FROM THE SOUTH

REFLECTIONS

As an Altar Guild member working on your own in the middle of the week with no one around the church until they start arriving to attend the service for which you are preparing the altar, you probably sometimes think “why am I doing this”? Then there are the times, such as Easter, when you are surrounded by people and wonder how you will get everything done before the next service with so many interruptions.

Just stop and Think.

You are a member of your own church altar guild, a truly blessed ministry. Maybe there are 60 more members or maybe only three or four. You have a wonderful altar guild director to whom you can direct any questions or discuss any other subject, but what happens if she doesn’t have the answer? She can call her deanery director. In Naples Deanery (starting at the bottom of the diocese), she would be Barbara Smith. In Fort Myers Deanery, Mary Vernon. In Manasota, Marcia Simington. At this time we do not have deanery directors for the remainder of the diocese, but we do have diocesan directors. Where your deanery has no director, you may contact either Sarah Hill in the northern half of the diocese or Thelma Wallis in the southern area.

FROM THE NORTH

A NEW VIEW

The current issue of the Altargram gives me the perfect opportunity to introduce myself to all my fellow Altar Guild members. In September, 2007, Bishop Dabney Smith installed me as Diocesan Director for the parishes north of the Manatee River. Thelma Wallis shares this role with me and oversees the parishes south of the river. I replace Ann Neller, who will continue to write the Altargram. I have belonged to St. Peter’s Cathedral since 1976 and am co-directress of their altar guild. Thelma and I work together caring for St. Thomas’ Chapel at Dayspring.

Altar guild has been a very major part of my life for nearly fifty years. When I was in college at the University of Wisconsin, I was trained by a wonderful woman who was the widow of a priest. She gave me a legacy which I try to share with others. Throughout all these years and in many parishes, I have found that altar guild is always a source of friends and purpose. I am a cradle Episcopalian and have belonged to at least ten parishes. I even met my husband, David, at church! With all these years behind me, I hope to be a resource to you all and am happy to help you in many ways. Please contact me if you need help with training or organizing.
These are the two people who the deanery director if she/he needed some guidance or any other question. Sarah and Thelma report directly to Bishop Smith but --- we also have a much larger section to our guild. Province IV consists of nine southeastern states with 20 dioceses and all the altar guild members in that area. These are the people we come in contact with at Kanuga, that very peaceful area in North Carolina where we meet each year to exchange ideas, renew old friendships and listen to some extremely interesting speakers.

They are a wonderful group, drawing on all the dioceses for their officers—several of our members have served on the Province IV Board and the diocese itself has membership. Any church can and really should belong or any individual member of the altar guild. As a member one receives various notices of what is going on in the Province, what to look forward to at Kanuga each year and many other items of interest. The annual dues for a parish or individual are $15.00.

Then we have our National Altar Guild Association. This organization also draws on all dioceses for their officers and memberships. In return we have speakers available to us (i.e. Hobey Hinchman, who has addressed us on many occasions). We have a very informative and helpful magazine each quarter. The NAGA EPISTLE contains many articles of interest about altar guilds in the rest of the country, how to handle certain situations, what has been and what will be going on in other areas. It really helps you to feel part of a most wonderful MINISTRY.

Our ministry is special and holy. May God bless each of you in your work.

Thelma

if you need help with training or organizing your altar guild. I can help you with sources for ordering supplies, vestments, linens or other supplies. I have attended many wonderful workshops and have lots of ideas to share. I also look forward to meeting you at your church as I make visits.

Ideally, we could have deanery meetings, too. You can help me by encouraging us to meet on the deanery level. We have much to offer each other.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you at our spring meetings on March 29th and April 5th. Please make it a point to attend. I would also appreciate having a contact with each altar guild director. Those lists are far from complete.

Please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail. My phone number is: 727-525-8340 and my e-mail is sarah_hill@hotmail.com.

Together we will work for the Glory of God.

Sarah

ANNUAL MEETINGS

Barbara Gent, winter resident of Florida, honorary member of the NAGA Board and author, will be the guest speaker this year. Her topic will be History of Altar Guild, a personal review.

South Branch host will be:
Church of the Good Shepherd
1115 Center Road
Venice, Fl 34292-3812
The date is: Saturday, March 29, 2008.

North Branch host will be:
St. Alfred’s Episcopal Church
1601 Curlew Road
Palm Harbor, Fl 34683-6515
The date is: Saturday, April 05, 2008.
NO CHANGES THIS YEAR

Thelma Wallis will continue to lead the south branch altar guild parishes. Her replacement is unable to accept the reins at this time. She has certainly earned her gold star and halo.

DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Venice Community Center was the venue for the October, 2007, Southwest Florida Diocesan Convention with St. Mark's as the host church. In a change from past conventions Eucharist was planned for the Friday afternoon before convention instead of starting off the convention Saturday morning. The service was held in the parish hall because pews which had been removed for refinishing had not yet been returned. Many thanks to St. Mark's Altar Guild who prepared the altar and Good Shepherd, Venice who loaned vessels.

In October, 2008, Christ Church, Bradenton will be hosting the convention in their newly enlarged and renovated church. This is the home parish of Thelma Wallis.

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARIES

Two areas of interest to altar guild are celebrating twenty year anniversaries this year. First is Province IV Altar Guild meeting at Kanuga. This is always held the first weekend of June. The dates this year are: June 1st to June 4th. Often reservation forms are available at the annual meeting.

Our second recognized anniversary is St. Thomas' Chapel at Dayspring. The lovely 1914 structure was transferred from Safety Harbor to Dayspring by barge twenty years ago. The location itself is soothing. Few changes have been made to the building, but as most of you know, the Diocesan Altar Guild Board is trying to improve the very small sacristy-vesting area with better locked storage. Please remember the chapel at the annual meeting with a separate personal donation to help meet the goal. Any small amount in a separate envelope labeled chapel would be appreciated.

View from the lakeside chapel at Kanuga

WOVEN WITH LOVE

Anytime you take on a creative project, it is always goes better when you know what you will do with it upon completion. One of the most rewarding projects my husband and I have done recently has been to learn to weave Eucharistic stoles which are then hand-delivered to Episcopal priests in Cuba.

For the past ten years, I have been going to Liturgical Arts week at Kanuga each August. You can learn to do beautiful handwork all relating to the church. They offer first class needlepoint, white work, such as altar linens, banner making, embroidery and weaving plus beautiful music and spiritual inspiration.

In the past two years, my husband and I have taken the weaving class taught by an
Episcopal priest from Connecticut, Jane Stickney. She has her own weaving business and is a wonderful resource. Her husband works with her to give the class. Each person has a table loom which can be warped to make two 54 inch stoles. Jane brings gorgeous yarns and threads with which to work. You usually choose one of the liturgical colors and then select up to five or so complementary threads which are woven as stripes making each stole unique and always beautiful.

I have woven two stoles, one of which was shades red with blue and yellow accents and the other was five shades of white with five different textures divided by a gold stripe. My husband, David, has woven three which are basically green but each with different stripes. They look completely different but the warp was always green.

These stoles are easy to weave in a week. You then stabilize them with an iron-on fabric and divide them vertically so the stripes will match. These two halves are then backed with a complementary lining and finished by machine. Even David has learned to surge, iron and sew his by himself. In fact, he has a new respect for my love of sewing!

These stoles make a wonderful gift to any priest but we find it most rewarding to supply the priests in Cuba. They have no way of getting new ones and have asked stoles, so we got busy. My white one was made for the new Suffragen Bishop, Nerva Cot Aguilera in Havana. I gave it to her personally and she was thrilled.

We are able to go to Cuba because St. Peter's Cathedral has a legal permit issued by the U.S. Treasury. You can go to Cuba to provide support for churches. Our last trip was over Thanksgiving in 2007. We were able to take in 13 other gently worn stoles no longer used here in our diocese. The two archdeacons in Cuba had a wonderful time dividing them. Some went to churches in Camaguey and some in Ciego de Avila.

There are so many ways to enhance our worship and do something creative for the Glory of God. This is one of the nicest and each stole is an original!

Sarah

DID YOU KNOW?

The annual dues paid by each altar guild in the diocese helped pay for Bishop Smith's new green vestments, a hot water heater for St. Thomas chapel and new altar linens. Dayspring only budgets $300.00 per year to purchase wine, wafers and candles. Annual meetings are given assistance with an honorarium for the guest speaker, the flowers and the organist.

LINEN WORKSHOP

Linda Tomlin owns a linen company named DETAILS IN DESIGN based in Williamsburg, Virginia. She offering a wonderful workshop right after Easter beginning on March 24th through 27th. One day is a workshop on Communion Linens and the other two days feature classes in Basic Embroidery, Whitework Embroidery and Sacred Monograms. This will be a really top notch program and I am planning to attend. I know Linda and enjoy working with her. She has gorgeous fair linens and communion linens to order on line at

linens@communionlinens.com Her web is

www.communionlinens.com

It is pricey but worth every penny. If anyone would like more information from me that is fine, too. She has arranged rooms at a very nice convention center
and it will be comfortable. The classes are about $475.00 plus where ever you stay.
Sarah

LENTEN PRETZELS

A fifth century Roman manuscript in the Vatican Library describes a little bread eaten only during Lent – Ash Wednesday through Good Friday. An Italian monk began baking the pretzels as a reward to children for learning their prayers because early Christians ate no dairy products during Lent. Shaped in the form of two arms crossed in prayer the treats were called pretzel by the Germans and later pretzel. Included is a recipe for a Lenten pretzel and prayer.

1 ½ cups warm water
1 envelope of active dry yeast
1 tsp. Salt
1 Tbsp. honey or sugar
4 cups of flour
1 egg beaten
Coarse or kosher salt


Beloved Lord, we ask that you bless this bread, which reminds us of the early Christians who crossed their arms in prayer. May we always be reminded by the sight of these pretzels to pray to you each day with grateful hearts. Amen

LOVING CARE

Treat vestments and other fabric items with regular, loving care by checking regularly for insects, fabric stress from hangers and soil. Shake them out, rehang or refold to protect from unnecessary wear. Use of mothballs or flakes regularly for wools and silks is encouraged, but hang out to air before using or a sprinkling of potpourri may be used to mask the odor of camphor. Also available is a moth retardant with a lavender scent.

Excerpt from the Diocese of Olympia, Washington newsletter

PRAYING WITH BEADS

Although Christians have been using rosaries since the fourth century, it gained wide use among Episcopalians in the 1980's. The cross which hangs from the rosary comes from Matt. 16:24 "take up your cross and follow me". Above the cross is the invitatory bead, which stands as an invitation to enter the circle of prayer and contemplation. Four large beads, called cruciform beads, form the points of the cross within the circle of beads as a reminder that the cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith. The number four also suggest the four Gospels, the seasons of the year and the four points of the compass. Thirty three beads, the number of years Jesus walked this earth, are arranged in four groups of seven. Called weeks. In the Hebrew tradition, the number seven signifies wholeness, completion and perfection. Also, it is number of days in a week, in the Creation story and number of seasons in the Episcopal church year (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost).
It is suggested that one complete the circle of beads at an unhurried pace three times before ending the devotion with a final prayer at exit.

Excerpt from Epistle

A PRAYER FOR ALTAR GUILDS

Patricia Hauze

CROSS

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, one thing I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

(Psalm 27:5)

INVITATORY BEAD

Grant me grace, O Lord, to serve you well.

CRUCIFORM BEAD

These things I do, I do for love of you.

Altargram
750 Rolling Hills Drive
Palm Harbor, FL 34683

WEEK BEADS

- Polishing the silver, I pray for clarity
- Washing the fair linen, I pray for truth
- Trimming the candles, I pray for new light
- Setting the Lord's table, I pray for guidance
- Laying straight the frontal, I pray for peace
- Counting out the wafers, I pray for strength
- Pouring wine into cruets, I pray for forgiveness

EXIT CROSS

Most Holy Lord, I thank you that you have called me to serve you in the setting of your table. I pray that all who come to you for nourishment this day will be fed and strengthened and carry through their day in peace. Amen.

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