

## **2009 Convention Report**

Submitted by (The Ven.) Anne L. Reed, Bishop's Assistant for Transition Ministry and Congregational Development

### **Overview**

Within my portfolio falls the ministry of working with congregations seeking new clergy and clergy seeking new congregations (a.k.a. Transition Ministry); providing resources to congregations in the areas of revitalization, evangelism, growth, and overall health (a.k.a. Congregational Development); and a few administrative items (Secretary to Diocesan Executive Council and Coordination of Diocesan Convention). In this report will be summaries of Transition Ministry and Congregational Development.

### **Transition Ministry**

#### Transition Ministry/Deployment-Statistics

- ✘ Attended Transition Ministry/Deployment Officers Gatherings
  - March & September: Transition Ministry Conference (40 dioceses in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Ohio Valley – including Chicago)
  - December: Province V (Big 10) Conference
- ✘ Clergy Transitions in congregations
  - Since the last convention 18 congregations have experienced, or continue to experience a transition in clergy.
  - 3 rectors/clergy leaders retired
  - 6 congregations called a rector
  - 2 interim rectors were called

Diocesan Consulting Team members have conducted Exit interviews with 1 congregation and have worked with or are working with 5 congregations as Transition Consultants and as Interview trainers
- ✘ Clergy Update Church Deployment Office profile – It is important that all clergy have an updated CDO. Several clergy and seminarians updated their profiles through the Diocesan Transition Ministry Office. Others updated with the help of the National Church Transition Ministry/Deployment Office. Offering assistance for updating is an ongoing ministry of this office.
- ✘ Interim Clergy met every other month for reflection and support.
- ✘ 6997 miles were traveled within the diocese to meet with Vestries and Search Committees during transition

#### Reflections

This diocese is blessed with a devoted and well trained Diocesan Consulting Team. This year new members have joined, and others are being encouraged to join. The work of Transition begins from the time the rector announces his/her retirement to into the second year of a newly called rector's tenure.

Although every transition is unique, as part of the work of transition, and before a new rector is called, every congregation must have a financial audit (as required by canon); parish by-laws must be reviewed by the Chancellor to verify compliance with

canons; and no paid staff, relatives of staff, or relatives of other Vestry members may serve on the Vestry. In order to call a full time rector, the congregation must have *at least* a \$125,000 budget.

Times of transition are difficult for both clergy and congregation. A 'good ending' helps a congregation have a healthy beginning with the next clergy leader. Good endings are the responsibility of both people and priest. There are wonderful resources for 'Saying Goodbye,' and the clergy retirement policy is posted on our diocesan website.

Please call on me regarding your transitions, so that as many resources as possible can be brought to bear in your situation.

## **Congregational Development**

### Congregational Development Ministry & Statistical Summary

- ❖ Living Stones Partnership – Attended Partnership gathering with the Bishop and Debbie Egnatuk from Trinity, Marshall. The Baptismal Ministry Experience and Reflection presentation, and notes from the gathering are posted on the Diocesan Website  
<http://www.edwm.org/congregations/congdev/documents/BMER2009.pdf>.
- ❖ *Smaller Membership Churches: A Process of Transformation for All the Saints* – Once again our ecumenical partners with the support of Journey at Western Theological Seminary have developed a year long reflection and learning process for our smaller membership churches (those with fewer than 100 in Average Weekly Attendance). After an initial kick-off, where the Rev. Mary Frens (St. Mark's, Newaygo) was one of the presenters, the participating churches read *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, by Diana Butler Bass. To help churches 'go deeper' there have been two cohort meetings in geographically central locations. Thanks to folks on our Congregational Development Commission who served as cohort leaders for these gatherings. In May, those churches participating will meet with Dr. Bass for a final event.
- ❖ TEAM-M (The Episcopal Area Ministry in Muskegon) -Two years ago, the churches in Muskegon County began conversations about how to enliven the ministries of individual congregations and collaborate in the area of Outreach and evangelism. As part of their work, a Vision Team was appointed to consider how the Episcopal Church could become an even more significant presence in the Muskegon area. The Vision Team, with which I worked, made a recommendation to the TEAM-M group in June.
- ❖ Congregational Development Commission – began its work in earnest in the Fall of 2008, ably convened by the Rev. Sue York. As Staff person to the Commission, much has been discussed. We look forward to having the Rev. Karen Ward in the diocese on September 26, 2009, to speak with the diocese about what it means to be a *missional* church. A separate report from the Commission is being filed for convention.

- ❖ Cascade Property Committee – The Executive Council asked that a group be convened to make a recommendation to them regarding the disposition of the Cascade Property (formerly St. Michael’s Church). Ivan Wheland and Lisbeth Eichner, along with the Revs. Val Ambrose, Charleen Crean, Cindy Nawrocki, Christine Tillman have met and continue to gather information in order to make a recommendation to the Executive Council. We are grateful for their commitment and time, as well as input from John Kingslight and Steve Wade, and look forward to making a recommendation in September.
- ❖ Natural Church Development (NCD) – As expressed at the Congregational Leadership Day, this program is being expanded (slowly, and as ‘coaches are available’) in the Diocese. To date 5 churches have taken the NCD survey and received some form of coaching, and 4 churches have expressed an interest in the program. We have at least 2 consultants who will be receiving coaches training within the next year.
- ❖ Church of the Holy Spirit – Continues to live with an eye to growth and innovative ways of engaging ministry. Meeting with the Advisory Board and the Vicar to work through issues and discuss ongoing future possibilities continues to be part of the Congregational Development portfolio.
- ❖ Vestry and parish meetings – are an ongoing part of the work of Congregational Development. At least 5 churches, not in clergy transition, have taken advantage of the resources of the Congregational Development Office.
- ❖ National Gathering of Congregational Development Officers in February – was an opportunity to learn from colleagues about engaging ministry in new and creative ways. Of particular interest to our diocese is the work of the Diocese of Colorado in Resort ministry. CDs of the first event are available to congregations, and we hope to send folks to the conference in 2010.
- ❖ 5738 miles travelled (within the diocese) in service to Congregational Development.

### Reflections

Our world is rapidly changing, and the church is no exception. With costs increasing in insurance and the cost of living, we now have over half of the churches in the diocese served by clergy on a part-time basis. Congregations are discovering new ways to engage partnership both within the diocese, and ecumenically. We have are well poised as a diocese to respond to the call of the Emergent Church, and reach out in creative and unexplored ways. I look forward to embracing this journey with you.