

## St. Andrew's, Seward, will have new Parish Hall



Groundbreaking for a new parish hall next to St. Andrew, Seward, took place during the Sept. 21 visitation of the Rt. Rev. Joe G. Burnett. Bishop Burnett and the entire Vestry joyfully began the construction process. Vestry members, from the left, include Cal Williams, Marsha Manson, Carrie Graves, Bishop Burnett, honorary member Jane Jones, Marilyn Engler, John Adams, and Missy Davis-Schmitt. Treasurer Donna Koenig looks on. Bids were received in October and construction should begin this year. The parish hopes to be using the building by Autumn 2009. (Photo Courtesy the Rev. Helen Gottl)

## Participants Celebrate Successful Healing Mission



Do you consider your church parish to be a healing community? Do those on the outside looking in consider your parish to be a healing community? What are your expectations when you come to church? Do you hear from God? How does God speak to you? What are the advantages of making the Order of St Luke part of your healing ministry? What do we mean when we talk about healing? Is it a simply a cure we are looking for, or wholeness in Christ?

According to Verneda Kelly, St. Matthew's, Lincoln, these were some of the questions asked and answered at the Order of St. Luke Healing Conference. This annual event, hosted by the Lincoln and Omaha chapters, was held Sept. 19-20 at St. Martha's, Papillion. Kelly and the Rev. Wes Agar, Deacon at St. Martha's, served as co-coordinators.

Keynote speaker was the North American Director Order of St Luke, The Venerable Larry Mitchell, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Mitchell's address was very practical and relevant, and encouraged a lot of interaction between this year's registrants, Kelly said. More than 40 people attended all or part of the conference, coming from as far as St. Joseph, Mo.

Four new members were inducted into associate membership by Kelly, the Region XI Director. They were the Rev. Pat Sheldon, Deacon, and Sandra Squires from St. Augustine's, Elkhorn/Omaha; Allison Scott, St. Martha's; and Russ Booton, St. Matthew's, Lincoln. After successfully completing six months of study, they will be inducted into full membership of the Order.

A healing service and Eucharist culminated activities on Saturday with prayers and laying on of hands;

A lot of planning and preparation, which was greatly appreciated, went into this year's event, Kelly said. Special thanks was extended to the Rev. Chris Roberts, Rector, for his support of this ministry in allowing the event to be held at St. Martha's.

## Stewardship Officer arrives in Omaha

The Rev. Laurel Johnston, a former fundraiser and global activist for CARE, has been appointed Program Officer for Stewardship for the Episcopal Church. She began her duties Oct. 13 at the Church Center's regional office in Omaha.

"I've had the privilege to work for organizations that transform lives," Johnston said. "I'm enthusiastic about shaping conversation, sharing best practices, and growing the ministry of stewardship in our Church."



The Rev. Laurel Johnston

"Laurel brings to the position a unique combination of experience in fundraising and global activism, as well as a passion for the mission of Jesus Christ in the world," said the Rev. Suzanne E. Watson, director of the Evangelism and Congregational Life Center. "She understands the multifaceted nature of stewardship, and promises to catalyze innovative and creative conversations."

Johnston recently completed a two-year curacy at St. John the Baptist Church in Capitola, Calif., a parish in the Diocese of El Camino Real. While attending the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, she was an associate at St. Stephen's Church in Belvedere, Calif., and served as a class representative for Episcopal Relief and Development.

Prior to attending seminary, Johnston worked as a fundraiser and global activist for CARE, an international relief and development organization working in 167 countries in the developing world. Her work took her to India, East Africa, Bosnia and Central America. Before beginning work at CARE, Johnston was a major gifts officer and public relations officer for the American Red Cross, Los Angeles Chapter.

Johnston can be reached by e-mail at [ljohnston@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:ljohnston@episcopalchurch.org).

# A Day in the Life    The Bishop's Journal    September 2008

**Sept. 1.** Drove to St. Luke's, Kearney, to join the young people and staff at the annual Youth Hapening. Celebrated a joyous closing eucharist which was filled with enthusiasm and a very positive spirit. Many thanks to all the Hapening staff, lay and clergy, and to all those who worked to make this a rousing success! Home to Omaha late afternoon.

**Sept. 2.** In office for morning staff meeting, followed by a budget meeting with Canon Yeates and Financial Administrator Sue Renninger. Met in early afternoon with a sub-committee of Bishop and Trustees exploring our various special funds and their status. Late afternoon meeting with Canon Schaefer and the chairs of the Standing Committee and the Commissions on Ministry.

**Sept. 3.** Home Office today, preparing materials and report for upcoming diocesan Executive Commission meeting this Friday. In the evening, drove to Church of the Resurrection for the annual "House Blessing" and dinner for this year's interns at Resurrection House. We welcomed four wonderful young men in various

stages of discernment for vocations in ordained ministry, and enjoyed a festive evening meal and time of fellowship attended by representatives from several Omaha area parishes.

**Sept. 4.** Home Office and study day, preparing for Executive Commission, and for weekend visitation and meetings for council planning. Tonight I attended our diocesan staff picnic at Jim and Judi Yeates' ranch. Enjoyed good visits with colleagues and spouses, as well as a delicious barbecue dinner with all the trimmings!

**Sept. 5.** Left home early to drive to Holy Trinity, Lincoln, for an all-day meeting of the Executive Commission. Following the meeting I drove on west and stayed overnight en route to Scottsbluff.

**Sept. 6.** Up early again to travel to Scottsbluff for an early afternoon planning meeting with Rae Whitney and, by conference call, Ed Doemland, who will be our council musicians this year. Late afternoon visit and meeting with Kelsey Hogue re: council and tomorrow's visitation at St. Francis, Scottsbluff.

**Sept. 7.** Wonderful morning visitation at St. Francis, where I preached and presided at two morning services, including baptism, confirmation, reception, and Holy Eucharist, assisted by rector Kelsey Hogue, priest assistants Bob Manasek and Karen Anderson, and Deacon Bob Brown. A joyful spirit, excellent attendance, and a delicious pot-luck lunch were enough to make my day! Following the festivities, I left in the early afternoon to drive back to Omaha, arriving late Sunday evening.

**Sept. 8.** In home office most of today, working on upcoming presentations to Central and Omaha clericus groups on the Lambeth Conference, plus sermon for upcoming new ministry celebration.

**Sept. 9.** Midday meeting with Canon John Schaefer, followed by afternoon meeting with Sr. Warden Joe Jones, and Todd White, from Church of the Resurrection, to discuss opportunities in their current search process. Late afternoon drive to Kearney, where I continued tonight to work on sermon for tomorrow.

**Sept. 10.** This morning I was surprised by a dead car battery when about to leave for McCook. After an hour or two of dealing with roadside assistance, we were able to get it started and charged, but unfortunately this unexpected made it impossible for me to get to St. Alban's in time for the planned meeting with the Clericus. Late afternoon appointment at St. Alban's with Ellie Thober, and then a rehearsal for tonight's "Welcoming of a New Rector," celebrating the shared ministry of the people of St. Alban's, and their new rector, Mary Hendricks. A delicious and abundant reception followed the service. Overnight in McCook.

**Sept. 11.** Left McCook before daybreak for drive back to Omaha; stopped home briefly, and then to All Saints for an afternoon meeting of the Omaha Clericus to make a DVD and verbal presentation on the Lambeth Conference. Brief appointments following the meeting, and then home late afternoon.

**Sept. 12.** Day off.

**Sept. 13.** Spent most of today preparing sermons for visitations tomorrow, and doing reading and preparations for meetings next week of the House of Bishops and related committees in Salt Lake City.

**Sept. 14.** The day began with an early drive to Christ Church, Beatrice, for a 9 a.m. service where I celebrated and preached and presided at Confirmation, assisted by Fr. Rick Moon and Deacon Frank Smith. Following a delicious brunch, Rick and Frank both drove to join me for an 11:30 a.m. eucharist at St. Luke's, Wymore. There we were treated to a reception/lunch following, and then, with the good assistance of Deacon Frank, I made my way on back roads to Tecumseh, where I was assisted by priest in charge Rick Swenson, I celebrated and preached at a 2 p.m. service. Following an extended coffee hour and visit, I drove home to Omaha, arriving late afternoon. Tonight I finished preparations and packing for trip.

**Sept. 15.** Flew to Salt Lake City via Denver, arriving mid-afternoon. Able to catch up on some email in the room tonight.

**Sept. 16.** Morning session for several of us being trained as future potential "coaches" for new bishops. I have been greatly helped and blessed by my relationship with my former "coach," Don Johnson, Bishop of West Tennessee, and I hope at some point I can be as helpful to others who come into this ministry. This afternoon I met with a special task force appointed by the Presiding Bishop to work with the deans of our seminaries to strategize and explore together issues in theological education for the future. All but one of the seminary deans were present for our meeting, which was a testimony to the value placed on this undertaking. Fortunately this group will have few meetings, and most of them will be in connection with other gatherings already planned.

**Sept. 17-19.** House of Bishops in session in Salt Lake City. Flew home to Omaha Friday afternoon, arriving Friday night.

**Sept. 20.** Drove to the Benedictine Center in Schuyler to join the Deacons on retreat, arriving late morning. Enjoyed lunch with those present, and then offered a presentation on the Lambeth Conference in the afternoon. Drove home to Omaha in the late afternoon, in time to finish up final preparations for sermon tomorrow.

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# The Pastoral Staff



## A Call to Mission and Ministry: Annual Council 2008

The Rt. Rev. Joe G. Burnett

I am excited about the plans for our upcoming 141st Annual Council, to be held at the Gering Convention Center Nov. 7-9.

Our host parish is St. Francis, Scottsbluff, and they will be assisted by Holy Apostles, Mitchell, as well as by other members and parishes of the Western Deanery. This year several schedule changes are planned that we believe will make this event truly a time of renewal for our common mission. Here are some highlights:

- On Friday, Nov. 7, several workshops will take place early to mid-afternoon.
- From 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. many interactive displays and workshops will be offered around the main convention hall, and during this same time a substantial reception and hors d'oeuvres buffet will be available for an evening meal.
- Capping off Friday evening will be a 7:30 p.m. jazz vespers featuring our council musicians, noted hymnist Rae Whitney and musician Ed Doemland, who will also lead a sing-along following the Council buffet on Saturday evening, Nov. 8.
- All Annual Council business will take place on Saturday.
- The closing Eucharist will be at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 9, and will conclude in time for all to depart for home in a timely fashion.
- This year we are also honored to welcome the Rt. Rev. Bruce Caldwell, Bishop of Wyoming, who will present meditations on Saturday and preach on Sunday morning; and the Rt. Rev. Chris Epting, the Episcopal Church's Ecumenical Officer, who will represent the new Regional Church Center office in Omaha, and speak about our ongoing Tri-Faith Ministry.

I hope many from around the diocese, as well as those who are members in western Nebraska, will join us for all or part of this Council, and especially for the closing Eucharist on Sunday, Nov. 9, at 9:30 a.m. at the Gering Convention Center.

## Bishop's Journal *Continued from Page B*

**Sept. 21.** Visitation to St. Andrew's, Seward, where I preached and celebrated, and confirmed or received several. Immediately following the service in the church we processed informally to the churchyard where we broke ground for a new parish hall, office, and classroom space. This is a monumental and wonderful undertaking by this growing congregation. Blessed by the generosity of many, and gifts from the Alleluia Fund, and lovingly served by Mother Helen Goltl, this parish is thriving and looking toward the future! After the groundbreaking, which was photographed by members and the press alike, we retired for a pot-luck lunch in the undercroft. What a wonderful day this is!

**Sept. 22-24.** Quick trip to St. Louis on Monday afternoon for the meeting of my Bishop Family Systems Group, which is a huge help to us as we gather in this small group and share insights and receive helpful supervision and mutual support for our episcopal ministries. The members of this group, besides me, are bishops Bruce Caldwell of Wyoming, Wayne Smith of Missouri, Bud Shand of Easton, Wendell Gibbs of Detroit, Porter Taylor of Western North Carolina, Nedi Rivera of Olympia, and Wallis Ohl of Northwest Texas. Returned home on a quick flight Wednesday afternoon, in time to catch up on some matters, and pack for another quick trip to an upcoming board meeting. I was distressed to learn of the death of Millie Ozaki, wife of Ron Ozaki. Ron is a member of our diocesan Standing Committee, and he and Millie have been faithful

communicants of Holy Trinity Church in Lincoln.

**Sept. 25-26.** Attended the annual Anglican Theological Review Board meeting at Seabury Western in Evanston, IL. While I am a member of the board, I also was invited especially to be present for this meeting and to join with bishops Tom Breidenthal of Southern Ohio and Jeffrey Lee of Chicago in leading a panel presentation and discussion on our experience at the Lambeth Conference. Since most of the members of this board are academic and/or ecclesiastical representatives from many of our seminaries, educational institutions, and some parishes, this was a fruitful and stimulating conversation. While I was at Seabury I was a guest in the deanery of Dean Gary Hall and his wife, Kathy. I also had an opportunity to have a good visit and lunch appointment with Christine Plantz, who is in her final year of seminary.

**Sept. 27.** Due to many tasks awaiting at home, I left the meeting this morning early and flew back to Omaha, arriving in the afternoon.

**Sept. 28.** No visitation scheduled. Tonight, enjoyed a good visit with the Rev. Canon Mark Dunnam, a long time friend from the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, who is in Omaha for a meeting this week of Congregational Development Officers.

**Sept. 29.** Day off.

**Sept. 30.** In office late morning; brief visit with the Congregational Development Officers who are meeting at Trinity Cathedral. Lunch meeting with Tim Anderson. Afternoon meeting with Lara Shine, Youth and Young Adult Minister at All Saints, who is pursuing our ordination process and has applied for postulancy. Mid-afternoon visit with another long time friend and associate, the Rev. Arnold Bush, retired, of Niceville, FL. Arnold, who worked closely with me in evangelism and renewal ministries in the Diocese of Mississippi many years ago, was also here for the CDO meeting at Trinity. After dropping Arnold off at the airport, I worked in the late afternoon on email, etc. in home office.

## Video Conferencing Equipment Available

The Diocese of Nebraska has purchased software that will allow diocesan committees the ability to conduct meetings by computer. The software will allow the sharing of documents, computer screens and video of persons.

This gives committees the option of conducting meetings by computer with little or no travel. A demonstration of this technology will be held Friday night of Annual Council. Committee chairs can contact Canon John Schaefer at the diocesan office for more information about video conferencing.

The Alleluia fund has also provided funds for computers, projectors, screens and a sound system. These are now in place at St. Francis, Scottsbluff; Church of Our Savior, North Platte; and St. Matthew's, Alliance, and can be lent to neighboring parishes for their use as well.

## Prayers Requested for Larry and Ruth Jaynes

Prayers are requested for Larry Jaynes, who is ill and in the hospital in Mexico near where his daughter was married the weekend of Oct. 11-12. Ruth is also suffering from a cold and respiratory illness. Both were scheduled to fly back to Omaha Oct. 14 but will be delayed. Please keep them in your prayers.

## Clergy Searches

A number of transitions are underway in the Diocese of Nebraska.

*Church of the Resurrection, Omaha:* The Search Committee has completed the Church Deployment Office Profile and is receiving names of candidates for rector.

*St. Augustine's Church, Elkhorn/Omaha:* The vestry has called the Rev. Mark Selvey as its next rector. Selvey will begin his duties the first Sunday in Advent.

*Church of the Holy Spirit, Bellevue:* The Search Committee has completed its work and a call by the vestry is imminent.

*St. John's, Valentine and St. John's, Broken Bow:* These two congregations continue seeking part-time clergy to serve their respective parishes. A possibility exists for some joint ministry between parishes in the Diocese of South Dakota and St. John's in Valentine that may become a full-time position. If you know of any priest who may be interested in either of these positions, please contact Canon John Schaefer at the diocesan office.

## North Platte and Mullen parishes worship together



Parishioners from Church of Our Savior, North Platte, and St. Joseph's, Mullen, united in worship Sept. 14 at the Steel Ranch. The 38 attendees enjoyed a time of fellowship both before and after the outdoor Eucharist. (Photo Courtesy Bob Thober)

## Life Cycles available for parishes

The Diocese of Nebraska has purchased a license so that parishes may use the program *Life Cycles* says Canon John Schaefer.

*Life Cycles* is based upon the understanding that all Christians are called to, and commissioned by baptism, for participation in Christ's ministry in the world and in the church. Working through small groups, *Life Cycles* aims to empower all members to realize their God-given gifts and so become ever more active, articulate apostles at work in God's world, and to transform congregations to become vital, ministering communities.

In most cases, *Life Cycles* is used as the formation process for mutual ministry teams which will provide the primary pastoral leadership in congregations. Some members of the congregation will be ordained, others will be commissioned for leadership ministries within the congregation while others will be sent forth to carry out their ministries in their daily lives.

However, *Life Cycles* can be used as an adult formation in any parish.

Participants will find that *Life Cycles*:

- \* supports them in doing ministry
- \* introduces them to creative liturgy
- \* invites them into a deeper spiritual life
- \* engages them in studying the Scriptures and theology
- \* offers them knowledge and skills for Christian living
- \* gives them practical help in leading congregations

*Life Cycles* groups usually meet weekly for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Some groups meet less frequently for a longer time and may cover two sessions per meeting. The group members take turns providing worship or session leadership or hospitality.

The materials are organized in units of six sessions each. Each session includes worship, the reading material, discussion questions and group activities. Each unit introduces an academic skill, a prayer method and/or a leadership skill that is practiced during that unit.

Specific issues, skills or topics are address in the Practicing Theology Units which can be any number of sessions and can be used when the group chooses. These units also can be used by other groups in the congregation and may serve as an entry point for new group members.

For more information about *Life Cycles* and how it can be used in your parish, contact Canon John Schaefer at the diocesan office or go to: <http://leaderresources.org/lifecycles>

## All Saints, Omaha, a Red Cross Partner Agency

All Saints, Omaha, has agreed to assist the American Red Cross by becoming a "pilot" for their new program "Partner Agencies Shelter Operations." Training was held in October. All Saints qualified as a Red Cross emergency shelter.

Parishioners from Episcopal churches through the area may volunteer to participate in the program.

Further information is available from the Rev. Robin McNutt, Deacon, at 402-651-6662 or by e-mail at [mcnuttribin@yahoo.com](mailto:mcnuttribin@yahoo.com).

## Harding visited by Canon Anderson



Sahra Harding and The Rev. Canon Tim Anderson stand on the steps outside the Chapel of General Theological Seminary in New York City. Canon Anderson had a chance to visit with Sahra while attending a meeting of the Standing Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations held at the Tu Tu Center on the campus of General Seminary. Sahra is now in her second year of studies at General and is doing well, but she says she misses seeing many of her friends and fellow Episcopalians in Nebraska. Sahra participated in the Resurrection House program of young adults in the process of discerning their vocation. Please keep Sahra and all of our seminarians in your prayers as they continue their studies. (Photo Courtesy the Rev. Canon Tim Anderson)

## Bishop Spong to speak in Omaha

The Center for Faith Studies, Countryside Community United Church of Christ, Omaha, will host the Rt. Rev. John Shelby Spong, Nov. 1-2.

The weekend promises an examination of the emerging Christian faith as it is found in the beginning years of the 21st century. Questions answered will include "What does Christianity really look like today?" and "What are the implications of the 'new' Christian faith?"

Bishop Spong, whose books have sold more than a million copies, was bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark for 24 years before his retirement in 2001. His admirers acclaim him as a teaching bishop who makes contemporary theology accessible to the ordinary layperson. A visiting lecturer at Harvard and at universities and churches worldwide, Bishop Spong delivers more than 200 public lectures each year to standing-room-only crowds. His bestselling books include "Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism," "A New Christianity for a New World," "Why Christianity Must Change or Die," and "The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Discover the God of Love."

Joining Bishop Spong will be Dr. Eric Elnes, biblical scholar with a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor of Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ in Scottsdale, Ariz., known internationally for its innovative, multi-sensory worship experience called "The Studio."

Dr. Elnes serves as Co-President of CrossWalk America, an organization committed to resourcing, strengthening and celebrating the emerging progressive Christian faith. He also serves on the faculty of the Center for Arts, Religion and Education in Berkeley, California.

Saturday Nov. 1, will begin with registration at 8 a.m. At 9 a.m., Bishop Spong will speak on "The Bible: Why Should any 21st Century person read it?" He will follow this at 11 a.m. with "Jesus: Why Should Any 21st Century Person be Concerned About Him?"

Following the 12:30 p.m. luncheon, Dr. Elnes will present "Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday and the Future of Christian Faith."

For registration information, please contact Countryside Community Church, 8787 Pacific Street, Omaha, 402-391-0350 extension 121. Cost for the Saturday lectures is a donation of \$45 and includes lunch.

## St. Andrew's grows by seven



Seven people were confirmed and received during the bishop's Sept. 21 visitation to St. Andrew's, Seward. From the left are Ted Kooser, Kathleen Rutledge, Lynn Wake, Pat Coldiron, the Rev. Helen Goltl, Stephanie Rouse, the Rt. Rev. Joe G. Burnett, Angel Freeman and Gerald Rouse. (Photo Courtesy the Rev. Helen Goltl)

## Ableson honored by Yale Divinity School

U. S. Navy Chaplain Bradford Ableson of Bellevue, a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky and priest-in-residence at Trinity Cathedral, Omaha, is one of four Yale Divinity School graduates to receive a 2008 Alumni Award during Oct. 14 ceremonies.

Ableson, M.Div. in 1985, received the Lux et Veritas award presented to someone who has demonstrated excellence and distinction in applying the compassion of Christ to the diverse needs of the human condition through the wider church, institutional ministries, ecumenical organizations, not-for-profit organizations, government, or industry.

Ableson is considered by some of the highest-ranking members of the U.S. military as among the most gifted, visionary, and inspirational chaplains in the country. Scheduled to retire from active duty in 2009 after nearly 25 years in the Navy, Ableson was the primary architect behind one of the most significant shifts in the history of American military chaplaincy: transformation of the chaplaincy from an institution focused almost wholly on the pastoral needs of personnel to one that embraces senior chaplains as agents of reconciliation with religious leaders around the globe.

He was the sole active-duty chaplain to publicly and forcefully rebut the United States's decision against signing the 1997 Ottawa Treaty banning antipersonnel mines.



**Bradford E. Ableson**  
'85 M.Div.

While serving as President Clinton's chaplain at Camp David, Ableson wrote his doctoral dissertation on the subject "Fields of Blood: A Theological Critique of American Land Mine Policy in Light of the 1997 Ottawa Process."

After earning his M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, which also awarded him the Mersick Prize for public speaking, he received a D.Min. from Columbia Theological Seminary located in Decatur, Ga.

### Why We Do What We Do

The Offertory is one of those awkward moments in the liturgy where the opportunities for mass confusion abound, mostly because there are a number of things taking place at the time.

The offertory is actually the first action in the second part of the Holy Eucharist, which is the Great Thanksgiving. We begin to render to

## Bishop and Marty Meet Archbishop



While attending the Lambeth Conference in London, England, the Rt. Rev. Joe and Marty Burnett had the opportunity for a "photo op" with the Rt. Rev. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. (Photo Courtesy the Rt. Rev. Neff Powell, Bishop of Southwest Virginia)

## UTO Grant Application Changed

The United Thank Offering has adopted a change in its UTO Grant Policy. Only one UTO grant application will be accepted from each diocese each year.

Grant requests must address one or more of several criteria, including: Poverty of women and children; address a compelling human need – a need so great it affects daily existence in terms of food, shelter, education, health, safety or ability to make a life for one's self/family; demonstrate new and innovative work; or, fulfill a project which is part of a planned diocesan mission strategy.

UTO grants will not fund: deferred maintenance, complete cost of vehicles, or capital improvements that do not expand capacity to meet compelling human need, or mission and ministry need in disadvantaged situations.

Upon receipt of the new grant applications in the diocesan office, copies will be sent to each parish in Nebraska.

God the praise and thanksgiving due God by presenting the gifts of our life and labor.

The Offertory Sentence spoken by the priest is a verse of Scripture from either the Old or the New Testament. In the First Prayer Book of 1549 this sentence was sung by the choir, but since the second edition in 1552 it has been said by the celebrant. In the earliest editions of the Prayer Book what was being offered was our alms and oblations; alms being money, oblations being anything else which in earlier days was everything from produce, to clothing and blankets to be used by those in the parish and beyond it who were in need.

Since Prayer Book revisions of the late 20th Century, the oblations have included the bread and wine that is used in the celebration, which are meant to symbolize that the elements for our celebration come from the people of God.

The first thing that occurs is that as a hymn or anthem is being led or sung by the choir, the elements

are brought forward and the offering basins received by the ushers. This action takes place while the music is going on. The taking of the offering is the business at hand. With all due respect to the choir, the anthem in liturgical churches is traveling music, not a performance.

Once the offering of alms has been taken, there is a second presentation which is appropriately received and blessed. Depending on circumstances the offering may either be left on the altar or removed to the side or sacristy. Either action is appropriate. Overall the Offertory is more than simply "taking up the collection" as is sometimes heard. It is the symbolic presentation of ourselves and a proper offering of thanks for the many gifts we have received at the hand of God.

*(From the Cathedral Chimes, St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral, Hastings.)*

## 2009 Historical Churches Calendars Available

The 2009 Historic Episcopal Churches Engagement Calendar features 53 churches, one from each state plus one extra for Arizona and Florida. Nebraska's entry on the calendar is All Saints, Omaha.

While a few of the parishes represented in the calendar were in existence prior to the Revolutionary War, most were founded in the 19th century. Two will celebrate centennials in 2009: St. Mark's, Mesa, Ariz., and St. John's, Colville, Wash.

The week-at-a-glance, spiral-bound calendar notes all Episcopal major feasts and fasts as well as secular holidays.

Available at \$16.95 per copy, purchasers should add 10 percent (\$3 minimum) for postage and handling. Payment may be made by check or money order, payable to NEHA, and should accompany orders sent to National Episcopal Historians and Archivists, 509 Yale Avenue, Swarthmore, PA 19081-1716. There is a discount for orders of 10 or more. Call 610-544-1886 for details.

"Writing a Congregational History," and "Archives for Congregations" are two helpful guides to help someone write their parish history or organize parish archives. These practical books describe what to consider before proceeding, then how to proceed and where to obtain further help if needed. These books are \$5 each and may be obtained from the NEHA at the same address.

The 2009 Episcopocast wall calendar is also available. Offering whimsical commentary and sage advice, the month-at-a-glance, wall-hanging calendar includes major and minor feasts and fasts and the appropriate liturgical color for each day from November 2008 through January 2010. Available at \$8.95 each, Episcopocast calendars may be ordered from the same address.

## Annual Vestry Conference Scheduled in January

A team of clergy and laypeople with extensive experience in congregational development have joined to help vestries go beyond preparing for the future.

Leaders of Kanuga's Jan. 9-11 Vestry Conference seek to fan the flames that feed each vestry member's desire to serve. The event, themed "Uncovering Our Strengths for the 21st Century Church," aims to equip vestries and their members to transform ministry for the realities of church life today.

"Our goal is for vestries to go 'from strength to strength,' retaining the best of the past while moving forward with confidence," said the Rev. Randy Ferebee and the Rev. Alan Akridge, conference coordinators, reflecting Psalm 84:7 and the Appreciative Inquiry process.

The Rt. Rev. James Mark Dyer and Dr. Amelia "Amy" Dyer of Alexandria, Va., will keynote the conference. The couple brings a unique combination of significant involvement in 20th century leadership and in the formation of leaders for the 21st century church.

An Episcopal priest for more than 35 years, Dyer began his ministry a professed Benedictine monk of St. Anselm Abbey in Manchester, N.H. He served as the seventh bishop of Bethlehem, Pa., from 1982-1995. He is a professor emeritus of theology at Virginia Theological Seminary and served on the Windsor Commission, the Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate, the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lambeth Steering Committee.

Dr. Dyer is the associate dean for academic management and program coordination at Virginia Theological Seminary. She is the founding director for the seminary's Center for the Ministry of Teaching and the James Maxwell Professor of Christian Education and Pastoral Theology. She has served as an editor for Episcopal Teacher, Episcopal Children's Curriculum and Episcopal Curriculum for Youth.

Ferebee and Akridge serve at St. Alban's Church in Hickory, N.C., and are co-directors of the Epiphany Institute + Consulting. Developed by a consortium of Episcopal clergy, the institute addresses congregational development issues not in isolation but as part of a comprehensive landscape.

Joining them for presentations is Elizabeth Whitten of Hendersonville, N.C., an Episcopal layperson whose consulting expertise includes strategic planning and congregational development.

Many vestries begin the year with this annual weekend conference. In addition to plenary sessions, there will be time for each vestry to meet to develop its own special planning and reflection.

For more information, visit [www.kanuga.org](http://www.kanuga.org) or call 828-692-9136.

## Bishop's Calendar & Diocesan Events

### November 2008

- Nov. 2 Bishop's Visitation, Grace Church, Chadron  
Nov. 7-9 Annual Council, Gering Convention Center, Gering  
Nov. 16 Bishop's Visitation, St. Matthew's, Lincoln  
Nov. 23 Bishop's Visitation, Our Savior, North Platte  
Nov 25 Celebration of New Ministry – Fr. Charles Peek, St. Stephen's Grand Island  
Nov 28-29 Diocesan Office closed for Thanksgiving  
Nov. 30 Bishop's Visitation, St. Martin's, Omaha

### December 2008

- Dec. 2 Bishop and Trustees, Clarkson Center, 10:00 a.m.  
Dec 3 Bishop's Visitation – Trinity Church Norfolk, 6:30 p.m.  
Dec. 7 Bishop's Visitation, Holy Trinity, Lincoln  
Dec. 8-10 House of Bishops' Theology Committee, Washington National Cathedral  
Dec. 14 Bishop's Visitation, St. Augustine's, DeWitt  
Dec. 21 Bishop's Visitation, St. James, Fremont  
Dec. 24 Bishop in Residence, Trinity Cathedral, Omaha

## This Side of Seminary *by Sahra Harding*

We have begun to designate my duties at my Field Education site for the campus ministry at Columbia University. Our service forms each Sunday evening. It is quite an opportunity to be able to work with the Chaplain there. She spends the rest of her time at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, cathedral for the Diocese of New York. She also is on the Executive Council of the national church and works very closely with the Bishop of New York to build the program for undergraduate students.

I am blessed to shadow her for the year. She is very flexible about the liturgy and we have been taking advantage of her receptivity. I am working there with two other students. It is a small group that gathers each week. They have formed an entire governing body for themselves, with a president and treasurer included.

The campus of Columbia is not large, but it is powerful. Walking along the marble floors preserved for hundreds of years, these towering columns hold more than the rooftop. The profess the entire history of academia.

In the whirlwind of New York City living, quiet, intentional, Christ-centered gatherings really bring me home. The chapel is a spacious dome built originally by the Episcopal church. The space is both wide and sparse enough to welcome all the faiths on campus.

Returning to the position of one who serves during worship, I feel back in my element. I have begun to feel more attached to my call for ministry that seemed to

elude me much of last year.

I look forward to returning to Nebraska for Thanksgiving. It has been more than a year since I was last there. Sometimes it feels like I am on a big ship at sea. Yes, New York City feels like a big ship completely self-sufficient, rocking to its own rhythm set by currents supporting it underneath. In Omaha I missed the ocean but after so long afloat, it seems I have begun to miss the land.

## Husker Ticket Raffle

St. Matthew's, Alliance, is raffling eight (8) tickets for the Huskers versus the Colorado Buffaloes on Friday, Nov. 28.

Only 250 raffle tickets will be sold at a cost of \$50 each. A drawing will be held Nov. 9.

The first raffle winner will receive four tickets on the 45-yard line and \$200 in gas money. The second winner will receive four tickets in the north end zone and \$200 gas money.

Tickets may be purchased from church members or by contacting the church office at 308-762-1965.

Proceeds from the sale will be placed in the St. Matthew's Furnace Fund.

Ticket were donated by the Feddersen and Cover families, both members of the parish.

# House of Bishops votes to depose Bishop Duncan

*(Editors Note: The Bishops of the Episcopal Church gathered in Salt Lake City Sept. 17-19 for a special session of the House of Bishops. Present were 128 bishops. Not present were 15 who could not attend for a variety of reasons, including the bishops of Texas who are dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Nine did not respond and were not present. Each day, a different group of attendees prepared brief reports. Those preparing the Sept. 17 report were the Rt. Rev.'s Thomas Breidenthal of Southern Ohio. Mary Gray-Reeves of El Camino Real; Gordon Scruton of Western Massachusetts; and GERALYN WOLF of Rhode Island.)*

Following morning worship, the bishops met in small table groups to debrief the recent Lambeth Conference. The bishops were presented with two questions for discussion: "For what were we most grateful?" and "For what were we least grateful?" The afternoon plenary session focused on what lies ahead.

Bishops consistently expressed gratitude for the relationships developed during Bible Study, Indaba groups and informal conversations throughout the Lambeth Conference. Many reported that these relationships are continuing through e-mail contact, and the establishment of companion relationships between dioceses around the world.

The bishops expressed gratitude for the Archbishop of Canterbury's leadership, especially during the retreat. Many expressed appreciation for the expansion of the world view they received.

Concerns expressed included the disjunction between the Lambeth Indaba Process and future decision-making. Many compared the deep and collegial conversation of the Indaba Process with the more contentious hearings held by the Windsor Continuation Group and the Covenant Design Group.

In the afternoon plenary, there was lively discussion as we looked forward to extending the Lambeth Conference experience. A wide range of topics was presented including: a cooperation on the environment; global warming; poverty reduction; and improved communication throughout the Communion.

The House of Bishops also discussed inviting Primates and bishops to visit The Episcopal Church. In turn, some bishops expressed a desire to visit other parts of the Communion. Throughout the day, gratitude was expressed for existing and developing relationships, and their significant value to our mutual life in the Anglican Communion.

## *House of Bishops Daily Account Thursday, September 18*

Today, the House of Bishops by a vote of 88 yes, 35 no, and 4 abstentions, consented to the removal from the ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church the Rt. Rev. Robert Duncan, Bishop of Pittsburgh, by authorizing the Presiding Bishop to "depose" Bishop Duncan.

The House of Bishops voted after lengthy deliberations, reflections and discussions in both the morning and afternoon business sessions. This followed an open discussion session on Wednesday evening. Throughout the discussions, the gathering was quiet, prayerful and respectful as the bishops listened to one another. There was a great appreciation for the beliefs and viewpoints of the bishops from all perspectives. Ample time was provided for all bishops to speak. It was clear that the bishops were aware of the weightiness of their decision.

The vote to depose was not based on speculation about what might occur at Pittsburgh's upcoming diocesan convention. Rather, it was based on the evidence of Bishop Duncan's record of actions and statements, and was the culmination of a process that began in 2007.

Evidence was presented pursuant to Title IV, Canon 9 of the Canons of The Episcopal Church, which provides that "an open renunciation of the Doctrine, Discipline, or Worship of this Church" constitutes "Abandonment of the Communion of This Church."

By the action of a majority of the House of Bishops, it was agreed that Bishop Duncan was actively attempting to remove the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh from the Episcopal Church in violation of the Constitutions and Canons of the Diocese and the Episcopal Church. The majority concluded that Bishop Duncan's actions constituted a renunciation of the Discipline of the Episcopal Church.

Evidence of abandonment of communion was presented to a Church body known as the Title IV Review Committee from clergy and laity of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Presiding Bishop in November 2007. On December 17, 2007 the Title IV Review Committee presented its report to the Presiding Bishop.

As a member of the House of Bishops, Bishop Duncan was ex-

pected to attend this meeting and had the opportunity to address the assertion that he had abandoned the communion. However, he chose not to do so.

*This daily account was prepared by bishops who cast their votes on different sides. Their personal comments are noted here.*

The Rt. Rev. Dorsey Henderson, Bishop of Upper South Carolina, said "This is one of the most somber, sober experiences I've had in the House of Bishops. It is a time for all of us to be praying for each other—especially for Bishop Duncan and the Episcopalians of the Diocese of Pittsburgh."

The Rt. Rev. Gary Lillibridge, Bishop of West Texas, said "As difficult as this decision is for me and many others in our Church, it is important to realize that the decision in the House today was not based on the theological convictions of Bishop Duncan, but rather on the evidence presented regarding statements and actions concerning moves to take the Diocese of Pittsburgh out of the Episcopal Church."

The Rt. Rev. James Mathes, bishop of San Diego, said "Today's decision was difficult and emotional but a necessary action to care for the order of the Church, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, and the collegiality of the House of Bishops."

The Rt. Rev. Porter Taylor, Bishop of Western North Carolina, said "Our decisions today were very difficult and came out of our deep love for our Church, a commitment to honor our ordination vows, and a desire to strengthen the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh."

The Rt. Rev. Peter Lee, Bishop of Virginia, also participated in preparing this daily report.

*Statement of Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori on the actions of the House of Bishops, Thursday, Sept. 18.*

The House of Bishops worked carefully and prayerfully to consider the weighty matter of Bishop Duncan. The conversation was holy, acknowledging the pain of our deliberations as well as the gratitude many have felt over the years for their relationships with, and the ministry of, Robert Duncan.

The House concluded, however, that his actions during recent months and years constitute "abandonment of the communion of this church" and that he should be deposed. Concern was expressed for the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh in the face of leadership which has sought to remove itself from The Episcopal Church. In the days and months ahead, this Church will work to ensure appropriate pastoral care and provision for the members of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, so that mission and ministry in that part of Pennsylvania may continue in the name of Jesus Christ and in the tradition of the Episcopal Church.

*Deputies to the 143rd diocesan convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh Oct. 4 voted 240-102 to leave the Episcopal Church. See the included edition of Episcopal Life for additional stories on this event.*

## Virginia Theological Seminary invites clergy to participate in Summer Collegium program

Applications are now being accepted by Virginia Theological Seminary for the Summer Collegium, a Lilly Endowment project in support of small congregations. Twenty-five clergy and their spouses/partners from all Christian denominations will be invited to spend nine days at VTS, Alexandria, Va., focusing on the theme "Body, Mind, and Soul: Celebrating, Strengthening and Sustaining Clergy Wholeness in Small Congregations."

The Summer Collegium takes place June 24-July 1, 2009, and applications must be postmarked by Dec. 15 to be considered. All expenses for the event, including travel, meals, lodging, books, pulpit supply and child care at home are paid for by the grant.

For more information and an application packet, visit our website at [www.vts.edu/education/collegium](http://www.vts.edu/education/collegium) or call Marilyn Johns at 703-461-1760.

# Church Mouse Places Computers in “Charlie’s Corner”



Church of the Holy Spirit, Bellevue, welcomed Charlie the Church Mouse during its annual Spirit Sunday observation. Spirit Sunday is a day when the many ministries of the church are celebrated and the stewardship season begins.

Sunday school children processing in with their handmade banners about stewardship were the first to notice Charlie.



Charlie was invited to join the church by the Rev. Ruth Jaynes who helped Kristi Smith, Christian education director, and Lynda Wyant, Sunday school teacher, choose new software for the preschool and elementary classes.

Three computers were installed in “Charlie’s Corner” in the Undercroft, thanks to the efforts of Alan Wyant. In “Charlie’s Corner,” children can play Bible games, with Charlie’s help. Following the 10:30 service, Charlie’s



Corner was standing room only as children waited their turn.

Alan Wyant plans to install headsets and search for more software appropriate to older children.

“It’s already obvious that Charlie is a success with these Bible students and is welcomed by the entire congregation,” he said. (Photos Courtesy Alan Wyant)

## The Challenge of Stewardship by Nancy Kirk, Diocesan Stewardship Commission

Are we counting our blessings or blessing our countings?

For many, the word “Stewardship” conjures up thoughts of the annual fund, getting the pledge cards in, and sometimes a big capital campaign to build or refurbish a physical structure. But this is changing in the Diocese of Nebraska, as we discuss the sacred act of giving in response to the gift of God’s love.

The newly formed Stewardship Commission has adopted a Mission Statement (see below) which describes Stewardship as a three-part process:

- God’s gift to us of unconditional love and entrusting us with all of creation.
- Our acceptance of those gifts with gratitude and thankfulness.
- Our response to God, by using and sharing those resources on a daily basis.

Is It More Blessed to Give Than to Receive?

We seem to struggle with accepting gifts, including the gifts we receive from God. Is it because we have learned all our lives that “it is more blessed to give than to receive”? The only problem with that concept is that if someone wants to give, there has to be someone there to receive. When God wants to give, we have to be there to receive.

Many of us have a hard time receiving help, compliments and gifts from other people. Do we have the same problems accepting gifts from God? I think so.

I think we have a hard time accepting unconditional love. We still think we have to do something or be someone special to deserve it. We sing “Jesus loves me” along with the elementary students, and

it is very clear to us that “Jesus loves the little children”, because they are very lovable.

But when it comes to me, or to the person who just shot a policeman, or the person who was just diagnosed with cancer – does Jesus love all of us? – all of them? Are we really prepared to receive that kind of love?

Are we ready to accept the gifts and our responsibilities for nature, animals, and natural resources? Are we ready to accept stewardship responsibility for our children and all children? Are we ready to accept the gift and the stewardship responsibility for new Christians, to nourish their faith by sharing ours?

Are we ready to accept the gifts and the stewardship responsibility of new marriages and relationships in our midst, to support and guide them? Are we ready to accept the gifts of aging parishioners who can no longer teach Sunday School or serve dinner for 200 or keep up the building and grounds, but who can offer wisdom, perspective, a sense of history and may be fierce prayer warriors?

Are we ready to accept the gifts and become stewards of dying churches and brand new churches who are facing changes faster than they can acknowledge or manage.

Are we ready to accept the gifts of people who don’t look like us, talk like us, think like us, behave like us? They are all gifts from God, and God counts on us to be there to receive them.

Before we can teach people to give and meet the needs of the church and the wider community, first we need to help people recognize and receive the gifts of

God and each other. That is the challenge of stewardship today.

As stewards, we are called to be grateful for the gifts and blessings from God. We are called to thankfulness.

Could we develop stewardship programs which teach people how to count their blessings? Could we teach people to create gratitude journals? How about taking up a collection of “blessings” from the people in the pews writing on “Blessings” pads – maybe early in the service, long before we ask people to respond to those blessings by dropping money in a collection plate?

We petition God for favors – good health, safe travel, safety for our soldiers, wisdom for our leaders – but rarely do the prayers of the people thank God for all the gifts we have already received. I wonder why?

In acknowledging and expressing our gratitude for the gifts we get from God, we come to a place where we want to respond with generosity. Giving to God’s church is not a requirement. There is no admission price for faith. The gifts we receive are free and unconditional.

But as we count our blessings, we begin to feel a growing desire to reciprocate and provide for God’s ministries on earth, not to meet some percentage giving standard, but because we need to express our thankfulness in as many ways as we can.

Stewardship then becomes an endless loop of gracious giving, grateful receiving and generous giving. Stewardship is not the job of a single person, or a vestry committee. It is the daily sacred act of every Christian.

### The Stewardship Commission Mission Statement

*The mission of the Diocese of Nebraska Stewardship Commission is to serve God by helping each parish to help each member to become a better Steward.*

*We believe Stewardship is about our very being as children of God, acknowledging that all of creation is a gift from God and has been entrusted to us. We recognize God’s generosity and grace with gratitude and thankfulness. In response we are called daily to the sacred act of using and sharing our resources of time, talent, and treasure, because stewardship is all that we do with all that we have after we say “I believe.”*

*The work of our Commission is:*

- *To encourage and support every parish in the development and growth of its own stewardship ministry*
- *To develop a collection of resources and materials for year round stewardship ministry*
- *To offer periodic learning and informational opportunities at the diocesan, deanery, and local levels*