

Connecting Generations

IN THIS ISSUE:

*Letting Our Light
Shine*

1

Youth Come Knocking

5

*The Diaconate of
Young Adulthood*

8

The Wander Years

11

Letting Our Light Shine

BY STEPHEN TREVER

On Sunday June 5, close to 600 people from the community of Medford, Massachusetts turned out for Let's Move! Medford, a field day/information fair centered on raising healthy and active children. The event took its name from Michelle Obama's campaign to end child obesity, and was part of Grace Church's ongoing attempt to be a positive agent for transformation in the larger community.

The idea for the event emerged out of the work of six parishioners taking part in the Leadership Development Initiative (LDI), a diocesan campaign to develop leadership skills among the laity using the model of community organization developed by Marshall Ganz. Our group was the second group that Grace Church has put through the program, and the second group to score a great success. (The first group recently received an award from the EPA for its work in orga-

nizing clean ups of several local community parks.)

The vision of the LDI model centers on the power of personal stories to connect people on shared values thereby creating strong bonds of commitment in order to effect change.

For this project our initial group of six began by telling their stories to one another. Through those exchanges it was determined that the group was well equipped to do a project in the area of education around children's health. The idea for the field day resulted from our struggle to come up with a project that would fit the course requirements for an event that would enable leadership, organize community, and lend itself to some kind of measurable goal. With 278 children registered, we practically doubled our goal.

Much of this success, no doubt,

came from an early strategic decision to align our project with Michelle Obama's Let's Move! By utilizing resources that already existed as part of that campaign, we were able to easily communicate what we were trying to do to the various community partners we recruited. At the end of the day, over thirty different community organizations and businesses participated. Some of those came as the result of our efforts to enlist them, and a few came as the word of what we were doing spread and they came to us excited by what we were doing.

Personally, one of the most exciting moments of the experience came on that Sunday afternoon when I looked onto the field and saw hundreds of children running through an obstacle course, doing yoga, hitting boards with a local Karate studio, lifting weights, dancing, hula-hooping, learning to pass a ball with a lacrosse stick with members of the Medford High girls Lacrosse team, taking shots on a goal with Medford High's soccer team, and generally enjoying themselves to the music of a local DJ. At that moment I remembered the night when six of us began brainstorming and we had the vision of children playing on a field while parents had the opportunity to connect with community resources to help them raise healthy families.

I was amazed that the vision had become a reality.

Even more amazing is that it wasn't really all that difficult. Yes there was hard work and many hours spent making it happen, but the work mostly consisted of making connections with people in the community, both within the church community and outside in the larger community. In the end it was through simple one-on-one conversations that we were able to get commitments from so many people. It was through conversations with parents in the community that we were able to get the approval of the superintendent in order to pass out fliers to every pre-K to 5th grade child in the Medford school district. It was through conversations that we were able to secure the location, and get food and water donated. It was through conversations that we got connected to the mayor and other city officials who in turn showed their support by attending the event with their families.

And that is the real beauty of this model and its implications for church communities. Namely, that the very process itself builds community. Since the event, we have been in contact with several of the participants and are continuing to explore ways that we can build on these partnerships.

For example, one of our participants is now offering free Zumba instruction at the church every Wednesday night this summer.

In the grand scheme of things one field day hardly impacts the greater issues of children's health, but the turn out and response assures us that we have done something important. I am so happy that Grace Church is growing its reputation as a church committed to the wellness of its community. This is a church that is not hiding its light under a bushel basket.

Stephen Trever serves at Grace Episcopal Church in Medford, Massachusetts as part of the Diocese of Massachusetts' internship program.

Resources

- Leadership Development Initiatives: <http://diomass-leads.org/about-ldi/>
- Let's Move America's Move to Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids: <http://www.letsmove.gov/>
- Structuring Leadership Teams: <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/structuring-leadership-teams/>

Editor's Letter

One of my earliest memories of church is of the kindergarten room in the basement of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Wakefield, Mass. It is Epiphany, and there is a large felt board on the wall with figures representing the Magi's visit to the baby Jesus. Among the felt figures are Mary and Joseph, various shepherds, the three wise men, and of course the baby Jesus. Also represented were a donkey, sheep, camels, and other animals. In the background was the manger, the stable, some palm trees, and the star.

The characters taking part in this Bible story represent the diversity of our common life. Parents and children. Young shepherds. Older sages from foreign lands. A variety of animals. Each character contributes to the richness of the story; if one were missing, we would feel the void.

Our common life continues to be enriched by the diversity among us. The July/August issue of Vestry Papers explores ways that congregations and dioceses bring people from different generations together in common purpose, creating opportunities for meaningful connection.

Our July articles relate to the younger members of our congregations. We'll share the story of a congregation interested in promoting healthy lifestyles for children as well as strategies for helping youth and young adults navigate their personal faith journey.

In this issue you'll find:

- "Letting Our Light Shine," by Stephen Trever, demonstrates how a small group of parishioners from Grace Episcopal Church applied the principles of the Leadership Development Initiative to bring about Let's Move Medford, a community-based program directed at building awareness around children's health.
- Virginia Citrano's "Youth Comes Knocking" shares the story the faith and determination of two high school age students who, as part of a conscious effort by the Diocese of Newark to more fully involve young people in every part of the life of our church, will represent the diocese at the Episcopal Church's 2012 General Convention as dele-

gates.

- In "The Diaconate of Young Adulthood," Jason Sierra reflects on the gifts that young adults searching for their place in the world can bring to the Church, and invites us to reexamine our expectations of their role in our church and the world.
- Ed Ziegler's "The Wander Years" offers an approach for helping students navigate their spiritual journey as they prepare to leave the safety of their home congregation in pursuit of educational or vocational opportunities.
- Our youngest contributor, Ryan Mahoney, shares how a ministry grew from one congregation's wish 10 years ago to provide bicycles to children at Christmas to "Adopt-A-Family Bikes," an intergenerational and community wide effort that provided over 250 bikes as Christmas gifts last year for families in need of assistance.
- In "Multigenerational Reading Camp," Allison Duvall also shares a story of a 10-year-old

ministry, which has spread from a one-week camp serving 32 campers to nine locations throughout central, southeastern, and northern Kentucky. Keeping our commitment to offer more Vestry Papers resources in Spanish, this article is presented in both English and Spanish.

■ “Care for the Troops” by Robert Certain offers resources to congregations interested in supporting active military and veterans of the current and past conflicts and their families.

■ In “Filling the Void,” the time in which families with recently baptized children disappear from parish life, Valerie Bailey Fischer shares the pipeline model she uses to help congregational leaders develop strategies to attract and support young families.

To make it easier for congregational leaders to find the resources offered through ECF Vital Practices, we are introducing a new ECF Vital Practices button and inviting congregations,

dioceses, and organizations to include ECF Vital Practices as a resource on their websites. Using the URLs below, you can add the ECF Vital Practices logo to your website and it will act as a direct link to the resources available through this site.

The logo button is available in three sizes:

■ Small button: <http://episcopal-foundation.smugmug.com/Other/Vital-Practices-Logo-Buttons/i-7S4gS6k/0/S/ECFVPLo216x43-S.jpg>

■ Medium button: <http://episcopal-foundation.smugmug.com/Other/Vital-Practices-Logo-Buttons/i-v6vtmpp/0/S/ECFVPLo450x90-S.jpg>

■ Large button: <http://episcopal-foundation.smugmug.com/Other/Vital-Practices-Logo-Buttons/i-5MKWtbq/0/S/ECFVPSQ100x100-S.jpg>

To save any of these images on your computer, upload the image using the link provided, click on the little chain link icon, and past

in the URL.

As always, I invite you to share your “Connecting Generations” resources in the Your Turn section, by participating in VP Talks, and/or posting comments related to our articles, blog posts, or other content.

Faithfully,

Nancy

NANCY DAVIDGE
Editor, *ECF Vital Practices*

Youth Comes Knocking

BY VIRGINIA CITRANO

In the Episcopal faith, children are full members from birth. We create Sunday school programs for them, and choirs, vacation bible schools, and retreats. But even when they cross into the age of reason, we often fail to include our youth in one of the most central aspects of our faith, the governance of our church. Until they come knocking, that is.

But knock they did in late January, quite loudly in fact. Caroline Christie, age 17 and Gibson Oakley, age 16, came to Diocesan Convention and stood for election as lay deputies to General Convention in 2012, alongside seven other candidates who were often decades their elders. Grounded in their belief that they had both been called to serve the Diocese of Newark, the young people carried the day. The story of their election is a story of their faith and determination, and of a conscious effort by the Diocese of Newark to more fully involve young people in every part of the life of our church.

“The youth were stepping up and living their baptismal covenant of action,” says Erik G. Soldwedel,

director of the diocese’s young adult urban internship program, NEWARK ACTS. “And they were doing it with respect and every bit of integrity that they have.”

They also weren’t doing it alone. This year at diocesan convention, all 10 districts in the Diocese of Newark were represented by youth deputies, and there were 10 youth pages. Among them were several young people who had never been to a convention before, diocesan or General. “Those who had been there before did a great job of shepherding the others along,” says Kaileen Alston, the diocese’s Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. “It’s important to have that for leadership development.”

Christie and Oakley had their share of leadership experience, through activities like the diocese’s Youth Event Planning Team. Christie had been a page at the previous Diocesan Convention, and both had attended the last General Convention as spectators. But when Alston asked them last May to stand for election as deputies, they hesitated. “Oh god, I can’t do this, I’ll be way too busy,” Oakley recalls thinking. “Then, Caroline

Christie said ‘I’m considering this, but I don’t want to do it alone’. We agreed to try together.”

General Convention, held every three years, is the principal governing body of the Episcopal Church. Each diocese elects eight deputies to the convention’s House of Deputies, four each from the clergy and laity. At this year’s Diocesan Convention, there were nine candidates in each category.

Alston saw Christie and Oakley as strong candidates from the beginning. “These two kids don’t need resume material,” she says. “They were doing it because of their passion for the church and their desire to bring a new perspective to church governance, as well as their confidence that this is their church to run.”

To help them prepare their candidacies, Alston put them in touch with Louie Crew. The well-known activist had announced late last year that he was stepping out of active roles in church leadership to be a teacher to a new generation of church leaders.

The candidates and their mentor

talked about the role and responsibilities of a deputy, and as the convention grew closer, they emailed Crew the speeches they intended to deliver. And they got a foretaste of how hard it might be to be both a church official and a high school student when this winter's snowstorms pushed Christie's mid-terms into the same slot as the convention's candidates forum.

"They didn't come expecting to be elected simply because they were young people," says Crew. "They came with a passion for the church. Not the church of the future," he adds. "This is about the church of the now. They are prepared to be that in an important way."

In his presentation, Oakley delivered a succinct message that stressed how he could represent not just youth, but all Episcopalians through three key issues: domestic violence, volunteerism and the environment, and equal rights for the gay community. "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are discriminated against every day," Oakley told the deputies. "Over eighty-five percent of LGBT students have experienced some form of harassment at school. Many of these teens feel that they have nowhere to turn and some, unfortunately, kill themselves. I believe that our own churches should be places where gay teens may turn in times of trouble." He said that

he would like to see the Episcopal Church not only bless same-sex civil unions, but also perform same-sex marriage ceremonies. "As a gay man," he added, "I would like to walk down the aisle in a church and hear the celebrant utter the words 'I now pronounce you husbands'."

The remarks brought those present to their feet in a loud cheer. "A lot of people said after the forum that I had their vote," Oakley recalls, "but Louie had said that it usually takes quite a few ballots. But I was surprised how many votes I received on the first ballot. We did two ballots Friday evening and then we had to break. It was like a reality show when they interrupt the results for a commercial."

When the balloting resumed on Saturday, it didn't take long for Oakley to become the third elected deputy. "When they put the results on the screen, I looked up but it didn't register. Then my friend said, 'You got it'. But it really struck me when Kaileen came over and gave me a big hug. I realized that what I had worked for was really coming true."

Christie would have her own moment of drama. As the balloting wore on, she found herself competing against one candidate for the final spot—a candidate who had the same last name as hers.

Caroline Christie's grandmother, Marge Christie, had stood for election in every ballot since 1976, winning or being first alternate every time. But this election would prove different. Marge Christie rose and announced to those assembled that she was withdrawing her candidacy, and embraced her granddaughter. Caroline Christie was elected. (The moment was captured in a video on <http://www.youtube.com/user/dionewark#p/a/u/0/17rSWxPsgMQ>).

"I was delighted," says Marge Christie. "She is a very bright, energetic, interested person. I am absolutely delighted that she cares to be involved and is involved."

The drama over the balloting had almost overcome Caroline Christie. "I thought about withdrawing at one point," she says. "But Kaileen told me that if it were something I felt called to do I should stay with it." She has a clear sense of her mission going forward: To help girls become church leaders, in the U.S. and abroad. "One of the issues that I am most interested in is how the church works on an international level," she says.

The reaction to the election rippled quickly out to their home parishes, and not only among the youth. "I was so tired, I didn't go to church the next day," says Oakley. "But my mom told me people in the parish

joked they had had to arm wrestle each other to be able to announce what had happened.”

Soldwedel believes that the election sends a clear message to the youth of the Diocese of Newark, which joins a growing movement of youth activism (there were 25 deputies under the age of 30 at the 2009 General Convention, according to Crew). “If you want to be involved, you have to be there,” he says. “And it’s OK to act into your faith. You have to know that if you stick your chin out you may get hit, but there is a faith community out there that will stand by you because we all believe in the same God.”

Oakley and Christie have a lot of work ahead of them to get ready for the General Convention in Indianapolis. “Caroline and I will go through it together and we are very excited,” says Oakley, who has also been elected to the vestry of his church. “The other deputies have been so welcoming about answering questions. I am confident that, with their help, I will be able to do my duties. The youth in the diocese are excited that they will have two young people representing them in Indianapolis.”

Just one small problem: When Christie and Oakley travel to meetings, because of their age, they will need chaperones. “We never

thought of that before,” says Alston, “but it’s a beautiful problem to have.”

“Hopefully other dioceses that think that youth aren’t ready or aren’t interested in church governance will see what happened in the Diocese of Newark and be inspired. Everybody should be represented at the table and we are doing our part.”

Virginia Citrano is a former vestry member and junior warden at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Verona, N.J. She also teaches the church’s pre-school/kindergarten Sunday school class. During the week, she runs a hyperlocal news site, MyVeronaNJ.com. This article originally appeared in the Voice Online on March 16, 2011 and is reprinted with permission from the Diocese of Newark.

Resources

- NEWARK ACTS: The Young Adult Urban Institute Program of The Episcopal Diocese of Newark <http://www.dioceseof-newark.org/NEWARK-ACTS/>
- The General Convention of the Episcopal Church: <http://generalconvention.org/gc>

The Diaconate of Young Adulthood

BY JASON SIERRA

Three years ago this Pentecost I found myself worshipping at an open-air church on the Garden Island of Hawaii: Kauai. I had flown down to interview for the position of youth and young adult minister at one of two Episcopal Churches on the island. I was 25. As it was a half-time position I spent much of my visit seeking out other part-time gigs: outreach coordinator for an HIV/AIDS service organization, Spanish teacher at a local private school, hula dancer... Meanwhile, I knew my brother was driving the streets of Houston, Texas dropping off small bundles of the first-ever issue of a photocopied 'zine we were calling *Episcorific*. Inside the front cover it read:

"The big idea? Young adults are not big churchgoers generally. Our lives are hectic and often unstable. We are at the mercy of the education system, bud-ding careers, frequent moves, and our own indecisiveness. We are justifiably self-involved as we try to make our place in this world, define the bounds of our lives. But for many of us the church is an important site for that self-creation, a place of expanding the me-box to let God

in. So, this is just another attempt at bringing the few, the brave, the young adult Episcopalians of this diocese into closer communion."

Self-effacing, folksy, and tongue-in-cheek, the 'zine nonetheless was an honest call for community, if community "in transition." Tired of waiting for our generation's "faith manifesto," we decided to build a forum from which it could be written, a space carved out within the church for us to speak: openly, honestly, creatively, together.

13 issues later, I've finally realized that the creation of the forum itself and not the words written there was in fact the manifesto, the manifest reality, for which we were looking: a space for young adults to authentically and fully engage the church even while they wrestled wholeheartedly with the questions of young adulthood: Who am I to be? Where am I to live? With whom? Where do my values lie? Who can I trust?

We, as a church, often see the double-commitment of young adulthood—fully immersed in the world and struggling to make sense of

faith—as a weakness and a challenge. We all too quickly assume the attitude we developed fifty years ago. We're afraid and overwhelmed, under-formed and content, and so we say, "Let them drift. They'll come back." But in reality, they won't, and both they and we will be poorer for it.

The reality is that the socially acceptable options for authentic spiritual life today are infinite. If young adults prioritize spirituality at all, they will have the world's religions to choose from, and in the end they'll probably develop their own path, built from bits and pieces they've collected along the way, often with only episodic guidance, mentorship, and community. As a young adult, I know this is not satisfying. It is not enough.

As Episcopalians we struggle with the word "right." We call it humility to deny an "exclusive" hold on truth, but all too often, in an attempt to be accommodating we underplay the tremendous gifts we have to offer, and we forget the transformational nature of sustained commitment to community and the spiritual processes

that happen therein. We forget that through the structures of our tradition we actually do create space for the Spirit.

One such structure we've undervalued in the latest iteration of our tradition has been the diaconate, a station of incredible freedom and commitment. In Acts 6, the Seven were sent out to share the word of God. The diaconate is commissioned to lead the charge outward, to authentically and courageously forge the connections between the world and the church, to care for the widow and orphan on behalf of the church, and to challenge and expand the limits of the church's embrace to include that same widow and orphan within the holy community. The diaconate is that liminal space where the world and the church overlap in a single process of integration, of blurring the boundaries, exchanging and translating information, practices, and values. In essence, it is the rightful place of the people of God, ever widening the embrace of Christ's body on earth.

In some ways young adults cannot help but to occupy just such a process and a social location. Perched precariously on the border between an institutional culture trying to uproot itself from the 1960's and find fertile ground in the 21st century and

the popular and evolving cultures in which they have come to consciousness, theirs is necessarily a work of translation. Of both world and church, we would do well to affirm both identities. Now, embracing and making space for that reality is a scary thing for many in our communities, the earnestness and the immediacy of the struggle of young adulthood is fiery and often unsettling. We'd rather keep it at arms length until the flames die down, until the iron is forged, the metal cooled.

Our society is so outcome-driven that it can become difficult to sit with any process, especially one so unfinished. But that is precisely what it means to be sacramental people, to allow the mundane, immediate, and unfinished to become the holy and eternal.

Young Adulthood is a sacrament, and I'd venture, a sacramental diaconate. Young adulthood can and should represent for us an outward and visible sign of the grace that is continually tearing down our temple walls to build the kingdom broader and wider than we could ever have imagined. Young adults can be a living sacrament of the community's vocation as a process; a reminder and a call to engage the world with passion and excitement, knowing full well that God's kingdom lies just over the horizon

Like the formal diaconate, the sacramental diaconate of young adulthood does not somehow absolve us of our responsibility to serve, sending "them" out to build houses and work in food pantries, while we finance and pray. Instead, as sacrament they remind us of the way in which we are called to engage the world: to proclaim the Gospel in our own voice, to call out from the back of the Church "Yay God! Now let's go!"

Our call in working with, ministering to, and alongside young adults is to honor their vocation, to create forums for exercising that vocation, and to feed the depth of their curiosity with the richness of our traditions. This is done knowing full well the dangerous consequences - for both young adults and the church more broadly - that we might, just might, be carried into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Jason Sierra is the Officer for Young Adult Leadership and Vocations at the Episcopal Church Center. He is based in Seattle, Washington in the Diocese of Olympia and a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Resources

- **Episcorific:** A web 'zine for and by young adults. Read back issues at: <http://www.episcorific.org/>. The publication is currently going through a period of re-formation and will relaunch in Advent 2011.
- **The Seven:** Sponsored by the Association of Episcopal Deacons, <http://www.diakonoia.org/>, The Seven is a pre-discernment discernment program for young adults interested in exploring the diaconate. Over ten months, participants will meet regularly with a cohort and mentor, engage in theological exploration, and develop a project in their community.
- **Episcopal Leadership Institute for Young Adults:** A new initiative of the Office for Young Adult and Campus Ministries, the institute is currently working to create short term immersion experiences for small groups of young adults around areas of advocacy and ministry of particular interest to them. Past topics have included Gender Justice and Middle East Peace; upcoming topics include Immigration, EcoJustice, Art and Faith, and Public Health. Find out more at http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109462_107663_ENG_HTML.htm
- **Young Adult and Campus Ministries:** Check out other great opportunities for 18-30 year olds and those who serve them in the Episcopal Church. http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109462_ENG_HTML.htm
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/campusministries>
- **Resource Library:** Offers resources related to curricula and vocational discernment as well as a link to Broadcast, the e-letter of the Office of Young Adult Ministry. http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109462_43859_ENG_HTML.htm

The Wander Years

BY ED ZIEGLER

For several years now I have been working with youth and young adults in the Diocese of Texas. Every year I volunteer to teach a few courses for the summer Christian Leadership Conference for high school aged youth from around the diocese. These students are the ones who have shown an interest in their faith and spirituality as they progress through high school and feel a call to help develop the future for youth and young adults in the diocese. I have been working with the idea of "Life After Youth Group" when teaching at CLC. What does life after youth group look like? What does it mean for each of us? What can we do to make it what we want and need it to be?

We know as a church there are commonly several years lost in our youthful spiritual journey. From the ages of 16 – 22 we start to see youth making their own choices about what their spiritual journey looks like. They are no longer being told what to do and listening, or what to think and listening. It is the age where we must make our own conclusions about what our faith life means to us. Is this my church or my parent's church? Is

this what I believe or what I was told to believe? How does my faith work with the life I am living now?

The students I work with at CLC are the ones who have shown an interest in continuing their faith journey by participating as they move from high school into college, but even some of them get lost along the way. Why is this? Do they not feel free to ask the questions? Do they think they have to have all the answers? Do they know it is ok to question along the way?

I recently heard from a new Episcopalian that it was refreshing to hear clergy say that they did not have all the answers. We are always growing. Scripture is always changing in what it means to us at each moment. Every time we hear a prayer it touches us in a different way. Youth need to know this is ok. The best way for them to stay active in their faith is to keep asking the questions and questioning the answers. This is the only way to keep moving forward on the journey. We have to keep learning as we go.

Youth making the transition to

college have even more choices to make and life is changing even faster so it is hard to stay in touch with faith. There are many ways to stay engaged, but the church must do its job to keep the young mind interested.

In my course on life after youth group we talk about how to find a new church and how to stay connected to your home parish. It is a choice to go to church or get involved. In college there are many pressures for time and it is hard to pick church over sleep. Being active in faith is like an exercise program, it has to be a habit. Once out of practice, it is hard to go back. If life in youth group was good, we need to encourage youth to stay involved, perhaps to become a sponsor and help out. Encourage them to write back to their home parishes to keep them informed on what they are doing, to join a new church and volunteer and most of all, to be an example for friends and make attending to their faith a habit.

Ed Ziegler is the Youth and Young adult Minister at Trinity **Church**

in Houston, Texas. This article was originally printed in the April 2010 of Broadcast as “The Six Years that Got Lost.” It is reprinted with permission.

Resources

- Life After Youth Group – Discussion Questions: <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/life-after-youth-group-discussion-questions/>

Adopt-A-Family Bikes

By Ryan Mahoney (as told to his mom, Jan Mahoney)

Each holiday season, members of St. Timothy's Parish in Danville, California set aside part of their busy Christmas preparation schedules to provide gifts to the area's needy families as part of the Adopt-A-Family outreach program. The Monument Crisis Center in Concord, a local relief organization, provides lists of families with specific needs; donors can choose to buy gifts for families who would not receive them otherwise.

About ten years ago, parishioners noted that many families requested bicycles for their children and themselves. For many, bikes served as their primary transportation to school and work. Donors, wanting to meet this need, were faced with the potentially expensive prospect of buying a lot of new bikes. While used bikes could fill the need, the condition of donated bikes ranged from shiny and barely ridden to rusty and barely usable. A simple question arose – who might repair these bikes and make them useable?

First to take on the bike repair challenge was Helen Coleman, a member of St Timothy's who had experience working at a bike shop

while in college. She and some older members of the congregation began by pumping up a lot of tires and doing whatever repairs they could.

This is how "Adopt-A-Family Bikes" began. Dave Struck, who also repaired bikes during college, became involved, and was soon joined by a handful of dads. The group worked in the basement of St Timothy's with tools, degreaser, rags, and some parts. Included in this group was Rand Mahoney, whose family had just recently begun attending St. Timothy's. On a couple of nights, his son Ryan (then eight years old) joined him.

"At first, I just hung around and waited for my dad," says Ryan, who is now 15 and a sophomore at San Ramon Valley High School. "Then I started to help out with simple jobs like holding parts. I just wanted something to do, but I started learning a lot about bikes and how to fix them. Pretty soon I was begging my mom to let me go to "Bikes" on school nights and weekends. I liked being with my dad and the other guys, but I really liked seeing how old broken greasy bikes could be changed into gifts

for kids who really need them."

Year by year, the program has grown: in the number of agencies requesting bikes, the number of volunteers, the space required to work on the bikes, and the number of donated bikes. Last year Adopt-A-Family Bikes served at least nine agencies, occupied a large donated empty retail space in a local shopping center, and was able to distribute over 250 bikes thanks to the over 50 volunteers who cleaned and repaired them. In addition to St Timothy's members, many of the volunteers come from the local community. Dads, moms, co-workers, scouts, sport teams, foster kids, local bike shop employees, and seniors (even an 85 year old!) have worked side by side often at odd hours trying to fix up as many bikes as possible to meet the Christmas distribution deadline.

Each year, Adopt-A-Family Bikes has been financially self sustaining. Bicycle donors are asked to contribute five to ten dollars to help with expenses for parts and materials. Most parts are bought at cost or donated from local bike shops. Local retail management groups

donate the space for the temporary repair shop and a donated truck is used to deliver the finished bikes to the agencies that receive them for distribution.

Ryan describes his experience helping distribute bikes two years ago. "My parents let me skip part of a day at school to take part in handing out bikes at Monument Crisis Center. It was so cool to see bikes I had worked on and then see the faces and hear the stories of the people who got them. There was so much excitement about how the kids would love their bikes or how the bikes would help them. Working on the bikes was fun, but handing them out was the best."

It is clear that involvement in the Adopt-A-Family Bike program has had a profound effect on Ryan. "I've gained valuable mechanical knowledge about bikes from the experienced adults I worked with. I'm sure that working with them as a team has taught me a lot too. This year I am planning my Eagle Scout project to include Adopt-A-Family Bikes and I plan to involve many scouts and more volunteers. This is a project that has benefits on so many levels."

Ryan sees great benefit in how he has developed strong working and personal relationships with people who give a lot of time

and energy to help others, and is thankful to have such great role models for himself and the other young people who volunteer at "Bikes." He also mentions other benefits, such as plenty of refreshments and food donated by some of the volunteers.

"Adopt-A-Family Bikes is really a lot of fun. There is a lot of camaraderie and a great sense of accomplishment. I love to take people to the shop and show them the rows and rows of shiny clean beautiful bikes ready to be given away. It's really a great feeling. I am blessed to be part of this outreach program at St Tim's, and to see how it has grown each year."

Ryan Mahoney and his dad are actively involved in the Adopt-A-Family Bike program at St. Timothy's in Danville, California. Now a high school sophomore, Ryan, who started volunteering with "Bikes" when he was eight years old, is a member of the Boy Scouts of America and is incorporating Adopt-A-Family Bike into his Eagle Scout project.

Resources

■ Adopt-a-Family Bikes: <http://sites.google.com/site/adopta-familybikes/>

■ Adopt-a-Family Bikes Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Adopt-A-Family-Bikes/123680694361208>

■ Have a specific question? Email Tania at: taniahd@comcast.net

■ Source for low cost bike helmets and locks: email Kathy Hoffman at KHoffmann@eastonbellsports.com

Multigenerational Reading Camp

By Allison Duvall

In the first year of his episcopacy, Bishop Stacy Sauls was assessing the gifts and challenges facing the Diocese of Lexington. He saw the problems plaguing the Appalachian region: high levels of poverty and rampant illiteracy. He saw the gifts the Church had to offer: the Cathedral Domain, our beautiful camp and conference center; our legacy of strong camp ministry; and a wealth of educators in our pews. The gifts and strength could, should, and must address the problems. Reading Camp was born.

Reading Camp began in the summer of 2002: one week of camp at the Cathedral Domain, with 32 campers and 30 volunteers. Now finishing our tenth summer of Reading Camp programs, we have served 1,172 children at nine sites in nearly a year's worth of camp weeks throughout central, south-eastern, and northern Kentucky.

Since its inception, Reading Camp has been a resource to struggling students, at no cost to their families. Over 90% of the children we serve receive free or reduced lunches in their schools, and the majority live below the poverty line. Living in the hopelessness of

poverty, it is little wonder why the children struggle with literacy. In their families, the primary struggle is for basic necessities, for survival. There is little time to devote to academics and learning.

The children who attend Reading Camp have repeatedly failed in school, have given up on themselves and associate learning with embarrassment and a feeling of worthlessness. Each year, campers tell us on the first day, "I can't do this. I'm stupid." We exist to reverse these associations, to let the children see their potential and ability. And, most of all, we exist so they can come to a safe place entirely focused on their wellbeing and learning. We're a place where they can be children - joyous, curious, imaginative children, reveling in the pleasures of discovery and learning.

Volunteer Reading Camp recruiters visit elementary school teachers and counselors across the diocese to explain the Reading Camp program and deliver camper applications. School personnel identify students who most need a "boost" during the summer, to gain new and review old skills, to

ensure they have a firmer foundation on which to begin the next school year. Children are recruited, applications are processed, letters of acceptance sent, and then we launch into planning our camps. We provide round-trip transport to children in need, and then - camp begins!

The camps themselves are dynamic, vibrant multigenerational communities, staffed by volunteers from across our diocese, the country, and the world (20 states and two foreign countries). It is not just a coincidence that Reading Camp is multigenerational - it is quintessential to who we are and how the ministry works.

Each volunteer staff is composed of three primary "types" of volunteers: counselors, teachers, and support staff.

■ Counselors are our young adult generation, ranging in age from 15-24: high school, college, and graduate students. They serve as chaperones to the campers, but more importantly, they are role models and friends. During the week, the counselors develop leadership skills, the ability to mentor, to

problem-solve, to create safe structure and routine, and to place others' needs before their own.

- Our teachers are middle-aged to older adults, both current and retired teachers. In recent years, we've seen an increase in the number of young adults interested in pursuing programs like TeachforAmerica, who would like to get teaching, administrative, and leadership experience through Reading Camp. So, we now include young adults as teachers, pairing them as assistants with more mature or experienced certified teachers.
- Our support staff members range in age from young adult to older adult. Support staff members read with the children in the mornings, make lunches and snacks, facilitate activities in the afternoons, and ensure that the dormitories and cabins are kept clean.

The goal of each camp program is to build a cohesive community with calm routine and structure, with flexibility to allow friendships to blossom across generations. It is vital that the children experience a well-functioning multigenerational community based on mutual respect, love, and care. It is in this community that they are inspired

to share their ideas, explore their own creativity, and form healthy relationships with adults.

This is Reading Camp: a program to build children's literacy skills, and an immersion experience into a diverse multigenerational community. The children are socialized in a way that brings them out of their shells, builds trust, and makes them know, deeply, that they are loved, they are capable, and they can do it – whatever "it" may be.

The volunteers work to create ideal Christian community, to live into our Baptismal Covenant, and to realize the Kingdom. We are able to do this, I believe, because it is all of us, together: all generations, all people, from all places.

If you would like more information about the Reading Camp program and how to discern whether your church or diocese could form one of its own, please contact Allison Duvall, Executive Director, at readingcamp1@diolex.org, (859) 252-6527 x110, or visit www.readingcamprocks.org.

Allison Duvall is the executive director of Reading Camp. Now in its 10th year, Reading Camp has sites throughout Kentucky (Dioceses of Lexington and Kentucky) as well as in Iowa, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia. There are also two

Reading Camp sites in South Africa and Liberia.

Resources

- Reading Camp: <https://www.readingcamprocks.org>
- Stories from Reading Camp Volunteers: <https://readingcamprocks.org/connect/share-your-story>

Campamento de Lectura Multigeneracional

Por Allison Duvall

En el primer año de su episcopado, el obispo Stacy Sauls dedicó tiempo a evaluar los dones que poseía y los desafíos que enfrentaba la Diócesis de Lexington. Vio los problemas que asolaban a la región de los Apalaches: pobreza y analfabetismo generalizados. Vio los dones que la Iglesia tenía que ofrecer: Cathedral Domain, el hermoso campamento y centro de conferencias, nuestro legado de sólido ministerio en campamentos y una profusión de educadores en los bancos de nuestras iglesias. Nuestros dones y puntos fuertes podían y tenían que tratar los problemas y así fue como nació el Campamento de Lectura.

El Campamento de Lectura comenzó en el verano de 2002: una semana de campamento en Cathedral Domain con 32 acampantes y 30 voluntarios. Ahora, a fines de nuestro décimo verano de programas del Campamento de Lectura, hemos servido a 1,172 acampantes en nueve campamentos en cerca del equivalente a un año de semanas de campamento en toda la zona del centro, sudeste

y norte de Kentucky.

Desde sus albores, el Campamento de Lectura ha sido un recurso para los estudiantes con dificultades sin costo alguno para sus familias. Más del 90% de los niños a los que atendemos reciben almuerzos gratuitos o a precios reducidos en sus escuelas y la mayoría de ellos son de familias con ingresos inferiores al nivel federal de pobreza. No es ninguna sorpresa que estos niños que viven en la desesperanza de la pobreza extrema tengan problemas de alfabetización. En sus familias, la lucha principal es cubrir las necesidades básicas, la mera supervivencia. Hay poco tiempo para dedicarlo a aprendizaje.

Los niños que asisten al Campamento de Lectura han fracasado repetidamente en la escuela y asocian el aprendizaje con sentirse avergonzados y sin valor. Todos los años los acampantes nos dicen el primer día, “No puedo hacer esto. Soy estúpido”. Existimos para invertir esas asociaciones, para hacer que los niños

vean su potencial y habilidad.

Y, ante todo, existimos para que puedan ir a un lugar seguro concentrado enteramente en su bienestar y aprendizaje. Somos un lugar en el que pueden ser niños: personitas alegres, curiosas e imaginativas que disfrutan los placeres del descubrimiento y el aprendizaje.

Voluntarios del Campamento de Lectura visitan a maestros y consejeros de escuelas primarias de toda la diócesis para explicarles el programa del Campamento de Lectura y repartir solicitudes para acampantes. El personal de las escuelas identifica a los estudiantes que necesitan un “refuerzo” durante el verano, para adquirir nuevas y repasar viejas habilidades y asegurar que tengan una educación más sólida al comienzo del próximo año escolar. Reclutamos niños, procesamos solicitudes, enviamos cartas de aceptación y posteriormente nos dedicamos a planificar nuestros campamentos. Proporcionamos transporte de ida y vuelta a los niños que lo necesitan y después empieza el campamento.

Los campamentos son comunidades multigeneracionales dinámicas y vibrantes, con un personal de voluntarios de toda nuestra diócesis, el país y el mundo (20 estados y dos países extranjeros). No es ninguna coincidencia que el Campamento de Lectura sea multigeneracional: es la quintaesencia de quienes somos y de la manera en que funciona nuestro ministerio.

Todo el personal voluntario está compuesto por tres “tipos” de voluntarios: consejeros, maestros y personal de apoyo.

- Los consejeros son de la generación de nuestros adultos jóvenes, de 15 a 24 años de edad, graduados de la escuela secundaria y de la universidad. Sirven como acompañantes de los acampantes, pero más importante aún es que son modelos de conducta y amigos. Durante la semana los consejeros desarrollan destrezas de liderazgo, la habilidad de servir como mentores y de resolver problemas, la creación de estructuras y rutinas seguras, y la capacidad de poner las necesidades de los demás antes de las de ellos.
- Nuestros maestros son adultos de mediana edad a maduros que son maestros en la actualidad o están jubilados. En años recientes hemos visto un

aumento en el número de adultos jóvenes interesados en participar en programas como TeachforAmerica deseosos de adquirir experiencia de enseñanza, administrativa y de liderazgo mediante el Campamento de Lectura. Así que ahora incluimos adultos jóvenes como maestros, uniéndolos a maestros certificados más maduros o con más experiencia.

- Los miembros de nuestro personal de apoyo varían en edad desde adultos jóvenes hasta personas maduras. Los miembros del personal de apoyo leen con los niños por las mañanas, preparan almuerzos y refrigerios, facilitan actividades por las tardes y aseguran que las residencias estudiantiles y las cabañas se mantengan limpias.

El objetivo de los programas de los campamentos es formar una comunidad cohesiva con rutinas y estructuras calmas y la flexibilidad necesaria para permitir que florezcan amistades entre generaciones. Es fundamental que los niños estén inmersos en una comunidad basada en el respeto mutuo, el amor y la atención: una comunidad que los inspire a compartir sus ideas, explorar su propia creatividad y formar relaciones saludables con adultos.

Este es el Campamento de Lectura, un programa creado para formar destrezas de alfabetización en niños y proporcionar una experiencia de inmersión en una comunidad multigeneracional diversa. Los niños son socializados de una manera que los saca de sus caparzones, genera confianza y hace que sientan profundamente que se los ama, que son capaces y que lo pueden hacer, sea lo que sea ese “lo.”

Los voluntarios se esfuerzan en crear una comunidad cristiana ideal, en vivir nuestro Pacto Bautismal y realizar el Reino. Lo podemos hacer, según creo, porque es todos nosotros juntos: todas las generaciones, toda la gente, de todos los lugares.

Allison Duvall es la directora ejecutiva del Campamento de Lectura. Ahora en su 10º año, el Campamento de Lectura tiene ubicaciones en todo Kentucky (Diócesis de Lexington y Kentucky), así como en Iowa, Ohio, Carolina del Sur y Virginia. También hay dos Campamentos de Lectura en Sudáfrica y Liberia.

Resources

- Campamento de Lectura (Reading Camp) <https://www.readingcamprocks.org>

Care for the Troops

By Robert Certain

Every day, in airports across the nation, men and women in uniform are applauded for their military service. What a pleasant difference from my war. I was a combat aviator in Vietnam, and spent the final days of that conflict as a prisoner in Hanoi. When I returned to the States in 1973, I was accepted as a postulant from the Diocese of West Texas, attended the School of Theology at Sewanee, Tennessee, and have served the church as a priest since 1976 (and the USAF Reserves as a chaplain until 1999).

For the past 35 years I have made it a practice to include the names of parish family and friends who died in service in the prayers of the people, and have asked veterans to stand to be recognized on the Sunday closest to Veterans Day. While I have always had a personal ministry to military veterans, it was not until 2007 that I asked the Brotherhood of St. Andrew (<http://www.brotherhoodofstandrew.org/province4.php?p4=Georgia>) to engage in their own ministry to the men and women of our armed forces as well as to their families.

The results have been most gratifying. The Brotherhood immediately began to reach out to combat veterans living in our area, discovering not only that there was a need, but also that few others were engaged in meeting that need.

Two other parishioners organized Care For The Troops (www.careforthetroops.org) to train faith communities to publicly welcome military members and veterans and to recognize the wide variety of spiritual, fiscal, social, psychological, and family concerns that are particularly heightened during times of deployment and family separation. Care For The Troops also trains local professional counselors throughout Georgia to recognize and treat the lingering effects of deployment, separation, combat, and death of friend and foe. Through their network of member congregations, they have developed a guide for establishing congregational ministries to and for military members, veterans and their families, along with a description of such ministries being conducted in the congregations. The

guide is posted on the web site and can be accessed, adapted, and used by anyone with a desire to engage in similar ministry.

Our urgency for military ministry has grown as the war against terror has lingered. There are very few of our citizens in uniform – only about 1% – so they are very easy to be “missing in action” from the mission and ministry of the Church. Second, with the National Guard and Reserves as actively deployed into combat as their Active Component counterparts, they and their families face unique hardships. The Guard and Reserve member has to leave not only family and home behind, but also a civilian job that may not be there upon his or her return from deployment. As a result, they return to high family stress, loss of employment, alienation from peers, and social disorientation. These are all areas where faith communities have a certain level of care and expertise. The specific ministries begun in this parish grew out of our own spiritual life and have been designed to meet

the needs of people in our own state.

Because I serve on advisory boards for both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, I have been able to give considerable insight and guidance to the parish members who have a heart for this ministry. Some of that work can be very frustrating. For instance, wounded warriors with some level of traumatic brain injury may not be able to make good decisions, respond adequately to offers for help, or cooperate well with the people who are there to support them. Tremendous patience and Christian good will are definite assets.

While this ministry can be very difficult, it has also benefited the parish in a variety of positive ways. Other veterans, some estranged from the church for a number of years, have returned to worship and ministry. People who have come to believe that the Church cares little for the men and women committed to our mutual defense, have had to reevaluate that idea and are becoming part of our other ministries in the parish. As a result, the congregation has a renewed sense of its place and its leadership in the community and in the Diocese. In the last four years, the parish I serve has experienced a 30% growth in average Sunday attendance. I am confident that

ministry to our veterans, service members and their families is part of that growth.

The Rev. Robert Certain is rector at St. Peter & St. Paul Episcopal Church in Marietta, Georgia. Author of *Unchained Eagle: From Prisoner of War to Prisoner of Christ*, he is the founder and president of the *Unchained Eagle Memorial and Benevolent Society, Inc.*

Resources

- Care For The Troops: www.careforthetroops.org
- Becoming a Veteran Friendly Congregation: http://www.careforthetroops.org/overview_congregation.php

Filling the Void

By Valerie Bailey Fischer

One Sunday, I greeted a couple as they were leaving the service at St. Elizabeth's with their recently baptized child. That service was particularly difficult for the parents as their almost one-year-old child's behavior caused quite a few disruptions. The frazzled parents could barely make it out the door. As they tried to shake my hand, the father turned to me and quietly said, "see you in five years." That was almost two years ago and I have not seen them since.

This encounter saddened me. Later that week, I reviewed the parish database and noted that these parents were among 33 families with children under age three who had not attended a Sunday service for months. Almost all of the youngest members of these families had been baptized within the previous two years. Before that encounter, I had never questioned the trend that families with small children would avoid church attendance for a season.

Perhaps 33 families were too many to allow to slip quietly into the

void between baptism and church school? Like many parishes, our records showed that once these families slipped into this void, many did not return. Instead of accepting this loss, I started calling these families and asked them to help us understand why parish life was difficult to navigate with infants and toddlers.

Almost all of the families said that they considered themselves members of the church; some were still regular pledgers. They shared that they could not attend church because they did not have the time or they found bringing their children to church too much of a challenge for them as parents.

The Challenge

Their challenge became my challenge. I decided to start conversations within the parish about ways to re-engage these 33 families. I began to wonder if somehow this void might be contributing to the systemic decline of mainline churches. Perhaps the systemic decline is not a mass

exodus of parishioners from our parishes, but a slow leak from a break in the pipeline.

So how did we spring a leak in this pipeline? The Episcopal Church's definition of systemic decline is the lack of people of child bearing age in the pews or, put bluntly, more funerals than baptisms. Who are the people in childbearing years and why are they not in church? There are so many answers to this question: the time issue; priority challenges; the difficulty in balancing faith, work, and family.

Studying the Pipeline

Before serving at St. Elizabeth's, I worked part-time as a new priest and a new mother at Church of the Holy Spirit, Wayland, Mass. From the first day, with baby Margaret in hand, parishioners asked me how the church would address the lack of families with small children. The parishioners were discouraged as they had tried numerous church school curriculums, but none of them

seemed to draw families or children. After several discussions about the leak in the pipeline from the reservoir of families in their community into the church, one of the parishioners, Kara Brewton, drew a diagram.

The diagram shows a series of pipelines, starting with baptism and continuing seamlessly through participation in church school, youth group, or acolyte programs to an end at high school graduation. Often a break in the pipeline occurs due to lack of a curriculum or leaders for the church school, youth group, or acolyte programs. Breaks may be invisible from Sunday to Sunday, but over time they could spring leaks of parishioners out of the parish, interrupting the flow of Christian Formation from baptism to young adults in church.

Highlighting the lack of families with infants and toddlers as a part of the pipeline was a new idea for me. Parents in the void were not even considered when a diagram of the pipeline was first drawn. I believe this is because the lack of children under three and their parents is accepted without question in many Episcopal churches. But if the parents of infants and toddlers are a leaky section for many Episcopal churches, is it possible that this void could potentially diminish any advantage a seamless age three to 18 Christian formation

program might offer to a parish?

Using the pipeline metaphor, the parishioners approached the challenge by doing simple maintenance on their church school system by asking the simple question of what could we be doing better and who is not being served under the present system.

Fixing the Pipeline

It was this spirit of maintenance that a few of the church school teachers at St. Elizabeth's came up with an idea to address the void. The teachers applied these maintenance questions and identified the families of infants and toddlers as a target for improvement. The teachers found there was a need for a program for children too old for nursery but too young for church school and created a new space specifically for them, the Transitional Atrium. Church educator Beth Santomenna describes the program: "Children in the transitional atrium begin to explore the quiet rhythms of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, learning to fall in love with God by exploring practical life activities and working with developmentally appropriate materials, singing songs, and coming together in prayer."

The program was successful, meeting the needs of a variety of families: those with 3 year olds not

ready for church school as well as families with children having special developmental issues. But the children were not the only ones receiving the benefits of this new program. When I reviewed the list of children who attend the transitional atrium, I found that their parents were among those who were involved in another initiative addressing the void: a series of Parents' Night Out.

Parents' Night Out drew in parents who would have normally not been in church at all. These special social events, which include babysitting for their children, gave parents a place to meet each other outside of the Sunday service. At first, I thought that these non-Sunday initiatives might replace Sunday participation. To my surprise, these small initiatives managed to increase the participation of the parents in the void category, thus plugging a potential leak in the pipeline.

The pipeline is not a reservoir that funnels hundreds of people into the pews. Instead, it is about the power of faith transmission through one-on-one endeavors. The metaphor replicates how Jesus called his disciples: Andrew told his brother Peter, who told others. The beginning of the pipeline for Jesus' cohort of twelve disciples may have been small, but it is how Christianity spread through the

ancient world and continues in the present.

In my search for solutions, I found answers among the collective minds of parishioners who were the Andrews and Peters for their communities. By examining their part of the pipeline, these parishioners came up with creative ideas such as a new church school curriculum at Holy Spirit and the transitional atrium and Parent's Night Out events at St. Elizabeth's.

If others are to have an opportunity to learn more about the love of God and to be inspired by Christ's teachings to love their neighbor, all of us in parish ministry must pass on the faith person by person. I offer the pipeline metaphor to a church concerned about declining numbers as a different way of addressing the challenge of systematic decline. Shifting the focus from high numbers to the quality of the pipeline of faith transmission, we can increase the availability of the stream of living water of our faith. For regardless of the availability of the stream of living water of our faith, many will remain thirsty if the pipeline is leaking or broken.

Valerie Bailey Fischer served as assistant rector at St. Elizabeth's in Sudbury, Massachusetts and at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Wayland, Massachusetts. She recently accepted the call to become rector at St.

Mark's Episcopal Church in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Resources

- Pipeline Diagram: http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/CHSyouth_spir_..._.pdf
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd <http://www.cgsusa.org/>