to answer, that I think students are asking, is, ‘Is there hope for the world?’” Adams says. “The question comes from the threat of nuclear war, from climate change and the effects of pollution that seems irreversible at this point, that racism continues to rear its head, and the fact that a lot of LGBT people are suffering and are experiencing suicide at a rate that is quadruple the national average. I do think it is something to worry about. Obviously, since we dropped the bomb on Japan, we realize the destruction we are capable of. That was a mind changer

and a game changer, that we, as people, are capable of being responsible for our own apocalypse. All these things are in the forefront of my students' minds every day."

Convincing students to trust the church with those concerns, however, can require competence in both pastoral care and popular culture.

"Most of the students, when I talk to them about their opinions about religion, all they know of it is what they hear in the media," says Adams, a 2014 graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago who sports a beard and sneakers and rides a penny board. "That's a hard stereotype to overcome. I find myself saying, 'I'm a Christian, but I'm not that kind of Christian.' And that's a divisiveness we don't need. Sometimes I only have a few moments with a student to debunk that."

GOD TALK, BUT MORE CASUAL

Grace Place, the Episcopal-Lutheran ministry that serves Northern Illinois University (NIU) in DeKalb, has first-hand experience with the world in which today's young adults have come of age. On February 14, 2008, Steven Kazmierczak, armed with a shotgun and three pistols, opened fire in a campus lecture hall. Five people died and 17 were wounded before Kazmierczak took his own life.

In 2014, faculty members on Grace Place's board became aware of a quieter student crisis. Thousands of NIU students—as many as 3000, according to one study—were food insecure. In response, Grace Place opened a food pantry for students. The project initially served about 30 students each week, but within two years the pantry was serving 75-90 students each week, at which point the university took it over because it was too big to be sustained solely by volunteers.

Today Grace Place partners with First Lutheran Church to provide free lunches. On Sundays, members of First Lutheran pack the lunch bags, which include a sandwich, a piece of fruit, a dessert, chips and a bottle of water, and deliver them to Grace Place, where they are handed out to students on Monday mornings. "Last week, they handed out 125 lunches at Grace Place in less than half an hour," says the Rev. Andrew Kayes, a Lutheran pastor who is acting president of the ministry. Each bag includes information about both Grace Place and First Lutheran.

There's free food, too—usually sandwiches and pizzas—on Wednesday evenings before worship. "Some students come for the meals and not the worship," Kayes says. "Others for the worship and not the meal. Some come for both. I can think of one student who shared with me that he depends on food pantries in order to get enough to eat."

Local need also drives the South Loop's largest campus ministry program, called The South Loop Community Table. Every Sunday, students gather for a meal and serve roughly 75 people who are homeless.

Taking it to the Streets is a monthly feeding ministry. Student



volunteers pack up lunches when it's warm, or soup when it's cold, and walk the city streets serving anyone they come across in need. This is what originally attracted Raychel Brown and Eduardo Zagalsky to the ministry. Both are students at Roosevelt University and receive a small stipend for helping Adams in the day-to-day running of the program.

The ministry, Zagalsky says, "gave me a chance to see people who needed it just a little bit more, who just didn't have the energy to get to the church to get food. To see how their eyes lit up, to see how much it meant to them. I didn't think I would care about it as much as I do."

Brown first started volunteering through her service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega.

"I go to church, but I didn't really do a whole lot of service-based things with my church," she says. "I actively avoided any campus ministry or religious affairs. I'd see them and I'd walk in the other direction. I didn't want to be a part of anything like that because it



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seemed it would be impeding on my college experience.

“It wasn’t anything I wanted to be a part of until I did a community meal at Grace Place. It was different from anything I had seen or heard about campus ministry. There is God talk, but it is more casual. It is this idea that Jesus can connect to your life outside of religion. We tell people it is faith-based, but you can be of another religion or you can be no religion at all.”

To Alan, the diversity of campus ministry programs and styles in the diocese makes sense. “One of the crucial things for campus ministry is being very attentive to the particular campus you’re working with,” she says. “The University of Chicago is an incredibly high-pressure place. Most people have ‘imposter syndrome.’ They feel like they got in on a fluke, and everyone is smarter than they are. So we have an open invitation for people to come, say, for afternoon tea, no agenda.

“I think it is crucial in this work to constantly be listening to what

is going on on campus. And in the listening, I find that it usually becomes pretty clear what needs are out there that we can respond to.”

ASK QUESTIONS AND BE LOVED

Sitting in a church office waiting for students to walk in doesn’t work on their campuses, say Alan and Adams.

Because South Loop Campus Ministry serves four colleges, Adams moves around a lot. He has an office at Grace Place Episcopal Church and uses the sanctuary space there for Saturday night worship services, but he can usually be found on one of the campuses.

“We meet students by word of mouth and by me being on campus holding informal office hours,” Adams says. “I have a sign that says, ‘Let’s talk about anything.’ I’ll usually just be doing work and have the sign. It’s a non-threatening situation. I have an office at Grace Place, but it’s two blocks from campus. Sometimes I’ll sit in a study lounge



*The Rev. Dr. Andy Guffey,
chaplain of Canterbury
Northwestern, and the Rev.
Emily Guffey celebrate
Giving Tuesday at Brent
House, photo by L.E.
Eames; below, Raychel
Brown and Eduardo
Zagalsky at Grace Place*



“I think one of the reasons we’ve lost the ear of a lot of young people is that we are not answering the questions that they’re asking.”

or cafeteria.

“It’s kind of scrappy. We don’t have a center or a place, but we do have a lot of spaces where we can be public about who we are. On a weekly basis, I probably interact with anywhere from 25 to 40 students.”

Alan, too, relies on a sign. “Recently I’ve been doing more work out on campus with other religious advisors,” she says. “Just being out there with no strings attached. We have a table in the student center. We have chocolate. Some people avert their eyes when they go by. They have the assumption that we are going to try to convert them. We have a sign that says, ‘Ask Lucy’, inspired by Lucy’s booth from the comic strip Peanuts. I sat there with my Muslim colleague and that got their attention. Sometimes it’s just a matter of saying, yes, the chocolate is free.”

In DeKalb, Grace Place’s visible and accessible location across the street from the student center is an advantage in attracting people, says Kayes. “It is surprising how many people just drop in,” including parents of students, walk-ins from the streets, and someone who had run out of gas, he says.

“When we ask students about what brought them in, most of them say they just saw the sign, or the fire we have on the first Wednesday of the semester, or just the open doors. The Holy Spirit moves in mysterious ways. When we asked students, ‘Why do you continue to come to Grace Place?’ one of the things that kept coming up was that it embodies its own name. It exhibits grace to people who come by.”

Visibility helps make the first connection with students, but what keeps them coming back, says Alan, is the ability to ask questions and wrestle with the kind of hard issues that face young adults trying to chart their courses in life.

“Discernment is a constant. It’s part of what we do,” she says. “I work really hard for the word discernment to be as broad as it is meant to be. In some of the groups, we’ve wrestled with job questions, field of study, relationship questions, where am I going to live and why? I really emphasize that discernment is a habit for life.”

Earlier this year, Brent House was awarded a \$29,300 grant by The Episcopal Church to develop an initiative that will introduce students at Brent House and several other campus ministries to the spirituality and prayer practices of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. The program, which will include a series of retreats and facilitated small prayer groups, builds on the informal Ignatian programs that Brent House already offers.

“Students find a new, more mature energy in their relationships with God, and they are given a vocabulary to understand the dynamics of that relationship. These all become powerful resources in discipleship and discernment,” Alan says. (Read more about this new initiative on page 29.)

“This is a place where they can be in process, where they can ask questions and be loved,” she says. “We, the church, can do that. Campus ministries do that in a particularly distilled way, because we get people when they are actively asking those questions. There is an intensity in campus ministry, that is true. The folks here say, ‘Yes, it’s good to hear that God loves you. But what happens when I screw up?’ Part of what we do is help people understand what sin is. Sometimes it is no, that is not sin; you were manipulated. Other times it is, ‘You made a choice and what can we do about that?’”

COMMITTED, OR JUST PASSING THROUGH?

Not surprisingly, campus ministers get used to the developmental ups and downs of young adults who are trying on new identities and testing long-held beliefs.

In DeKalb, “we get all sorts of people,” says Kayes. “We have a few cradle Lutherans and Episcopalians. They normally constitute about a third. Then there are a few people who grew up in other churches. The bulk are people who are non-religious or non-committal. Maybe they went to a church as a child, or maybe not. It’s wild how many of our students say they just won’t go to church. Part of their identity is that they’re not churchgoers. Grace Place seems to be an appropriate stepping stone to ‘this is what church is really all about.’”

“People are curious about everything, including



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— the Rev. Ben Adams



“When we asked students, ‘Why do you continue to come to Grace Place?’ one of the things that kept coming up was that it embodies its own name. It exhibits grace to people who come by.”

religion and religious practice,” Alan says. “We have pagans and Jews and Christians. Once we had a speaker come in to talk about Buffy the Vampire Slayer and religion. At one point I overheard a neo-pagan who was explaining the concept of the Trinity to an atheist Jew. They have both since graduated. Neither became Christians, but the atheist Jew has become much more active in her faith. We also have people who join the Episcopal Church through Brent House every year.”

Campus ministry in the South Loop is particularly diverse, says Adams, thanks to the diversity of the colleges it serves. “We tend to not get the traditional white, mainline protestant students. I think most campus ministries skew white, and Episcopalians and Lutherans are mainly white. We are an ecumenical ministry in that we don’t have to be all Lutheran or all Episcopalian.”

Adams has given a lot of thought to why young people who are attracted to campus ministry are often missing from the church pews.

“I think one of the reasons we’ve lost the ear of a lot of young people is that we are not answering the questions that they’re asking,” says Adams, who also serves as an assistant pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, where he has started a program called Sweet Home Chicago that pairs students away from home with families who want to host them for meals, evenings out, and practical support. “As we’re getting ready to observe the 500th anniversary of The Reformation, I think back to the questions of Martin Luther’s time, ‘Will I go to heaven? Will I be forgiven?’

“Young people today are not asking about salvation. I’m there myself. I’m not concerned about the afterlife but about the things that are happening around us,” he says. “It’s not that the church doesn’t have anything to say about the afterlife and what happens when we die. The church has a lot to say about that. But there’s an order of things. Can we invite them into our vision of hope and talk about it from there, and not with a heaven or hell starting point?”

While the Brent House community attracts many seekers and skeptics, the ministry has a stable membership and a strong history of helping people discern both ordained and lay ministry in the church.

“At the University of Chicago, if you’re doing a PhD, that can take 10 years,” Alan says. “Undergraduates may be here for at least four and people often stay in the city after. We’re not a parish, but we are a congregation.”

Brent House currently has a member in the diocese’s formation program for vocational deacons and another in the process to become a priest. “I had another student who, while he was here, told me he had become an atheist and he had to step away from Brent House,” she says. “Life kept happening to him, and God came around and did the work that God does and brought him home. He is now starting his first year of seminary.

“But we also are forming the lay leadership of the church. We do that with everything from preparing people with basic Bible study, having students be on our board, or being a delegate to diocesan convention. I’m very intentional. If people choose to get involved with a parish, they will have a confidence in offering their services.”

Students faced with coming of age in uncertain times might ultimately become ordained leaders, drift away from organized religion, or become what Alan calls “confident, educated in the faith, formed lay people.” Regardless of the outcome, the campus is a mission field, she says. “We build relationships, and we ask them how we can support people in what they need. If in the end of all of that, they want to know about Jesus, we tell them about Jesus. Our job is not to convert everybody but to proclaim the Gospel, which means listening, being present.”

“It requires,” she says, “holding both a really profound confidence in God’s love and Christ’s presence with us, simultaneously with a deep humility.” ✚

A SPACE FOR GRACE



“For young adults, there is a hunger to have an impact in the world. I don’t think they’re very interested in a faith that’s not connected to making a difference in the world.”

— CHAD SENUTA

In early September, the Public Religion Research Institute released “America’s Changing Religious Identity,” a report on some findings from its 2016 survey of American values. The survey was most noted for discovering that, for the first time, fewer than half of the adults in the United States are white Christians.

Buried in the data, however, was what well-known author and religion researcher Diana Butler Bass called “an odd little statistic.”

“While there is much doom-and-gloom for white Christian communities of all sorts,” she wrote on her Facebook page, “mainline Protestants are actually doing slightly better retaining (and attracting?) millennials. While only 11% of both white Catholics and white evangelicals are younger than 30, 14% of white mainline Protestants...are under 30. This may well mean that IF a young adult chooses to find a religious community (note: IF and that’s a big IF), then mainline churches are an attractive generational alternative to them.”

“Here’s my big suggestion,” Bass, an Episcopalian, concluded. “Pour whatever resources you have into college and university ministry.”

The post, which attracted a good deal of conversation among Bass’s followers, was welcome affirmation for Chad Senuta, Bishop Lee’s associate for youth and campus ministries.

Senuta helps support five campus ministries across the diocese that serve Columbia College, DePaul University, Northern Illinois University, Northwestern University, Robert Morris University, Roosevelt University, the University of Chicago and Western Illinois University. While the styles of ministry vary from campus to campus, Senuta says that they are all “hoping to help students find a space to encounter God’s love and an Episcopal expression of Christianity that helps them live out their faith.”

Campus ministry has changed since he was in college in the early 1990s, he says, when the usual model was a weekly Eucharist followed by a meal.

“One of the biggest things to develop in campus ministry in the last five or ten years has been social justice work,” he says. “For young adults, there is a hunger to have an impact in the world. I don’t think

they’re very interested in a faith that’s not connected to making a difference in the world. When the South Loop started their ministry [see page 3], they started in a very traditional way by inviting people to have a meal. Some homeless guests showed up, and that provoked a conversation—what do we need to do to take care of that community?”

Building relationships with students is the most important element in any campus ministry, he says. “They need a space where they can be themselves and accepted wherever they’re at, with whatever challenges, hurts they’re bringing. One of the things that makes being a chaplain at a university hard is getting to know students, being seen, and being present.”

Those relationships can be especially challenging to sustain, he says, because not only do students graduate and leave the community, their involvement might vary as they get new class schedules, find campus jobs, and study abroad. “It’s not like a congregation,” he says. “It’s its own thing, and it can’t be compared to youth group or young adult ministry. You’re serving a population that’s constantly in transition.”

Despite the challenges, Senuta says he fully supports Bass’s call for investment in campus ministry. “Anecdotally, when I look around at those who are still faithful people as adults and still have an alive, vibrant faith, they were involved in campus ministry,” he says. “It’s really important formation at a pivotal time when we’re making decisions about who we’re going to be as adults. It can make the difference in someone having a lifelong faith.”

“It’s our chance to let college students know about God’s grace and about how to integrate that in how they’re going to live.”

Learn more about campus ministry in the Diocese of Chicago at episcopalchicago.org/campus-ministry. ✚

Chad Senuta joined the Diocese of Chicago’s youth ministry office in 2012 after leading the diocesan youth program in the Diocese of Kansas from 2002 until 2011. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Kansas State University and a certificate in youth ministry from the Seminary of the Southwest. He and his wife, the Rev. Lisa Senuta, live in Northfield with their daughters, Bethany and Mabel.

Practicing an Art

LEADERS CULTIVATE OTHERS' GIFTS





“I want leaders who build vital, effective, growing congregations...where the good news of Jesus is being made real and lives are being transformed.”




By Rebecca Wilson

B

ishop Jeff Lee is often asked to make speeches, but until now, he's usually ceded the keynote responsibilities at the Diocese of Chicago's convention to others. Author Sarah Miles, television personality the Rev. Alberto Cutié, Bishop Yvette Flunder of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, and the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, now a canon to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, are among those who have visited the diocese to bolster enthusiasm for innovative ministry.

This year, however, Lee takes the keynote role himself to discuss transformational leadership—a topic he says is central to the diocese's future.

Last year, Lee spoke with Thrive! about what he hopes to achieve by focusing the diocese on the issue of leadership. “I want leaders who build vital, effective, growing congregations that are making a difference,” he said. “That is what I mean by vital. Making a difference. They are places where the good news of Jesus is being made real and lives are being transformed.”



“All of that success and failure dichotomy, we just take it off the table. It’s not even an issue. We learn, we discern, we do the next right thing.”

Transformational leaders are found in congregations and communities across the diocese. But regardless of the contexts in which they serve, Lee said, they have several characteristics in common. The leaders he is looking for, he said, cultivate vision and set the tone, they form and foster effective relationships that develop other leaders, and they look for and celebrate success.

What does that kind of leadership look like in everyday life?

For the Rev. Ellen Ekevag, who became rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in LaGrange in March 2016, it starts with spiritual focus. “I do my best to keep first things first,” she said. “To lead, we need to put God at the center of our lives. God, as it turns out, is in the business of transformation. So my approach as a priest is to hold that center—to remind myself and others that we are co-laborers with God.”

The Rev. Gregg Morris, rector of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Downers Grove since August 2015, agrees. “If the leader doesn’t have the vision of what God might be up to in this place, then no one does,” he said. “One of the primary jobs of a leader in a congregation is to set the tone for leadership. If the leader is highly anxious, the organization becomes highly anxious. If the leader is micromanaging, then the organization becomes lost in the weeds of detail.”

Cheryl Collins, principal of Holy Family School in the North



Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago since 2004, said she learned the hard way to avoid micromanaging. About five years ago, she was converted to a collaborative, inclusive style of leadership. What made the difference?

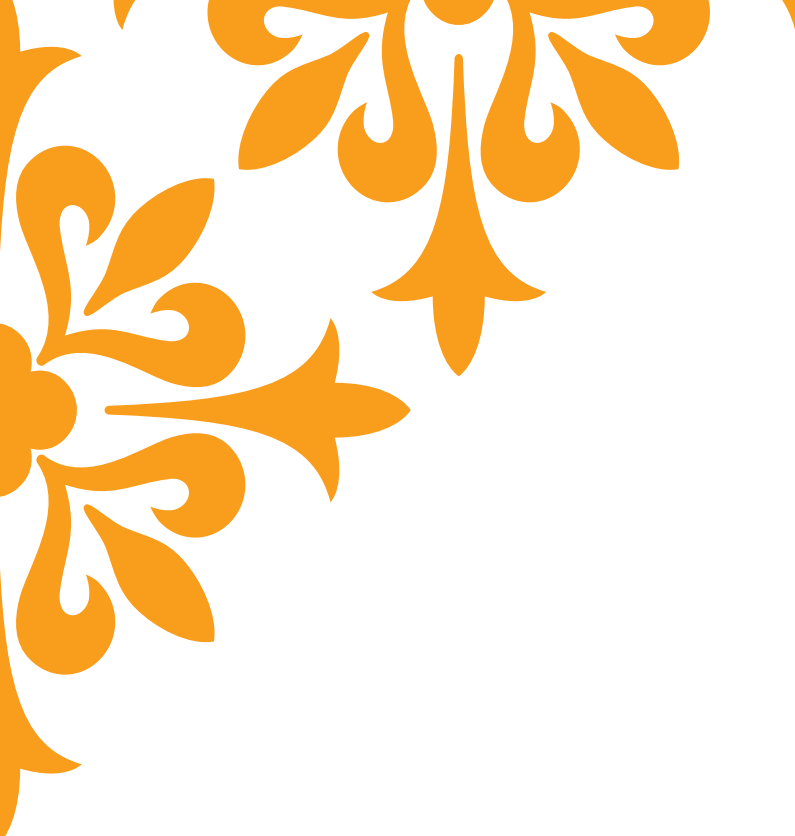
“Honestly, it came out of burnout,” said Collins who is also the new CEO of her school’s parent organization, Holy Family Ministries. “I said, ‘I can’t do it all,’ and then I thought, ‘Why do I think I need to do it all?’

“I still loved my job, but you reach a point where you see how much of a toll it takes on you. I’d had leadership training galore, I knew the importance of team and empowering others to make decisions. Five years ago, I began to believe it.”

Now, she said, collaboration is integral to everything that happens at the school. “You only have one brain that God gave you, but when you include all of the brains in the room, you see all of these ideas. Sometimes they can be disruptive and competing, and they can clash, but otherwise you end up doing the same thing in the same way all the time. And then you don’t grow, you stagnate, and then you die.”

The transition to collaborative leadership can be hardest for those who are comfortable with top-down decisions, Collins said, “They’re so used to bringing everything to you that when you say ‘figure it out,’ they think you don’t want to help them.”





“You only have one brain that God gave you, but when you include all of the brains in the room, you see all of these ideas. Sometimes they can be disruptive and competing, ...but otherwise you end up doing the same thing in the same way all the time. And then you don’t grow.”



That’s a challenge that Ekevag knows well. Her strategy is to remind people that “God has given us everything we need to do what is set before us.”

“I try to counteract feelings of powerlessness and negativity,” she said. “Essential to all of that is trust: trust in God and one another. You have to have trust for any transformation in community to happen. You build trust by being open, collaborative, transparent, authentic, and by just hanging out with one another. Church should be fun.”

“I use all of the tools I can get my hands on. I read a lot of organizational development books and I use College for Congregational Development resources,” she said, referring to a training program for clergy and lay leaders developed by the Diocese of Olympia and adopted by the Diocese of Chicago last year. “But when you get right down to it, it’s about relationship. God is doing it. We just have to follow, and get our egos out of the way.”

Like Ekevag, Bishop Lee also finds value in learning about leadership from other disciplines. “There’s a lot of very important, very sound work on leadership in the wider culture, in the business world and elsewhere that we make regular use of quite happily,” he told Thrive! last year. “I’m reminded of what Gregory the Great is supposed to have said to Augustine when he sent him off to evangelize England, ‘Baptize what you can.’”

Morris has spent most of his adult life doing just that. Before he started seminary in 2008, he earned a master’s degree in leadership studies from Azusa Pacific University. It was one of the first programs of its kind in the country, he said, and while he was there, he read a book called “Leadership is an Art,” by Max DePree, that



changed his life.

“It taught me that a leader’s primary task is to identify, liberate and polish the gifts of those whom you lead,” he said. “So leadership isn’t about ‘What’s the latest technique, What’s the gimmick?’ It is an intensely human approach. A leader is not as much the person out front charging ahead; the leader is the person cultivating the gifts of others in the organization.

“Throughout my life, the most rewarding experiences I’ve had working are when people identified something in me that I was good at and helped me get better at it. I’ve always valued that, and it’s always seemed like there’s a dearth of this type of mindset in corporations and leadership thinking.”

A leadership style based on cultivating the gifts of others fits the culture at St. Andrew’s, Morris said. “Since its founding in 1880, this has been a lay-led parish. Over and over again...it was the women of this parish who saved this place. The women did fundraisers and kept the money, and the vestry had to ask them for money when they needed it. That lay-driven DNA still exists here.

“As a leader, I see myself as a permission granter,” he said. “We’re beginning to feel around the edges of doing some work with refugees, and we’ve organized a visit to a mosque in a neighboring community. That didn’t come about because the rector said, ‘We are now going to foster a relationship with our Muslim brothers and sisters,’ but because people came to me and said, ‘We have this opportunity. Can I put a sign-up sheet in the back of the church?’”

By virtue of leading a K-8 school with more than 300 students and 61 employees, Collins has become an expert in identifying the gifts of others. “Last year, it became clear that our staff needed help with

classroom management,” she said. “I told a teacher who is an excellent classroom manager that I needed him to give a workshop for his colleagues when we returned in August.”

At first he was reluctant and was wary of being singled out among his peers, Collins said. “He said ‘I don’t know what I do,’ and I said, ‘You treat them [students] with respect, you greet them when they come in and in the hallways, and build rapport through a culture of respect. I’ve given you one point, but I want you to reflect on what else you’re doing.’”

“You have a gift and a talent that is innate,” Collins told the teacher, “but you also have some practices that you’re doing intentionally.” He did the workshop, “although he didn’t want to,” Collins said. “But he got so much good feedback from his peers, he’s glad he did it and now agrees to do things with more confidence.

“You have to let them know what you see by saying, ‘I need you to do this, and I’m going to help you,’” she said. “‘I need you to’ is different from ‘I want you to.’”

Collins knew her approach was working one morning when her phone stopped ringing. “I finally called my office phone from my cell phone to make sure it worked,” she said, “and then I realized that the office phone had been ringing, but they were asking for other people. Everybody can run this place. If you’re not here, it’s not going to fall apart. That’s the best feeling of empowering leaders in your space.”

Ekevag agrees. “I know leadership is working when I really see the church being the church and people owning their ministry and their gifts,” she said. “I ask, ‘Do you need me to do this?’ and they say no. But I know that if they do need something, they can come to me. That sense of mutual trust is one of the huge signs.”

Morris often relies on news from the outside world to know what’s working. “When you hear somebody else who’s not part of your community say something about your church, that’s a good sign,” he said. “For example, we had a vacation Bible school this summer, because a parishioner got it in her heart to revitalize a program that hadn’t happened for years. A grandmother who came to pick up her grandkid said, ‘I don’t know what you’re doing differently here, but it’s obvious that you want to be part of the community. Whatever you’re doing, it’s different. Keep doing it.’ She goes to a different church, but she was able to recognize that there’s life that’s compelling here.”

It is important for leaders to remember that “the point isn’t to be perfect, the point is to be faithful,” Ekevag said. “The point is relationship and transformation, so things don’t have to be perfect. Take that burden off people. Either the Spirit picks up something new or it doesn’t.

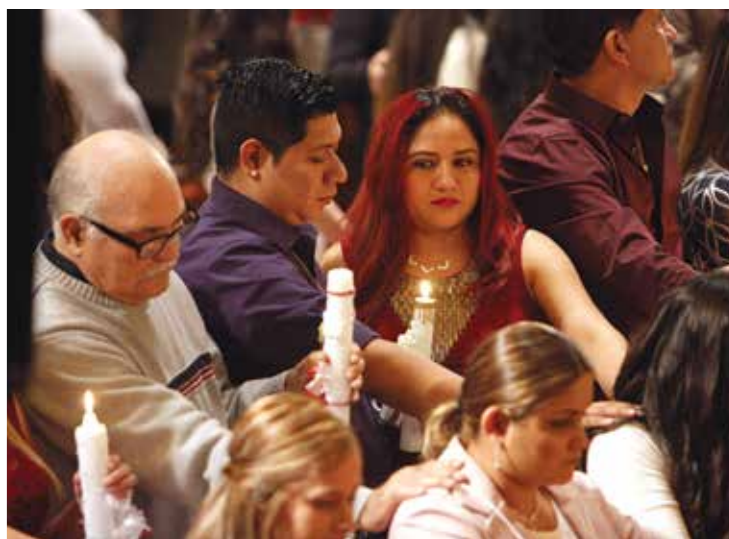
“All of that success and failure dichotomy, we just take it off the table,” she said. “It’s not even an issue. We learn, we discern, we do the next right thing.” ✚



A Joyous *Convivio* at the Cathedral

| PHOTOS BY **SUZANNE TENNANT**





They prayed. They sang. They celebrated the confirmation and reception of scores of children and adults from ten congregations, and then they filled the plaza at St. James Commons for a *convivio*. The Annual Hispanic Liturgy of the Diocese of Chicago on October 21 at St. James Cathedral was a spirited success.

The day began with a legal information session on the status of “Dreamers,” young people who immigrated to the United States without

documentation as minors, and who were previously protected from deportation by an Obama administration policy that was rescinded in September by President Trump. At 9:30 a.m., candidates for confirmation and reception met with Bishop Jeff Lee, and at 11 a.m. the service began.

Earlier in October, Lee announced the formation of a task force to study the development and sustainability of Hispanic and Latino congregations.





Doing Lunch

A Glencoe parish invited its neighbors to a meal with Bishop Lee

By Kathleen Moore



“When we talked about the Episcopal message,” Lee said, “People said, ‘Oh we love that, we love what you’re saying. But who knew?’”

— Bishop Jeff Lee

Two years ago, the people of St. Elisabeth’s Episcopal Church in Glencoe set a lofty goal. They wanted their parish to become the center for interfaith and intercultural understanding on the North Shore of Chicago. To achieve that goal, the congregation decided to increase its understanding of interfaith, intercultural and LGBTQ communities, and of people who are unaffiliated with any religious congregation.

“Our real goal is to listen and learn and grow in understanding because we think that’s the first step toward empathy and loving our neighbor,” said the Rev. Daphne Cody, who has served as the congregation’s rector since 2005. “If we don’t understand where people are coming from or anything about their life experience, it will be hard not to see things as ‘us and them.’”

The congregation’s leaders organized themselves

into what they called initiative teams to plan events with the communities they wanted to know more about. The teams focusing on interfaith and intercultural understanding and the LGBTQ community hosted family education series, speakers, workshops and preachers, sponsored leadership training, and incorporated what they learned into liturgy. But the team looking for ways to build relationships with unaffiliated people—those who have no connection to a congregation—ran into some trouble.

“They tried a bunch of things,” Cody said. “We have a labyrinth, and that has been one way to draw unaffiliated people. But the team was really kind of struggling along, so then we remembered a challenge from Bishop Lee, and we thought, ‘maybe that would be a good place to start.’”

During his sermon to the 2014 diocesan convention, Bishop Jeff Lee said, “I’m going to ask members of vestries to invite friends they may know who are not members of any church to come for coffee

“...People were surprised at how progressive the Episcopal Church was. They’d say, ‘I had no idea the Episcopal Church was so open-minded.’”

so I can meet with them. I want to hear from them, listen to them, ask them what might make participation in the life of the church worth their while. No strings, no tricks to get them to sign up, no sales pitch. What might we learn from them? What might change us? What do we have to offer them? How precious is a living relationship with Jesus Christ to us anyway? I’m asking you to join me in this project of listening to stories we might not otherwise hear; to offer our own stories in language and images the world around us is dying to hear. We need to get out there.”

The initiative team’s leaders set about planning lunch at a local restaurant after the bishop’s visit on June 18. The meal would be free for all who attended, paid for by funds set aside for the initiative in the parish budget. “The way we conceived of doing it was that if you want to go, your ticket to the lunch is to bring an unaffiliated friend or family member,” Cody said.

“As the group planned the lunch and got more excited about it, we realized that we didn’t really know a lot about the unaffiliated, and not only would the bishop get information, but we might get information! We might know where to turn next for a bigger project,” said senior warden Glenna Foley.

“It wasn’t difficult to find people willing to participate,” said Joyce Newcomb, the chair of the initiative team.

Five parishioners brought an unaffiliated friend. “One had never had experience with church at all,” Foley said. “Two had grown up in the Baptist Church, one had been Catholic, and one had grown up an Episcopalian.”

Cody credits the team with organizing the lunch based on what they had learned through the congregation’s Kaleidoscope Institute training. The institute, led by the Rev. Eric H.F. Law, helps congregations understand the part that diversity plays in sustainable ministries. Law facilitated discussion at the diocese’s annual convention in 2013 via Skype. St. Elisabeth’s offered the institute’s Gracious Leadership training in 2015 and 2016.

“We learned a lot about power and power dynamics, and so we wanted to make sure that people we were inviting knew that it was going to be a one-to-one correspondence between St. Elisabeth’s people

and unaffiliated people, and that they weren’t going to be outnumbered or subsumed or anything like that,” Cody said. “Our host...made sure the bishop was in the middle of the table, and that the two seats next to him and the three seats across from him were taken by the five unaffiliated guests. The St. Elisabeth’s people were instructed to not speak first, and to always make sure everyone else got to speak before they did. We were very intentional about that.”

“We hoped that we would be able to learn from the unaffiliated, rather than telling them or selling them,” she said.

Bishop Lee opened the conversation by asking the guests what guides their lives, a question proposed by the team at St. Elisabeth’s. The consensus of the guests, said Foley, was that their lives are governed by the Golden Rule—do to others as you would have them do to you.

To Lee, the fact that unaffiliated people use a teaching of Jesus to guide their lives suggests a basis for establishing relationships. “Some understanding of basic Christianity, of Jesus’ teaching, is not as far away as we assume,” he said. “There’s still residue of the Christian way in the culture. There are points of contact we can make.

“We don’t own the deep conversations, he said.

“They’re already going on out there. I learned that there is a whole lot of interest in living oriented toward others, in living ethically. I was reminded of how rewarding it is to get curious about the people who are not in church.”

Foley invited a long-time friend to the lunch. “She raised her kids in the Catholic church,” Foley said. “After that, she sporadically went, and then decided it just wasn’t for her anymore. After the lunch, she said ‘until the Catholic church admits women as priests, forget it.’” We weren’t out to tell these guests about our church necessarily. The bishop did talk about the Episcopal Church, and how progressive it was, and that appealed to my friend, but she’s not going to come because of that.”

Even so, the warm reception for the Episcopal message was heartening. “I think the most important things I took away from it was the enthusiasm of those unaffiliated people who were surprised at how progressive the Episcopal Church was,” Newcomb said. “They’d say, ‘I



“I think it was important for people to understand that we weren’t trying to pressure them in any way, but we were just reaching out to get to know other people.”

—Joyce Newcomb



had no idea the Episcopal Church was so open-minded.”

“When we talked about the Episcopal message,” Lee said, “People said, ‘Oh we love that, we love what you’re saying. But who knew?’”

St. Elisabeth’s leaders emphasize that neither the lunch nor the initiative team’s work is aimed at recruiting new church members. “I think this kind of event gives us ideas for things we could do within the community that might appeal to a lot of people, whether or not they come to our church,” Foley said. “I don’t think that that’s our goal.”

Lee agrees. “We’re not trying to trick someone into signing up,” he said. “We want to say, ‘Our doors and hearts and minds are wide open to you. We’re not faking this. It’s not a technique. If you’d like to know more, awesome, but we’re really here to know more about you.’”

“It recently occurred to me how important it was that this was a meal,” Newcomb said. “If we’d had a reception, it would have had a whole different feeling to it. Sitting down at a table and sharing a

meal together is a much more intimate and more interesting way to do this. I think it was important for people to understand that we weren’t trying to pressure them in any way, but we were just reaching out to get to know other people.”

Even if such initiatives don’t result in increased membership or giving, Lee believes they are valuable to congregations seeking greater vitality. “I hope we can build our self-confidence to be outward-looking, to discover that there is so much that’s interesting in the lives of people who don’t show up in church,” he said.

“God is at work in the lives of people who never show up in church, and we need to know about that. It helps us better recognize what God is up to in the lives of people who are in church. Sometimes people only bring their edited church selves, and it’s good for us to practice being with people who don’t know they’re supposed to do that.”

“We need to get out of church more,” he said. ✚

How to Say Hello

By Rebecca Wilson

The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers is Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care. Since early 2016, shortly after Curry took office, her job, as she describes it, has been to help the Episcopal Church "fall more deeply in love with Jesus and create spaces where different people can grow in that love too."

Although there is no fail-safe recipe for congregations like St. Elisabeth's, Glencoe, (see pages 22-25) that want to form relationships with people who don't go to church, the guiding principle she recommends is Curry's exhortation to focus less on institutional trappings and more on becoming "the Episcopal branch of Jesus' movement in this world."

"We're talking about connecting with neighbors—not because we're scared we're becoming extinct and want bottoms in pews and money in the coffers, but because this is what Jesus Movement people do," says Spellers, who gave the keynote address at the Diocese of Chicago's convention in 2011. "We long to create loving, liberating and life-giving relationships with God and our neighbors."

"The mechanics will vary in different communities, but the yearning driving us should be that."

First, she says, Episcopalians need to be more curious. "People think engaging their neighbors means telling them something or giving them something, but our neighbors don't actually want to have that conversation," she says. Instead, Episcopalians need to "go out with genuine curiosity."

"What does good news sound like in this place?" is one question she recommends. "Ask people if they have seen Beloved Community."



"If you really begin to care about the people you've met on the road, then your church will be changed."

What does it feel like? What does it look like for them to experience blessing, healing and joy?"

"Then when people tell you, the thing to do is not respond, 'Could you come do that at our church?'" Rather, she hopes that congregations will cultivate the ability to "come alongside" their communities, discovering where their neighbors find and seek meaning and wholeness in their lives.

That might, for example, mean adopting a different approach to the oft-repeated frustration that youth sports take families away from church on Sunday mornings. "Let's be curious," she says. "What are they discovering on that soccer field that we don't know? What are they teaching about community and teamwork that we're not teaching?"

Building relationships with neighbors is not a quick fix for church decline, she cautions. "They still might think church is doing a

bait-and-switch. We may have to be present with them for a while before anybody says, 'I'd like to come to your church.'

"Be ready to make your home with these people for a while," she says, referring to Jesus' charge to his disciples in Luke 10: 1-12. "Receive their hospitality, learn and become trustworthy in their midst. The time will come when God will use you to bless them, and they'll bless you, too."

Letting go of anxiety about church attendance and pledging is difficult, Spellers acknowledges, but essential to forming authentic relationships. "If you really begin to care about the people you've met on the road, then your church will be changed. But you need to know whether you want them to come to church to make more leaders of the Jesus Movement out in the world, or to help your church survive. If it's not about blessing, if it's not about genuine mutual relationship, then they're going to feel used."

She recommends that vestry meetings, where concern about membership and budgets can be intense, be grounded in the Bible. "If that meeting begins with scripture study and is rooted in the abiding presence and love of Jesus Christ and the power of Holy Spirit, it is a very different meeting. We can talk about resurrection faith and ask 'Do you believe in resurrection? Can you trust that the love of God isn't going anywhere?' We have practices and stories at our disposal that can be a counter-narrative to decline. But if the only story we're telling is the narrative of decline, we can't get out from under it."

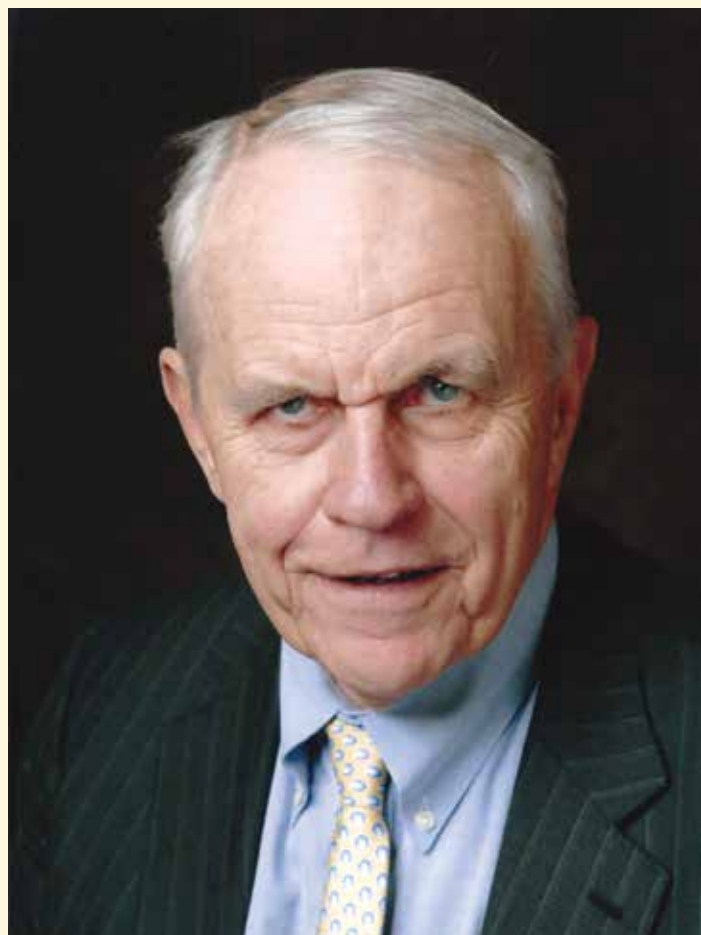
Studying the readings of the Easter Vigil in the Book of Common Prayer, which recount "the record of God's saving deeds in history," is one way to start, she says. "We don't have to create a new narrative. We already have one. We just have to lean back into those stories of journey, struggle, death, resurrection, ascension, and ongoing community. We can hold the truth that certain things are dying alongside the promise of resurrection."

"If God's people were able to make a way over and over and over again, I refuse to believe that we are somehow the generation that can't overcome," she says. "I refuse to say that dying is the end." ✝

A CEO with a Capital Vision

| BY |

LU STANTON LEÓN



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hen it comes to money and ministry, Peter Willmott thinks big, which isn't surprising for a lifelong Episcopalian with a long history of leading and leveraging the assets of numerous major organizations.

Willmott is spearheading a new effort, led by the trustees of the endowment and Bishop Lee, to increase substantially the endowment fund that provides operating income to the diocese. The fund is currently valued at \$3.4 million.

He's hoping individuals, parishes and foundations will join together to create an endowment that can generate revenue to strengthen and expand the ministry of individual congregations and secure the future of the diocese.

"I have this vision of an endowment that the bishop and leaders of the diocese could utilize for opportunities that better serve the needs of the parishes and the community. That's why we get so emotionally geared up about enhancing the availability of these funds," says Willmott, chair of the trustees of the endowment and a member of St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church in Chicago.

On the recommendation of Willmott and the bishop, the diocese's trustees have retained CCS Fundraising, a New York-based consulting firm. In early 2018, CCS consultants will assess potential for a mutual benefit campaign in which the diocese would supply congregations with capital campaign consulting in return for a portion of the campaign proceeds. From 2013-2015, CCS helped the Diocese of Ohio mount a similar campaign that raised more than \$9 million for congregational projects and also funded the construction of a new diocesan camp and retreat center. A CCS-assisted campaign in Massachusetts raised nearly \$32 million for diocesan and congregational needs.

Willmott understands venture capital and what it takes to support large organizations. He was an officer at FedEx during its inception, which was the largest venture capital startup deal in history at that time. He is a managing partner at The Berkshires Capital Investors, serves as chairman and CEO of Willmott Services, Incorporated, and has been CEO and president of Carson Pirie Scott & Company. As part of his public service, he has chaired the board of Williams College, the Clark Art Institute, the Associated Colleges of Illinois, and the Children's Memorial Medical Center.

"If we do this right and we are able to help individual parishes enhance their ability to raise funds by implementing good capital campaigns, the parishes will benefit considerably and the diocese will, too. We have to create a partnership between the diocese and parishes so they work together. The goal is to make the pie much bigger so the parishes have more funds and the diocese has more funds."

Willmott says information gathered last year by Shay Craig, the bishop's associate for resource development, and the trustees suggested that parishes considering capital campaigns, especially those doing it

“If we teach people how to do a capital campaign properly and how to do all the steps, we will be able to increase the impact on the congregations.”

without outside consulting, were underestimating their ability to raise the needed funds.

“Basically, the answer we got was most of the parishes who are doing any kind of campaign are looking for small dollars,” he says. “We felt what they were asking was way below the capacity of the congregations. One of the big items is, through advice from consultants, how churches can approach their parishioners about capital gifts instead of just increasing their giving by \$100 a year. A big hunk of this is educating the parishes about how they can do a better job of improving their strategies and how these better strategies will help them raise more money.”

Craig says that having an outside consultant to help guide parish capital campaigns “is a game-changing plan for the future of both the parishes and the diocese.”

“In Chicago, the bishop’s staff exists to provide resources to congregations. For instance, Courtney Reid, director of operations, can talk to you about your roof or insurance for a nursery school. Or if you’re calling a new rector, all the things you have to do—hire an interim, conduct a search—are done with the guidance of Andrea Mysen, director of ministries, and other members of the bishop’s ministry staff. My job is to talk and teach about stewardship and planned giving. We are meant to be out in the congregations helping with the things they need. Every congregation needs a different thing.”

Under the proposed strategy to increase the diocesan endowment fund, “the benefits are twofold,” Craig says.

“The churches have capital needs. If they have deferred maintenance, if they participate in this program that will get done. By working together, we can create an army of trained lay leaders who know how to do a capital campaign, not just working in one congregation but in many congregations, and they can call on each other. We will end up creating congregations that are healthier and a team of people who can help each other.”

In the past, she says, some congregations have tried to undertake capital campaigns without the assistance and expertise they needed. “A lot of congregations just don’t know how to go about doing it,” she

says. “A lot haven’t done it recently or haven’t done it successfully. If we teach people how to do a capital campaign properly and how to do all the steps, we will be able to increase the impact on the congregations.”

THE PURPOSE OF AN ENDOWMENT FUND

The endowment fund that generates revenue to support the work of Bishop Lee and his staff was established in the late nineteenth century and has been built primarily from bequests made to the diocese and earmarked specifically for the endowment fund.

As part of his annual address at the diocese’s convention in 1898, Bishop William Edward McLaren said, “To me it would be a most gratifying thing should a large addition be made to the fund in my lifetime. It would be a great joy to leave my successor the foundation of an adequate support so that the churches shall in his day be free from the charges they are now bearing so uncomplainingly.”

The endowment committee at that time stated that its goal was to build an endowment fund “until the interest thereon may be sufficient for the entire support of the Episcopate, thereby relieving all the parishes from assessments.”

Despite McLaren’s initiative, the Diocese of Chicago’s endowment is modest compared to many other dioceses of its size that received large gifts from industrialists or philanthropists in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries or have been able to sell assets like hospitals, land or real estate. But despite Chicago’s historic disadvantage, today the needs of the diocese are a “secondary act” to the needs of its parishes, Craig says.

“Nothing happens in the episcopacy that puts the parishes at risk. We’ll always say people should give to the diocese after you give to your church.”

Willmott also stresses that this new effort to increase the diocesan endowment fund is not intended to divert money from individual parishes. The needs of the parish always come first, but with a substantial endowment fund, both the parish and diocesan needs can be met. And the needs are great.

“When the financial situation of the diocese is lacking,” Willmott says, “you start impacting the quantities and qualities of services you can give to the parishes.”

Craig says the trustees “are raring to go. People understand that solving this problem now means not solving a worse problem later. I am constantly amazed at how generous people are with their time and their creativity.”

At diocesan convention on November 17 and 18, the bishop will discuss the project, and in early 2018, congregational leaders will be asked to participate in interviews that will help determine the level of support and readiness across the diocese for a campaign. Based on the data from that survey, called a feasibility study, the bishop and trustees of the endowment will determine how to proceed with the proposed campaign.

If you’re considering including the diocesan endowment fund in your estate planning or would like more information on how to contribute, please contact Shay Craig at 312.751.3576, or at scraig@episcopalchicago.org. ✚

The Art of Discernment



THE REV. STACY ALAN

“Discernment—in the broadest sense, as a lifetime habit—is not only hearing God’s call, but learning to recognize the enemy’s lies.”

“I’m off to engage in spiritual warfare,” I called over my shoulder to one of our residents as I left Brent House for a commitment on campus not too long ago. I don’t remember why I said it, but I know I mostly meant it.

Spiritual warfare is not what one expects to hear about from an avowedly progressive Episcopal chaplain at one of the world’s top universities. Yet it is something I think about a lot. Certainly not the theatrics of the movie “The Exorcist,” or the abusive rituals of casting out demons of homosexuality or a child’s defiance. Demons, to be truly demonic, need to work in more insidious ways: in our communal fear of the other; in the voices that tell us that we are not worthy, or that we are not complicit; in the anxiety that there will not be enough money, power, jobs, or love. On our campus, the demons work in blatant expressions of the obscenely common -isms and -phobias, but more often in whispered voices that say that failure is always absolute, that everyone else belongs here except me, that I need the answers now. We are always fighting demons, just not with spinning heads or projectile vomit.

Spiritual warfare, actually, is how we begin the baptismal rite: *Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God? Then we ask: Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior? Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love? Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?* In baptism we declare our loyalties: for God and the dignity of every human being, and against Satan and the forces that undermine human dignity.

Discernment—in the broadest sense, as a lifetime habit—is not only hearing God’s call, but learning to recognize the enemy’s wiles and lies. On a university campus, questions of discernment—identity, relationships, meaning, values and vocation—are often asked and sometimes answered. Our students know that the stakes are

high, even life or death, both personally and communally, and that the voices competing for their attention are sometimes not God.

With the help of a grant from the Episcopal Church’s office of Young Adult and Campus Ministries, we are developing a program that helps young adults dive deep into their baptismal identity with the help of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Ignatius offers techniques and concepts that foster a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus and habits of listening for and committing to God’s call in our lives. One also learns to recognize the voice of what Ignatius calls the “enemy of our human nature.” In all of this one learns to discern, and at the same time one learns to pray.

When the injustices and pain of the world urge us, rightly, to act, but when it’s not always clear what, exactly, we ought to do, my students are asking how to pray. They long for intimacy with God. They understand that the hard, complicated work of making God’s dream reality requires discipline, spiritual skills, community and wisdom. We must learn to recognize the enemy’s voice tempting us to selfishness or shortcuts or fear. We must learn to discern when to act and when to wait, when to speak and when to listen—how to hear in the cacophony of the world’s needs and the distractions of demonic voices, God’s loving, persistent and insistent call into our best selves and beyond, to offer those selves to God’s world.

This is why I am so passionate about Brent House and its ministries. It is our call to walk with young adults learning to pray, learning to listen for God’s voice, and yes, learning to fight demons. It is urgent and holy work. ✚

The Rev. Stacy Alan was born in the Midwest and raised on both coasts. She attended Seattle University, where the Jesuits taught her to love both God and the intellect, and earned bachelor’s degrees in humanities and German. After traveling and studying Spanish in Central America, she earned an MDiv from Union Theological Seminary in New York and worked in non-profit management and congregational ministry before arriving at Brent House in 2005.

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