

When saints change names

Well, not quite. While saints don't change names, sometimes buildings associated with them do. And so it is with the former St. Matthias Anglican Church in Halifax changing into St. Antonios' Church as it passed into the welcoming hands of the Orthodox Church. The stained-glass window over the entrance shows both saints standing side-by-side, welcoming all who enter. And above the sanctuary is a magnificent

ceiling mural that is the work of nuns from Panachrandou Monastery in Athens Greece. They will return to finish their work in the Easter season.

Several years ago Saint Matthias Church faced closure and potential demolition. However, a plan was initiated by local Christians to maintain the institution as a place of worship. The parish of St. Antonios, whose congregation had outgrown the capacity of

their original Church, would move into Saint Matthias after the completion of extensive renovations. A byproduct of that decision was the preservation of Saint Matthias' legacy, and allowed the establishment's impact to span from the 19th into the 21st century. Note that Saint Matthias is heralded by both the Orthodox and Anglican faiths, and consequently it is fitting that Saint Matthias and Antonios are the patron saints

of the new Church.

The opening of the church will be during the visit of Bishop Alexander Muffarj at the Feast of St. Antonios on January 17, 2016.

A followup article is coming after the official opening in January. More photos are posted on our Facebook page.

Photo above: The painting above the altar in St. Antonios Church.

Photo right: The stained-glass with Saint Anthony and Saint Matthias.



Who is our Parish Vitality Coordinator?

The Parish Vitality Program is a new initiative of Bishop Ron Cutler to enable congregations to enhance their opportunities for growth in ministry. This fresh approach will help parishes prayerfully discern God's call and path for them as a faithful community. It also involves the facilitation of conversations with church leaders on topics like finances, governance, property, congregational opportunities, as well as the articulation of a clear and optimistic vision for mission.

Encompassing a focus on a well-understood plan, that is realistic, believable



Rev. Lisa Vaughn
Parish Vitality Coordinator

and achievable, the Parish Vitality Coordinator, will guide congregations through a process of renewal and growth for their particular area and situation, using the generous gifts God is providing.

The purpose of this full-time Parish Vitality Coordinator in the diocese is to empower parishes to envision a promising future. She will help lay and clergy leaders to consider their congregational, individual and local assets and to create a concrete plan to move toward the path of vitality.

Vitality can be defined as a quality exhibited in a parish community that is a response

to living into Christ. Some of these signs of vitality are caring, liveliness, energy and strength.

Rev. Lisa Vaughn was appointed as Parish Vitality Coordinator on October 1, 2015. Lisa was the rector/priest of the Parish of Hatchet Lake & Terence Bay for more than twelve years. She is also the Building Healthy Parishes VSST Team Leader, co-leader of the Vital Church Maritimes conference task group and a "Reimagining Church" series promoter.

Her childhood church was All Saints', Mill Village, in the former Parish of Eagle Head, in South Queens. Other

previous parish involvements include St. Mark's Mill Cove, the former St. Philip's Halifax, St. John's Halifax and St. Peter's Eastern Passage.

From the earliest days of ministry formation Lisa was passionate about study and application of things involving congregational development, fostering discipleship growth, empowering leaders and the undertaking of new missional opportunities. Her vocational motto for this new role is a quote from author and pastor Bill Hybels: "The local church is the hope of the world."

COLUMNIST

A time to say goodbye

WE HAVE LIVED through a wild roller coaster ride here By the Bog. Once Rev Billie announced her retirement we began to plan a huge farewell party. Billie has been here with us for over 12 years and we have shared many moments of joy and sadness with her. Each one of these moments makes the bonds tighter between Priest and people and the ending of a ministry that much harder for all concerned.

The plans were to have a feast with the whole community invited. Like most events here By the Bog it was to be 'pot luck'. We have the best pot lucks because everyone seems to have their special "thing" to contribute. One will bring spicy meatballs with rice, another their own version of coleslaw that is both tangy and creamy, we have a family that will show up with a whole ham, baked and glazed and looking like something out of a magazine and we can expect at least two versions of deviled eggs; one with pickle relish, one with curry. I am expected to bring enough macaroni and cheese to feed an army. This dish is never made the same way twice because it has whatever kinds of cheese in it that happen to be in the house



ST. BART'S BY THE BOG

Sarah Neish

at the time. The sauce is a white sauce that I watched my own mother whip up without benefit of measuring cups. She was able to judge the amount by guessing and it always turned out just right whether it was for 6 servings or 20. She must have passed this gift on to me along with her blue eyes because I seem to be able to do the same thing.

The desserts were put out on a separate table with someone sitting as guard so that the wee ones can't descend like a hoard of locusts and strip the table clean before touching their first course. There were cakes

and pies and as usual, Miss Compton brought "Sex in a Pan" and giggled because my Orin asked her what she calls this wonderful treat. Never fails to make her spinster cheeks blush. Yes, we have 'pot lucks' down to a fine art.

There was some gentle Roasting of our Rector, there were gifts and many touching speeches. Billie was her own gracious self as she watched members of her flock come up to add to the festivities and her own farewell remarks will linger in our memories for a very long time.

The very next day the moving van pulled into the rectory driveway and an era was over for St. Bart's. Billie came to us as a second vocation, she was older, wiser, and anxious to live amongst us. Her family became our family and her pets our pets; she sat at our kitchen tables and at our bedsides as life ended for some. She baptized babies...usually grandbabies of her flock; she married couples, she buried our dead and she laughed and cried with us. She really cared for us all. We cared for her as well and grieved when her beloved Peter died right here in The Bog. We were there when he was buried in the grave yard

behind the church and when his own father joined him there a few years later. We welcomed her second husband James to our community and loved that he would share his wonderful voice with us on a Sunday morning.

We will miss having Billie there to care for our souls, we will miss seeing her car driving the roads of our community, visiting and praying with us as we needed that support. We will miss seeing her fancy flowered rubber boots parked just inside the door of the church on a muddy spring morning. We may not miss her strident voice as she struggled to lead the singing but we will miss her sermons. We will treasure the gifts she has shared with us and the knowledge she has given us that we as a congregation have lots of life left in our old bones.

We will now begin the search for a new Priest, a new leader; he or she will have big flowered boots to fill: and we will wish Billie and James and her beloved mother-in-law a happy retirement. The search begins.

I'll keep you posted,
Aunt Madge



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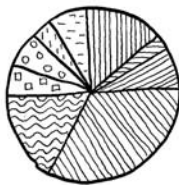
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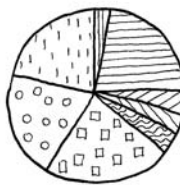
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The first week of the month preceding the month of publication: e.g., the deadline for the February edition is the first week of January.

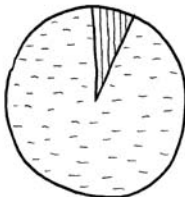
WHAT THE CLERGY DO ALL WEEK



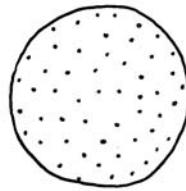
WHAT THE CLERGY DO



WHAT THE PARISHIONERS THINK THE CLERGY DO



WHAT THE CLERGY THINK THE PARISHIONERS THINK THE CLERGY DO



WHAT THE PARISHIONERS THINK THE CLERGY THINK THE PARISHIONERS THINK THE CLERGY DO

- GO TO CHURCH, PRAY ETC
- PREPARE SERMONS
- GO TO MEETINGS
- VISIT THE SICK
- HELP PEOPLE BE BORN, GET MARRIED AND DIE

- SURF THE INTERNET
- PLAY GOLF
- KEEP UP TO DATE WITH POPULAR CULTURE (TV, MUSIC ETC)
- NOTHING
- TO BE HONEST IT IS NOT SOMETHING I HAVE SPENT MUCH TIME THINKING ABOUT

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BISHOP'S MESSAGE



The Right Reverend Ron Cutler,
Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince
Edward Island.

Without good work, faith is useless

"Maker of us all, you call us to love our neighbours as ourselves and teach us that faith without works is dead. Open us to the ministries that lie before us, where faith and the needs of our neighbour come together in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour." Amen.
(Trial use collect, proper 23B)

As I write this column, I am enjoying the last few days of my summer vacation and combining a conference in Newfoundland with a family reunion for Marianne and some research into her family history. It has been a wonderful time for making and remaking connections with friends and family.

How
can your
faith
make it
possible
to
literally
give
life to
others?

For most of my time away, I have managed to avoid email and have not turned on any available television. It has been a blessing not to be bombarded with political sniping and the constant chatter of the 24 hour news cycle. In the last few days, however, the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and Europe has cut through both my self-imposed vacation blackout and the conscience of this country. The picture of a young boy's drowned body on a beach has focused our attention in a way that thousands of other deaths over the past few months, has not.

I can't help contrasting the stories I have listened to from aging relatives over the past few days, with the way political leaders in Europe and elsewhere have been dealing with this crisis. For the former, hospitality was both a cultural norm and a bedrock of faith. Although they often had next to nothing in terms of worldly wealth and the fact that initiative and self-reliance was highly valued, welcome was always extended to the stranger or the traveler. This may have simply been because you never knew when you might need that welcome in return but I believe it went deeper. At a time when the line between survival or not in a harsh environment were very real, welcome was generous and its absence a real shock to community norms. Giving welcome to the stranger and relying on the kindness of strangers wasn't just a survival mechanism, it was grounded in gospel stories about welcoming the stranger and accepting the kindness of strangers. So what has happened?

It would be simplistic to say that an accumulation of wealth leads to a desire to protect what you have or that a higher standard of living leads to fears of a loss of security. Perhaps at root is a fear of 'the other', those who are not like us. In recent years, fear seems increasingly to be used as a motivator in our society. I'm sure there are many other factors that have added to our current refugee situation, but there is no doubt that for the countless people fleeing war ravaged Syria and Iraq- they are in a crisis. You don't try to cross the Mediterranean in an inflatable boat unless the alternative is worse!

By the time these words are in print, the situation may have sorted itself out. Perhaps common sense, common humanity, Christian charity or a sense of responsibility may begin to inform governmental decisions in our country and elsewhere. However, I suspect there will still be many people simply searching for somewhere peaceful to live their lives. For those not familiar with it, our diocese has a refugee sponsorship agreement with the Federal government. Over the years, a number of parishes throughout the diocese have sponsored refugees or have been a part of interdenominational or community coalitions. If you are interested in finding out about this process, please contact **Marie Kettle**, our diocesan refugee coordinator. The need for refugee sponsorship, for 'welcoming the stranger', is not only for times of crisis but has become a constant of our time.

We are preparing to celebrate the twin holidays of the National Thanksgiving weekend and the church festival of Harvest Thanksgiving. These holidays are usually a time to stop and reflect on the blessings of the fruitful earth which sustains our life. As well, it is an opportunity to be more aware of the less tangible blessings that we receive in this land such as: opportunity, peace, freedom of religion and democratic choice. These blessings make life more than simply about what we have. They remind us of the interconnectedness of the planet and the fact that we are a part of the whole human family in one way or another. So this Thanksgiving, don't just give thanks to God for what you have received. St. James says that faith that does not produce good work is useless. How can your faith make it possible to literally give life to others?

Are only five senses valid?

OCTOBER 18TH is the Feast Day of St. Luke the Physician. Luke is the Patron Saint of many churches, schools and hospitals. He was a gentle (non-Jewish) medical doctor who set about to gather an orderly account of Jesus' life. Besides the Gospel that bears his name, he also wrote the Book of Acts, a history of the Early 1st Century Church.

There was a three-fold emphasis in the Primitive Church - Preach, Teach and Heal. The New Testament Book of Acts contains many stories of healing. In fact, Yale Church Historian, Ramsey MacMullin in his book "Christianizing the Roman Empire - AD 100 to 400" chronicles the impact of signs & wonders in the Patristic Era. His central assertion is that the Early Church grew MAINLY through the impact of healing



Rev. Dr. John Roddam

and deliverance. MacMullin drew from non-Christian witnesses exclusively!

The focus on healing and experiencing signs & wonders has waned over the last few centuries. Pope John Paul I noted that the quietly anti-supernatural Western Church has been impacted

by the Post-Enlightenment worldview, commonly called "Empiricism." Only information derived by the five senses is valid. Since so much of the supernatural is in the realm of the 'numinous,' it is suspect and often dismissed.

However, in contrast, the two-thirds world Church is exploding! The Chinese Underground Church sees 35,000 people convert to Christianity PER DAY!! A ministry in Northern India I am closely acquainted with planted 5,500 churches in 2014! In each of these regions, where phenomenal growth is evident, signs & wonders are a key catalyst, including raising the dead! It's like the Primitive Church all over again!!

In 2014, in Halifax, NS, a still-born child was raised from the dead through prayer 28 minutes after the child was

delivered. This was medically documented but was never reported in the Chronicle Herald. Why? Because these instances defy Western thinking. In the 1960s, one such raising from the dead led to over 100,000 conversions in Indonesia. BTW, if you're interested, Reinhard Bonnke, the famous East German Evangelist, produced a documentary (DVD) of a beloved African pastor who was raised from the dead. It's available on his website. Check it out!!

Dr. Candi Brown, a Harvard Professor has been writing on the power of Prayer and the impact of the 20th C. Healing Movement. So... our Western defences against supernatural intervention are crumbling! Do a Google search! Find out for yourself!

In the Great Commission,

Jesus told His disciples, "teach them to observe EVERYTHING I've commanded you..." Included in this list is the command to heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, etc. This is happening TODAY!! A key to this is found in Jesus' same final words before His Ascension to Glory - He called the Church to make disciples. In areas where believers are mentored and trained to move in the Power of God, these signs occur.

This fall, training will take place in Halifax to equip workers for Healing Rooms. This movement has grown to over 4,000 centres in less than two decades. The Order of St. Luke also has a strong training component. Come and learn how to operate in Kingdom power.

A quilt illustrates that it's about the world!

BY CYNTHIA PILICHOS

What happens when a Spirit-infused gift is directed outward to help those living with ALS? Amazing things, that's what! In May, Joanne Turner, a gifted quilt maker from the Parish of Trinity, Sydney Mines with Baddeck, Cape Breton donated a quilt to help raise funds for the Anglican Church Women NS Board's Annual Project 2015/16: *Ability to Live with Spirit*.

This beautiful hand-made 72 x 94 (Queen size) quilt is to raise funds for the ALS Society's equipment loan program that helps families living with ALS.

The Anglican Church Women NS Board raises funds for its annual project each year over the space of 12 months. We appreciate that parish women's groups contribute generously each year to the Board's Annual Project, but anyone is welcome to contribute. Feel free to make a contribution to *Ability to Live with Spirit* (cheque payable to the Anglican Church Women NS Board with *Annual Project 2015/16* in the memo line; c/o Treasurer, Anglican Church Women NS Board, 1340 Martello St., Halifax, NS, B3H 2Z1).

With this amazingly generous offer of Joanne Turner's, the Cape Breton Region's Anglican Church Women Executive decided on a Silent Auction, with the quilt travelling each week from church to church on the Island, gathering bids along the way. The journey started in *Sydney Mines* with bids of \$300, \$325, \$350 & \$375; then on to *Glace Bay*, with no bids, but offers of donations toward the Project; then to *North Sydney*, where the bid went to \$500; on to *Christ the King, Sydney*, with bids of \$800 (which is the market value of the quilt)



Photo: The ACW quilt that raised awareness of ALS.

and \$1,500. After a short stay in Halifax for the Anglican Church Women NS Board members to be inspired, the quilt returned to Cape Breton to the *Parish of St. Andrew's, Neil's Harbour*, where the ACW ladies present on that Sunday morning took it on as their project to raise the bid to a whopping

\$2,000! The quilt was on the move throughout Cape Breton, gaining momentum, inspiring generosity.

The quilt, having next visited St. John's, Ingonish and St. Bartholomew, Louisbourg, was en route to St. Alban's, Whitney Pier when Selma Doucet's telephone rang. It was a gentleman visiting Cape Breton from Toronto, who, having heard the story of the quilt and the work the ladies were doing in support of ALS, asked to add his bid of \$ 5,000.00!!! Wow! Are the women of Cape Breton flabbergasted, pumped, delighted, and proud? You want to believe it!

By the time you are reading

about this awesome quilt in The Diocesan Times, the cut-off date for bidding on it will have passed, as the Cape Breton Regional Anglican Church Women's Annual Meeting, Sat. Sept. 26th, (at All Saints Church, New Waterford), will have taken place, and the successful bidder will have been announced at that time.

The Trinity Sydney Mines ACW were an amazing inspiration to the Cape Breton women, as this parish ACW held several mini fund raisers for the Annual Project 2014/15, showing everyone what was possible when one's ministry and mission reaches beyond the parish doors. Are you aware that further inspiration for *Ability to Live with Spirit* is the dedication of this Project in loving memory of Verna Munroe and her faithful contribution to the church and the community?

Anglican Church Women everywhere, like Verna, know that *it's about the world* . . . and they live that belief!

Where's my stuff?

Dear reader,

THIS MONTH'S Diocesan Times has the challenge of providing news from around the diocese as well as news from world events.

Regrettably, due to limited space, some parish news was not able to be included in this edition. However it is included in the online PDF edition and on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/diotimes

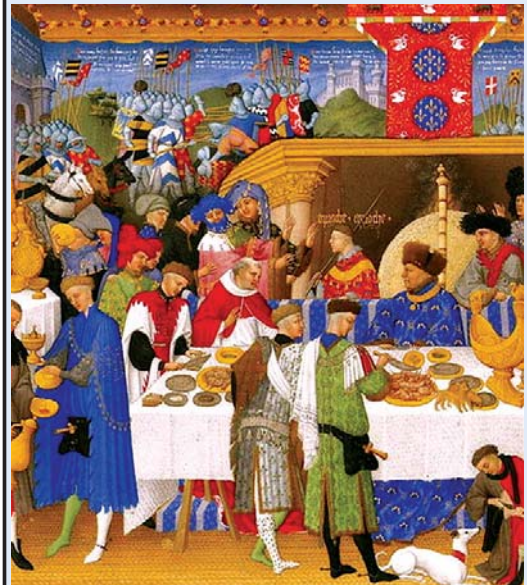
The November edition of the newspaper will continue to include parish news across the diocese. Your contributions are important to the life of the diocese; sharing your stories can provide inspiration to others.



Our Anglican family is as diverse in geography as it is rich in traditions. And we will do our best to keep sharing the news as it happens.

Paul Sherwood
Editor,
The Diocesan Times

Medieval Banquet Cathedral Church of All Saints 1330 Martello Street, Halifax



Fri, Oct 30, 2015

Reception 6pm
Supper 7pm

TICKETS – \$40
includes:
3 Course meal
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available for
purchase)

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by Vanessa
Lindsay-Botten
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9 and 10:30am
Services on
Sundays

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period costume!

PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE
CATHEDRAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Archdeacon Marilyn Newport resigned as archdeacon of the Dartmouth Region. Marilyn continues in her role as CAPP Vacations Coordinator (Community of Associated Parish Priests) and archdeacon of the Eastern Shore.

Archdeacon Marilyn Newport appointed interim priest-in-charge, ½ time, of the shared parishes of

Musquodoboit and Ship Harbour, Sept 1st.

Archdeacon Mark Kingsbury appointed priest-in-charge of the Parish of Lakelands Sept 1st, 2015.

Nicholas Hatt to be ordained a deacon on Wed October 28th, 7pm. at the Cathedral Church of All Saints.

Rev. John Newton appointed priest-in-charge of the Parish of Trinity, Halifax, Sept 8th, 2015.

Rev. Tory Bryne appointed interim priest-in-charge, ½ time, of the Parish of Chester, Sept 1st.

Rev. Katherine Bourbonniere appointed archdeacon for the Dartmouth Region.

Putting faith into action

The letter below needs no introduction to anyone who listens to world news. The bishop's column this month speaks to the world's crisis of refugees searching for safety and a new home. How we act, or fail to act, on this crisis will be our legacy. Please stand for those who cannot and make your voice heard. The letter was also sent to local MPs and the Prime Minister:

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Letter below: This sample letter came from St. John's Anglican Church in Wolfville as part of their efforts to help bring refugees into Canada as quickly as possible.

Photo right: Parishioners at St. John's Anglican Church, Wolfville, sign letters to the Prime Minister, the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and their local MP seeking action on the Syrian refugee crisis.



The Hon. Chris Alexander, MP Ajax-Pickering
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

September 6, 2015

Dear Mr. Alexander:

Like many others, I have been horrified by the images on the news showing the plight of the Syrian refugees. You cannot deny that there is a growing emergency situation in Europe as hundreds of thousands of persons are forced to flee their homelands in search of safety. Something must be done and it is imperative that Canada step up and take a lead role in offering sanctuary, as has been our historic custom.

I am joining my voice with refugee agencies and church groups across the country in asking you and your government to please consider the following actions:

- Expediting applications of asylum seekers and those seeking resettlement in Canada, with flexible measures (such as Temporary Resident Permits) for Syrians with family in Canada.
- Increasing the number of resettlement spaces for Syrians to a minimum of 10,000 available to Government-Assisted Refugees, with selection based solely on need
- Upholding the principle of "additionality" that recognizes that all privately sponsored refugees are in addition to - and not in place of - Government commitments to resettlement
- Elimination of barriers to the private sponsorship of refugees, including reinstatement of full Interim Federal Health coverage for both privately sponsored refugees and refugee claimants and lifting of the document requirements for Group of Five sponsorships.

I have been inspired by the groundswell of support from the Canadian people for swift and compassionate action to assist refugees fleeing from Syria and I look forward to hearing what you and your government will do to respond to this urgent humanitarian crisis.

As a member of the Anglican Church of Canada, I believe that I am required to do all that is in my capacity to care for those in need. As Christians, we have a special responsibility to care for refugees as we remember that our ancestors were once wanderers in the desert without a home and that Jesus himself was forced to flee his homeland as a child in order to find safety.

I implore you to act now.

Sincerely,

It's A New Day!

Growth groups

BY REV. LISA G. VAUGHN

It was Jesus' idea. He inaugurated the first small group with a dozen disciples. It was powerfully effective because the Church today has some 1.09 billion Christians professing faith around the world.

The apostles continued Jesus' model and formed budding communities of believers who focused on loving God and loving one another in radical ways. We witness the

Community is a precious gift we can give to an often lonely world.

first Christians in The Book of Acts, in various settings of city, town and village, living out their faith both in the temple or synagogue and in house gatherings. Believers in the Early Church participated in life together, connecting in large corporate settings and in small, intimate groups. These home groups engaged in Bible reading, teaching, communion, prayer, confession, laying-on-of hands for healing, sharing of goods, celebratory meals and

deep friendships.

It was small groups that were the red hot engine which fired-up the early Christian church. They are the same for many thriving congregations today. They foster the building up of church as a loving community, supporting one another to actively live out their faith.

Small groups (sometimes called by other names like life groups, discipleship groups, home groups, growth groups or cell groups) offer one of the best ways to make disciples. These mini-church microcosms, when healthy and focused, provide opportunities for seekers to explore their spirituality and personally experience authentic church community. They also supply growing and long-time Christians with spaces to go deeper in their faith.

Growth is the main goal of life groups. Individuals grow in their depth of gospel truths and in committed Christian practice. Growth also occurs in increasing numbers. Unlike insider gatherings and private clubs, small groups encourage the inclusion of newcomers. Friends, family, neighbours and coworkers are intentionally invited as guests to check-out and join the small group. When this gathering grows to consistently more than twelve attendees, it typically divides like a cell and works to multiply again. Of course, these disciples are urged to join the larger Church in corporate weekly worship, percentage giving and active service.

What makes small groups attractive is the environment of radical acceptance with a "come as you are" philosophy, a level of trust and open sharing, and a stated expectation of confidentiality. New people are not judged for their level of Christian knowledge or lack of depth of belief. The scriptures are opened and all participants may offer their opinions. Everyone's shared ideas are valued. Besides the opportunity to wrestle with Bible passages, there is gracious support offered, as well as loving accountability.

Effective and dynamic discipleship groups operate with leadership roles being shared and rotated through the members. Each gathering different people do things like coordinate the hospitality (refreshments), lead music, facilitate the study and discussion, and offer prayer. Pastoral care is shared mutually within the group. This enables the development of spiritual gifting in leadership, but also relieves the burden from one or two main organizers having to do it all every week.

Small groups are often hosted in private homes, but also in community meeting rooms in Legions, recreation centres, school classrooms, etc. They are especially appreciated in rural areas where some large church buildings are closed in the winter months to conserve heating costs.

Sometimes these growth groups are established for particular demographics or time availability. For example,



small groups can be arranged for new retirees or seniors, singles and singles-again. Entrepreneurs and business folk can meet for regular early breakfast sessions before the workday begins. Other ideas are golf course, bowling alley, or curling rink post-game gatherings for the sports like-minded. Couples and at-home parents can assemble for small group Christian support. For those who don't have much free time in the evenings or weekends, lunch hour groups work well. Simply bring a bag lunch and a Bible!

Life group gatherings should be regular – either weekly, biweekly or at least monthly. The Cursillo community encourages similar intimate Christian assemblies, calling them "Group Reunions."

Author Robert Warren in his book "Developing Healthy Churches: returning to the heart of mission and ministry", says that these types of intentional, focused intimate Christian community are a vital way

to be mission-minded church. They are an answer to the desperate need in an individualistic society.

He writes, "Community is one of the distinctives from our faith heritage that we need to hold on to and rediscover in our day. It is a precious gift we can give to an often lonely world."

Small groups are life-giving, not only that they inject energized faith into the larger congregation, but they also function as highly effective mechanisms to help Jesus-followers grow as committed disciples.

Warren says, "People are hard-wired for community and long to belong. ... What they instinctively want to be a part of is a network of loving relationships."

Rev. Lisa G. Vaughn is the recently appointed Diocesan Parish Vitality Coordinator and Team Leader of the Building Healthy Parishes VSST.

Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the souls blood, The land of spices, something understood.

Prayer – George Herbert

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We are gifted—answering God's call

REV. MARILYN HAMLIN

If you were anything like me as a child, the word "gift" conjured up thoughts of Christmas and birthdays, occasions when I might be fortunate enough to receive a present or two from Santa, from family or from friends. It was all about the surprise as I examined what had been left under the tree or in my stocking (which was the biggest one I could find at the time). It was the excitement of tearing into that odd-shaped package wrapped in coloured tissue, tied with string. It was in the sounds emanating from a container, sounds I recognized as the noise marbles make as they roll around knocking against one another.

Gifts come in any number of sizes and shapes and they take many different forms. I was usually very happy with the presents I received, but one Christmas I remember being disappointed. I coveted the pink doll carriage Santa had brought to my sister. Didn't he read the letter I had written to him? I had even prayed to God requesting that He intervene and let Santa know what I wanted. Needless to say, I have grown up and changed from that little girl whose thoughts about the giving and receiving of gifts were sometimes quite selfish.

Gift-giving in today's society is big business. We are told what we should and should not purchase. Advertisements shout out to us announcing where to buy that perfect gift. Customers receive free wrapping service if they shop in a designated Mall. There are instructions about what



Rev. Marilyn Hamlin

to do with unwanted gifts, the ones you will never use. Suggestions are made about recycling them. Discussions take place about re-gifting. Is it acceptable or not?

In my role as deacon, I was part of the Leadership Team at the Diocesan Vocations Discernment Weekend this past August. On several occasions that weekend, I remember reflecting on something I had recently read about. It is the idea of RE-GIVING. It is described as passing along to another, with love and care, a gift that has previously been given to you. You give it to the other person because you care about them. You know it will give them pleasure and joy. Perhaps it will even make a significant change in their life. Something tells you it is the right decision to make. It is the relationship between the giver and the recipient that is the key to this transaction.

During the Vocations Weekend, I came to realize that each member of our group, which included nine

discerners and four leaders, was in possession of an abundance of gifts given from God, gifts to be shared, gifts to be re-given. Over the two-day period, we took time to discuss, reflect on and pray about what to do with these gifts. How is God calling us to use them? Do we put them away until a later date? Do we examine them with the understanding that we are each the recipient of very unique gifts? How is this wonderful relationship between the giver and the receiver affecting us? A question I asked myself was, "How can I re-give the gifts that have been bestowed upon me?"

The weekend itself is a gift from the diocese. It provides the opportunity to be together with others who believe they may be discerning a call from God, a call that could change their lives forever. Various tools and methods that help with the discernment process are shared. The leaders for the weekend represent different ministries. They speak of their own experiences and how God is present in their lives. The discerners represent many walks of life and they, too, share their experiences of God's presence. They have the opportunity to be part of discussions, to read, write, reflect, pray and to take part in worship services. Our diocesan bishop joins the group for Sunday morning Eucharist.

The weekend is all about digging deep into ourselves with the knowledge that God is present in our hearts and minds offering us God's gifts, waiting on us to accept what is offered, waiting for us to see within ourselves what God

sees in us, waiting for us to be who we are meant to be, and waiting for us to re-give what has been given to us. Discernment involves a great deal of waiting.

When I think about it, it is almost beyond my comprehension that each one of us created beings is gifted with all that is necessary to live our lives the way God would have us live them. No matter if we are a tiny, new babe just entering this world, a discerner reflecting on God's call, or a person in the last stages of their earthly life, I believe we hold within our spirit cherished gifts, gifts to be shared with the other, gifts to be re-given. Parker J. Palmer writes, "Our deepest gifts are those we are not even aware of possessing – they are part of our God-given nature, they have been with us from the moment we drew first breath, and they are as unexceptional to us as breathing."

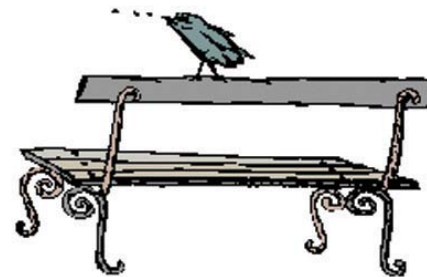
I think we all came away from the Vocations Weekend realizing that God's gift of presence was and will

continue to be with us, breathing on us, reaching out to us and calling to us. And because of God's presence we will always be discerners, whether we are ordained or not. My own experiences have taught me that discernment does not end with ordination, it just begins all over again, and I expect it will continue.

One of the prayers we took away from our weekend together is the Prayer of St. Therese of Lisieux, a Carmelite nun who died from tuberculosis at the age of 24.

"May today there be peace within./May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be./ May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith./May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you./ May you be content knowing you are a child of God."

May we always be re-givers of God's gifts to us.



The view from the Deacon's Bench

Society adds associate on Quiet Day

On May 2, (St. Athanasius) a Quiet Day on "Prayer" was conducted by Rev. Mel Malton, rector of the Parish of Digby/Weymouth. During the Evening Prayer service Brenda Munro was admitted as an Associate of the Society of Our Lady Saint Mary. The Society began in 1979 at the request of Bishop Leonard Hatfield to have a house of prayer and hospitality in this diocese. There is a hermitage located on the property in Rossway, Digby

County, and is operated year round and also the Bethany Retreat Cottage located in Sandy Cove, Digby County, is open from May until October. The next Quiet Day will be held Saturday, November 7th. Space is limited; to register or for more information please e-mail slsm@eastlink.ca or telephone 1-902-245-4841.

Photo: Quiet Day participants at the hermitage in Rossway, Digby Country.

