

thrive!



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EPISCOPAL
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OF CHICAGO
MAGAZINE

Bishop Lee on the essence of leadership
Guiding parishes in growth and death
Priest, people plumb the meaning of “call”



Letter from Bishop Lee



"It is local leaders who make the greatest difference in how well our parishes respond to the work that God is calling us to do."

Welcome to this issue of Thrive! which focuses on leadership and its development. I get my turn to talk about leadership on page 2, so I won't say much more here, other than that I regard calling and cultivating clergy and lay leaders as perhaps the most significant work a bishop does. As invested as I am in the life of our diocese, it is local leaders who make the greatest difference in how well our parishes respond to the work that God is calling us to do. The diocesan staff is devoting itself anew to developing grassroots leadership, and I hope your congregation will take full advantage of some of the programs I talk about in the interview.

You may recall that at our diocesan convention in November, we conferred parish status on St. Benedict's of Bolingbrook, which had been a mission for more than a biblical 40 years. The Rev. Heidi Haverkamp and the lay leaders of this new parish offer an excellent example of what collaborative leadership between clergy and laity looks like at its best. You can read about their journey, with its many ups, downs and leaking roofs, on page 5.

As some congregations are experiencing new life, others are realizing that their ministry as a parish is coming to an end. Leading a church sensitively and effectively through a closing or merger is challenging work because we so easily adopt the worldly wisdom that closing is failing. We lose sight of the new mission and new relationships to which God is always calling us. The people of St. John's, Mount Prospect, did not lose sight of this truth as they found their way to a new home at St. Simon's, Arlington Heights, and their story, on Page 12, is an encouraging one.

We are at a time in the life of the church when innovation is at a premium, as is the ability to reach out to people

and populations not often found in our pews. Our diocese has a thriving Hispanic ministry, and one edifying example is the work underway at St. Mark's, Glen Ellyn, under the direction of the Revs. George Smith and Victor Conrado and Spanish and English speaking lay leaders. St. Mark's ministry is distinctive, in part, because the parish was not responding to the needs of a local population but simply felt a need to deepen its relationship with Spanish-speaking Christians in the western suburbs, and in part because the parish does not function as two distinctive congregations that share a building, but as one community that shares common leadership and, increasingly, common worship. This glimpse of what the reign of God might look like begins on page 20.

How leaders know that they are called to serve a particular community is a question that has long interested me. If that leader is a priest, there is an additional question: how did they know they were called to ordained ministry in the first place? The story of how the Rev. Barbara Seward, priest-in-charge at St. Bride's in Oregon, Illinois, found her calling and how the people of St. Bride's found Barbara begins on page 24 and helps us understand how both leaders and communities experience God's presence in the selection of parish leadership.

God calls each one of us, individually and as members of our faith communities, to some particular mission and some particular role. I hope reading about how others have understood this call and undertaken their roles helps you to reflect on how God is at work in your life and your church and inspires you to respond.

In Christ,
+Jeffrey



Calling a Leader 24

To an outsider, the Episcopal “call” process may look like most other employment processes. But the Rev. Barbara Seward and search committee chair Joanne Pennock of St. Bride’s in rural Ogle County know better. “I do believe it is the call of God, first and foremost,” Seward says.

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On our cover

The Rev. Barbara Seward
and the people of St. Bride’s
Church in Oregon, Illinois.
Photo by Bruce Solko

SAVE THESE DATES

July 24–30

College for Congregational Development
(CCD) training for congregational teams
The Cenacle in Chicago

October 15

Hispanic Liturgy
St. James Cathedral

October 16–18

Annual Clergy Conference
Techny Towers

November 18–19

Diocesan Convention
Westin Lombard

June 26–July 16

Camp Chicago (Ages 7–15)
Leader in Training Program (Ages 16–17)
Camp Stronghold Center, Oregon, Illinois
For more information, go to campchicago.org.

*Join Bishop Lee at one of five upcoming
breakfasts to talk about the ministry of the
diocese and the work God is calling us to
do. Details on page 28.*

Sizing up Leaders

WHAT BISHOP LEE IS LOOKING FOR



Bishop Jeffrey D. Lee believes that recruiting, developing and deploying good leaders are among a bishop's most important jobs. "Nothing else has such far reaching effect," he says. That is why he has made leadership development one of his top priorities, bringing programs that include the College for Congregational Development, Fierce Conversations, Living Compass and Project Resource to the diocese. You can read about these programs under the Congregational Vitality tab on the diocesan website. Lee also hopes to instill new ways of thinking about leadership among clergy and lay leaders alike. Here he talks with Jim Naughton about the importance of developing a strong, healthy culture of leadership in the diocese.

What do you want to accomplish by focusing diocesan attention on the importance of good leadership?

I want vital, effective, growing congregations that are making a difference. 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. People are naturally attracted to that.

Do you approach this project with any insights you are especially eager to share?

It's important to draw a distinction between leadership and management. In successful businesses and effective churches, the most important role of leadership is cultivating and stating the vision and purpose and setting tone. And setting tone gets not nearly enough attention. It is really big; it involves embodying, insisting on, standing for how we are as church. Here are boundaries around the kind of behaviors we value, and here are behaviors toward which we are not moving.

I think style matters a lot, whether from the pulpit or in meetings. Leaders set tone.

Do we mean something different when we say "leadership" in a church context, and if so, what?

Not necessarily. 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. 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." The end may be different in differing endeavors, but disciplines of good leadership are transferable across

"The heart of leadership in the church and everywhere else is the ability to make and keep productive rich relationships."

boundaries. We had a retired rector in this diocese who used to say, "the church might be very much more than a business, but it is at least that."

I do believe that the character of leaders in the church should be distinctive. We have the model of Jesus as a servant. Church leaders are called to put themselves at the service of their communities. But even there, I have seen instances where that has been done by leaders in business and even in the political realm. And I've seen leadership in the church be coercive and abusive. Just because something comes from the church does not mean it is holy.

How do you cultivate healthy leadership?

The kind of leadership I am talking about is a question of formation and self-understanding. It's a stance. The thing I am looking for over and over again is the highest level of emotional intelligence I can find. You can learn all the tools—here's the latest and greatest management technique, and that is all available—but if you don't have the ability to make and tend effective relationships, so what? The heart of leadership in the church and everywhere else is the ability to make and keep productive rich relationships.

I interview toward emotional intelligence. I think there are questions you can ask that demonstrate it. I hope we are coaching search committees and vestries to ask questions that reveal good emotional intelligence too. I think a lot of it is incumbent on congregations that nominate people who are postulants for holy orders and it is for sure incumbent on commissions on ministry.

The diocese has developed a few programs to help people cultivate the rich relationships you are talking about.

We have Living Compass, which has its national training

“Three things are true in general about thriving congregations: One is that they are clear about their main focus. Two, they foster and sustain conversations about things that matter and three, they have heart.”

center here at the Nicholas Center, enhancing personal wellness. It promotes wholeness, holiness. That makes for people who can build strong emotional connections.

One of the reasons I am taken with *Fierce Conversations* is that, yes, it is about how to have difficult and even confrontational conversations honestly, but Part B is always “AND enhance the relationship.” It’s always about enhancing the quality of relationships by having conversations we might want to avoid.

I’d include Project Resource in the list. Project Resource makes it clear that fundraising is about tending relationships. It is about creating an environment in which people are more likely to be generous. With their time, their presence, their energy. Money is just part of the equation.

And to all of this we have added the College for Congregational Development, which is less about leadership in the way I am talking about it now and more about tools: “Here are really effective tools for assessing where your church is in relation to its primary purpose. Here’s how to get a lot of data about an issue.” It offers a suite of managerial and operational tools.

It is easy to understand the role of clergy in church leadership. Where do lay people fit in?

This is a part of the intersection of the church and world I get really jazzed up about. Our pews contain a lot of people who are probably doing this work or being exposed to it in their work environment, and I want to encourage them to bring it right on into church. I think folks outside the ecclesial sphere have a lot to teach those of us who spend most of their time inside of it.

I hope my own staff, which includes many lay people, help to model this. If we are going to talk about shared episcopate—delegating some of the functions of the office of the bishop—you can’t do

that alone. My staff ought to be all about setting tone. This is about reconciling the world to God and the implications of that.

What are some of your favorite books on leadership?

Well, first, I spend more and more time in the Gospels. It is worth meditating on the way Jesus leads. His constant reframing of reality is all about setting tone. Look at the feeding of the five thousand. The disciples tell him to send the crowds away to buy food. They don’t want to be responsible for all of these people. Jesus says, you feed them. They say, we can’t. Jesus says, go see what you’ve got to offer. He’s reframing constantly. He won’t take any excuses. He refuses to accept the prevailing definitions of scarcity, and the “Gee ain’t it awful.” It’s radical trust in the endless goodness of God.

Any others?

I like “The Multiplier Effect: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter” by Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown. They draw an important distinction between leaders who are “multipliers” and those who are “diminishers.” When you leave a meeting with a multiplier, you think you’re the smartest person in the world, and when you leave a meeting with a diminisher, you think that they’re the smartest person in the world.

Patrick Lenceoni is really good about keeping organizations focused on “the main thing.” Jim Steen, our retiring director of ministries, likes to say three things are true in general about thriving congregations: One is that they are clear about their main focus. Two, they foster and sustain conversations about things that matter and three, they have heart. The clergy and lay leaders are all in, and it is obvious that they are.

How will you and the people of the diocese know whether a healthy culture of leadership is taking hold?

At the end of the day when leadership is connected and healthy and clear, you just see it. Those places tend to grow—not always, and you don’t start there, but it is not a surprising byproduct of healthy leadership—and they are engaged in ministries outside of themselves and have significant numbers of people who are not only doing that work but doing it with glad and generous hearts.

You’ve mentioned the importance of focusing on essential priorities, of remaining devoted to “the main thing.” What is “the main thing” for the Diocese of Chicago?

I believe at my core that a relationship with Jesus in a community of faith can be life-changing and that it can reveal texture and depth and purpose in your day-to-day life that can be an experience of new life. It can be a kind of re-enchantment of the world, yes even of the workplace, school, home. When we realize the sacramental depth of this world, we see it with new eyes shot through with the presence of God, and that can change everything. That can change the way you lead and the way you follow. It can change your life. ✚



A Church Planting Saga

HOW ST. BENEDICT'S MADE ITS WAY





BY KATHLEEN MOORE

one of the manuals on church planting suggest housing the new community in a pair of leaky geodesic domes with the sacristy in a broom closet. Yet the Episcopal Church of St. Benedict in Bolingbrook survived having its first building condemned in the 1980s and watching its attendance fall in the new millennium, and still remained resilient and resourceful enough to be granted parish status, on a unanimous vote, at the 2015 Diocesan Convention.

“It was one of the most humbling experiences,” says St. Benedict’s warden Tish Sanborn of the vote, which was greeted by a standing ovation. “I am so proud.” The road St. Benedict’s traveled illustrates many of the challenges that confront new church communities as well as the essential role of clergy-lay partnerships in surmounting those challenges.

Transitioning from mission to parish status means St. Benedict’s is now a fully self-sustaining congregation and no longer supported by the diocese. Rather than a bishop’s committee, a vestry now serves as the parish’s governing body and the clergy leader, previously called the vicar, is now referred to as the rector.

St. Benedict’s started as a home worship group in 1972, when Bolingbrook, some 30 miles southwest of Chicago, was as much a notion as a suburb. “There was nothing here,” says the Rev. Heidi Haverkamp, who served as St. Benedict’s vicar, and then rector, from 2007 until mid-May of this year. “And I think there had to be a real openness there in that context—starting a community where there’s no established community already in place—there had to be an openness to the future that you still feel in this community. From the beginning, Bolingbrook

has been a racially-diverse suburb, which is unusual for a suburb that's so far from the city."

By the early 1980s, the community had grown enough to call a full-time priest and build a space for themselves. "Unfortunately, it was a terrible building," says Haverkamp. "It was two geodesic domes. The stories people tell about this building—the sacristy was in the broom closet, water would just run down the wall of the Sunday school classrooms, it was ridiculous." Eventually, the building had to be condemned. Though St. Benedict's had more success with its second building (which still serves as its home today), the financial burden of the mortgage on that space, coupled with church attendance decline in the 2000s, made it difficult to climb over that last hump of financial independence that would allow for transition to parish status.

Haverkamp came to St. Benedict's in 2007. "I was fresh out of seminary, and I just had the energy to sort of rally the place," she says. "Because they're really a great group of people, and they were so resilient after so many years just making things happen. And they seemed cheerful somehow. They just had this can-do spirit and this openness to change and trying new things." The church began to experience growth in membership, and Haverkamp helped build on that cheerful, can-do spirit and openness by empowering lay leadership to take ownership of all aspects of church life.

"Heidi elected to dial back her responsibilities," parishioner Donnie Williams says. "I have to say that's a testament to her confidence in her church. We would have been happy to let her run it, but she said, 'No, you guys are going to do this, you guys are going to do that.' She started letting the wardens create committee agendas and run the meetings. I thought that was a huge step because a lot of leaders don't want to give up that power of running a meeting. These are the little things that gave us the confidence to be a parish." Parishioners point to Haverkamp's 2014 four-month sabbatical as a turning point in the life of St. Benedict's. "During the sabbatical, the church got to see that we could not only survive, we could run," Williams says.

"We went on our own sabbatical during that time," Esther Simonson, a warden, explains. "We had all kinds of special things going on: we had our own speakers, and visited other churches, and held fundraisers."

"There's tons of lay leadership, and it's a natural thing; it's not forced," Sanborn says. "It's not like there's recruitment. There's not a cycle you have to go through. It seems to come very naturally because people aren't afraid to make mistakes, they aren't afraid to ask for help. People will jump in and help at a moment's notice—sometimes the people you least expect in the least expected ways. I think we're really healthy in that way."

Lay leaders are responsible for successful programs and ministries such as the "Grace and Race" discussion group that screens relevant movies, invites speakers and takes field trips to museums, places of worship, ethnic restaurants and festivals. Morningstar Mission, a

"Heidi elected to dial back her responsibilities. I have to say that's a testament to her confidence in her church. We would have been happy to let her run it."





During Easter and Pentecost, cookies are decorated, eggs found, and people meet for fellowship. “We know we have Heidi’s encouragement, but she’s happy to let us run with it,” says Esther Simonson.

“There’s openness and optimism here that’s a part of this place’s DNA. They have a deep sense of prayer, this community. There’s a spiritual core. They really are here because they believe in God—not ... because it’s a club, or because the building’s pretty.”

homeless shelter in Joliet, was chosen by lay leaders as St. Benedict’s primary charity. Teams from the parish help serve lunch there, take part in numerous drives and fundraisers, collect donations for their thrift store, and collect school supplies, underwear, socks, children’s books, and coats.

“I’ve been in parishes where they think the priest has to be in every club within the group,” says Simonson. “But at St. Benedict’s we have a number of groups and things going on that are really powered by lay people. We know we have Heidi’s encouragement, but she’s happy to let us run with it and let her know what’s going on.”

While the church did see membership growth, leaders realized they were still not going to have enough pledge units to clear the last hurdle to full parish status—financial self-sufficiency. The problem was a crushing \$6,000 monthly mortgage that they knew they couldn’t pay by themselves any time soon.

“But we were all ready to become a parish,” Haverkamp says. “After 40 years of being a mission, we were ready.”

Working with the diocese’s Congregations Commission, Bishop Lee, and the diocese’s trustees, they mapped out a route. “The decision was made for the diocese to buy the building for us,” Haverkamp says. “I believe this was because we were doing so well, we were a great little congregation, and we were growing—and the only way we could continue is if we didn’t have this mortgage to pay. Now we can pay all those bills ourselves. It was really just the mortgage that was holding us down. Like all churches, we scrape by, but we’re fine being financially independent without that mortgage.” St. Benedict’s will pay the diocese back \$75,000 over the course of 10 years.



The transition to parish status has been wholly positive but not without some fear and adjustment. “It’s sort of like we’ve moved out of our parents’ basement into our first apartment now. It’s a big step and it’s scary,” Haverkamp says.

“It’s just like a kid growing up,” Sanborn says. “You think you’re big and bold and you can do it, but once you do it there’s that moment where you think, ‘oh my gosh!’ There’s this sense of ‘What if this happens?’ and ‘What if that happens?’ Still, we’re comforted by knowing that our bishop and our diocese aren’t just walking out. If something came up, they could help us find resources, we could talk to other churches. We’re still a community that way.”



Haverkamp, who has accepted a new call to serve as senior associate rector at St. Chrysostom's in Chicago, is optimistic about St. Benedict's future as a parish. "People here like change, they like new things here, they like funky stuff. It's not easy for me to leave this fantastic church, but it's the right time" Haverkamp says. "There's openness and optimism here that's a part of this place's DNA. They have a deep sense of prayer, this community. There's a spiritual core. They really are here because they believe in God—not because they love the Episcopal Church, or their friends, or because it's a club, or because the building's pretty. They're here

because they believe in God."

The Sunday after the convention voted to receive St. Benedict's as a parish, things didn't feel all that different. "The funny thing is it sort of feels like a birthday," Haverkamp says. "You know you have a different name, but it doesn't feel that different."

But the change didn't go unnoticed. On previous Sundays, Haverkamp used to say, "Hello everyone. My name is Heidi Haverkamp, I'm the vicar." But on the Sunday after the convention, she said "I'm the rector here" for the first time, and the congregation broke out in applause. ✝



After the Ending

A deftly-handled church closing engenders hope, not rancor

By Lu Stanton León



"There were a few people I had met, and I sent them a handwritten note, just saying we're here, we know you're hurting."

It wasn't unexpected; the symptoms had been evident for a long time. Diminishing attendance, absence of young families, financial problems, the perennial lack of parking. People were tired.

"You had to see the writing on the wall," says Mavis Schweber, who for 12 years had attended St. John's Episcopal Church in Mount Prospect. "We knew we couldn't continue the way we were, despite all of our efforts to try to bring people in."

St. John's closed with a final celebration service September 28, 2014, followed by a festive potluck lunch. For those who remained faithful, the closure was painful, but here's the kicker; it was not devastating. Clergy and lay leaders led the congregation through a detailed, thoughtful closure process that left them feeling empowered, not defeated. With one or two exceptions, all of the parishioners have found a

new church home at nearby St. Simon's Episcopal Church in Arlington Heights, where they are active participants in a growing ministry that allows them to maintain old friendships while creating new ones.

"A closing is not an easy thing, but it did go well. We could walk out with our heads high," Schweber says. "In a way, it was a very positive experience for all of us."

How did they do it? How do you close a 75-year-old church without rancor or desperation but with love and hopefulness? In St. John's case, a lot of credit goes to then-senior warden David Zuehlke and the Rev. Scott Barron, who served as the church's rector for 11 years. Couple that with the pastoral outreach and warm welcome from the Rev. Elizabeth Jameson and her parish at St. Simon's.

"We were certainly kept informed," Schweber says of St. John's deliberations about closing

“We did it with dignity,
and we can all feel pleased
about that. As hard as it
was, we did it the best
possible way.”



the church. “Father Scott sent a message to everybody about three months before we closed, giving his ideas on where we were, why we were at that point, and what we should do. Everybody got that letter, which was very, very helpful. We could have, as he said in his letter, continued on and whittled down our resources and then left. Or we could make the decision ourselves. We all agreed.

“I think you have to be realistic. As Scott said in his letter to us, and I’ll always remember it, ‘Control your destiny or someone else will.’ It’s a quote from Jack Welch, the former CEO of GE. We did control our destiny. We didn’t let it drift until it disappeared. We did it with dignity, and we can all feel pleased about that. As hard as it was, we did it the best possible way.”

For almost two years before it closed, Zuehlke, a parishioner at St. John’s for 43 years, discussed the parish’s unsustainable situation with Barron.

“St. John’s was a good place,” says Zuehlke, who now serves as junior warden at St. Simon’s. “Like so many parishes, you had your ups and downs. Some things weren’t productive. We had a young priest who died suddenly in his 40s, followed by a priest who did some damage. We also had a strong contingent who didn’t want to change from the 1928 Prayer Book, and physically, we didn’t have any room for parking. What we saw was the disappearance of the young people and the families, which is a dangerous situation to be in.

“We tried to do things to correct it. Scott Barron came in and

was a wonderful priest, but as much as we tried, we couldn’t change the course.”

Zuehlke and his wife, Diane, raised three boys at St. John’s and served in almost every church leadership position. She served as senior warden once and he served in that position three times.

“The people who had remained were quite committed to keeping the place open, and they even increased their pledges,” Zuehlke says. “Shortly before we closed there were about 25 to 35 people there on Sundays, and it was a fairly large facility. My wife died [of breast cancer] less than a year before we closed. I’m glad she was never confronted with that, quite frankly. She loved the church so much, she said she would go out in the middle of the street and drag people in if she had to.”

Zuehlke knew the parish inside and out, and he didn’t want to see an ugly ending. He says Barron showed exceptional leadership in the closure process.

“Scott did a superb job and was very pastoral,” Zuehlke says. “There are some guidelines from the diocese, but we had a process of our own. We started out with a list of concerns of things that had to be addressed or done. We met with the vestry and people who had a long-time involvement, and then we informed the parish at one of the services.

“The thing that drove us is, we said we’d like to close the parish with a touch of class. Let’s do it in a kind, thoughtful way and celebrate where we’ve been,” Zuehlke says. “The people hung in together right through the last service. Sometimes people just bail, and unfortunately,





they end up fragmenting and losing connections. A neighboring parish closed, and my take is that it was a shotgun deal and everybody went every which way. We wanted to approach this as a parish together, not just pull the plug and go off in every direction.

“There were three Episcopal parishes in our area that had closed in the past few years,” Zuehlke says. “In our conversation about options, we talked about big church versus small church. If you go to a really big church you can get lost, but in a small church you can face the same problems we were facing.”

A GOOD LANDING

Looking back, it's no surprise that almost all of St. John's parishioners ended up at St. Simon's. The two churches have co-mingled histories that includes St. John's members who were involved in St. Simon's founding in 1957. More importantly to St. John's parishioners, while some members of neighboring churches visited them after the church's closure was announced in June 2014, Jameson was the only priest who came in person.

“I went in August to meet with the parish and extend an invitation to the members,” Jameson recalls. “One of the things I said was that I hoped there would be some form of resurrection, some reconciliation, that there would be healing in the process. I said how sorry we were

and I acknowledged there was long-ago history of our parishes having the same roots, and that we would do anything we could to support them. I wanted them to know they were welcome here.

“I thought we all would do that,” she says of area clergy, “but one priest in the diocese made a comment about not going because they didn't want to be seen as an ambulance chaser!”

Those aren't the words St. John's parishioners use to describe Jameson.

“She was a savior,” Schweber says. “She was there for us in a very gentle way. And the congregation has been wonderfully warm and welcoming. No pressure, not made to feel that we didn't quite belong or that we were the newcomers, not that at all.”

When St. John's parishioners were in the early stages of discussing closure, it was suggested members visit a number of churches, including two Lutheran parishes.

“We didn't do that, I think, because of Elizabeth and the way she treated us,” Schweber says. “I've said on so many occasions, you cannot fault her. She never puts a foot wrong. And does she work! When she talks to you, she focuses on you, and you're the one who is important in that moment. I can't say enough about her and how supportive she's been of me in the last few months. At my husband's funeral in February of this year, Scott Barron was going to say a few words since he had known him so long, and then Elizabeth invited him to assist her in the



service. It was just another indication of her pastoral care. She knew how much that would mean to me.

“We felt so much love and affection for Scott Barron that we thought we’re never going to find someone like him and feel that way again. But we did.”

Jameson not only visited St. John’s before it closed, but afterward she sent each St. John’s parishioner a mailing that included a letter from a current St. Simon’s parishioner, recent St. Simon’s newsletters, and a note from her saying: “We are all part of God’s household, and I pray you find a new people among whom you feel called to journey and continue growing in faith. Please let me know if there is something we can do to support you in your discernment process. We hope to have the opportunity to welcome you to St. Simon’s as you explore the various faith communities in the area.”

“We had asked for the directory, and I had sent everyone—with Scott’s okay—a note just saying, again, our hearts go out to you and here’s information about our parish,” Jameson says. “There were a few people I had met, and I sent them a handwritten note, just saying we’re here, we know you’re hurting.”

Amy Sanecki, a St. John’s member who a few years earlier had gone through the closure of St. Hilary’s in Prospect Heights, felt the love.

“She couldn’t have been more welcoming. We kind of came in as a group, but we weren’t labeled as a group,” Sanecki says. “Honestly, I couldn’t believe I received a tender, sweet, empathetic letter, saying she would be there for us. I have some health issues, so for me personally, it has been unbelievable. I feel totally enveloped in her love here.”

During the few weeks after St. John’s closed, parishioners began attending St. Simon’s.

“Scott was very, very helpful to me about the people who might come,” Jameson says of Barron. “He wanted them to land well.”

For many, it was on Sunday, October 25, that they realized they had found a home. That morning the congregation celebrated

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Heritage Sunday, an annual event during which long-time parishioners are recognized.

"We invited people who had been at St. Simon's up to 50, 40, 30, 20 and 10 years to come up front," Jameson says. "Because there were some St. John's people in the mix, I said there might be people from St. John's who have been there for a long time. We asked them to come up and be recognized, too. It was a holy time. We recognized together the faithfulness of each other. It was truly astounding. It didn't matter to me that they were only visiting at the time—what mattered was recognizing their faithfulness."

Zuehlke agrees, and says Heritage Sunday was a "key thing" to St. John's parishioners feeling at home.

"I don't know if Elizabeth had planned it or not. It was shortly after we came over to St. Simon's. She went through the St. Simon's congregation first, and then she said, 'Now for St. John's,' and we joined the people up front. They applauded us. For me, that was a pretty profound moment of being welcomed. Sometimes it's the little thing that has the most impact."

St. Simon's is a healthy church family, Jameson says, with some 150 to 180 people in the pews most Sunday mornings.

"Our growth curve is phenomenal. Almost every week, new people are coming and many of them are staying," she says. "When I first came there was no one in their 20s or 30s unless they had kids. Now that group is thriving. Across all ages we are seeing growth."

"It's a beautiful parish, and we are truly blessed by the presence of those who came from St. John's. We even embraced their potluck tradition. It is especially wonderful to see the reaction of those who had been at St. John's when the kids come in at the peace. The energy of this parish is palpable. It is pure joy. We now have 95 people in our church school, and that is just extraordinary."

Jameson points out that members of the group who came over from St. John's have repeatedly told her they don't like to be called "St. John's people" or "former St. John's people." They don't want to be considered a subset of the new congregation they have embraced. They are members of St. Simon's. Period.

As for St. John's old site, it was sold and is home to a new congregation, Evergreen Community Church, which has services in Korean and English.

"I'm glad it is going to remain a church," says Schweber. "One of these Sundays I will go to the services." ✚



El convivio!

Two cultures create a thriving parish
in the “bilingual air” at St. Mark’s

— BY LU STANTON LEÓN —

El Espíritu is at work at St. Mark's Church, Glen Ellyn, and she speaks both English and Spanish.

"The air has become bilingual," says the Rev. George Smith, rector of St. Mark's. "You'll hear both Spanish and English here. We don't have to be perfect. It just creates that welcome. So when a Spanish speaker comes in, we can say *Buenos días!* Or *¿Cómo estás?*"

Four years ago, the parish added a 1 p.m. service in Spanish to its three existing Sunday morning services. Attendance at the afternoon service fluctuates between 100 and 180 on most Sundays, but climbs to 300 on feast days and special occasions.

How did St. Mark's, a successful English-speaking congregation in a town with a Hispanic and Latino population of less than six percent, develop a thriving Spanish ministry?

Part of the answer lies in the parish's distinctive approach. St. Mark's does not refer to the people who attend the 1 p. m. service as its "Spanish congregation." Rather, Smith uses the phrase "one church" to emphasize the unity of St. Mark's across English and Spanish services, and his vision has caught on.

"While we offer a Spanish language service at 1 o'clock, the purpose is to welcome and integrate everyone into one church," says senior warden Peter Vagt. "Many of the services we do bilingually. The Good Friday bulletin was in two languages, and we alternated saying the readings in English and Spanish, integrating it as a single church and a single group of people."

That, Smith says, "is one of the hardest concepts for people to get. People say, 'How is the Hispanic congregation?' And I say, 'Do you mean the 1 o'clock service?' We have some crossover. It's not huge, but the mixing is happening and it is a wonderful thing to see."

The parish facilitates this crossover by offering English classes for Spanish speakers and Spanish classes for English speakers. Sunday bulletins are printed in English and Spanish, and both English and Spanish speakers attend women's ministry events. *El convivio*, a coffee hour or light lunch for which congregants prepare traditional dishes, offers parishioners a time to socialize after the 1 o'clock service.

"Our story is a 'loaves and fishes' thing," says Virginia Vagt, a leader in the church's women's ministries who is married to Peter Vagt. "We all just bring a tiny loaf, a small fish, and all of a sudden *el Espíritu* provides a banquet of people, lives, and friendship for us all to enjoy, together."

St. Mark's outreach to the Latin American community has unlikely roots in the 2003 consecration of the Rev. Gene Robinson, an openly gay priest, as the bishop of New Hampshire. "In 2004, many people left over the Gene Robinson situation," Smith says. "St. Mark's lost half of the congregation, lost the rector, lost the deacon. As a church, those who stayed said, 'We are going to welcome gays

"We all just bring a tiny loaf, a small fish, and all of a sudden el Espíritu provides a banquet of people, lives, and friendship for us all to enjoy, together."

and lesbians into our church.' We got so we could say that with confidence."

"I arrived in February 2006, and you know how new rectors are full of energy and new ideas," Smith says. "I said, 'Let's do something fun.' The Diocese of Southeast Mexico is our companion diocese, so I said, 'Let's make a connection with a church in our companion diocese.' In June of 2006, we went to Nigromante, Veracruz, Mexico, which has a church whose name is San Marcos. We picked it for no other reason than it had the same name as ours, St. Mark's."

Meanwhile, Smith was learning Spanish, as were some other members of the parish, and the relationship with their companion parish blossomed. Every year a group from St. Mark's travels to Nigromante to work side-by-side on projects inside and outside San Marcos, including painting, setting up a computer lab, and building a play set for the community.

"I don't know exactly the epiphany that came to me, but I realized there was nothing liturgical in Spanish in our area," Smith says. "I thought, 'What if we had a 1 o'clock service in Spanish? We could do that, and we could offer it to everyone. Let's just be Episcopalians and open our arms and offer the sacraments.'"

Smith's epiphany was in keeping with St. Mark's vision statement, developed in 2009 as the congregation sought to define itself in the wake of the division over human sexuality. "We talked about how a vision statement is what you aspire to be, not necessarily what you are," Smith says. "Before we started, we had very little diversity. Glen Ellyn, especially around our part of town, is mostly white, mostly Christian, mostly upper middle class, but we know there is diversity not far from our parish."

"One of our first frontiers was coming to a place where we welcomed gays and lesbians. With our vision statement in 2009, we said we wanted to be more diverse, more open, and we weren't sure what that would look like."

As it happens, it looked like an icon of the Virgen de Guadalupe

“They have been in the shadows, but now they are being acknowledged. They are respected and are invited to value and share their culture and traditions with the wider community.”

inspired by the parish in Nigromante and created by the children of St. Mark’s.

“At the time we didn’t realize how articulately this icon would express a warm welcome, on our behalf, from primarily Anglo church members to our Latino and Hispanic neighbors and visitors who are now active members and leaders together with us at our church,” says Virginia Vagt. “Through this project, the Spirit led us to communicate ‘Welcome!’ without words, which was good, as few of us at the time had the words!”

The connection with Mexico and the recognition of the Virgin of Guadalupe were very appealing to Mauro Hernandez, who started attending St. Mark’s shortly after he and his young family moved from Mexico to the United States four years ago.

“We came to St. Mark’s at the invitation from friends,” says Hernandez, an electronics engineer who works as a manager for Morey Corporation in Woodridge, Illinois. “We were looking for a church where they speak Spanish, and St. Mark’s has been very open to adopting some of the celebrations we have.”

Hernandez, who is starting his third year on the St. Mark’s vestry, used to live about 25 minutes from the church. He, his wife and their two children have since moved to Aurora, a town about 35 minutes away.

“Now the place I live has a big Latin population, so there are two or three churches around my house that offer services in Spanish that are much closer than St. Mark’s, but we are very comfortable at St. Mark’s,” Hernandez says. The welcoming congregation and the care and concern of Smith and the Rev. Victor Conrado, associate rector at St. Mark’s, are big reasons why.

“They are very warm people,” Hernandez says of the priests. “They make you feel very comfortable. You can trust them immediately. You can connect with them. Not all churches are willing to be diverse and accept people from different parts of the world.”



Conrado, who Smith recruited in 2011 to launch the 1 o’clock service, has worked with Smith to build the Spanish ministry, going to shopping centers, restaurants, apartment buildings and other places where Spanish speakers live or work.

Their efforts have been rewarded. Not only is there an increase in numbers at the 1 o’clock service, but there is also an increase in Spanish-speaking members’ participation in the life of the church.

“What has changed, I think, is that now there is more involvement of the Latino and Hispanic parishioners in the leadership positions of the parish and in the running of the church,” Conrado says. “Now we have people from the 1 o’clock service who are involved in the vestry, and there are others in leadership positions in the congregation, doing things like preparing events, organizing music in the service.

“Now the Spanish ministry is something that is established. It is not



experimental. It is part of our identity.”

More Spanish speaking parishioners are becoming involved in stewardship, and more are participating in the adult education programs, which are led on some occasions by Conrado and on others by experts on immigration issues, family health, and financial concerns. Conrado is also encouraged because parishioners are increasingly comfortable attending either English or Spanish services.

“It takes away from the mentality that only English speakers go to the English service,” he says. “Now we have a good number of people from the 1 o’clock service that go to the 10:30 service, and people from the 10:30 are going to the 1 o’clock service. That movement gives us the insight into why it is successful. We help people navigate, and we welcome people to all the services.”

Conrado, who was born in Colombia and raised as a Roman Catholic, understands the issues facing many Latinos and Hispanics looking for a parish home, and he has broad experience in establishing new ministries. He worked for 11 years in Kenya, where he attended seminary, starting new missions that became self-supporting parishes. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 2001 and was received as an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Chicago in 2009. He and his wife, Lucia, have two young sons, David and Daniel.

“Every Sunday we have new families coming. It’s spreading by word of mouth,” Conrado says. “You see families invite another family, and we are still intentionally reaching out as well.”

Incorporating the Virgin of Guadalupe into the life of the parish has been a big draw, he says, because of her significance in the spiritual life of Latino and Hispanic communities. “Now for two years we have had

two images of Our Lady of Guadalupe. One we call the Pilgrim Virgin. She goes out into the community for 15 days and stays with a family, and they can invite people to come into their home. It goes from family to family all during the year. They bring the Virgin back to the church and then it goes to another family.

“We have the chance to go meet with the families and also educate them about the Episcopal Church,” Conrado says. “There are two important elements of education, especially the role of women in our salvation history, and respect. We value and respect the different traditions that are part of the community, and we invite people to journey deeper in their faith.

“Normally gatherings are 15 to maybe 40 people in the house. It’s kind of a way to work out an Episcopal identity as well as respecting their identity.”

Conrado says St. Mark’s Spanish ministry has met with a positive response from the rest of the religious community.

“Normally we go to a lot of meetings with other Glen Ellyn religious leaders and we share our experiences,” Conrado says. “Some of them ask why aren’t they aware of this community. I normally tell them the Latinos are here. They are working in the restaurants. They are in apartment complexes nearby. They also are working as engineers, doctors, nurses. They are involved in our education system as well as in our local industries.

“For many years they have been in the shadows, but now they are being acknowledged. There is value in being acknowledged and recognized, and being not seen as somebody who is only renting space. They are here as parishioners. They are respected and are invited to value and share their culture and traditions with the wider community.”

All four services at St. Mark’s are growing, and the 1 o’clock service is growing the fastest, Smith says. Some 400 people worship at St. Mark’s on an average Sunday, and the parish has about 1,700 members.

Looking back, Smith says, a lot of goodness came out of St. Mark’s difficult past.

“The split that happened in 2004 really brought the church to its knees, both financially and in its sense of identity, but in that there was this incredible openness to trying new things,” he says. “In other churches, it seems to take years to get up the courage. You build the risk-taking appetite, like okay, that worked; let’s try something else. There’s this sense of let’s continue to open our hearts to our community.

“It’s about openness, opening your heart and taking risk,” Smith says. “I really do feel like it’s the Holy Spirit that is guiding us.” ✠





HEEDING THE CALL

A Priest and Parish Find Each Other

By Jim Naughton

In the search for a new clergy leader, Episcopal parishes can avail themselves of all of the resources of the contemporary marketplace, from international data bases to search consultants to interview instruments designed to determine just how compatible a candidate and a community might be. But the Lord, as the saying goes, moves in mysterious ways, or at least counterintuitive ones, and unlikely people are called to unlikely places.

Consider the case of Saint Bride's Church in Oregon, a small town about 100 miles west of Chicago, and the Rev. Barbara Seward, an African American priest looking for her first parish placement.

Seward, a former teacher with a masters in marketing and communications from the Johns Hopkins University, read St. Bride's profile and wasn't sure she wanted to lead a congregation in a rural setting miles from clergy colleagues. And Joanne Pennock, leader of St. Bride's search committee, doubted that a parish with an average Sunday attendance of about 25 people was going to find a priest who took liturgy and preaching seriously enough to suit it.

But then something happened.

The Rev. Andrea Mysen, the diocese's associate for ministry whose portfolio includes leadership development and clergy transitions, asked Seward to keep an open mind. And the more she meditated on St. Bride's, the more she felt the beginnings of a call.

"I just researched more, prayed more, and as I read the profile again, what really captured me was that I enjoy revitalization work," Seward says. "I enjoy helping to make things grow. And when I read St. Bride's profile, I saw great opportunity there, and I still do. But I will say this also: Coming to a rural environment isn't something you wake up to. I do believe it is the call of God, first and foremost."

To an outsider, the Episcopal "call" process may look like most other employment processes. An employer assesses its needs, circulates a job description, evaluates applications, screens candidates' cover letters and résumés, conducts interviews and reference checks, negotiates compensation and extends an offer. But those involved say that through these procedures and their own spiritual discernment, they are trying to determine where they think God is leading them.

Seward's caution about rural communities was born of



“I never make a decision based on my written-down plan. I have a strong sense of the environment speaking, the people speaking, a sense of God speaking, but that’s it.”

experience. She grew up in Lawrenceville, Virginia, a community of about 1,200 people not far from the North Carolina border, and hadn’t planned on returning to those roots. The population of Ogle County is 88 percent white and just over one percent African American, according to census figures, making Oregon, the county seat, seem an unlikely destination for her. Yet Seward says she has “a passion for marginalized communities” and knew that rural communities frequently felt they existed on the edges of the American mainstream.

Pennock, meanwhile, took one look at the materials on Seward that she had been given by Mysen and thought, “There’s no way she’s really interested. She has lived in big cities. She’s just doing this because somebody told her to.”

But with Mysen’s encouragement, Pennock decided that Seward was an appealing candidate and worth a phone call. The call went well.

“I felt very comfortable talking to her,” Pennock says, “so we arranged a Skype interview. We had the interview and when we turned off the computer, everybody just said, ‘Wow!’”

Seward, for her part, continued to discern whether God was calling her to serve St. Bride’s.

“The way I approached it is, ‘Which doors were closing and which doors were opening?’ This door kept opening. Then when I visited Ogle County, met the people, there was a connection, a comfort, it was as if—I don’t want to romanticize this—it was as if the ground

opened up and said, ‘Welcome.’ It was the sense of people when I got here, our interactions with each other, the conversations, the comfort we had with each other.

“Even when I walked into the rectory, I could see myself living here. When I went to officiate at the church it was very natural. The pieces just started falling into place.

“I never make a decision based on my written-down plan,” she says. “I have a strong sense of the environment speaking, the people speaking, a sense of God speaking, but that’s it.”

Seward is accustomed to taking an indirect route to her destination and relying on divine guidance to get her where she needs to go. She was attending a Mennonite seminary and serving in a Baptist Church when the Rev. Hilary Smith, now rector of Church of the Holy Comforter in Richmond, Virginia was invited to the seminary one night to lead an Episcopal service.

“It was really a God thing, a spirit thing,” Smith says. “I remember after the service talking to her. I knew from a friend that she had an internship at a Baptist church and that she wasn’t allowed to do much because she is a woman. I felt kind of called to say to her, ‘Have you thought about the Episcopal Church, or the Episcopal priesthood?’

“And after I said it I thought, ‘That was so weird,’ because I really didn’t know her. After I said it I thought it must have been a God thing because normally I am a lot more circumspect.”



We need to find a way of doing church that is not cookie cutter. We need to become more visible. What is our one thing we can do that is different?



Her encounter with Smith set Seward on a path to Virginia Theological Seminary, where she received a certificate in Anglican Studies, and eventually to St. Bride's.

"Everybody had such a good feeling with her," Pennock says. "She was very personable, a quick pleasant smile. She works incredibly hard on her sermons and it shows. She's a very spiritual lady and she gives it a lot of research and thought before she gives a sermon. And she is serious about the ritual."

Priest and people have been together for seven months now, and in some ways, Seward says she is still adjusting to her surroundings. She says she is used to being one of the only black people in the community where she worships, but, like many priests in rural calls, she hungers for the company of colleagues.

"Sometimes it gets very lonely here," she says. "Sometimes when you need to bounce the day off someone, there is no one. There is a challenge with spiritual direction. I'd have to go all the way into Chicago to get a spiritual director. So the support of clergy is very difficult here. Diocesan people are helpful but can't come out every

two weeks or so."

Yet she and the members of St. Bride's are in agreement about what visitors should expect on a Sunday morning. "You will get God-filled liturgy," Seward says. "You will hear the word of God, and you will get some insight, I hope, into the Episcopal ethos." And they are in agreement about where the parish needs to head next.

"We can't wait for people to come in the door," Pennock says. "We need to get out there."

"We need to find a way of doing church that is not cookie cutter," Seward agrees. "We need to become more visible. What is our one thing we can do that is different?"

The outlines of an answer have begun to emerge. St. Bride's feels a particular call to feeding the hungry, Pennock and Seward agree. Parishioners participate in CROP Hunger Walk, which raises money to fight hunger and contributes to a local food pantry. They also visit nursing homes.

St. Bride's has come further in a short time than Pennock thought it could. "I believe the hand of God was in this," she says. ✚



BREAKFAST

with THE BISHOP

*"In the
Diocese of Chicago,
we're in the transforma-
tion business," says Bishop
Lee. "We really are in the
business in the church of
changing people's lives
in Christ."*

Save a Date!

Thursday, May 26

8:30-10:30 am
Rockford Deanery
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
900 Normal Rd., DeKalb

Thursday, June 2

8:30-10:30 am
Peoria Deanery
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
3601 N. North St., Peoria

Saturday, May 24

8:30-10:30 am
Oak Park Deanery
Grace Episcopal Church
120 E. 1st St., Hinsdale

Saturday, October 22

8:30-10:30 am
Hispanic congregations
(Spanish translation available)
Iglesia Episcopal Nuestra
Señora de Guadalupe
2415 N. Butrick, Waukegan

Saturday, December 3

8:30-10:30 am
Chicago South Deanery
St. Thomas Episcopal Church
3801 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

This year, join the bishop for breakfast and conversation about the ministry of the diocese and the work to which God is calling us. To RSVP, please email Associate for Resource Development Shay Craig at scraig@episcopalchicago.org or call her at 312.751.3576.

Leaders at All Levels



CLAIRE HARTFIELD

“By embracing and lifting up the diversity of gifts in our church community, we strengthen our capacity to fulfill our baptismal covenant to do God’s work ...”

I have lived among diverse peoples my entire life. I was born to a black Episcopal mother and a German Jewish father and raised in a community of African Americans and Africans, European Americans and Europeans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, corporate executives, artists, and school maintenance workers. From this I learned at an early age that the world is rich with people of diverse gifts. Throughout my life—both at work and in church—I have experienced again and again the increased vitality of the whole community when the abundant gifts of the many are lifted up and developed in such a way as to empower leadership.

Sixteen years ago, I went to work in Chicago’s fledgling charter school movement. I joined a group of leaders in getting a new elementary school up and running in one of Chicago’s most underprivileged neighborhoods. My job was to put in place the key pieces to create a vital community where children can thrive. Our first task was to find the right principal, then to build a passionate and talented team of teachers, then, one September morning, to open our doors to a new student body.

As we began to work together—principal, teachers, and students—the diverse gifts of the various members of our school community started to surface. We came to understand the tremendous potential of creating structures within the organization to discern and develop leaders at all levels.

Time and time again, our school community has reaped the benefits of this multi-faceted leadership. I will share one illustrative process: our “club day” program that prompts our community to discern and develop its gifts. The brainchild of our principal, the program calls upon each teacher to choose and to lead a weekly seminar sharing an extracurricular skill or hobby with students. The range of clubs reflects the diversity of teacher-leaders: there is tap dancing and chess, Japanese and Swahili, cooking and robotics. At year’s end, it is the students’ turn to lead a presentation of their work to family, friends and

neighbors, demonstrating the development of their own gifts. We have become a community of leaders, each member contributing to multiply the effectiveness and vitality of our school.

The same hallmarks of discerning and developing diverse leadership are front and center in the growth of a vital and effective church. I see the wonders at work in my parish community—in welcoming, in worship, in formation and in service. On a larger scale, I am energized by my work as a member of the Commission on Ministry.

The commission itself is a group with diverse gifts, coming together with a deep commitment to growing the life of the church, and a common understanding that the best way to do this is through the discernment and development of a constellation of leaders—ordained and lay. Part of our work is to engage the many deeply thoughtful, creative members of the church community who are seeking to discover and develop clarity about how they can best use their particular gifts. Some are called to be priests, others are ordained as deacons, and most serve as lay ministers. The other part of our work is to provide resources and support around leadership formation. Our calling, in the church and in the world, is to facilitate growth of leadership at every level. By embracing and lifting up the diversity of gifts in our church community, we strengthen our capacity to fulfill our baptismal covenant to do God’s work, to make a difference in the world. ✚

Claire Hartfield, a senior education consultant and author, is a member of the Commission on Ministry and a parishioner at the Church of St. Paul and the Redeemer.

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