



# Idaho Messenger

July 2009

[www.episcopalidaho.org](http://www.episcopalidaho.org)

## Nora Gallagher at St. Thomas

St. Thomas Church, Sun Valley, is pleased to announce that Nora Gallagher, prominent author, compelling speaker, and active Episcopalian, will be the Scholar in Residence at St. Thomas Episcopal Church on July 17-19.

Nora has written two memoirs: *Things Seen and Unseen: A Year Lived in Faith* and *Practicing Resurrection: A Memoir of Work, Doubt, Discernment, and Moments of Grace*. *Practicing Resurrection* was a finalist for the BeliefNet Book of the Year Award. She has also written a novel, *Changing Light*, which has received outstanding reviews. Her forthcoming book, *The Sacred Meal*, is part of series on ancient

Christian practices (October, 2009). In the style of memoir and personal reflection, she explores the beauty and mystery of Communion and why it is a Christian practice.

Gallagher has led workshops at numerous universities and churches throughout the United States and is currently the preacher-in-residence at Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara. She is also a featured speaker at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church on July 8-17 in Anaheim, California. She lives with her husband, the novelist and poet Vincent Stanley, in Santa Barbara and New York.

*Leaving "Christianity" to Follow Jesus* is the title of her presentation Friday at 8 p.m. On Saturday, she will present a workshop, *A Map of Faith for the 21st Century*. For tickets and additional information, please call 208-726-5349, ext. 20 or go to [www.stthomassunvalley.org](http://www.stthomassunvalley.org).



Photo by Sigrid Estrada

We are one in baptism; our call to discipleship; to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world.

We are a worshipping community, a people who discover our identity in relating to God, one another, and the creation.

We are a learning, teaching community, focused on the Good News.

We are a serving community, Welcoming and inviting all.

## Paradise Point Staff Ready for Summer!



Paradise Point staff and leaders are pleased to announce that not only is the staff ready and waiting to welcome campers, but the kitchen and dining hall are also completely renewed and refurbished.

This renovation was made possible by many generous gifts and helping hands from throughout the diocese. According to Jes Benson, executive director, it marks a great beginning to an amazing summer.

## Choral Rendezvous Celebrates 15 Years

On July 15-19, all those who love to sing in the mountains, will gather for the 15th year of Choral Rendezvous. This ecumenical ministry sponsored by St. Phillip's Church, Challis and the Diocese of Idaho, gathers singers and musicians from far and wide for fellowship, fun, and choral excellence. The event includes a youth component, a river float trip and dinner, and several concerts.

This year's director is Mark Lawlor. Before his current position at the Oklahoma State Music Department, Lawlor was director of choral activities at Idaho State University. At one time he was the choral conductor at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Information about this event is available at your church office or at [www.choralrendezvous.org](http://www.choralrendezvous.org). Registration is \$185 and scholarships are available.



## I want you to know how I will be voting.

The 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church will begin soon in Anaheim. This ten-day event, occurring every three years, is the primary expression of our Church's commitment to ministry in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In its business portion, the triennial budget for the Church will be calculated and set. In its legislative portion, the Houses of Deputies and Bishops will formulate responses to the liturgical, educational, social, environmental, and ecclesiastical necessities of the mission of the Episcopal Church.

One of the necessities of this mission, I believe, is the full inclusion of all the Church's members in the sacraments of the

Church. Many resolutions at General Convention will address different portions of this issue. In particular, however, I want you to know that I will be supporting resolutions that will lead the Church to support the committed relationships of two persons, regardless of gender. I have come to this commitment over time, not

*First notes... Reflections by the Bishop*

as a justice or moral imperative, but as a theological one.

In God's gift of creation, human beings were given the gift of each other. Further, in order that our intimate human relationships be both life-giving and God-honoring, God invites us to imitate God's own relationship with us. We are called into relationships that are other-centered and monogamous, nurtured by mutuality and fidelity. Our human sexuality, in its natural variety, is one of the ways we share this gift and call.

The heart of the Gospel is this call to relationship, because it is within our commitments to God and each other that we are drawn away from destructive self-absorption and called beyond our sinfulness into lives that are marked by repentance, reconciliation, and redemption. Anyone or any persons who are able to commit to this sacred journey are fulfilling God's desire for his people. It should be the Church's witness to the world to honor those who attempt to do so.

Monogamy, mutuality, and fidelity are the foundations of relationships rooted in the love of God. When two persons are willing and able to make such a commitment, we should bless them in their journey and thank them for their testimony. I believe God does.

+Brian



## David Neblett, St. Luke's, Idaho Falls, died unexpectedly

on Friday, June 5, due to a heart condition. David served the Church faithfully for many years, both at the parish level and as a member of Diocesan Council, the Idaho Episcopal Foundation, and the Paradise Point Committee. His thoughtfulness, sense of humor, and reconciling spirit will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Condolences may be sent to his wife, Carolyn and daughters Catharine and Christa at [www.woodfuneralhome.com](http://www.woodfuneralhome.com). Memorials may be made to the David Neblett Paradise Point Memorial fund through St. Luke's Church.

## DIOCESAN CALENDAR July 2009

- 7-12 Primary Camp, Paradise Point
- 7-12 Climbing Adventure Camp, Paradise Point
- 7-17 General Convention, Anaheim, CA**
- 14-19 Intermediate Camp, Paradise Point
- 15-19 Choral Rendezvous, Challis
- 21-26 Junior High Camp, Paradise Point
- 25 Stewardship School, Emmanuel, Hailey

## Education for Ministry: *helping you to be the Hands and Heart of Jesus* by Les Parsons

"We are the heart and hands of Jesus in the world." We see it all the time as our mission statement; it is also a description of our ministry as baptized Christians. Do we really know what it means?

How we carry out our mission and ministry is not always clear. Many of us struggle with the answers. We can learn how to carry out our ministry through the Education for Ministry Program. This four year program is specifically targeted to lay persons and how they define their ministry. In addition to a comprehensive review of both the Old and New Testaments, church history, and modern theology, this four year program teaches us how to think theologically. It trains us to look at the world as Christians.

What does that mean, to think theologically? Thinking theologically produces useful, creative, and productive discussions that lead to decisive actions in both our ministries and daily lives.

Thinking theologically is learned and practiced in the program by doing a theological reflection each week. This reflection is done from four different perspectives. The tradition perspective looks at the subject in terms of our Christian heritage while the culture perspective takes into account society's modern ideas on the subject. Our personal feelings and convictions are covered in the position view and the examination ends with action - what do we do in a particular situation and how do we deal with this subject in day to day life? The final question in theological reflection is, "How will this change the way you live tomorrow?" How will your ministry change, develop, and grow? This is where you will begin to see clearly how to be the heart and hands of Jesus in the world.

Education for Ministry is available here in Idaho. If you are interested, contact Les Parsons at (208-524-1734) or [clesparsons@gmail.com](mailto:clesparsons@gmail.com). If you cannot commit to a regular meetings, there is an on-line option available.

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# Convention Deputies Report

*The Diocesan Deputies to General Convention all submitted reports highlighting those issues of most interest to the Church in Idaho. Due to lack of space, those reports are published at [www.episcopalidaho.org](http://www.episcopalidaho.org), along with other reports of interest from various committees and commissions of the National Church.*

## Legislative Committee: 08 World Mission

By Mick Hodges

Some 27 resolutions are before this committee. They range in purpose from a Resolution supporting the creation of a “Two State Solution for Israel & Palestine”, (A039), to a resolution calling for support of the Millennium Development Goals, (CO53). However, the most “weighty” resolutions addressed by this committee involve questions of how the Church will respond to the divisive questions surrounding sexual orientation

The 2006 General Convention, in response to the recommendation of the Windsor Report, passed Resolution 2006-B033, which “calls for restraint “ in ordaining certain Bishops, as follows:

**Resolved, That the 75th General Convention receive and embrace The Windsor Report's invitation to engage in a process of healing and reconciliation; and be it further Resolved, That this Convention therefore call upon Standing Committees and bishops with jurisdiction to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.**

General Convention 2009 will likely revisit many historical Resolutions relating to this topic. As an example, several past Resolutions called for a “Reaffirmation of Support of Gay and Lesbian Persons, (2006-A095, 2006-A167). Another “Acknowledge[d] Relationships other than Marriage and [the] Existence of Disagreement on the Church’s Teaching, (2000-D039).

In 2009, a number of resolutions call for repeal of 2006-B033, (C010, C036, C033, C054). Others call for an amendment to the Canons to clarify that sexual orientation will not bar ordination at any clergy level., C039, C045, & C046) At least one of these Resolutions proposes development of blessings for same sex unions, (C046).

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori was recently quoted to say, “My hope is that we will not attempt to repeal past legislation at General Convention. It’s a bad practice.....I would far prefer us to say where we are today in 2009.....to make a positive statement about our desire to include all people fully in this church and that we be clear about who we are as the Episcopal Church, (*The Living Church News Service*, Posted on May 13, 2009.) - “Repeal or don’t repeal” will surely receive much conversation. (Again, the Archive web site identified above is an invaluable research tool in tracing the history and legislation relating to this volatile issue.)

## No Anglican Covenant at This Time

After diocesan secessions, and with several lawsuits pending regarding ownership of church property, many hoped an “Anglican covenant” would be a “way to maintain unity amid differing viewpoints, especially on human sexuality issues and biblical interpretation.”, (*see Episcopal Life, June 2009, volume 20, number ; The Living Church, May 31, 2009.*) At the May 2-12 meeting of the Anglican consultative Council, (AAC), held in Kingston, Jamaica, the group postponed release of a proposed covenant, but affirmed continuing bans on concentration of partnered gay and lesbian people as bishops, same sex blessings and cross-border Bishop interventions.” (The ACC is the Anglican Communion’s most representative decision-making body and includes bishops, clergy and laity. While the 40 year old body has no jurisdiction over the communion’s provinces, it makes policy and encourages the communion’s members to engage together in mission and ministry”)

“Nobody’s moved very much in the last 10 days”, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was quoted as saying. He acknowledged “that divisions remain” However, many were reported to have left with hope of continuing positive negotiations Williams reportedly said the meeting “deepened our obligations to each other.

Since the ACC did not adopt an Anglican Covenant, General Convention will not consider ratification of such an agreement.

## STATE OF THE CHURCH

Over the last five years the Episcopal Church had a net loss of 148,197 baptized members; 36,345 of these losses occurred in the most recent year.

### Age Structure

The advanced and still advancing age of our membership, combined with our low birth rate, means that we lose the equivalent of one diocese per year. In the late 1940’s and throughout the 1950’s we were growing faster than the population, due to a high birth rate and the fact that many formerly unchurched persons were joining Episcopal congregations, usually with their families. By the late 1960’s the birth rate had dropped greatly, and many of our youth began to drop away from the Episcopal Church as young adults – a large number never to return. Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s and even into the 1990’s, we gained more adult members than we lost through persons changing denominations. In the past, more people joined the Episcopal Church than left, making up most, but not all, of the natural decline among participating adult members until recently.

Two facts on the age structure of TEC: First, “youth and young adults” were articulated by General Convention as one of our top five priorities for the 2006-2009 triennium. The Executive Council, in developing the draft budget for the 2009-2010 triennium, did not list “youth and young adults” as one of their mission priorities. Second, in the recent reorganization of the Episcopal Church Center staff in New York City, the position of Staff Officer for Youth and Young Adult Ministries was eliminated and the duties of that officer re-distributed to other ministry areas.

### Financial Stress

The increase in parishes experiencing financial difficulty between 2000 – 2005 is alarming, jumping from 44% to 68%. While that does not worsen between 2005 – 2008, the rate is far too high to allow a rosy picture to be painted.

It should be noted that with the departure of members of congregations, and now leaders of certain dioceses, from our fellowship additional legal expenses have been incurred by the Episcopal Church at all levels, not to mention the expenditure of time, talent and energy. What has, thus far, remained unstated is that as a consequence of this strife substantial funds have been diverted from the mission and ministry of many congregations and dioceses, adding to our financial burden.

Since the 2003 General Convention and the consent to the consecration to the Bishop of New Hampshire 64% of Episcopal congregations acknowledge having some kind of conflict over the ordination of gay clergy. And most of that conflict was of a serious nature. Overall, 47% of Episcopal congregations had serious conflict over this issue, 40% indicated that some people left and 18% indicated that some people withheld funds.

### Sources of Conflict in Congregations in Last Five Years

• Ordination of gay priests/bishops	46.9%
• Finances – Budget	18.4%
• Priest’s leadership style	29.1%
• How worship is conducted	14.8%
• Program priorities	10.3%
• Use of facilities	2.8%

In view of losses due to the age structure and declining birthrate of the Episcopal Church, as well as losses associated with controversy, an emphasis on Evangelism and recruitment of new members would seem a natural almost inevitable consequence. Interestingly, the 2008 Faith Communities Today Survey revealed that under 20% of our congregations report active evangelism programs and less than 5% report that evangelization is a congregational specialty.

What remains largely unaddressed are two issues reported to our Committee. The first is the huge financial burden placed on most of our seminarians. The Episcopal Church is the only mainline Christian denomination in the US that does not provide financial support from its annual operating budget to its seminaries in order to reduce tuition costs for its seminarians. Although this is a new goal (and the Episcopal Church is not yet close to achieving it) the Committee on the State of the Church learned that several seminaries are currently making plans to permit their seminarians to graduate debt free.

The second issue is the special and diverse needs of women clergy, particularly those leaving active parochial ministries to raise families, with the intention of returning to their profession at a later date.

A month after the research for this report was completed and its content drafted, the economy of the US plunged into what appears to be the deepest recession since the Great Depression of 1929. In November 2008 alone, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 533,000 layoffs. The National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. was obliged to lay off fifty of its employees in November.

As corporate downsizing, “rightsizing” and layoffs increase, the church should be a leader- not a follower – in channeling resources to her service to God’s people. The practices adopted by the Episcopal Church at all levels should model intelligent deployment of financial resources, tempered by the compassion inherent in our Christian faith.

# Come to the Banquet!

## An invitation to service and celebration at St. Michael's Cathedral

by the Rev'd. Lucas Grubbs, Canon Pastor, St. Michael's Cathedral, Boise

For well over a year now I have overseen our young adult group, *Ex-Nihilo*. We started mainly as a fellowship group with dinners and outings, but as the young adult numbers grew, so did our desire to offer meaningful service to the ministry life of the cathedral. Enter: *Come to the Banquet!* (yes, the exclamation point is on purpose). *Come to the Banquet!* is a ministry of food, hospitality and dignity to the rather substantial community of homeless, hungry and disadvantaged in the downtown Boise area. The idea is simple. Jesus did much of his ministry around the table, eating and drinking with friends, enemies, strangers and disciples. *Come to the Banquet!* attempts to recreate and relive that spirit of service and companionship for those with the greatest need.

On the last Saturday of each month, the young adults transform the cathedral parish hall into a veritable banquet hall.

Tables are lovingly set with linens and real plates and glassware. Napkins and silverware are set as well as beautiful centerpieces, just like at any dinner party. And at noon, anyone who wants and is in need comes to the banquet. A three-course meal of healthy, hot and seriously delicious food is prepared. Once the guests arrive, they are seated and served by folks who are assigned to each table. The servers take care of any needs our guests have. Servers (mostly young adults, but anyone who wants to volunteer) then eat with the guests. The idea is to create meaningful community among and with those who enter the door. There is no fee for the dinner, (thanks to a grant we received from the Idaho Episcopal Foundation,). Guests are invited to come in, relax, eat, drink and converse.

*Come to the Banquet!* operates on two important principles:

1. No food is served that the servers wouldn't want to eat themselves. In fact we try to go the extra mile by making and serving food that you would eat on a special occasion offering a level of quality and nutrition that might usually be out of reach.
2. Food eaten together is the locus of community and dignity. It is where we see Jesus Christ in each other. If we take restaurants for granted, we take being served for granted. Instead of setting up a chow line, let's give folks the chance to enjoy being served. Most of our guests live in a world where that is not only out of reach, but often an unimaginable luxury.

Our first two banquets were wonderfully successful and as word spreads throughout the community, I have no doubt that *Come to the Banquet!* will flourish into a regular ministry in downtown Boise.

