The offering from our annual meeting on March 3 totaled $802.00 and was sent to the Episcopal Charities Fund of the Diocese of Southwest Florida in memory of Mary Ellen Smith. At the DAG board meeting on May 9, your officers voted to send $100.00 to the National Altar Guild (NAGA) in Mary Ellen's memory.

PROVINCE IV ALTAR GUILD CONFERENCE & RETREAT
June 3-6, 2012 at Kanuga

Sarah Hill, President-North, and Peggy Curlin, Treasurer, had the great pleasure of representing the Diocese of Southwest Florida at the annual Province IV Altar Guild Conference. Conference Chaplain was The Rev. Paula Morton from Church of the Transfiguration in Saluda, NC -- their Director of Music and Organist. Dr. Carl Gilmer, played the organ for both the opening and closing Eucharist, and soloist, Stephen Spence provided additional music at the opening service. Rev. Paula played the guitar for other worship services. Keynote speaker, Sr. Suzanne Elizabeth from the Community of St. John the Baptist in Mendham, New Jersey, led altar guild members in a two-day exploration into the meaning of "the beauty of holiness" and how it shapes our lives. This familiar phrase is found in many places in scripture (see Psalms 29, 96, 110, I Chronicles 16:29, 2 Chronicles 20:21).

What is holiness? Something complete, something beyond, something "other," something out of nothing. God the Creator is whole, complete, and needs no other.

What is beauty? Wholeness, harmony, radiance (illumination), something that encompasses all our being -- intellectual, physical, and spiritual. Beauty in and of itself beautifies all it touches. Without beauty, there is disharmony, imbalance, and darkness. Beauty is creative and is found in all of God's creation, from the smallest molecular structure to the vastness of space, from the paw of the mouse to the depths of the Grand Canyon.

Sister Suzanne challenged us to take time to dwell in the beauty of holiness. Grow in awareness of beauty around us and within ourselves. Some of the ways to heighten our awareness are icon reflection, flower arranging, being open to people, altar guild service, scripture, prayer, meditation, contemplation, intentional breathing, prayer beads, being outdoors.

We used Andrei Rublev's icon "Trinity" (also known as "The Hospitality of Abraham") as an entry to the beauty of holiness -- particularly fitting as it was the day after Trinity Sunday! The Father (left side) displays earth colors, fitting for the Creator of all things. The Christ (center) wears blue for divinity, and brown for humanity. The Holy Spirit (right) is clothed in blue and green, representing sky and leaves. One can also let the icon speak of the three strangers who visited Abraham. How often are we open to strangers? People tend to look at the darkness first -- are they going to take something from us? Are they going to harm us? Why is our first instinct darkness, not light? There is beauty in light -- balance, color, harmony. If we look for the light in people, we can sense balance, completeness, harmony.

Altar guild is a ministry, and its members should seek inward and spiritual grace. When you feel you are not ministering but "doing a job," please submit your resignation! How do we create order and beauty within ourselves? Be intentional and attentive in welcoming God into our lives. Pray, meditate, contemplate. Come and know the God of Love. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with grace and energy.

Another way to access the beauty of holiness is "intentional" breathing. Be still. Take a deep breath. Exhale slowly. Experience peace and order and stillness.

Prayer beads and prayer bracelets are a way to experience God. In every culture known, archaeologists have found some type of intentionally made beads used for spiritual purposes. Seeds, nuts, stones, knots, bone, clay, shell, metal, glass -- there is something about the roundness that speaks of spirit. Sister said people may be uncomfortable if she says "I'll pray for you" -- so she says "I'll roll the beads for you." Participants had the opportunity to make prayer bracelets, which were later blessed on the altar at closing Eucharist.

Being outside provides another opportunity to experience the beauty of holiness. Be intentional -- listen and look. Intentional breathing creates "spaces" so you can really SEE and really HEAR. Look for beauty and harmony in God's creation.

(Continued on P. 2)
The second day of our exploration opened with the Prayer of the Chalice. Seek harmony, wholeness, illumination, order, and calmness.

**The Prayer of the Chalice**

Father, to Thee I raise my whole being -- a vessel emptied of self. Accept, Lord, this my emptiness, and so fill me with Thyself -- Thy Light, Thy Love, Thy Life -- that these Thy precious Gifts May Radiate through me and over-flow the chalice of my heart into the hearts of all with whom I come into contact this day, revealing unto them the beauty of Thy Joy And Wholeness and the serenity of Thy Peace which nothing can destroy.

_Amen!

Sister Suzanne reminded us that God constantly cares about us. "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:16) and "you are precious … in my sight, and … I love you" (Isaiah 43:4). Say to yourself, "I am precious, God has written me on the palm of his hand."

Each participant was given a hazelnut and a reading from the "Revelations of Divine Love" by Julian of Norwich. We held the hazelnuts and meditated on the love of God. Everything boils down to GOD IS LOVE. Whether looking at the hazelnut or at ourselves, God made it; God loves it; God keeps it. Sister used the Lord's Prayer to bring us out of meditation quietly and slowly. We experienced that particular type of energy found when praying with others. Our spirits need both service and quietness.

Another path to the beauty of holiness is found through prayer. Sometimes people are frightened by all the kinds of prayer -- contemplative prayer, prayer of silence, lectio divina -- and think it is beyond them, but in actuality we do it all the time and just don't realize it. As altar guild members, we are used to "doing for others" -- but prayer is a way to care for ourselves. Sister introduced us to "Praying in Color," a book by Sybil MacBeth, wife of an Episcopal priest. Don't fall into the trap of judging your prayer -- just pray. Focus down on the thing you are praying about. Draw a mental circle around a word or name, think of colors, and let the Holy Spirit lead you. In prayer, be repetitive, plumb the depths, experience Celtic spirituality wherein the body and spirit are one and inseparable.

* * * * *

The Conference also featured "chair aerobics" by Judy Milam-Henderson of Palm Bay, FL; a Linen Workshop by Ann McCormick of Memphis, TN; a video of last year's highlights; a Flower Workshop by the Flower Guild from St. James Episcopal Church, Hendersonville, NC; a joint reception with the Province IV ECW; and the always popular "Show and Tell" where members share creations and ideas.
FROM THE DESK OF SARAH . . .

One of the highlights of my year is attending the Province IV Altar Guild meeting at Kanuga in North Carolina. Peggy Curlin and I went a day early and attended Sunday service at a most delightful church in nearby Fletcher, just south of Asheville. Eight board members went to Calvary Church to see their beautiful needlepoint kneelers which they designed and made themselves. The kneelers depict the history of this pre-Civil War congregation, the seasons of the year as seen in the surrounding mountains, as well as many familiar symbols of the Episcopal Church. Each kneeler is almost like a photograph with beautiful shading and tiny details. Chapel altar cushions are new this year.

All eight of us Altar Guild ladies are still talking about the radical hospitality we found at this little brick church. If there ever was a feeling of being the Body of Christ, this church radiated with it. They all honored their graduating seniors that Sunday with special music and beautiful testimonials from the young people --all stated how much their church had helped to form them. We were introduced and welcomed into the sacristy. Their hospitality extended into guided tours of their beautiful cemetery, history of their stained glass, and even two fresh loaves of bread! We came away inspired and feeling very blessed to have found this wonderful parish full of loving people. Father Victor Mansfield is one of those priests who can see Jesus in everyone he meets. Don’t fail to stop if you are in the area.

Here in our own diocese, remember we are gathering gently worn white Eucharistic linens and will be burning them in November at DaySpring. It is a good time to purge your sacristy drawers!

We are still in need of Deanery leaders in Clearwater and St. Petersburg. We need to support each other on a Deanery level. Please consider if this could be your ministry and contact me. It gives us a chance to support each other and get acquainted with each church.

You will be saddened to hear that our wonderful Flower Guild leader, Carolyn Randall, lost her husband on May 9. She says her church family continues to sustain her. Isn’t that what it is all about?

It isn’t too late to register for the Liturgical Arts conference at Kanuga held this year August 19-24 (see P. 6). Enjoy expert instruction in embroidery, flower arranging, sewing banners and vestments, needlepoint, and much more. It is the chance of a lifetime!

Blessings from North of the Bridge,

Sarah Hill, President-North

FROM THE DESK OF CAROLANN . . .

Thanks to everyone for your prayers and concern when I was ‘under the weather’ for what seemed like forever.

Things south of the Skyway always slow down considerably in the summer. Many of our Alar Guild members head north for the summer, hopefully to cooler weather -- although recently many northern sites have been hotter than it is here in southwest Florida! I hope everyone takes time this summer to rest their bodies and renew their souls.

NOTE: Nancy Shields, Naples Deanery Director, has a new email address (see P. 6).

Blessings from South of the Bridge,

Carolann Brumbach, President-South

WORKSHOP ON FLOWERS
PROVINCE IV ALTAR GUILD CONFERENCE
June 3-6, 2012 at Kanuga

Members of the St. James Episcopal Church in Hendersonville spent an afternoon explaining and designing beautiful arrangements. They arranged both traditional and less formal styles. One was used for the Joint ECW-Altar Guild Reception in the Fireplace Lounge and the other in the Chapel at Kanuga for our closing Eucharist. Our arrangement in the chapel was modern and made of white lilies with beautiful big leaves at the base. The Kanuga chapel lends itself to a floral piece placed directly on the floor and it looked stunning. St. James flower Guild also gave participants a copy of their flower manual which is full of tips and resources.
DECONSECRATION OF LINENS: If you have small linens that are beyond repair (purificators, lavabo towels, etc.), please give them to any Board member (see Page 4) prior to September 19. The DAG will hold a service of deconsecration and burning of linens at DaySpring in conjunction with their next board meeting, September 19, 2012. The Board meeting starts at 10:00 AM. If you would like to attend the service, contact Carolann Brumbach or Sarah Hill for additional information.

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS CHURCH?

Well, only if you have been to Fletcher, NC, to visit the historic and welcoming parish of Calvary Church! The church is located on a beautiful 26-acre site, with an historic churchyard cemetery dating to sometime in the mid 19th century. The oldest readable grave marker dates to the late 1860s, but there are many unmarked graves in the oldest section. The “silent congregation” under the beautiful trees includes many prominent local families, an opera singer, famous humorist Bill Nye, a bishop, several priests, doctors, teachers, many children, supposed Russian royalty, a punk-rocker, housewives, farmers, soldiers, all sorts and conditions of folk; some rich in things, many rich in spirit, known and unknown.

In 1857 Daniel & Helen Craig Blake gathered neighbors in their home, spear-heading the founding of Calvary Church. They donated the land and led the campaign to erect the first building. Using plans based on drawings of Sir Christopher Wren, a 16th century-style building was planned; clay was dug, kilns built, and bricks fashioned by hand. The building was completed, beautifully sited on a hill and complete with bell tower. The Rt. Rev. Thomas Atkinson, Bishop of North Carolina, made the long journey from Raleigh, NC for the consecration on the 21st of August, 1859.

The Civil War brought hardship to everyone, but the church continued. The grove was often used as a rallying place for volunteers, and the church building and carriage shed were used from time to time as barracks and hospital as well as for worship. The Old Well was a watering place for soldiers from North and South alike.

The original church building burned in 1935, with only the brick shell left standing. One stained glass window, the baptismal font, the Bishop’s Chair, and a few smaller items were saved. The congregation moved quickly to rebuild; Architect S. Grant Alexander, a Scotsman recently emigrated to Asheville, was engaged for the design. The nave was lengthened and widened, but the west front of the old building, with its beautiful bell tower, were saved and incorporated in the new building.

Under the leadership of the Rev. David Sailer, (rector, 1984-1998), improvements were made in the church building with new lighting and a freestanding altar. In January 1992, a two manual, 23 rank pipe organ by the Holtkamp Company was dedicated after extensive renovations in the chancel and nave. In 1995 an ambitious $2,000,000 capital campaign, “the Gateway to Calvary’s Future,” was begun to expand and renovate the Parish House. Construction was completed in 2000, just as the vestry called the present rector, the Reverend Victor C. Mansfield.

Email a church picture and article to pcurlin@verizon.net. Include the name and location of the church and any other interesting information, along with your name and church home. The next issue of the Altargram will come out in October 2012.
**Ecclesiastical Vocabulary - “L” and “M” words . . .**

*Lavabo:* The ceremony of cleansing the celebrant’s hands before the offertory oblation in the Holy Eucharist. The word is also used to denote the bowl containing the water, and for the small towel accompanying it.

*Lectern:* A stand near the chancel on which rests the Bible.

*Lectionary:* A selected list of Scripture passages for daily readings throughout the Christian year.

*Liturgical Colors:* The colors used in the church during the course of the year: white, black, red, violet (purple), green, rose, and gold. See additional explanation on Liturgical Colors following Glossary.

*Maniple:* A short band or scarf which hangs on the left arm of the celebrant over the Alb as part of the Eucharist Vestments.

*Mass:* One of the names for the Holy Mysteries; the Holy Communion.

*Mensa:* The top of the altar.


*Missal Stand:* The stand or desk upon which the altar service book rests.

*Mitre:* The headdress of a bishop or Archbishop; two pointed and cloven, worn with the cope or Eucharistic vestments. It symbolizes the “tongues of fire” at the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at Pentecost.

*Morse:* A metal clasp, usually elaborate, for use in fastening the cope.

*Mundatory:* A lavabo towel.

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**DAG WEBPAGE**

For some time, the DAG Board has been discussing the possibility of having a DAG webpage where information about the Diocesan Altar Guild could be found. Well, it has happened!

Go to the Diocesan website (www.dioswfl.org) and hold your cursor over “Mission and Ministries” and then click on “Diocesan Altar Guild.” The link is http://www.dioswfl.org/Mission%20and%20Ministry/diocesan_altar_guild.html.

So far, we have a description of what the DAG does, links to past issues of the *Altargram,* list of current DAG Officers (click for additional information), and links to NAGA and Province IV Altar Guild. In the future, we would like to include a directory of all AG directors for all the churches in the Diocese; and come up with a way to make the “Free Market” a year-round exchange rather than just a Convention event (create a way for churches to post pictures and descriptions of available items, along with whom to contact).

We are missing the following old issues of the *Altargram:* 1994 & 1995, and 1997 through 2005. If you have copies of any of the missing years, please contact Peggy Curlin so she can make arrangements to scan them for addition to the webpage.

Please email or call any DAG Board member with additional ideas of things you would like to see on the DAG webpage.
EDITOR’s NOTE: CONGRATULATIONS to Sarah and David Hill, who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 9, 2012. Sarah and David are long-time and very active members of St. Peter’s Cathedral in downtown St. Petersburg.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Thursday July 5 to Wednesday July 11, 2012
Join NAGA at the Triennial Convention
Indianapolis, Indiana

Wednesday September 19 at 10:00 AM
Diocesan Altar Guild Board Meeting
DaySpring Conference Center
8411 – 25th Street East
Parrish, Florida

Friday October 19 to Saturday October 20, 2012
The 44th Annual Diocesan Convention
Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center
75 Taylor Street
Punta Gorda, Florida 33950

Saturday March 5, 2013
Joint Meeting of Diocesan Altar Guilds
(North and South)
Church of the Redeemer
222 South Palm Avenue
Sarasota, Florida 34236

Sunday, June 2nd thru Wednesday, June 5, 2013
Province IV Altar Guild Retreat
Kanuga Conference Center
Hendersonville, North Carolina

UPCOMING EVENTS AT KANUGA:

• LITURGICAL ARTS CONFERENCE
  August 19 – 24, 2012
  2012 Classes: Fair Linens & Embroidery; Flower Arranging; Celebrate! Banners & Vestments; Sacred Stitching: Easter Eggs; Rejuvenating the Choir; Image & Word.

• ICON WRITING: A Glimpse of the Kingdom
  November 10-16, 2012
  Led by Teresa Harrison of Coronado, CA.

HELP WANTED: Deanery Directors for the Venice and Clearwater areas.
If you love Altar Guild and enjoy sharing ideas, this is the (unpaid) job for you! Primary responsibility is to maintain phone or email contact with the altar guilds of the churches in your Deanery to let each other know what is going on. Deanery Directors are members of the DAG Board and are encouraged to attend the quarterly Board meetings at DaySpring.

If interested, call Carolann at 239-481-5410 (for Venice) or Sarah at 727-525-8340 (for Clearwater).

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VACANT

CLEARWATER

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‘ALTARGRAM’
The ‘Altargram’ goes out by email to the Altar Guild Director of each parish in the Diocese (or to Church Office or Rector if no email address available for AG Director). PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THE ‘ALTARGRAM’ AND POST IT IN YOUR AG SACRISTY, and forward an electronic copy by email to as many members of your Altar Guild as possible. Send any changes in email addresses to pcurlin@verizon.net.

SUBMIT ARTICLES by email to any Board member, or by mail to: Altargram, Post Office Box 18938, Tampa, FL 33679-8938

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