



A Light in the Sacristy

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

FROM THE BISHOP



One of the things I enjoy about returning to England is the sense of “being there” that you get when you attend a parish church. I happened to drop in to see a former parishioner from Eagle Rock now living back in Yorkshire on the day that the Bishop of Bradford was visiting. We are at quite

opposite poles on the human sexuality issue, and he did not have much time for me during Lambeth. But as far as I could see an Episcopal visitation in the Bradford Diocese which stretches out into the Yorkshire Dales is about the same as an Episcopal visitation in Iowa. He arrived unheralded, carrying his crosier which was a simple shepherd’s crook, which I do remember him telling me about. His vestments were squeezed into a gym bag, which was a little different. His manner was unassuming, and he enjoyed worship. He was very much at home in this small congregation as he might be in his Cathedral. I could not help thinking that he and I were more alike in our piety and liturgical styles than we would know if we continue to choose to see each other only through the lenses of the troubles of the Anglican Communion.

I am ready to move on and be who we are as Episcopalians in this century. We need that confidence of “being there”, of being who we are by choice and recognizing that the center of that choice is Jesus Christ who has chosen us before we actually knew to choose Him. I can never be a lifelong Episcopalian. I have already been a Methodist, a Pentecostal and studied under the Easter Orthodox in Romania. I was once accosted by one of my parishioners who said that he’d been trying to sort me out as he listened to me preach and decided that I was a Baptist.

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Director:

Martha Hippee
407 28th St.
Des Moines, IA 50312-4405
(515)244-5824
hipowls@mchsi.com

Newsletter preparation:
Jeanne Roland,
St. Mark’s, Des Moines
JeanneHR@q.com

This Newsletter is also
available at:
www.iowaepiscopal.org

DIRECTOR’S LETTER

I always regret experiencing the end of summer, the opposite side of the thrill and anticipation of spring. This summer it would seem, all of my daily thoughts and actions have been directed toward growing, gratitude and gardens-- mine, a dear daughter’s and a dear friend’s. I am very grateful and thankful for the beauty that God has created in every bloom and bud, but also for the physical strength and energy to dig and tend and the deep desire to create.

The summer came to an end with a garden wedding, not in my garden, ravaged as it is by deer and raccoons, but in a lovely, quiet space in a beautiful, lush garden. I felt honored to be asked to take part and to accompany one of the young men into the garden for the ceremony and to stand with him and his partner as they repeated their vows and pledged their love. It was most certainly a very deep-felt and tender, as well as joyful experience. Happy tears “watered” the garden! As a garden provides spiritual sustenance, so too do the experiences within it.

Autumn is a full, rich season in the sanctuary, as well as the gardens of our lives. It is a time to give thanks for the harvest and gratitude for its abundance. The green of Pentecost season will be replaced on November 29 with the purple or blue of Advent, the first season of the church’s liturgical year. In between we will celebrate All Saint’s Day “the day on which the church remembers the communion of saints, known and unknown, the cloud of witnesses to the faith with which God has surrounded us.” (There is something very comforting to think of “the cloud of witnesses to the faith” surrounding us.) All Saint’s day is followed by All Soul’s day on which “all the faithful departed are commemorated.”

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER *(continued from page 1)*

Regarding H1N1: The Diocesan website has information on the subject under "H1N1 Flu: Guide for Community and Faith-Based Organizations. Scroll down to "Healthy Church Practices." Am certain there will be much more information to come - from the Diocese and clergy.

I shall remember you all in my prayers and send love to all.

Martha

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ADVENT, THE COMING

The meaningful observance of Christmas depends on the full observance of Advent. Advent is a time of waiting, preparing and hoping. To Keep Advent is to keep clear the meaning of Christmas.

The Christmas celebration was established in the fourth century, but Advent did not develop until at least several decades later. The word Advent comes from a Latin word for "coming", and this coming has been interpreted in various ways in church history.

Today it has three meanings: past, present and future. First, Advent refers to Christ coming as the baby at Bethlehem, reflected in Advent hymns and the focus of the gospel for Advent IV, Second, Advent refers to Christ repeatedly coming to us in Word and sacraments and in the fellowship of the church. Third, Advent is a time of preparation for Christ coming again at the end of time -- the second Coming.

Excerpted from: "Keeping Lent" *The living Liturgy*
NAGA Newsletter.



*Do you little bit of good
where you are;
its those little bits of good put
together that overwhelm the world.*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

A REMARKABLE GIFT

...Given the world's financial crisis, this year just might be a bit more restrained. Count that as a blessing, and make some conscious decisions about how to spend your Advent time this year.

For some centuries, the church treated advent as a mini-Lent, with great focus on penance and contrition, purple vestments and a somber, even dour, mood. In the last century, many parts of the church have returned to a more joyful and expectant mood.

Some churches use Sarum blue vestments to mark that shift in an outward way. (The blue used in Advent is called Sarum blue in reference to the Sarum Rite dating from medieval England.) Most congregations still put off Christmas carols and decorations until after the fourth Sunday of Advent. These four brief weeks are a remarkable gift, if we engage them.

Find or make an Advent calendar, and use the little daily ritual of making another day as an invitation to consciousness, whether there is a door to open or a verse to read, and give thanks. Give thanks for breath, clean air, water to drink, food for energy and celebration, time spent with friends and strangers who might become friends. Let go of the excess -- business and busy-ness, too much rich food, mindless buying, needless driving and thoughtless speech.

Choose one thing as a focus each day or each week of Advent -- for example, use words as a blessing in all ways and always through each moment of one day. Give thanks for clean water to drink, cook and wash with -- and use each drop consciously and carefully. Give thanks for the people in your life -- your family, co-workers and neighbors. Care intentionally for some part of God's creation, human or nonhuman. Give thanks for the abundance in life...make a conscious decision about how you would like to change that pattern.

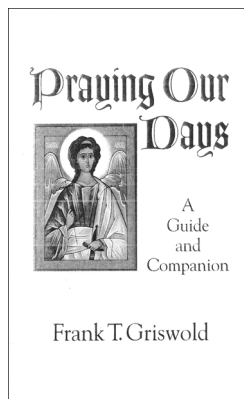
All of this thank-giving and consciousness-improving is about preparing a home for the Christ-child. When we are ready to welcome the image of God in neighbors or give thanks for the goodness of creation, we soon discover that the Christ-child already has been born in our hearts.

A blessed Advent season -- may it be filled with peace, rest and awareness of light in the midst of darkness.

Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop



BOOKSHELF



Griswold's book weaves teaching and commentary.

By Jerry Hames

“Former Presiding Bishop Frank T Griswold, whose strong devotional practices shaped his ministry as priest and bishop, launched his most recent book, *Praying our Days*, at an event sponsored by the Philadelphia Theological Institute in march.

In his book, Griswold, one-time chair of the church's Standing Liturgical Commission and former co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, said that for years he valued a small blue book of collected prayers that he received upon confirmation at St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H. “More out of curiosity than overt devotion, I

began to use the book,” he wrote. “It became a companion and a great help in leading me more deeply into practice of prayer and participation n in the sacramental life of the church.”

Weaving powerful teaching and commentary, with aids to self-examination and questions, *Praying our Days* offers that same kind of companionship for those who seek a regimen of personal daily prayer, introspection and reflection. It includes devotions to mark the rhythm of the day (brief prayers at fixed hours), intercessory prayers, devotions to the Mother of Jesus, praying with the saints and praying with icons. (The icon on the cover is by Pennsylvania priest and icon writer Peter Pearson, and eight other full-color icons in the book company Griswold's reflections.

At the March event, Griswold spoke about his boyhood faith, read an array of prayers and explained how Vatican II renewal efforts encouraged Episcopalians to revise their Book of Common Prayer. Profits from sales of the book will support the work of Episcopal Relief and Development.”

Griswold was methodical and clear, calling upon us to experience the Triune God, without sentiment or excessive enthusiasm, but in ways that truly form us to be Christ-like disciples, carrying faith into the dailiness of this broken world,” said Doylestown, PA, bookstore owner Bryon Borger.

SIMPLE

AS SIMPLE AS A SEAMLESS ROBE,

IS IT SEAMLESS—

THE TOTAL TEXTURE OF THE LIFE

EVERY BIRD AND LEAF,

WOVEN INTO ONE SINGLE, SIMPLE PIECE.

THE AILYNESS, THE ECSTASY, THE GRIEF—

A SEAMLESS ROBE IS WOVEN WHOLE—

ALL INTERWOVEN IN ONE HOLY WHOLE?

NOTHING SUBTRACTED, NOTHING ADDED

YES, ALL IS WHOLE CLOTH,

ON.

ALL, ONE SHEET OF FIRE,

THEN WHOLLY GIVEN TO GOD

ALL, UNDIVIDED AS THE FLAME

THAT HE MAY MOVE

THAT ANIMATES THE AIR—

WITHIN THE FABRIC OF OUR UNIVERSE.

NOT JUST AT PENTECOST,

BUT EVERYWHERE.

Elizabeth Rooney, Packages, Published by Brigham Farm Publishing, www.brighqmfarm.com Used with permission

National Altar Guild Association

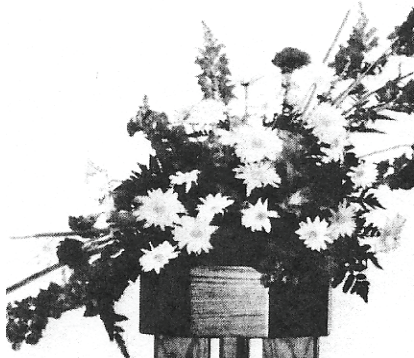
FLOWERS IN AUTUMN

Clara Fowler

As summer ends, it is a good time to collect dry material in the fields for use as fillers during the fall and winter. Plan ahead to save money on your materials during the expensive flower season. You can dry some flat ferns, like leather leaf, in newspaper under a scatter rug. Look for big seedpods like okra, teasel and small cones. Blow the dust off well and stabilize them with hair spray. The search can be great fun.

This is a good time to recruit new members. The flower guilds have a really joyful, beautiful service to offer in helping set the table to welcome the guests. It is a constantly changing and learning experience and the guilds I have been a member of have all been very helpful and cooperative to each other. Everyone comes at Christmas and Easter to do the huge festival arrangements. If your church does not do any of their own flower arranging, I would suggest you encourage a few people to try it. I have experienced a huge saving in money for altar flowers and great interest from the congregation. I currently have four team and they all arrange a little differently. When someone must miss a turn, others are anxious to fill in. Actually, I assign them the space they are to work in and rarely the type flowers, and they do what they wish. We use one retail/wholesaler (good prices) and charge with a price limit. This would not work in a large church with multiple arrangements or for big holidays. Then one person should plan, order and supervise the division of the flowers. For either big holidays or multiple arrangements I use buckets with signs on them so the team will know which area the flowers are for.

It is a very rewarding service. If all goes wrong, just take the arrangements apart, say a prayer and start over again. You will leave happy and at peace, no matter how you arrived.



THE ALTAR GUILD

Ulele Hamway, Holy Trinity, Menlo Park, Epistle #116 Summer 2000

What on earth do they do for Heaven's sake?
If they weren't there what difference would it make?
If there should be no altar guild there
Neither clergy on LEMs would find vestments to wear.
If the weekly team should fail or falter
There'd be no silver of linens on the Trinity altar.
The flowers at the altar don't descend from above:
Week after week they're a labor of love.
We change vestments and hangings from season to season
Since those different colors are used for a reason.
The lights burn bright in the candlesticks
Because we replenish the oil, we fix the wicks.
We launder the linens, we dust the pews.
We polish the silver, straighten book that you use.
We choreograph weddings, reassuring the nervous.
We're a quiet presence at each memorial service.
To make high holy days a rich celebration,
We give our time and our talents to church decoration.
In fact, we fill needs of every dimension,
Some are large and important, some too small to mention.
We're seldom noticed, but our rich reward
Is to be Martha and Mary in the house of the Lord.

FROM THE BISHOP *(continued from page 1)*

In fact the Romanian Communist authorities held up my permit to study under a British Council scholarship (an equivalent to the Fulbright in the USA) because someone had said that I was a Baptist! (I attended a Baptist church for two of my three years in Oxford, I confess).

In fact I find myself aspiring to the words of that wonderful Negro spiritual of wanting to preach like Peter or pray like Paul. In other words I wish I had the passion of a Baptist, the eloquence of a Methodist, the freedom of a Pentecostal, but I find I don't have to leave the Anglican/Episcopal home to explore it. I like the temperance and framework that Anglicanism provides for all of that. Our divisions, no matter how strongly felt, are the windmills of Don Quixote if we refuse to embrace them. I am sure that if the Altar Guild members of that parish church in Earby were to meet you, you would have a lot to talk about – more in common than not. You see clergy come and go, you see bishops come and go, you see worship styles come and go, and you hear the chatter of the church's disagreements. But none of that is what you are about even though you are not immune from differing opinions and expressing them. Chiefly however, you are about “being there” to serve God at the altar, making sure God's name is hallowed, and everything we offer in God's Name is treated with the reverence and respect only God deserves. For that I am profoundly grateful.

+Alan