
Good SHEPHERD News

The Episcopal Church of The Good Shepherd

March

2007

A HOCKING VALLEY DEANERY MEETING with Bishop-Elect Breidenthal will be held Sunday, March 11th, at 3:30 p.m. in Nehls Hall. The meeting is intended to be part of a listening process as our Bishop-Elect learns about the hopes and dreams of the people of Southern Ohio. It will be his first opportunity to meet many of us. Please plan to attend and welcome him to Good Shepherd.

Inside . . .

- From the Rector p 1
- Outreach News..... p 4
- Vestry Highlights..... p 6
- Calendar of Events see insert



Seeking and Serving Christ in all persons

A Season of Fasting?

O flaming Heart,
Unseen and unimagined in this wilderness,
You, You alone are real, and here I've found You.
Here will I love and praise You in a tongueless death,
Until my white devoted bones,
Long bleached and polished by the winds of this Sahara,
Relive at Your command,
Rise and unfold the flowers of their everlasting spring.

--"SACRED HEART 2," in the *Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*

We make our Lenten pilgrimage in dry and desert places. There can be agony here, as we turn from sin. There can be anguish also, as we cry out to God to save us. In equal measure, Lent involves both the hard work of spiritual housecleaning and finding refreshment in the loving arms of God.

At the moment, there is a great deal of anxiety, confusion, and anger in the Anglican world. For all sides, things we thought we knew for certain have now been shown to be unreliable. What's more, people we thought we knew have acted in ways that are incomprehensible to us. The Primates, leading Archbishops and Presiding Bishops of different churches of the Anglican Communion, have once again made known their displeasure with the Episcopal Church. They have also made another set of requests (why do their requests feel so much like ultimatums?), this time with a specific timetable for our reply. These include assurances about the consecration of bishops living in same sex relationships as well as about same sex blessings. The deadline of September 30 seems to suggest that invitations to the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops will be contingent on us making a response that is deemed satisfactory.

Our Presiding Bishop has invited us into a season of fasting. Many, myself included, have been critical of a call to sacrifice which will cost some members of the Body more than others. The biblical injunction is to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2) From where I sit, this sacrifice looks a little too much like *Lord of the Flies*. We have also pointed out that one of the Old Testament lessons for Ash Wednesday, Isaiah 58:1-12, insists that the fasting which pleases God is fasting from INJUSTICE:

Is this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

I raise these issues about a Presiding Bishop who deserves our full support, not just because of her office but because of her character. I am disappointed with some of the things she has said and done, but I continue to trust her. I don't envy her job right now.

Personally, I wish that the Presiding Bishop had spoken directly to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered members of the Episcopal Church, as Bishop-elect Breidenthal did in his letter to our diocese (which I've sent to the parish e-mail list and have made available in the parish office). I wish Bishop Katharine had taken a moment to assure these sisters and brothers that she understands how painful the fast she is contemplating is. I wish she had added that she is powerless, at the moment, to stop this season of fasting but that her powerlessness to stop this particular fast for a season should not be confused with advocating it. I wish, finally, that she had tipped her hand a bit more about the direction in which she will attempt to lead the House of Bishops. Bonnie Anderson, the President of the House of Deputies, has already indicated how important it is that the bishops not act alone. She rightly points out that, according to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, the 800+ member house of lay and clerical deputies (four laypeople and four clergy from each diocese) has a necessary role to play in deciding our response.

Sound pastoral care, as well as faithful mission, demands that we assure all the children of God of their full and equal place within the Body of Christ. This is grounded in the Gospel and not in permission granted or denied by a small conclave of bishops. I hope that my personal assurance to all members of Good Shepherd, without exception, has been unequivocal—that no matter how these issues are decided, there is and will continue to be an equal place at the table for you here. I mean, first and foremost, the lgbt members of Good Shepherd. I also mean those who may disagree with me.

Our bishop-elect's letter contains two other comments that I want to highlight. First, he urges all Episcopalians in Southern Ohio to exercise the virtues of mutual love and forbearance (See Ephesians 4:1-

3), as we seek to live through a difficult chapter in the history of the Episcopal Church:

Wherever you stand on this spectrum, I ask you to keep praying that God's will be done, and to hold the whole church, including those with whom you most disagree, in prayer. My greatest concern as your bishop-elect is that the mutual respect and care that you have forged and maintained continue to mark our life together.

Second, acknowledging the Presiding Bishop's call to a period of fasting, Bishop-elect Breidenthal offers us a glimpse of his hopes for the future: "I am hopeful that this period of fasting will call the Anglican communion back to itself, and that we will remember that our strength lies in stretching, not limiting, our boundaries."

The House of Bishops will meet in March to begin to formulate a response. The issues before us will also be taken up by the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, which meets between General Conventions and includes lay and clerical members other than bishops. There will likely be some kind of interim response, but the Episcopal Church cannot respond before the General Convention in 2009, unless a special General Convention is called before then. Until then and perhaps longer, like it or not, we are in a time of prayer and fasting. The outcome is uncertain, which ought not to surprise us in a season that begins with a cross of ashes. I ask for your prayers, your honest speech and advocacy, and your love for all in this difficult time. The good news is that we can find God here too, if we open our eyes. In the words of Bishop-elect Breidenthal, "May our Lenten walk lead us to resurrection joy."

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In Christ,

Outreach News: Creation Justice Ministry

by: Dana Carlson

May we always walk gently upon this earth....
Mindful of those who will come after
Recognizing our proper place as part of,
Not apart from creation.

Adapted from "A Prayer for Global Restoration" by Michele Balek of Pax Christi

Three years ago, the Earth Justice Network was created as a local ecumenical group focused on environmental justice. . Carol Kuhre, former director of Rural Action, lead the group's effort to educate themselves and their respective congregations about issues such as the impact of coal on the local environment, disadvantaged people of the region and globally on climate change. Founding members of the group were Lutherans, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Quakers, Catholics, and Episcopalian Gifford Doxsee.

In the past year, Bill Carroll, Gifford Doxsee, Jane Forrest Redfern, and Dana Carlson have attended EJM meetings. This group, plus Geoff Buckley, Anne Braxton, and Bruce Ergood, have been working on a grant proposal for \$3000 (for more see Vestry Highlights) from ECSF to begin an environmental justice ministry in this parish. On February 22, Carol met with us to organize this ministry in partnership with the Earth Justice Network.

Proposed goals for Good Shepherd's Creation Justice ministry include teaching the youth group how to do energy audits for the church building and parishioner's homes, selling low cost compact fluorescent light bulbs (which use 1/6 the energy of regular bulbs), establishing a recycling program for CFL bulbs, expanding the reuse/recycle/reduce program already established at Good Shepherd and working with other parishes in the region on environmental programs. Geoff and Jane will partner to take the youth and other interested persons on trips to see abandoned coal mine sites, coal-burning power plants, and mining watershed restoration projects.

The meetings of the Creation Justice Committee are open to all. For more information contact Dana Carlson.

Sit... Stand... Sit... Kneel... Sit... Stand... Kneel... Eat... Kneel... Stand... Leave.

There is more to the Episcopal faith than pew aerobics on a Sunday morning. Get involved and be inspired by your faith! The Episcopal Church has so much to offer and we want our congregation members to experience the true colors of our faith tradition. That is why we are offering a new approach to Christian education with **Via Media**, a course which includes videos, conversation, and of course FOOD!

We invite members of Good Shepherd to use this opportunity to encourage friends and family to come learn more about the Christian faith as practiced in the Episcopal Church. Via Media's purpose is to educate and provide outreach to the wider community. Via Media is a great, low-pressure way to welcome people into the life of our parish.

The sessions include short videos featuring diverse groups of ordinary Episcopalians talking about their faith and the difference it makes in their lives. In addition to the videos, portions of the classes will be dedicated to open discussion and conversation. Food and beverages will be provided.

**WHEN: Wednesdays during Lent, at 6:00 p.m.,
immediately after the 5:30 Eucharist**

WHERE: Nehls Hall

**QUESTIONS? See Fr. Carroll or A.J. Stack or call the
parish office at 593-6877.**

**Come, learn about our faith, understand how it evolved, and be
proud of what it stands for!**



Vestry Highlights from the February 15, 2007 Meeting

Fr. Carroll summarized the data in the parochial report. For 2006, our average Sunday attendance is 94, more than double what we reported in 2005. Sunday School enrollment has nearly tripled, from 4 to 11. We have now recovered to about the same place we were during the interim. He noted that there has been a significant turnover in membership and that many of those who are now here were not here prior to a difficult year. He also noted that our welcome will need to be more intentional if we want to keep growing (see the discussion of new member ministry below). Early on growth is rather easy. Later on we have to work harder for it. This is absolutely crucial to the ongoing mission of Good Shepherd, as well as our financial viability as a parish. As he did in his report at the annual meeting, Fr. Carroll stressed the need to communicate a sense of urgency without inducing panic.

Anne Braxton and Fr. Carroll reported about the outreach committee meeting and a grant request emerging out of that meeting for a new ministry at Good Shepherd, with the working title Creation Justice. Toward the beginning of February, the Episcopal Community Services Foundation announced that it had \$15,000 of additional grant money for new ministries not previously funded. We are asking for the maximum amount of \$3000. Creation Justice will work closely with Earth Justice, a coalition of (so far) 7 congregational groups, who are working for ecological sustainability with a particular attention to global warming. Good Shepherd's grant request (now submitted) includes money for intergenerational educational events, including a series in Eastertide at the 9:00 Sunday School hour for adults and youth; a tour of an operating coal mine, abandoned mine sites and restoration efforts, and an operating coal power plant; and training for youth and others to perform energy audits at Good Shepherd and other participating congregations, as well as members' homes. We are also using the money to buy compact fluorescent light bulbs for sale to the congregation and will take the lead in organizing a recycling program for these bulbs in Athens (they contain mercury, which is toxic). We will be working with other nearby Episcopal congregations (Nelsonville, Gallipolis, and Marietta have offered letters of support) as well as ecumenical and interfaith partners.

Fr. Carroll reported about a meeting of the new member ministry committee. They are taking first steps in five areas. First, they are organizing a greeters program, and hope to draw on the curriculum and

training received by members of the new member ministry during the interim. Second, there will be a second new member dinner, at some point in April, at Al and Margaret Topping's home, at which those who have come since the last dinner or who were unable to attend will have a chance to eat, ask questions, and get to know some established members of the parish. Third, we need to pay attention to how we collect personal information from visitors and arrange an appropriate follow up. Fr. Carroll currently calls and/or writes everyone who shows up. We would like eventually to add lay follow up. Fourth, we need to develop welcome materials, to be distributed from welcome tables in the narthex and in Nehls hall. These materials will answer questions about Good Shepherd and the Episcopal Church that newcomers are likely to have, and many of them will be incorporated into the website as well. Fifth, we are offering the Via Media curriculum on Wednesday evening during the Lenten soup supper program. The program will run through the first couple of weeks in Easter and will be advertised widely in the community. It is intended for those who have never been to Church, those who have left the Church, and those who have been here all along. Via Media is a short introduction to the Christian faith as practiced in the Episcopal Church. It models a conversation around a common table among a diverse group of Episcopalians who do not always agree.

Fr. Carroll reported about a \$36,000 grant request to the diocesan trustees to pay for our gutters and signs. He distributed copies to the Vestry and asked for comment. He indicated that, according to people he had spoken to, the trustees would be unlikely to fund the whole amount and that these grants average about \$20,000. Once we have secured funding, we will need to accept a bid and approach the Board of Zoning Appeals about the needed variances before adopting a final design. Both projects are absolutely crucial to Good Shepherd. The sign, so that we can welcome more people, including students, into the parish. The gutters, so that the building will stay standing. Once Ted Foster receives an updated estimate for the gutters, the grant request will be submitted. Fr. Carroll noted that he had been told that the trustees are usually able to act quickly on these requests, since they discuss the proposals by e-mail.

Upon the recommendation of Jack Flemming, the Vestry decided to participate in an insurance program for those portions of our natural gas lines for which we are responsible. (It turns out that we are not eligible to participate in this program which is only for private residences.)

Dearly Beloved,

In our last newsletter, I wrote you about contributions for purchasing a new shepherd's staff for our bishop-elect, the Rev. Thomas Breidenthal. Some of you have contributed. Thank you. I want to solicit additional contributions at this time. I received a letter from Bishop Price appealing for more funds, so that the whole diocese may participate in the giving of this important gift to our new bishop, who will be consecrated in Columbus on April 28. Details about tickets have not yet been released, but I hope that we will have a large delegation from Good Shepherd. The consecration of a bishop is a moment of profound joy, and we hope that he will help us renew the Church in Southern Ohio.

The staff is an important symbol of our relationship to the new bishop. God has called Thomas Breidenthal to work as a servant, teacher, pastor, apostle, and missionary among us, as well as to guard the faith and unity of the Church. The fundamental ministry of bishops, in which we all share, is continuing the eyewitness testimony to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one is strong enough to do this work alone. As a diocese, we have participated in calling him, and it is as true to say that his ministry is an extension of our ministry as it is to say that our ministry is an extension of his.

Please pray for the bishop-elect daily, as we do at the Sunday Eucharist, and please consider making a gift to the fund to provide him with the symbols of his office. Donations should be sent to the parish office at 64 University Terrace by March 15. They should be made out to Good Shepherd with "bishop's staff" written in the memo. We will then send a single check to the diocese.

In Christ,

Sr. Faith Margaret will be here March 23rd, 24th, & 25th. She will be available for conferences as well as a meeting with the Associates. On Saturday, March 24th, there will be a Quiet Day from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. which will focus on Reconciliation and Forgiveness. Everyone is invited! For conferences call Julie Nehls at 593-7354

March Events at Good Shepherd

				1 7:30 pm - Alanon	2	3
4 8:00 am – HE I 9:00 am – Ad Ed 10:15 am – SS 10:30 am – HE II 2:00 pm – LI 5:00 pm – HE II	5 11:30 am – Bible Study 7:00 pm – Boy Scout	6 7:30 pm – Alanon 8:00 pm – AA	7 noon – Free Lunch 5:30 pm – MW Via Media 7:00 pm – CR	8 7:30 pm – Alanon	9 5:30 pm – Ultreya Potluck 6:30 pm – Ultreya 7:30 pm - YG	10
11 8:00 am – HE I 9:00 am – Ad Ed 10:15 am – SS 10:30 am – HE II 3:30 pm – Deanery Meeting	12 7:00 pm – Boy Scout	13 9:30 am – Prayer Shawl Ministry 7:30 pm – Alanon 8:00 pm – AA	14 noon – Free Lunch 5:30 pm – MW Via Media 7:00 pm – CR	15 7:00 pm – Vestry 7:30 pm – Alanon	16	17
18 8:00 am – HE I 9:00 am – Ad Ed 10:15 am – SS 10:30 am – HE II 2:00 pm – LI 5:00 pm – HE II	19 11:30 am – Bible Study 7:00 pm – Boy Scout	20 Parish Administrator out of office 7:30 pm – Alanon 8:00 pm – AA	21 Parish Administrator out of office noon – Free Lunch 5:30 pm – MW Via Media 7:00 pm – CR	22 Sr Faith Margaret’s visit 7:30 pm - Alanon	23 Sr Faith Margaret’s visit 4:00 pm – YG to leave for retreat	24 9:00 am – Quiet Day with Sr Faith Margaret 5:00 pm – YG return from retreat
25 8:00 am – HE I 9:00 am – Ad Ed 10:15 am – SS 10:30 am – HE II 5:00 pm – HE II	26 7:00 pm – Boy Scout	27 9:30 am – Prayer Shawl Ministry 7:30 pm – Alanon 8:00 pm – AA	28 noon – Free Lunch 5:30 pm – MW Via Media 7:00 pm – CR	29 7:30 pm - Alanon	30 Parish Administrator out of office	31 9:00 am – Flea Market

Key Guide:

HE I – Holy Eucharist Rite I
LI – Lindley Inn Eucharist

HE II – Holy Eucharist Rite II
SS – Sunday School

MW – Midweek Eucharist
CR – Choir Rehearsal

YG – Youth Group Meeting
Ad Ed – Adult Education