



A Light in the Sacristy

A newsletter for and about the Altar Guilds in the Diocese of Iowa

FROM THE BISHOP



Mark your calendars for Saturday September 29th, 2007, for this is the date (last Saturday in September) that I hope we can begin to own for ourselves as the annual gathering of the Diocesan Altar Guild. I caught only the afternoon sessions this past Saturday (September 30th), but was reminded of the imagination, creativity and

love that goes into making our environment for worship meaningful and transcendent. I come from a school of thought that appreciates the attitude towards worship that my Byzantine Catholic priest friend espoused, who shared sacred space with us at St Barnabas', Eagle Rock. Many times he only had a few people – often his family – for worship, but the altar was covered in a gold frontal and much more; each Sunday, from the sides of the sanctuary wall at St Barnabas' he would swing out a beautiful iconostasis; and he would prepare to pray the holy prayers of his tradition. When I asked him if he ever became despondent that so few were present to experience such moving beauty, he answered that everything was prepared for God and it did not matter how many enjoyed it with Him.

In many ways this was a twist on the concept of the customer always comes first – a phrase we often relate to consumerism. But my friend's customer was God and that was all that mattered. I suppose that is what is behind the unusual question I was asked during the Altar Guild Day – whether machine sewn vestments and adornments were okay, or did everything have to be hand sewn? When I inquired why the question, the answer came back – because some think you cannot make something with

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CO-DIRECTORS LETTER

One is starting to say "goodbye" to summer. Starting to think of raking instead of digging, of putting the garden to bed rather than waking it up (always expect late summer to be long, lazy and lingering, but instead it surprises every year and disappears quickly in a last stifling heat wave that miraculously changes into a refreshingly cool rain).

A change is in the air. Change can be exhilarating, and at the same time emotionally difficult. Something is left behind, but at the same time, much is improved and enhanced and restored. This is most certainly a beautiful world God has given us and there seems to be, all around us, an arousing of interest toward change in our attitude toward this beautiful world, toward our use this world, this environment of ours.

This desire for change in our uses of the environment, of our sources of energy, was addressed at the General Convention in Columbus, Ohio in July when participants "endorsed further measures to address global warming as a threat to the future of God's good creation". We are, collectively, starting to understand that it is our moral duty to care for this creation, this earth, not just our backyard plot of flowers and veggies, but throughout. Many churches are showing Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" and hosting discussion groups on global warming and the environment. Many feel that stewardship of the Earth will be "the defining moral cause of this century".

Deacon Muffy Harmon raised this question in a recent sermon: "What can one human do? How much can one human do?" She assured us that "we each have gifts and can use them in differing ways." She gave us "three suggestions: first pray ...for peace, the hungry, those living in poverty, second, learn, educate

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SACRISTY SECRETS



Mix white vinegar, Ultra Tide and Water together for a chemical reaction that will get lipstick and wine stains out of ANYTHING! It would probably take the barnacles off the bottom of a battleship if the ship could be soaked long enough.

NEVER put linens in the dryer; the heat destroys the fibers. A quick and easy way to dry linens is to place the wet item flat — on a firm countertop, mirror or even a refrigerator door—pressing the linen completely against the surface. When it dries, just peel it off and fold.

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"And how about the time you were too sick to iron the Fair Linen, but not too sick to go play bridge?"

UPCOMING DATES OF INTEREST

Nov. 4 Investiture of the Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori as Presiding Bishop, Washington, D.C.

Nov. 10 - 11 154th Diocesan Convention, Des Moines Marriott Downtown Hotel

July 20 - 22, 2007 Ministries Retreat, Grinnell

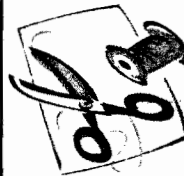
THE BISHOP'S CORNER *(continued from page 1)*

love by machine! I don't think all my friend's vestments or sanctuary vessels were made by hand, but they were certainly offered in love. I thank God for every servant who works behind the scenes making sure everything is ready for Sunday or Saturday evening or whenever the people of God gather. I thank God that it is enough that we serve only His Majesty with our finest efforts, and if it is experienced by a crowd or by a solitary person, that it is really being shared with us by our God.

+ Alan

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JULY 2007 MINISTRIES RETREAT



We hope to offer a class in embroidery and stole making led by Phyllis Melton, Artist in Residence at St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines.

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PRAYER CORNER



Be present, Spirit of God,
within us, your dwelling place and home,
that this house may be one where
all darkness is penetrated by your light,
all troubles calmed by your peace,
all evils redeemed by your love,
all pain transformed in your suffering,
and all dying glorified in your risen life.
Amen

from *The New Zealand Prayer Book*

At this time let us remember Altar Guild members and persons close to the Altar Guild who have died this past last year:

MARGARET AUNER PARSONS - St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines
ARLINE MONTGOMERY - St. John's-by-the-Campus, Ames

**MAY LIGHT PERPETUAL SHINE
UPON THE DEPARTED**



REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ALTAR GUILD TRIENNIAL MEETING, JUNE 2006 IN COLUMBUS, OHIO

By Elinor Kornhauser

The four days that Lisa and I were able to be a part of the NAGA meeting were most enjoyable and very busy. Church convention took place at the convention center which was too far for me to walk, so I only did the exhibitors a couple of times and had to miss the UTO ingathering and Eucharist on Saturday.

Our opening Eucharist was at Trinity Church just a couple of blocks from the NAGA hotel. It is a lovely old church in the same age and style as St. Paul's Cathedral. This was followed by a very bountiful reception, so no one wanted dinner! The church is configured so they have outside access to the undercroft and they run a buffet for not-so-affluent downtown workers as well as some unemployed.

We had a monologue on Theologian Richard Hooker by Phil Secor. It was good enough that I bought his book. Workshops on dried materials decoration on the brass Advent Wreath at Trinity Church followed by a prayer workshop conducted by Sr. Suzanne Elizabeth of St. John the Baptist Convent in New Jersey. I have reviewed Pat Crane's small liturgical linens workshop for the Epistle and it will be in the fall issue. She did a fine job of instruction.

By having to cut our time short and leave Columbus Sunday noon, we missed a tour of a renown garden, our Barbara Schlacter's monologue on Elizabeth Seton. The Rev. Barbara Schlacter is an Associate at Christ Church, Cedar Rapids, and gave her presentation as part of the Episcopal Women's program. We also missed the installation of the 2007-2009 NAGA officers. I was saddened to learn that our newly installed president, Mac Hollopeter, passed away in mid July. Have not heard if officers will move up or a past will preside.

Saturday, while taking a coffee break at the exhibits I got to see and hear Gene Robinson speak at the Integrity booth.

The Eucharistic Art Exhibit was lovely. The Mary Moore linens and hangings from Trinity Cathedral, Davenport and St. John's Church, Mason City were displayed to advantage and returned to me very promptly and carefully packaged after convention. I would not hesitate to display again. The next convention is 2009 in Anaheim and at this time I do not anticipate attending.

I have some good pictures, courtesy of Lisa, and will try to bring them to the Iowa Convention in November.

ALTAR GUILD HISTORY

Altar Guild have existed in the United States for over a century. Evolving from sewing groups and flower arrangers, the Guilds have become fully organized to care for all facets of the sanctuary. According to Edith Weir Perry, author of *An Altar Guild Manual*, published in 1930 by the Diocesan Altar Guild of Rhode Island, "a need was felt in many parishes in America as early as 1835 for a society which could faithfully and devoutly undertake the care of the Altar and its vestments, thus relieving the rector."

The Diocesan Altar Guilds were recognized by General Convention in 1928 as a definite organization of the Episcopal Church.

The original purpose of NAGA was:

- To unite all altar guilds, encouraging and deepening the spiritual life of all members.
- To represent altar guild ministry at all levels (national, provincial, parish/mission) to the Presiding Bishop and interpret his wishes to the members.
- To assist in the continuing organization of diocesan and provincial altar guilds.
- To provide information, resources and communication
- To support the national church in meeting ecclesiastical and mission needs related to altar guild ministry.

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THE CO-DIRECTORS' LETTER

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...yourself and then others... and thirdly, act ...give time to some project, write letters...or just change some of your old ways...like giving up one standard 100 watt bulb for a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL). This would reduce one household's global warming pollution by more than 1300 pounds of CO₂." Deacon Harmon emphasized that one person can make a difference. Think how it would be if hundreds or thousands of members of Altar Guilds across the country all know that what they do does make a difference. What a change we could bring to this earth!

Yes, lets pray and learn/educate and act and keep close to our hearts words by Nikes Kazantzakis:

"I said to the almond tree,
'Friend, speak to me of God',
and the almond tree blossomed."

Faithfully and with thanksgiving for each one of you,
Martha and Elinor

P.S. WE HAD A WONDERFUL TURNOUT FOR THE SEPTEMBER WORKSHOP! MORE ABOUT THAT LATER!

THE JOY OF SERVING

(An Altar Guild Manual by Marty Thompson,
Diocese of Atlanta)

Quoted below is Marty Thompson's introduction to her Manual.

God has given me a joy beyond my human mind to comprehend, but it is real, and I long to share it with you. Will you commit yourself to serving at God's Altar? This commitment will bring joy and fulfillment to you all your life. Come with me and learn to serve at God's Altar.

These pages must of necessity contain the proper and orderly way to prepare for the services of the church. I almost regret this, as my primary objective is to impart to you a sense of the joys and blessings of being on the Altar Guild. I am aware however that procedure and direction will help you become comfortable as you serve so that you may fully enjoy your service. Remember you are here to serve the Lord because you love Him. When you love someone it is so natural, so human to want to do something. Serving at god's altar lets us do something, lets us praise Him with our hands and hearts.

You won't find the Altar Guild to be your usual women's group. It is not a fellowship organization, though deep friendships are often formed with fellow members. After all, what better basis for a friendship than the love of our Lord Jesus Christ? The Altar Guild is a group of women who come together with the primary task of serving God at His altar. We serve God through our Rector, and he is always the authority under whom we function. This coming together will involve working together, cooperation, and the realization that all are working out of a common call to serve our Lord. Each member brings a unique gift of self, and together we make our offering. This is a serious commitment and will involve careful preparation and attention to detail.

Our Lord is found in all you do, whether it is polishing a candlestick, washing linens or vesting the chalice for a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Come then and pour out your love for our Lord Jesus Christ in this service of prayer and praise.

Marty Thompson

MINISTRIES RETREAT - Grinnell College, July, 2006



Front, left to right: Elinor Kornhauser, St. John's Mason City, Joann Oleson, St. Anne's, Ankeny, Donna Hostettler, St. James, Oskaloosa.
Back row: Martha Hippee and Phyllis Melton, instructor, both from St. Paul's Cathedral, Des Moines



Seated left to right: Phyllis Melton, instructor, St. Paul Cathedral, Des Moines; and Donna Hostettler, St. James, Oskaloosa. Standing, Joann Oleson, St. Anne's, Ankeny.