

thrive!

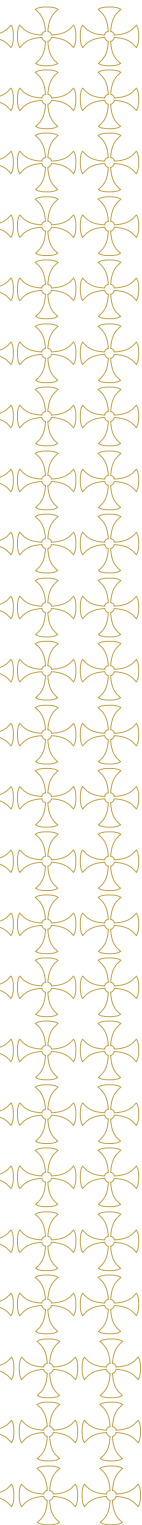


[SPRING 2013]

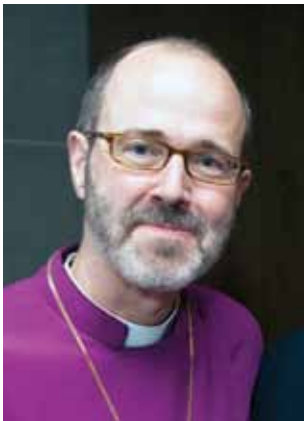
THE EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
OF CHICAGO
MAGAZINE

CROSSwalk Honors Grief, Spreads Hope
Thrive Sparks Congregational Comebacks
Living Compass Points Toward Wholeness





Letter from Bishop Lee



... like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

{1 PETER2:5}

When I was a little kid, I loved to play with construction sets of various kinds. I liked putting together model cars too. In college I assembled a harpsichord from a manufacturer’s kit, and I still like putting together bookcases and such that come packed flat. I think it’s a wonderfully satisfying experience to start with a pile of boards or plastic parts, and with a few hours of work, glue, screws (and lots of patience!), to end up with something whole, useful or even beautiful. A colleague at my former parish, a family therapist, told me that assembling things like this ministered to my overdeveloped intuitive sensibilities. He said that I clearly needed to work with my hands to counteract all the time I otherwise spend in my head.

In the Diocese of Chicago we are living in a time with lots of assembling going on. The physical renovation of St. James Commons is largely complete. The first phase of the capital campaign to support this work has been a great success, and the second phase to invite more to participate is well underway. We will soon undertake the build-out of the fifth floor of 65 East Huron as the Nicholas Center, an important new resource for the Diocese and the Church beyond this diocese. The first year of our congregational vitality program, Thrive, is making a significant impact on the twenty congregations that are part of the first year cohort, and we are ready to launch year two with the addition of as many as twenty more congregations. The work of nurturing vitality is bearing fruit in many congregations, and I give thanks in particular for the growth of our Hispanic ministries. The critically important work of helping congregations and clergy in times of transition is resulting in renewed and vigorous leadership throughout the diocese.

In some ways, this diocese reminds me of those construction sets I loved as a child. Maybe an even better analogy would be that harpsichord kit. It had lots of parts. The instruction manual was helpful only to a certain point. The keys and strings and all the rest had to be assembled in just the right way, and sometimes that was more a matter of intuition than anything else. Lots of tinkering was involved. But at the end of the day, what mattered was the music that emerged from the completed instrument. For the church, what matters most is the song we sing, the mission that motivates us, the work of growing and forming and renewing Christians for the work God gives us to do. What matters is the rebuilding of our lives into the image and likeness of Christ, who came among us to love and serve and save us—and through us to change the world.

In Christ,
+Jeffrey

thrive!

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CHICAGO MAGAZINE [SPRING 2013]



CROSSwalk Redux 12

A prayerful four-mile procession on a cold March night, the second annual CROSSwalk was an opportunity to grieve, pray and commit one’s self to the cause of reducing gun violence and making a difference in young lives. Above, Julian DeShazier of Verbal Kwest.

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SAVE THESE DATES [2013]

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On our cover

The names of young Chicago residents murdered since 2008 are affixed to a cross for the CROSSwalk procession. Photo by Vincent Johnson.

June 4

Rush Hour Concerts Opening Event, St. James Commons
Mix and mingle at 5:30 concert series featuring world-class musicians.

June 8

175th Annual Diocesan Convention, St. James Commons
The Convention reconvenes to consider proposed reunification with the Episcopal Diocese of Quincy.

June 21

Make Music Chicago Finale Performance
St. James Commons takes part in the citywide celebration of music making.

September 15

Block Party on the Plaza, St. James Commons
A party on the new plaza for the people of the diocese. Come one, come all!

October 13-15

Clergy Conference, Techny Towers
A time of fellowship and refreshment for the clergy of the diocese

November 1

ECCS Bishop’s Ball, Sheraton Aqua Blu
Celebrate the life-changing ministries of Episcopal Charities at the Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel.

November 22-23

Diocesan Convention, Westin Lombard Yorktown Center
Business meeting, workshops, children’s programs, exhibits. The family reunion of the Diocese of Chicago

DESHAZIER PHOTO BY VINCENT JOHNSON; BISHOP LEE PHOTO BY BRIAN J. MOROWCZYNSKI



The Rev. Peg Williams, rector of Grace Church, Sterling, was once its senior warden and knew the parish was ready for a change. She's seen a surge in the parish's energy level thanks to Thrive.

Thrive Revives

PROGRAM BREATHES NEW LIFE
INTO RECEPTIVE CONGREGATIONS

By Lu Stanton León

It might be an exaggeration to refer to the diocese's Thrive program as spiritual CPR, but there's growing evidence that it is breathing new life into participating parishes.

"This program has given us an infusion of energy and optimism and a real hope that we're going to figure out our focus and move forward in a way that feeds people," said the Rev. Peg Williams, rector of Grace Episcopal Church, Sterling. "Everybody is just ready to soar."

Twenty congregations are participating in the diocesan-sponsored, two-year church revitalization project, which got underway in January 2013. Here's a look at how the program is shaping up in three of those parishes.

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH [STERLING]

Since Peg Williams became a member of Grace Episcopal in 1989, she has served as a vestry member, senior warden, lay reader, Lay Eucharistic Minister, teacher, and lay preacher. In January 2013 she was ordained a priest and immediately

installed as rector at Grace. She knows the parish inside and out, and she knew it needed help.

The church averages more than 30 people in the pews on Sundays, but for a while it was struggling to get even 20. Williams said the parish had gone through the life cycles many established churches have faced as the economy and surrounding communities change.

"Over the years we have greyed, and our congregation is made up of predominately retired people," she said. "We have some younger adults who are working and who are energetic, but they are certainly outnumbered. We had a lack of energy to do the programs we'd like to see and a lack of resources to give as much as we once did."

But, she said, thanks to the parish's involvement in Thrive and the diocesan support provided in the program, their situation is changing.

"We have been knocked out by the number of people from the diocese who come and help us," Williams said. "It has put new energy in us. It is just fabulous. It is very affirming to know that people are excited for you and think that you are

“We have been knocked out by the number of people from the diocese who come and help us.”

— Peg Williams



The Rev. Jose Arroyo, vicar of Sagrada Familia, says Thrive is helping to knit together a small English-speaking congregation and a larger congregation that worships in Spanish.

headed in good directions. They are a support system. Really, they're a bunch of cheerleaders.”

Twenty-eight churches applied to be part of the Thrive program, a learning initiative to bring together clergy and lay leaders who want to strengthen the overall life and health of their congregations. Why was Grace one of the parishes chosen to participate?

“Grace was ready to move, ready to do something, and with a change in leadership, we had the opportunity to do it,” Williams said. “When we applied we said we are on the cusp of being able to do something inspired.”

Williams said she is already seeing results, both in how the parish views itself and its energy level.

“As part of the Thrive program, they asked us to envision a program or a focus for what we wanted to do as a parish, to envision what the community right around us needed. It was astonishing to me how quickly our little Thrive team from Grace considered all the things we had wanted to do but struggled with in the past. We felt bad that we weren't helping with formation with children and making connections in the community, although we've made efforts in the past.

“We immediately thought of a kids' program to provide parents in the community with a night out. We plan to feed the children, do activities, lessons and worship, maybe from after school until the evening. It will help form children and hopefully meet the needs of parents in the community who rarely get a night off.

“So we're going to do Sunday school on Friday night!”

Williams said her congregation had 100 percent

participation in a survey required by Thrive that helps identify a congregation's priorities.

“We were surprised that members said that their very top priority was to deepen our sense of connection to God and one another through stronger worship experience. And we've started making some inroads on that. We now have a Saturday morning spirituality group that we've never had before, and people seem to love it. We're trying to build spiritual networks.

“We just keep pushing our own little envelope that way. It seems to be the food that we want and need.”

SAGRADA FAMILIA [LAKE VILLA]

Sagrada Familia is a mission church that considers itself one congregation with two services. About 15 people attend the English-speaking service on Sunday mornings, and about 150 attend the Spanish service in the evening. The Rev. José Arroyo and warden Melanie Bryant said they are hopeful that Thrive will help members of the two services see that they are, in fact, one.

“We have worked very hard over the past three years to have everyone feel that this is one family, not two congregations sharing a building,” Bryant said. “We've made great strides. Our bishop's committee is made up of members of both services. We are a mission. This year I have a co-warden who is a member of the Spanish congregation and he is originally from Haiti, so we have people who speak English, Spanish and French.”

Arroyo was installed as vicar of Sagrada Familia three



years ago and “has been a major part of us being able to become the two-in-one congregation,” Bryant said.

Arroyo described the mission as a work in progress that he hopes will benefit from Thrive. Although the program hasn't yet resulted in any action items for the parish, Arroyo said it has provided a lot of food for thought and insights into the character of the parish.

“We first have to take a look at the tradition of our people, who normally come to church, participate in the sacraments and go home,” Arroyo said. “But this program provides an opportunity for them to integrate and become more involved with the church.”

Because many of those who attend the Spanish-speaking service come from a Roman Catholic tradition, they are not accustomed to taking an active role in the life of the church, Arroyo said. Thrive is helping to open their eyes to new possibilities.

“They are beginning to see that they are a family,” he said. “This Thrive program is helping them see that even more so.”

Arroyo said that even though the Spanish-speaking service is normally over by about 6 p.m. on Sundays, “sometimes it is 9 or 9:30 and families are still networking, talking. They don't want to leave.”

He said the leadership at Sagrada Familia is still digesting all the possibilities presented by the Thrive program.

“We need to develop a new mission for our congregation, and that mission is everyone's responsibility,” Arroyo said, “not just the bishop's committee or the priest. We want an active congregation that makes its own history.”

ST. JAMES THE LESS [NORTHFIELD]

Lisa Senuta arrived as rector of St. James the Less in January 2012, on the heels of a series of transitions. Before her arrival the parish had an



extended period with a part-time interim rector, preceded by a rector who stayed for six years, preceded by a rector who stayed for six months.

Not unexpectedly, they had experienced a decline in members and in pledges.

“Before I arrived, the parish had taken the CAT (Church Assessment Tool) survey, which the diocese encourages parishes to take when they are in transition,” Senuta said. “It gauges your energy and satisfaction around church. We tested out as very low in satisfaction and very low in energy.”

Senuta said she went over those scores with Susan Czolgosz, the diocese's associate for congregational vitality and transitions, and concluded that the survey was a true mirror of the parish.

“I'm a high energy, passionate, joyful person, thanks be to God,” she said. “Since I have arrived we feel more energized on Sundays, but what we noticed is that the feeling has not changed the structure, and the structure is tired. There's a sense that we are geared for maintenance rather than mission. The same people have been doing all the work for a long time.”

And without a mission focus, that work can become draining.

“Sometime we're burnt out not because we're doing too much but because we are not connected with the meaningfulness of what we are doing.”

The Thrive program was like an answer to a prayer.

“We want to grow in spiritual depth, in size and in the number of younger people, but the structure is not set up for that,” Senuta said. “It is set up to keep the ministries we have going by the skin of their teeth. The survey results describe our congregation as a turnaround parish. In other words, it's going to take energy and change in mission and vision in order to move to the goal, which is an energized church.”

Senuta has been impressed with the diocesan commitment to the

“The diocese is just pouring its resources out into the parishes, which has been a great help to us at St. James.”

— *Lisa Senuta*



The Rev. Lisa Senuta, rector of St. James the Less, Northfield, has loved sitting with the people of her parish “when they are excited and laughing and thinking about how to help the church.”

Thrive program.

“The diocese is just pouring its resources out into the parishes, which has been a great help to us at St. James,” she said. “They are in concert with my own vision for the church, which is to reenergize, to help us be creative, to become the leaders we need to be—not just to survive but to thrive, which is the word they use.”

The Thrive retreats, Senuta said, have had a profound impact.

“I can’t tell you how powerful it is,” she said. “I’ve never sat with my lay people in a setting like this where they are excited and laughing and thinking about how to help the church.”

“The fierce conversation part is really empowering to a congregation, which always wants to be nice,” she said, referring to a part of the Thrive curriculum that teaches leaders to have difficult conversations using a model developed by Fierce, Inc. “They have to sit beside these people every week,” she added. “But the reality is, there is no way to be a community without conflict. The whole Thrive thing is that you need to have positive conflict and say what you really think.”

Senuta and the three other members of St. James’ Thrive team are strategizing how best to bring what they’ve learned to the entire parish.

“As a whole parish I think we’re still working on

buy-in,” she said. “The vestry is in the desert, trying to figure out what our strategy is going to be to get to this new vision and mission.”

“The ideal outcome would be that the parish goes through an all-parish experience of thinking about what our resources are, what our environment is where we do ministry, what the needs are of that environment, and what our own needs are if we are to grow in our relationship with God.”

St. James the Less has about 100 worshipers on Sundays now and is seeing some new growth. The challenge for the parish, as well as all other parishes participating in the Thrive program, is not only to energize members but also to equip them to become the church that God calls them to be.

“We are all in the same boat in trying to figure out how to move creatively into the future,” Senuta said. “We’re all asking the same questions. That’s why I felt called here. I felt St. James was very good at taking care of their church but they felt completely ill-equipped to ask and answer the big question: How can we be a place where we can grow?” ✙



Charles Allen of St. Andrew’s, Chicago shows off his handiwork. Lisa Senuta and her team look ahead.



The Rev. Dr. Scott Stoner, founder of Living Compass, at a recent retreat for clergy spouses and partners. He says Jesus was a healer, but the church is uncomfortable with healing and wholeness.

LIVING COMPASS

A path to holy wholeness

By Jim Naughton



When he was rector of St. Christopher's Church in River Hills, Wisconsin, the Rev. Dr. Scott Stoner led Bible studies. At least he called them Bible studies. What he learned from repeated experience was that people used the first hour of their time together "checking in" and only the last 15 minutes talking about the scriptures.

The lesson Stoner drew from this was not that people didn't like the Bible, but that they liked, and needed, to talk to one another. "They probably wouldn't have come if you called it a wholeness and wellness group," Stoner says, "but that is what many Bible studies and adult formation groups really are."

Stoner, who has a doctoral degree in pastoral psychotherapy, has been a licensed psychotherapist for more than thirty years and a priest for thirty-one. He estimates that he has spent 45,000 hours listening to people talk about what is important to them, and

he has come to three particular conclusions: that people want to change their lives for the better; that they need a group of supporters to help them make that change; and that religious congregations are the perfect settings for such groups to flourish.

Three years ago, Stoner and his wife, Holly, founded Living Compass, a comprehensive wholeness and wellness program that blends scripture, spirituality and wisdom gleaned from their work as therapists—and Holly's work as a teacher—into a seamless whole. The program, which has become popular in a hurry, is about to open up shop in the Diocese of Chicago, thanks to a gift to the diocesan capital campaign by Albert "Ab" and Nancy Nicholas, longtime supporters of Stoner's ministry.

The gift will make it possible for the diocese to turn the fifth floor of its office building at St. James Commons into a small retreat and conference center. The Nicholas Center, as it will be known, will host a variety

of programs, including Living Compass workshops, retreats and facilitator trainings. The gift also enhances the endowment of Living Compass.

Bishop Jeff Lee, whom Stoner succeeded as rector at St. Christopher's, thinks the couple's work will be a great asset to the diocese and the wider church. "To take a wellness perspective means focusing on what is healthiest and best in an individual's life, a congregation's life or a family life and building on those strengths," he says. "Living Compass is a simple, easy-to-digest, easy-to-practice set of methods for doing that, for focusing your attention on strength. It is a way of practicing Jesus' promise of abundant life. It is richly theological but in very accessible terms."

Living Compass roots its philosophy in the insights of a coaching technique known as motivational interviewing, a collaborative conversation that seeks to heighten people's desire to make constructive

equilibrium. But the core of the Living Compass experience is a small group experience, based in the parish, and tailored, as are most of Living Compass materials, for adults, parents and teens.

"In the Bible, every time we turn around, Jesus is healing," Stoner says. "But in the church we have always been a little uncomfortable with healing and wholeness. We need a system of practices. This gives people something to work with."

Living Compass evolved from the work that the Stoners were doing at Samaritan Family Wellness Center, their therapy practice in Glendale, a Milwaukee suburb. A gift from Nicholas allowed them to devote less time to seeing clients and more time to writing and speaking, and the facilitators' manuals that are the bible of Living Compass programs were born.

Edith Braeger, who has led scores of parenting programs for Living Compass, says the programs work because the Stoners'

"Living Compass is a simple, easy-to-digest set of methods for practicing Jesus' promise of abundant life."

changes in their lives by focusing on their strengths.

"It always fit for me theologically because I already believe that there is a spark of divinity in all of us who desire to orient our lives toward God," Stoner says. "We have been given our wholeness through our baptism. This is about responding to that gift. This is not 'Ten Steps to a Better You.' It is really a spiritual formation program."

Living Compass begins by helping people assess themselves and determine in what areas and to what degree their lives are out of balance. The Stoners have developed assessments that are available on the Living Compass website (livingcompass.org) for assessing one's balance in the areas of spirituality, rest and play, handling emotions, relationships, care for the body, stress resiliency, work or school life, and self-organization.

The assessments, iPhone, iPad and Android apps, booklets of seasonal devotions, bulletin inserts and Stoner's column, a "Weekly Word of Wellness," serve as a no-risk, no-commitment introduction to Living Compass and its thinking. Educational workshops deepen participants' understanding of the ways in which their lives can get out of balance and offer steps they can take to regain their

curricula helps the members of small groups strike the proper blend of support and accountability. "The steps that Scott and Holly have laid out get them organized and motivated and setting goals," she says. "It actually puts a plan into action instead of having everybody just sit around and talk."

Braeger, who is director of operations and a professional coach for Living Compass, has led programs in a variety of settings, but she especially enjoys working within the church. "It is so much deeper and more meaningful," she says. "People in the church groups don't have as much of a wall up. They aren't as guarded. They are more likely to help each other because there is a community there."

The relationship between congregations and the Living Compass programs is reciprocal, with each feeding the other, says the Rev. Gary Manning, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, where the first Living Compass groups were held in 2010.

"You know what parish life is like," says Manning, who now manages Living Compass' Facebook and Twitter accounts. "You stand around the coffee pot with the same people for years and you talk about the same things. You talk about the kids, the weather, the sports team or the dog. The thing that makes Living Compass



different is that it is about setting the stage for people to have authentic conversations.... I have witnessed people getting converted doing conversation. They are changed as a result of a conversation."

The Rev. Tom Purdy, rector of Christ Church Frederica on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, first encountered Living Compass in the exhibit hall at the 2012 General Convention in Indianapolis and was impressed. "I liked that there was a program rooted in scripture and tradition that understood that our beings were made up of all these elements we find on the compass: heart and mind and strength and soul," he says.

"There is a disconnect for a lot of people, including me, about how all of that fits together. Living Compass really paints a picture for people about where the weak places might be in their lives."

Purdy tried all three of the programs—for adults, parents and teens—at his former parish, St. Peter's Church in Poolesville, Maryland, and found that it helped make friends of people who had been attended church together for years, but barely spoke.

Stories like Purdy's make Holly Stoner especially happy. She believes that Living Compass is valuable not only as a health and wellness program but as a means of evangelism, a way of letting people

know that the church cares about them and their struggles to raise healthy children and lead good lives.

"I get excited about the possibility of having churches be centers of support for folks, places where people can really have honest conversations about how they live their lives," says Stoner, who became a therapist so she could better help people with the kinds of problems that her students brought to her during her years as a teacher.

"Lots of parents feel really isolated, and the idea that a church could be the place where people could turn for real honest-to-goodness community seems to me a hopeful thing for the church," she says. "I think that that would be attractive to people. People will want to go there because the church has something that they are hungry for."

Living Compass will maintain its headquarters in suburban Milwaukee, but if renovations go as planned, the Stoners and their associates will also be in residence at St. James Commons in 2014. Scott Stoner, who attended Seabury and was ordained at St. Matthew's, Evanston, is already spending time in the diocese every week and fielding questions from parishes interested in Living Compass. Learn more about Living Compass at livingcompass.org. ✚



CROSSwalk

Grieve. Pray. Organize. Advocate.

By Jim Naughton

On the newly renovated plaza at St. James Commons they gathered in the cold. A thousand people bundled in coats, gloved, some carrying tall wooden crosses, some holding photographs of murdered love ones, most wearing the number 806 to commemorate each of the young people who have been murdered in Chicago since 2008.

CROSSwalk2, as it was known on Twitter, unfolded on the night of March 22, a four-mile procession of pain, remembrance, hope and, just possibly, commitment. It began in the heart of the city's restaurant and entertainment district, stopped at Daley Plaza, wove through The Loop and ended on the lawn at Stroger Hospital, where so many of the young people who are shot in Chicago each year come to be healed, or to die.

At St. James Commons, the crowd heard Steve Pike, of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Chicago, talk about his son Ricky who was shot to death in 2012. Ricky was neither a child of privilege nor a child of want, his father said. Ricky was the child whose death made it clear that gun violence could shatter any family.

At Old St. Pat's, they heard the Rev. Tom Hurley speak about how a parishioner had challenged him to stop politicizing the Eucharist by preaching on gun violence, and how the priest had responded that perhaps they should talk this over at the grave of Hurley's murdered sister.

And before they left the Roman Catholic parish

that has been among CROSSwalk's most ardent supporters, they heard 11-year-old Julian Roman-Nunez describe what it was like in his house the night his parents got the call saying his brother Manny had been shot, and what it has been like since that night, and how, as a fifth-grader, he feels the need to act as a role model for Manny's children.

Finally, on the lawn at the hospital, in front of the looming façade of the old Cook County General Hospital, they heard Bishop Jeff Lee urge them to be "agents of Easter," to continue their work against gun violence, to bring life out of death.

It may not be immediately obvious how an annual liturgy—an evening of prayer, reflection and remembrance—contributes to reducing the violence that besets Chicago and other cities and towns in the diocese, but ask around and you hear people speak of healing, or solidarity, of raising the awareness necessary to mobilize people to take action.

"Each time I hear these stories, I am shredded all over again," says the Rev. Bonnie Perry, of All Saints', which had some 150 people in the procession. "It makes you realize that we are walking on holy ground when we tell the story of someone's death. So in part, this is public memorial and public lament, and there's a need for that."

"The walk sets up a tone of remembrance," says Mark Walsh, campaign director of the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, who works closely with the diocese on CROSSwalk. "It helps people



The Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, the diocese's director of networking, speaks to the CROSSwalk crowd at Daley Plaza in the midst of a chilly four-mile pilgrimage against gun violence.

focus on the fact that it is not just a number of people who are killed. It is actual people. It puts a face on that.

“It speaks to the fact that we don’t live in isolation,” says the Rev. Deacon M.J. Leewis-Kirk of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, La Grange. We live together as the people of God and we really have to look after each other.”

“There were three or four families of victims I spoke to along the way, and they were just happy to have a vehicle to express their sorrow over losing a loved one, said Beth Marek, director of community and global outreach at Old St. Pat’s.

Few people have done as much thinking about the strengths and limitations of CROSSwalk’s annual procession as Bishop Lee.

“The thing that CROSSwalk is doing well is what the Episcopal Church does well: liturgy—public prayerful witness,” he says. “But the structure on which that liturgy rests is the careful work of organizing and collaborating with people across the city, many of whom have been at this work a lot longer than we have.”

Most Episcopalians do not live in neighborhoods with soaring murder rates, but that is precisely why church members must work for sensible gun laws and help to ameliorate the conditions that breed a culture of violence.

“Until people of privilege get outraged about this, we won’t have the political and corporate will we need to make systemic change,” Lee says. “We need to offer the particular capacity of the Episcopal Church to bridge boundaries of class and race and privilege to this effort.

“In the 1960s, St. James Cathedral was the place where Martin Luther King met with Mayor Daley. In that very tense time, ripe with the

“Until people of privilege get outraged about this, we won’t have the political and corporate will we need to make systemic change.”

potential for violence, the cathedral was the place that King thought was safe enough to have that meeting. I’d like to translate that into terms that matter today.”

CROSSwalk, its organizers say, has reached a turning point. Former director Jack Clark, who has left to pursue ordination to the priesthood, spent the year between the first and second public processions building up CROSSwalk’s relationships with organizations that work for sensible gun laws and provide programming for young people. The time is ripe to build on that work.

“If putting on an event is all we plan to do, we may as well stay home,” says the Rev. Carol Reese, violence prevention coordinator at Stroger. “Our credibility will be diminished if we don’t find some real, tangible ways to engage these issues on the street and if we aren’t able to point to some accomplishments.”

Participants in CROSSwalk2 were asked to make at least one of three commitments: to travel to Springfield and lobby the state legislature for stricter gun laws; to take part in a citywide week of service; and to provide summer employment for young people.

“We have more commitments [to take action] than we did last year,” Perry says, in part because this year participants could text their responses to CROSSwalk’s requests.

“Now what we need is for people to do some of the volunteering and for us to get a small pilot project of jobs,” she adds. “What we need is to build the on-ramps for people of affluence and influence to get connected. And we need to say that this is what being an Episcopalian in the Diocese of Chicago means.”

Youth Guidance’s program B.A.M. (Becoming A Man™) is one way of preventing violence that CROSSwalk leaders would like even more Episcopalians to support. The agency, which serves more than 14,000 at-risk youth in Chicago each year, counts Episcopal Charities and Community Services among its nearly 40 funding partners. Through B.A.M., it provides counseling, mentoring, violence prevention and educational enrichment to young men in the hope of stopping violence by providing them with a brighter future.

According to a 2012 University of Chicago Crime Lab Study, B.A.M. is working. Participants had a 10 percent increase in graduation rates, a 37 percent reduction in failing grades, and a 44 percent decrease in violent crime arrests.

Reese has also seen the fruits of the diocese’s labor against gun violence at Stroger. “One of the concrete accomplishments of last year’s walk was that I now finally have four pastoral care volunteers who signed up to offer additional support for our unit during the spring and summer months, which are more intense. When there is a specific thing to do, there have been people out there willing to do it.”

The success of CROSSwalk, and, in some measure, the future of many young people in Chicago, depends on sustaining this effort. The religious community is only one of the many actors in the campaign to reduce gun violence, but it plays an essential role.

As Walsh puts it: “We’ve never had a successful social justice movement in this country that didn’t have a faith component.” ✚



Cultivating Spanish-speaking Ministries

BY LU STANTON LEÓN

“We’re not a well-kept secret anymore.”

If you described the Rev. Victor Conrado as a door-to-door salesman in the neighborhood surrounding St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Glen Ellyn, you wouldn’t be far off the mark.

It’s not unusual to see him out pounding the pavement, promoting the Diocese of Chicago’s newest Hispanic congregation and its multiple ministries at St. Mark’s. And he is good at it. The congregation has almost doubled in size since its first service in December 2011.

Some 20 miles away at the Church of the Redeemer in Elgin, where Hispanics make up 43 percent of the population, the Spanish-speaking congregation has grown ten-fold over the past 15 years, said lay leader Martin Saldaña, and its Sunday attendance now outnumbers the English-speaking congregation by about six-to-one.

Apparently the word is out: Exciting things are happening in the diocese’s nine Spanish-speaking congregations, thanks, in part, to the dedicated service and leadership of people such as Saldaña and Conrado.

“We’re not a well-kept secret anymore,” said the Rev. Alvaro Araica, who holds an MDiv and a DMin from Seabury and is the Bishop’s

Associate for Hispanic Ministry. He noted there are between 2500 and 3000 members in the Diocese of Chicago’s Hispanic congregations.

“Our bishop and diocesan staff are very supportive of our Hispanic congregations,” said Araica, who also serves as the vicar at Cristo Rey and Nuestra Señora de las Americas, both congregations in the city of Chicago. “I have been here for 20 years, but it isn’t until now that I see how important our ministry is. This diocese is committed to developing good clergy and lay leadership in the Hispanic congregations.”

Here’s a look at how the clergy and lay leadership in two of the diocese’s Spanish-speaking congregations are spreading the Gospel and meeting the needs of a growing Hispanic population.

ST. MARK’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH [GLEN ELLYN]

The Rev. Victor Conrado arrived at St. Mark’s in October 2011, just two months before the launch of that parish’s Hispanic congregation. In a year and a half, the Spanish service has grown from about 80 people to more than 130 on Sundays and swelled to 350 for the Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration on December 12, 2012.





Festivities during and after the Eucharist in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Mark's Glen Ellyn. Opposite lower right: Martin Saldaña of El Redentor (Church of the Redeemer, Elgin).

“I’ve been going to malls, restaurants, businesses, apartment buildings ... Sometimes people give me the chance to talk to them.”

In addition to the Spanish services, St. Mark’s offers English as a Second Language classes and a legal clinic focusing on family and immigration issues, offered in Spanish every third Sunday of the month. Thanks to the initiative of the rector, the Rev. George Smith, the parish recently began offering Spanish classes for English speakers.

“The English-speaking parishioners at St. Mark’s have been very welcoming to the Latino, Spanish-speaking members,” Conrado said. “That welcoming part is so important.”

Another factor in the growth of the Spanish-speaking congregation has been St. Mark’s seven-year relationship with its companion parish, San Marcos in Nigromante, in the Diocese of Southeast Mexico, Conrado said.

“Also, we have reached out to the community,” he added. “I’ve been going to shopping malls, restaurants, businesses, apartment buildings. I go hand out flyers, and sometimes people give me the chance to talk to them and invite them to come. I’ve been studying the area as well, doing research on demographics on where the Hispanic people live, and I do a lot of one-on-one meetings and family visitations.”

Another important element, Conrado said, is the creation of *el convivio*,

a coffee hour or light lunch in which congregants prepare their native food. That gathering time is offered after the 1 p.m. Spanish service.

“Sunday we ask someone to volunteer to bring the food. We have found that it is an important time to share. Some members are from Mexico, some from Central America. They bring tacos, beans and rice, tamales, arroz con pollo—some of the families from Puerto Rico would bring that—yucca from natives of Honduras and Nicaragua. We have people from Chile as well. It shows we are not only from one country. It is a joyful time. We want to make people feel that everyone is welcome.”

Conrado said St. Mark’s has worked hard to integrate the Spanish and English congregations.

“We have a group that meets every month called The Bridge Group,” Conrado said. “It has members from the Anglo and Spanish congregations, and we meet to talk about how we can integrate. We try to find one activity a month where we can do something together. I created that group to give people the sense of being members of the same congregation.”

Many in the new Hispanic congregation are Roman Catholic by tradition, Conrado said, but some were refused sacraments in that church

either because they were divorced or not married. Some of them did not feel welcome because of their sexual orientation. When they visited St. Mark’s, they felt they belonged.

“The turning point for some people is that they have a place where they can celebrate the important moments of life, the baptisms, the weddings and the funerals.”

Conrado can certainly understand the religious backgrounds of his congregants. Born in Colombia, Conrado was raised as a Roman Catholic and has a sister who is a nun. He became a Roman Catholic missionary priest in 2001 and worked for 11 years in Kenya. He holds a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from St. Bonaventure University in Colombia and a masters in divinity from the Jesuit School of Theology in Nairobi. He was received as an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Chicago in 2011. He is married to Lucia Conrado, who is the manager of finance and operations at St. James Cathedral.

As part of his ministry, Conrado is teaching his congregation about the importance of stewardship and pledging, which was not part of most of the congregants’ traditions. In addition to support from St. Mark’s, the congregation receives financial support from the Congregations



Commission of the Diocese of Chicago, the Lilly Endowment, and from some other parishes in the Aurora Deanery.

Conrado said that as the Spanish congregation continues to grow, St. Mark's is beginning to train Hispanic members about service on the vestry and is studying the best way to reach young people.

"The young population we have here is pretty much bilingual. I would say the children, ages 6 or 7 to 10 or 11, they are having more difficulties communicating in Spanish, but now they are reconnecting with that. Our teachers are bilingual, and they are helping the youth get comfortable with Spanish. Some of the people have problems with writing and reading Spanish, but the speaking is good."

EL REDENTOR — CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER [ELGIN]

When Martín Saldaña first attended Redeemer in 1997, he was one of about 20 Hispanics in the congregation. He and his wife, Elsie, had been invited to attend a baptism that Saturday. The Saldañas have been members ever since, and they've seen the congregation grow to about 290 members every Sunday.

"I felt something that day, something I hadn't felt in other churches before," said Saldaña, who is from Mexico and was raised in the Roman Catholic church. "That Saturday, my wife said why don't we go to Redeemer? We felt it was a place to grow up in the faith."

At Redeemer, Saldaña felt welcomed.

"I'd been living in Elgin since 1985. At Redeemer, people actually came and talked to me and welcomed me to the church. That was something I didn't experience at other churches. It makes a huge difference when people know that you are there and make the effort to talk to you."

Saldaña responded by throwing himself into the work of the church, and he continues to do so.

"They see us all the time in church," said Saldaña, who works as a manager at Diamond Marketing and Solutions. "My wife is administrator at the church, and I'm always there for something."

Redeemer began a ministry to the Hispanic population in 1992, a ministry that really began to bloom in 2004, when the Rev. Pedro López arrived. Lopez left in 2011, and now his brother, the Rev. Uriel López, serves as rector.

The growth of Redeemer's Spanish-speaking congregation has coincided with the growth of the Hispanic population in Elgin, which in 2010 was 45 percent Hispanic. Now on Sunday mornings there is one service in English and two in Spanish. There's also a healing service in Spanish on Wednesday nights, attended by about 30 to 50 people, Saldaña said. He said the English-speaking congregation numbers about 20 to 30 people on Sunday mornings.

Redeemer's Hispanic ministry has received financial support from the Lilly Endowment and the Diocese of Chicago, and now has an associate rector for the Spanish-speaking congregation, which has more than 115 families, 56 of which pledge.

Saldaña knows Redeemer inside out, from the liturgy to the governance to the heating system.

In 1999 he was the first Hispanic to be elected as a vestry member. Later he served as junior warden and then served as senior warden for four years.

"Now I'm back on the vestry, and half of the vestry is Spanish speaking," Saldaña said. "I have also served as an usher for many years, as a lay Eucharistic minister and as the maintenance man. Being an usher is such a blessing. You get to greet the people, welcome them to the house of God and give them a big smile. A person receives a lot when they are welcomed with a big smile and a great attitude. It sets the tone of the day."

"And being a Eucharistic minister, it's a blessing to share the cup of salvation with others. To know that God lives in me and in others through the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation is the biggest blessing you can receive."

As if that's not enough, Saldaña helps lead the Sunday adult formation classes and attends Friday night Bible study.

"I thank God every day for the gifts he has given me, the gift of reading his word and being able to share his word with others." ✚

"I felt something I hadn't felt in other churches. My wife said, 'Why don't we go to Redeemer?' We felt it was a place to grow up in the faith."

Youth and Campus Ministries Cultivate Young Christians

BY LU STANTON LEÓN

The emailed request to the chaplain at Brent House, the Episcopal Center at the University of Chicago, was straightforward. Could you suggest the names of a few young people whose lives are influenced by Episcopal Church ministry programs?

The floodgates opened.

"If I had my druthers," wrote the Rev. Stacy Alan, "I'd have you write stories on nearly every one of our students, like:

- Andrew, who won a college Jeopardy championship and has published graphic novels;
- Charlie, who teaches at a boarding school in Jordan;
- Nina, who won a Truman Scholarship and has recently converted to Judaism (which I count as a “success;” she still considers me her priest);
- Jack, who was my administrative assistant and went on to be the driving force behind CROSSwalk here in Chicago;

- Jay, who wants to become a rabbi and found God again through his involvement in our community;
- Chana, a committed atheist who wept at the “non-oppressive” nature of the prayers at our interfaith Christmas service.”

You can almost hear Alan pausing to catch her breath as she finishes writing the email. “I have the best job in the world,” she continued. “I’ll stop gushing now.”

The Diocese of Chicago is enthusiastic about the young adults involved in its many parish, diocesan and campus ministries. It appears the feeling is mutual. Here we talk to four young people, ages 17 to 28, who describe the tremendous influence church programs have had—and continue to have—on their social and spiritual lives, as well as on their career choices.



LAURA EBERLY: CAMPUS MINISTRY:
SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL FORMATIO

Laura Eberly credits Brent House with making her the person she is today.

“For five years at the University of Chicago I had the incredible privilege of participating in Brent House’s campus ministry, which remains an enormous influence on my spiritual life,” she said. “It was the community that baptized me and really formed the core of my Christian identity, and it still supports and challenges me today. As a student I served in roles ranging from peer minister to bookkeeper, and I am currently on the Board of Directors.”

Laura is a community organizer with Mercy Housing Lakefront, a supportive housing provider in Chicago. She has worked there since graduating in 2011 from U of C with a bachelor's degree in public policy and master's degree in social service administration.

Raised in a nonreligious family, Laura first fell in love with Christianity while volunteering at a school founded by the London Missionary Society in the northwest province of South Africa. She was taking a gap year between high school and college. The faith she witnessed there, the “certainty of belief,” changed her life.

But coinciding with that rock solid faith was something she didn't find appealing: a rigidity she couldn't accept, "particularly that church's views on heaven and hell and the nature of sin."

When she returned to the United States and started at U of C, Laura found the spiritual home she had been looking for at Brent House. The initial appeal was that it offered a Sunday night service and a vegetarian dinner. Its allure grew from there.

“Brent House really is the source of my spiritual formation,” Laura said. “I came back from South Africa as a passionate Christian without a lot of tools for thinking about or critiquing my new faith. The people who told me who God was were fundamentalists and had rigid rules about who God was. At Brent House it was clear to me that there was a real community there, and people were really inquisitive about their faith. Brent House is an amazing place that invites people to challenge their assumptions while accepting and reinforcing the profound value of sacred traditions and spiritual beliefs.”

In addition to Sunday evening services and dinner, Laura said Brent House is open on Wednesdays for students to hang out, do homework, and build community, and there's a Wednesday night service or educational program.

“Often times, Brent House is one of the only places on campus people feel they can go to talk openly about their religion,” she said.

Laura, who is 26-years-old, was baptized in the Episcopal Church in 2007 at the Easter Vigil at St. James Cathedral. She and her partner, Jane, live in Edgewater, where Laura attends Immanuel Lutheran Evangelical Church. She remains active in Episcopal ministries, most recently helping out with CROSSwalk.

AMY BUCKLER: COMFORTABLE BEING A CHRISTIAN AGAIN

For a while, Amy Buckler was pretty angry with God and felt church was an institution best avoided—too rigid, too judgmental, too unreliable. Beloved priests moved on and people you loved died.

Laura Eberly, left found a spiritual home at Brent House at the University of Chicago, where the Rev. Stacy Alan, right, is chaplain. Participating in Brent House's ministry was "an incredible privilege," Eberly says.



Growing up in Texas, she attended Unity of Houston, whose principles include that God is the source and creator of all, and that Jesus Christ, while divine, “is our great example, not the great exception.”

When she was 12 her family moved to a small town in southern Illinois. Amy found that her religious views weren’t accepted.

“Christianity meant something very different there,” she recalled. “Most of the churches were of the fundamentalist, evangelical ilk. The fact that I believed people who were born Buddhists were not going straight to hell, it shocked them. At that time I stopped calling myself Christian because I thought if that is Christianity, then I am not a Christian.”

That all turned around when she went to college.

“I was first introduced to the Episcopal Church when I organized a panel discussion about Women and Faith while directing a production of *The Vagina Monologues* at Northwestern University,” Amy said. “I met a lesbian who was an Episcopal priest, and I thought, ‘You can be all these things and be a Christian?’ I realized the Episcopal Church was a place I could be challenged and safe. I could use my brain, and my voice could include what I felt about women’s rights and gay rights. So for the first time in a long time, I thought maybe I can call myself a Christian again.”

Amy quickly became involved with Canterbury Northwestern, the Episcopal campus ministry program. She helped develop and lead a workshop on Christian sexual ethics at Gather 2008, the national conference of Episcopalians in higher education, and officially joined the church when she was baptized at the Easter Vigil in 2009. Amy graduated from NU with a degree in theatre with a focus in directing and arts administration.

Now 25, Amy works in development with the Black Ensemble Theater in Uptown and is a company member with 20% Theatre Chicago. She is a member of St. James Cathedral, where she occasionally cantors and recently organized an Occupy art exhibition as part of her work as an artist and organizer of the Rebel Arts Collective.

Amy said she is grateful that the Diocese of Chicago recognizes that young people have a lot to offer the church.

“I think young people are searching for that community offered by the church, but now that I’m on the other side of it, I realize that so often we think of young adults as people who need to be ministered to versus recognizing how they can minister to us. It’s important for us to recognize what they can contribute. I think the life and mission of this church depend on it.”

NICK REX: FINDINGS FRIENDS IN FAITH AT HAPPENINGS, SUMMER CAMP

Nick Rex will leave behind many things when he heads off for college in the fall, but he’ll carry with him the many friendships and a strong faith developed through diocesan youth programs.

“The diocesan programs are a huge, huge part of my life, and that’s partly because of the many friends I’ve made,” Rick said. “I have made friends I hope to spend the rest of my life with. They’re from all over the Chicago area and even outside as well.

“But it’s not only because of all the friends I’ve made, Nick said. “The weekend retreats, especially the weekend of Happening, are so overwhelming emotionally. It definitely has helped deepen my faith. One of the reasons I keep going back and helping with the retreats is because I want other high school students to experience that as well.”

The Diocese of Chicago’s Happening weekends are part of a church-wide program for Christian community building. The retreats are for teenagers, presented by teenagers. Nick has represented Chicago’s Happening steering committee at national Happening weekends.

“A big part of Happening is making friends,” he said. “It’s definitely helped me grow as a person and opened up my eyes to my faith and to the world in general.”

Nick, who lives in Evanston and attended Evanston Township High School, is a lifetime member of Church of Our Saviour Lincoln Park, where he’s served as an acolyte and crucifer and currently helps serve at communion. He is active in his church’s youth group and has participated in several of his church’s mission trips to Appalachia. In addition to the Happening weekends, Nick has attended diocesan summer camps. His father, Sandy Rex, is a deacon in the diocese.

Although church was always part of his life, it wasn’t until high school that he really felt engaged with his faith.

“For a while, until I was about nine, going to church was just what we did on Sundays. In middle school I didn’t really enjoy it, but in high school, we started talking about our faith, and I enjoy listening and talking about that.”

Nick hopes to find a facsimile when he begins his collegiate career.

“Being involved with the church has definitely helped shape my life,” he said. “When I go to college, I hope to continue to be involved in something that gives me the sense of community that I’ve found in my diocese.”

JIHAN MURRAY-SMITH: FAITH SUSTAINS EPISCOPAL RENAISSANCE WOMAN

Does Jihan Murray-Smith ever sleep? When we talked to her this spring she was auditioning to host a local television show, attending the diocesan diaconate school and teaching an elementary school class in public speaking, all while continuing to own and operate Tea & Crumpets, an etiquette consulting company she founded.

Her faith, she said, undergirds all that she does.

“The church is a huge part of my life,” Jihan said. “It’s because I love God, and the church has been such a support system; it’s a loving community. God is faithful.”

A native Chicagoan, Jihan, 28, grew up attending parish and diocesan

camps and as recently as last summer worked on the diocesan camp staff.

She graduated from Fisk University in Nashville (the fifth generation in her family to do so) with a BA degree in dramatics and speech and a concentration in theater. While there, she was a member of the renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers, as was her mother in the 1970s.

“Being a person of the theatre, one thing I love about the Episcopal Church is its liturgy,” Jihan said. “Visually, it is just stunning. It is so beautiful.”

With a mother who is an actor and a father who is a director, Jihan said the Episcopal Church was a natural fit for her; she has always appreciated self-expression and is comfortable in front of a crowd. The Episcopal Church has given her those opportunities, in spades.

Since graduation, Jihan has served in almost every role imaginable at her home parish, Messiah-St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in Chicago’s Avalon Park, where her mother, Eleta Murray, is parish administrator. She taught Sunday School, was Sunday School director, served on the vestry, chaired the search committee for a new rector, and was a delegate to diocesan convention.

She also organized a Bible Olympics for the youth at her church, and she and her father organized a ball for the young people in the parish—he taught ballroom dancing and she provided the etiquette instruction. Most recently she organized a parish health fair.

Why become a deacon? It was the encouragement of others that led Jihan to explore the diaconate as an avenue of service to the church.

“When I first moved home to Chicago, I was just interested in taking a few classes in theology and had no intention of being ordained,” she said. After taking a few theology classes at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, she decided in January 2013 to give deacons school a try and found that “it really has helped strengthen my faith.”

“Archdeacon Elaine Bellis encouraged me to consider becoming a deacon,” she said. “I decided why not? Why don’t I go to school and, if I don’t like it, I can continue to serve from the pew.”

Sometimes that service can seem overwhelming, but it is what feeds her.

“I try to stay focused on God,” she said. “Being a young person, sometimes you feel—not used, but that you’re being overextended because people rely on you. Our church is an older parish, and I’m one of the youngest parishioners. I try to focus on serving. I love my church.” ✝

A Grateful, Generous Diocese

CONGREGATIONS PITCH IN AS CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

By Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows

Forty-five years ago the Diocese of Chicago came together to raise the funds necessary to build what was at the time, a modern, of-the-moment gem of a building to house the offices of the bishop and his staff and the staff of St. James Cathedral. When the Episcopal Church Center was dedicated in the fall of 1968, lay people, children and clergy from across the diocese streamed in to view their second home. Archival photos reveal the sense of pride and ownership that Episcopalians took in the glass box at 65 East Huron Street and its plaza.

This spring a renovated and once again state-of-the-art center for the offices of the Diocese of Chicago will open to the world. And once again, the project—now called St. James Commons—is being made possible by the support of Episcopalians from across the diocese. The Campaign for St. James Commons enjoyed early success because of the unprecedented generosity of individuals. Now, as the effort enters its second phase, congregations from Northfield, Glen Ellyn, Chicago, Hinsdale, Barrington and Winnetka are finding creative ways to participate.

Christ Church in Winnetka chose to participate in the Campaign because they are excited about new opportunities for mission and vitality across the diocese. Their rector, the Rev. Christopher Powell, has made a pledge to the Campaign and encouraged many in his parish to join him because he believes in the project. “The Episcopal Church has played a central role in forming and shaping the person I have become, and I’m so

It is the right time for this to happen and the right leadership; that’s when a lot of people are willing to step forward.

grateful,” says Powell. Longtime Christ Church member and leader Withrow Meeker adds, “It is the right time for this to happen and the right leadership; that’s when a lot of people are willing to step forward. It’s the energy that comes with that proper leadership, and the energy is felt through Bishop Jeff Lee.”

Likewise, in Northfield, several members of St. James the Less Episcopal Church have committed their support to the campaign and are inviting others to join them. Like many parishes, the members of St. James want to be good stewards of the resources needed for congregational life but see the advantages of ensuring the success of diocesan projects like St. James Commons. “The benefits are huge,” says the Rev. Lisa Senuta. “I have already experienced our diocese’s hospitality through Fresh Start, and I know that having a public Episcopal welcoming space in



the heart of the city sets a tone for all our churches to follow suit.”

Several parishes are showing their support and enthusiasm for the project by signing up to use space in St. James Commons. The Great Hall is hosting retreats for the vestries of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church on Belmont in Chicago and Emmanuel Episcopal Church in La-Grange, while St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Glen Ellyn has brought several members to Chicago for a tour and evening prayer. They also plan to bring their youth back for a Nightwatch faith exploration overnight retreat at the Commons. “St. James Commons was a good space for conversation and meeting,” said the Rev. LaRae Rutenbar, rector of Emmanuel. “It was convenient and just perfect for our group of 14

members.”

On Sunday afternoon, September 15, every member of every congregation in the diocese, along with their families and friends, are invited to St. James Commons to celebrate a new phase in the life of the building and the diocese. The event, which will include worship, music and food, will be an opportunity to celebrate what we have done together to make St. James Commons a place of grace and gladness for all. ✚

To learn more about how you and your congregation can join the Campaign for St. James Commons, please contact the Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows at 312-751-3577 or jbburrows@episcopalchicago.org.

Supporting Congregations

New phase of
campaign focuses on
local opportunities

In 2011, the Diocese of Chicago launched The Campaign for St. James Commons to undertake \$12 million in significant and essential renovations to its diocesan center, located at 65 East Huron. A 2010 feasibility study indicated that the diocese could raise \$8 million, and in what trustees determined was an act of faithful stewardship, the trustees of the diocese financed the balance of the renovation costs from diocesan assets.

The Campaign's leaders have been surprised and overwhelmed by the generosity of Episcopalians from across the diocese and beyond. In January 2013, the diocese met its \$8 million campaign goal ahead of schedule.

Now the campaign is working to raise \$4 million that will spread this extraordinary generosity across the diocese by paying back the trustees' loan and, by doing so, increase the income available to support programs and initiatives that foster vital congregations across the diocese. "The trustees' early money allowed us to complete the entire \$12 million project on time and on budget. Now, returning these funds to the trustees' investments will restore the income available to do God's work across our region," says Bishop Jeff Lee.

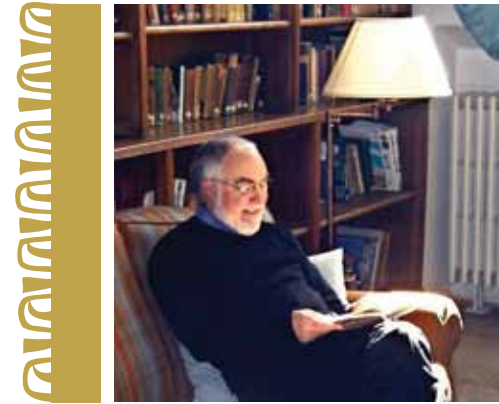
Campaign gifts made now will allow Bishop Lee and his staff to continue identifying congregations that are hearing God's call to new ministry and responding with sustainable plans that need support to succeed. Each year, the diocese makes available about \$700,000 for emergency building needs and vitality grants. Recent grants have supported a suburban parish that needed seed money to reach Spanish-speaking neighbors and a mission on Chicago's West Side that has reached out to its neighborhood to create a Gospel choir and a theater program. "Some of the congregations who benefit from vitality grants have long histories, while others are new missions in growing neighborhoods," says the Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, director of networking for the diocese. "Some are moving to become self-sustaining, and others are faithful communities discerning how best to minister as small churches. In all of them, God is working with faithful Episcopalians."

The newly renovated St. James Commons serves as home base for this transformative work of creating and supporting



vital Episcopal congregations across northern Illinois, explains Baskerville-Burrows. "Now we have a place to gather leaders from across the diocese to share ideas, create networks, and foster collaboration. Investing in the Commons is truly an investment in the vitality of the Episcopal Church across northern Illinois."

Gifts to the Campaign can be commemorated in the accessible, environmentally responsible building that has brought the Episcopal Church out into the downtown Chicago streetscape. A list of naming opportunities—including portions of the welcome center, classrooms, and other public spaces that host public events, feeding programs, and meetings of leaders from across the diocese—is available upon request. ✚



C. Christopher Epting

Emergent Ecumenism

Toward the end of my tenure as the Presiding Bishop's deputy for ecumenical and interfaith relations, I became interested in something called the emergent (or emerging) church. At first this was a loose association of largely young, post-evangelicals who were seeking to understand what Christianity might begin to look like in the post-modern world. Since then, the conversation has widened to include people of all ages and some of us from the so-called "mainline" denominations as well. Hence, there are now "Angli-mergents," "Presby-mergents," "Luther-mergents," etc.

This is not so much an attempt to start a new church (God knows there have been enough of those!), but an ongoing conversation about what the Holy Spirit may be up to in the 21st century church and where we may be headed. A loose association called Emergent Village provides ways and means for the conversation to continue—you can find out more and get involved at emergentvillage.com and at the group's new blog on Patheos.

Emergent Village members, in the spirit of a religious order, have four common values as their rule: 1. Commitment to God in the Way of Jesus; 2. Commitment to the Church in all its Forms; 3. Commitment to God's World; 4. Commitment to One Another.

I am particularly heartened by Emergent Village's explanation of their second common value, which articulates emergent ecumenism as well as anything I have seen:

We are committed to honor and serve the church in all its forms – Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Anabaptist. We practice "deep ecclesiology" – rather than favoring some forms of the church and critiquing or rejecting others, we see that every form of the church has both weaknesses and strengths, both liabilities and potential.

We believe the rampant injustice and sin in our world require the sincere, collaborative, and whole-hearted response of all Christians in all denominations, from the most historic and hierarchical, through the mid-range of local and congregational churches, to the most spontaneous and informal expressions. We affirm both the value of strengthening, renewing, and transitioning existing churches and organizations, and the need for planting, resourcing, and coaching new ones of many kinds.

We seek to be irenic and inclusive of all our Christian sisters

and brothers, rather than elitist and critical. We own the many failures of the church as our failures, which humble us and call us to repentance, and we also celebrate the many heroes and virtues of the church, which inspires us and gives us hope.

My experience in hanging out with some of these "emergents" is that they are not particularly interested in re-hashing 16th century Reformation arguments, many of which led up to the splintering of the church catholic. They are not interested in converting one another to the other person's ecclesiastical point of view. Rather, they are committed to deep listening to one another, to learning from each other's tradition and experience, to honoring those traditions and experiences, and to getting on with the practice of mission and the proclamation of the reign of God together.

And, increasingly I ask myself: I wonder if the Holy Spirit has trumped many of our old-style attempts to unify the Church and is leading us all well beyond our concern for institutional mergers (which Frank Griswold used to call "ecclesiastical joinery!"), or even full communion agreements, and is leading us into a much more exciting future? I hope so. What about you? ✚



Bishop Chris Epting's new novel, *John Mark*, is the result of his years of studying the Gospel of Mark. In the book, Epting incorporates his experiences studying in Israel and Palestine and reading modern scholarship about the society in which Jesus lived and the politics of his day. Order *John Mark* online at redmoonpublications.com.

"My hope is that John Mark may be put into the hands of seekers and others who may gain access into the person of Jesus in somewhat different ways than seem available to them initially through the words of the canonical gospels," says Epting. "Obviously, I hope that may in turn drive them into the New Testament itself (hopefully in a good, modern translation) to engage this journey further."

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