



“To Grow” Becomes “To Discern”

Discernment is key to growth. But what is “discernment” and how do we do it?

In the fall of 2006 St. Stephen’s began participating in a diocesan program called “To Grow or Not to Grow,” designed for churches that find themselves in that zone where they are about to grow (or not) from what in the trade is called a “pastoral size” church to a “program size” church. Jane Bishop, Elizabeth Finley, Linda Kaufman, Bill MacKaye, and I were a team which met with other parish groups about every other month. In between meetings, we huddled and did our homework.

If you have been around St. Stephen’s in the last twelve months, you might well have participated in one of several congregational discussions we have had around issues of the growth we are experiencing. These have been energizing, exciting, and informative. Organizing and reflecting on them was a part of our homework. Along the way we gathered observations and when possible passed them along to folks who might respond by shifting this, correcting that, planning for the other. One tangible result of that process is the new life that you can see in the children’s Christian formation ministry.

When asked in May what our next steps would be on this journey we huddled again. Out of that came a sense that we needed to continue checking and search-

ing parish life to spot the realities that produced or inhibited growth-growth in all sorts of ways. We realized that there needed to be a group that could “stand on the balcony,” so to say, and look at how things are happening at the church, picking up signals, noticing developments, identifying the crunch-points, tuning in on concerns. In short, we needed to continue to discern the issues and challenges looking at the whole system of St. Stephen’s, not just at its parts.

Two things quickly became apparent. One was that we wanted to discern the issues, not to take action or make decisions. Action and deciding are the proper province of the vestry. But both Senior Warden Jane Bishop and I, as Senior Priest, are aware that we as well as the vestry depend in part upon other eyes and ears than our own to identify trends and to name the currents that need to be addressed. So, after some conversation around all this, the vestry □ page 2

BREAD

Dec. 23, 2007

The Fourth
Sunday in
Advent

Number 1590

Christmas Service Schedule

Christmas Eve:

•5pm: Bilingual Service

Especially for the young at heart, who will reenact the Christmas story, this bilingual service will be full of energy and music.

•10pm: Festive Eucharist

A Christmas music prelude begins at 9:45pm. The late service is followed by a very festive Christmas party; please bring food or drink to share.

Christmas Day:

•10:30am

A simple service with Christmas hymns and sermon.

FORUM

Every Sunday, we gather at 9:15am in the auditorium for Forum. The schedule:

- Dec. 30: "Picking up the Pieces: After Christmas," led by The Rev. Frank Dunn.
- Jan. 6: "Picking up the Pieces: Divorce," led by Jane Bishop.
- Jan. 13: "Picking up the Pieces: Physical Illness," led by Bill Bonwitt.

BREAD

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□ **page 1** blessed the effort.

The other thing that we became very clear about was that we needed to include other people with a gift for discerning our challenges. And we were clear that the group, which was all-white and over 50, had to be more representative of the diversity of the congregation than the original "To Grow" team is. Thus, we have set about inviting a few other folks to join us. So far, Beth Fasci- telli, Vivian McFarland, and Areto Im- oukhuede have agreed to serve.

We are gathering about four times a year. For me this is a very real kind of prayer. Envision a small group of people who are not taking responsibility for deciding anything, simply noticing the signs of what is happening with the life of God in the congregation. Our goal is not to judge these signs but to notice them. That is the first part of discernment. We do not leap into problem- solving or even celebration. Instead, we begin asking the question of what Truth is speaking to us in a trend or a circum-

stance. Then we proceed to see if there emerges any kind of feeling, hunch, idea that seems to be saying, "Pay attention to this!" Frequently that process is a careful process of listening and speak- ing. Frankly, we have not plotted out exactly how this all should shake out. Maybe we frame issues and present them to the vestry for consideration. Maybe something comes up that logi- cally belongs in some other court—that of the clergy or Brian Best or some parish group. What we are committed to is faithful listening, in the belief that listen- ing to each other is a deep way to listen to the whisperings and guidance of the Holy Spirit. And that includes listen- ing to any thoughts, concerns, promptings that you might wish to voice to any of us.

The Discernment Group will practice accountability for this ministry by regu- larly checking in with the vestry. After awhile, we believe, it will be apparent if our efforts and time are serving a useful purpose.

- Frank Dunn, Senior Priest

English Class Begins at Misa Alegria

“It was great being with you last night — what wonderful spirit and fellowship I experienced there! I’m the one from St. Paul’s, K Street, who brought Padre Israel Monge to your service. Also, after speaking with a woman named Maria at dinner, I might be able to start an English class for those in your congregation who would be interested.”

This simple email lit up my life one Monday morning not long ago. Several weeks later, Ms. Jo Stelzig, a member of St. Paul’s, K Street, began teaching a much-needed English class for begin- ners on Sundays before the Misa Ale- gria. Jo has spent some time in Honduras teaching English and has a

generous and loving heart for Latino people.

Jo’s class has been well attended. People love her dedication and gentle ways. And she knows how to make it fun. Last week, she brought a suitcase full of clothing to help folks learn the vocabulary through “show and tell.” People of the Misa Alegria are very pleased and appreciative. Several new- comers to our country and to the Misa, who have found the Misa from our sign, have found Jo’s English class to be a welcoming place as well.

Jo’s class is for beginners, although people of any level are invited to partic- ipate. We would like to extend the

class to those whose English skills are a little more advanced. If you have a gift or interest in this area and would like to help another gain a foothold in this country, please consider giving your time.

In this time of gift giving, we are grateful to Jo for her gift of love.

-The Rev. Sarabeth Goodwin

Meet Troy Mendez

Troy Mendez is our new seminarian. He is a second-year student at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria.

A native of Houston, Troy most recently spent the last 14 years in Los Angeles, where he was member of All Saints, Beverly Hills, and served as a choir member, acolyte, and as a frequent facilitator of adult education forums.

Prior to entering seminary, Troy worked in Sales and Marketing in the travel industry, where he volunteered with his co-workers at events for AIDS Walk Los Angeles, Habitat for Humanity, and My Friend's Place — a drop-in center for homeless teens.

When asked why he chose to go to seminary, Troy commented "I had a series of experiences — at church, in my work life, and also with some of my closest friends — that God was calling me into a place where I could dedicate my life to God's service in the church." He added, "since I started seminary, I've had even better clarification that I am in exactly the right place, at the right time." Troy is very excited to be a part of the St. Stephen's community, and looks forward to getting to know everyone through his ministry here.



Beth Fascitelli Takes Her Leave

Dear St. Stephen's,

I've recently accepted a job that has me moving to India on January 12th. I'll be working with a conflict consulting organization in Bangalore called Meta-Culture.

I'm both sad to be uprooting so soon from the communities I've come to love in D.C. and excited to be undertaking this next adventure. The last several weeks have brought big and unexpected changes in my life and I have greatly appreciated the support of many parishioners. I am honored to be a member of this church.

As much as possible, I hope St. Stephen's will remain my spiritual community from afar and that I find ways to remain engaged despite the distance. You all are in my heart. Thank you for your gifts of the last year and your continued prayers as I take this next step in my life.

-Beth Fascitelli

Can You Spare a Room?

Deng Chol is a leader of the thousands of Lost Boys of Sudan who arrived in the U.S. in 2001. Located in Phoenix, he graduated in 2004 from Arizona State University, the first Lost Boy to graduate from college. In January he is coming to Washington to finalize the creation of the Lost Boys and Girls National Foundation. Deng is an articulate, thoughtful, determined young man who works tirelessly to help his brothers in sisters in exile. He seeks a room in a quiet home for the next six months. For more information, call Anne Heyniger.

WORSHIP at St. Stephen's

Sundays

8:00a—

Holy Eucharist,
Rite I

10:30a—

Holy Eucharist,
Rite II with
Children's
Spiritual
Formation

5:00pm—

Misa en Español

Celebrants and
Preachers

12/23: The Rev.

Frank Dunn
(8:00, 10:30);
The Rev.
Sarabeth Goodwin
(5:00)

12/24: The Rev.

Linda Kaufman &
The Rev.
Sarabeth Goodwin
(5pm); The Rev.
Frank Dunn & The
Rev. Ronald
Conner (10pm)

12/25: The Rev.

Kathy Grieb
(10:30am)

12/30: The Rev.

Frank Dunn
(8:00, 10:30);
The Rev.
Sarabeth Goodwin

Wayfaring Stranger

The rest of this issue of BREAD was finished — photocopied, folded, waiting for labels — when the Rev. Sarabeth Goodwin preached on the third Sunday of Advent, December 16. The BREADitor thought her sermon warranted inclusion, so we've put together this special insert with a slightly-shortened version of her sermon, which began and ended with Sarabeth singing:

*I am a poor wayfaring stranger,
A traveling through this world of woe.
Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger
In that bright world to which I go.*

I have been feeling like an exile this week. Maybe it's been the relentless gray of the days. We're in the waiting mode. Something's coming...almost here...but not yet. I've had a gnawing in my heart, an aching for those no longer seen. A hint of fragrance I can no longer identify invades my heart every year when so much of my world seems to be wrapped up in tinsel and bows and skating blithely across the surface of life.

I know I should rejoice. Isaiah talks about the highway in the desert that will welcome all the exiles back to their true home, where the desert will rejoice and blossom. Isaiah tells us that God will come and save us. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy

John cries out in the wide expanse of wilderness: prepare ye the way of the Lord. The kingdom is coming....it's coming....it's just this close.

A few years have passed since John baptized that young man in the river Jordan and the Spirit of God made itself so clear. In the dark solitude of his prison cell, depressed perhaps and alone, John contemplates his life and death. What has been the meaning of his life? Did he point people to a new Way? Or did he make a mistake. Was this Jesus really the one the world was waiting for?

If so, where is the reign of peace and justice? Where is the everlasting joy? Sorrow and sighing have not fled away. In John's day there was the hope that the dawning of God's reign was imminent, that all would be changed with the coming of the Messiah. John expected the desert to be in flower. And 2000 years later we are still waiting

for peace to flourish and justice to be our way of life. God, you have not met our expectations. Are you the one or are we to look for another?

And Jesus tells John's disciples, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them."

Well, I haven't seen lepers cleansed or the dead raised and I sure haven't seen good news brought to the poor. I see wasteful wars, wanton violence, a selfish society with no sense of shared sacrifice and growing gap between rich and poor, a discourse of hatred the likes of which we have not seen since the days of the struggle for civil rights

"Twelfth Night" on Twelfth Night at Twelve Noon for Twelve Dollars

Lean & Hungry Theater will perform Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* at noon on Saturday, January 5, at St. Stephen's Church.

Lean and Hungry is the new resident theater company of St. Stephen's. Parishioner Jessica Hansen is the company's artistic director.

Tickets are \$12 for the staged reading, performed as a radio drama with live sound effects and musical underscore. Tickets are available at the door beginning at 11:30am.

The cast features actors who have taught and appeared with some of the best-known classical theaters in Baltimore and Washington. Join us for the first St. Stephen's performance by our resident company!

of African Americans in this country.

The failure of our Congress to address the comprehensive issue of immigration marked an increase in the “anything goes” attack on undocumented immigrants. People who should be responsible have instead lit the flame of hateful rhetoric, pandering to groups like Council of Conservative Citizens, who act like the White Citizens’ Councils that Justice Thurgood Marshall once referred to as the Uptown Klan.

Blogs and websites, even Christian radio, are full of such talk. Very few are standing up against such language when it refers to Latino people. Words such as vermin and cockroach, rapists and terrorists are the language of hate. It is demeaning and degrading of the people it is used against and it unravels the moral fabric of our nation.

This vitriol is not only aimed at those who don’t have the cherished documents in hand. How could one differentiate really? If it looks Latino it fits the description. We should know this from our history...we should have learned by now. When it becomes permissible to denigrate any group in public discourse, that group is at risk for potshots from many sides.

And I am caught up in this human struggle because the people I am called to love and serve are all affected by it. Discrimination doesn’t limit itself to people without legal documents. It spreads out to encompass all who look Latino and still have accents, undocumented or citizen. The raids on the playgrounds and street corners of this neighborhood impact our families—if not directly, then secondarily through extended families, or simply because one belongs to a racial group being profiled. Fear, anxiety, depression are common.

It is not an easy situation, of course. The God of our mothers and fathers speaks directly to this situation. “Do not mistreat foreigners who are living in your land. Love them as you would yourselves. Remember that you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

John from his cell calls out. Jesus, are you really God’s anointed? Are you the one or should we look for another? And people may come here to this congregation and ask, “Are you really the ser-

vants of God or should we look for another?”

And I want to answer that question from my perspective as priest and pastor of the Spanish-speaking members of St. Stephen’s. You have opened the doors of this place. Some dioceses and even some churches in this diocese have chosen to keep them closed. Many have opened your hearts as well. You have invited a pilgrim people to share with you the way, to discover the Good News of God’s love. You have invited in a diverse group, a motley crew, representing 10 countries and cultures, from different socio-economic backgrounds—young and old, straight and gay, some citizens, some documented, some not—but all connected to each other by language and the fact they are wayfarers. They are people like you and me, trying to be faithful to God’s call in their lives.

At 5 pm on Sundays, people of all sorts and conditions come through these open doors. People separated from families, find a family. Families too humble to seek a blessing down the street on their birthday or anniversary or prayers for the dead when a mother or brother dies in a far off place. These and more are blessed and lifted up. People plagued by their illnesses come and find what it means to be healed in body, mind and spirit. They may still have their illness, but they have found healing grace. People long cut off from the sacraments kneel at the table and are fed.

Do you know what I think is happening when people come through these doors to the Misa Alegría? Christ is being born anew.

So if anybody asks, “Are you really the servants of God or should we look for another? Tell them that their search is over. This is the one. Come in, stranger no more. Or, when you hear somebody shout, “Go back to where you came from.” Remember we are all going back to where we came from. We are all of us, every one, exiles in this world. We are all building the highway home, shoulder to shoulder, step by step, holding onto a shining glory, the hope of home. As Isaiah promised, “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.”

I am a poor wayfaring stranger...

LECTIONS

4th Sunday in

Advent
(Dec. 23)

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7,
17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:
18-25

1st Sunday after

Christmas
(Dec. 30)

Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalms 148

Hebrews 2:
10-18

Matthew 2:
13-23

THE SAINTS

Sunday, December 23

Birthday: Anne Heyniger

Tuesday, December 25

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST

*Birthday: Liane Rozzell,
Michelle Sinkgraven*

Wednesday, December 26

SAINT STEPHEN, DEACON AND
MARTYR

*Heavenly Birthday: Anne
Bennett, 2004*

Thursday, December 27

SAINT JOHN, APOSTLE AND
EVANGELIST

*Birthday: Martha Carty, Miriam
Hood, Gretchen McMullen*

*Ordination Anniversary:
Ronald Conner*

Friday, December 28

THE HOLY INNOCENTS

Sunday, December 30

*Birthday: Jeremy Edwards,
John Phillips*

Tuesday, January 1

THE HOLY NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST

Wednesday, January 2

*Heavenly Birthday: Rebecca
Jackson, 1993*

Friday, January 4

Birthday: Ann Hargrove

Saturday, January 5

Birthday: Catie Davis

Sunday, January 6

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST

Birthday: Vladi Wien-Kandil

THE PRAYERS

Here's who we've been praying for recently:

•Louise Dyer and Falan Yinug, and Jessica and Aaron Hansen, who are expecting babies;

•Ridgely Bennett, Terrey Danley, René Holloway, Teresita Kelly (Mary Alcuin Kelly's mother), Brother John Mathis, and all who desire to be restored to health; those who are homebound; and all who care for aging relatives, the sick and the homebound;

•Duane Bonds, Helen Bonds (mother of Duane), Lisa Buonarosa, her husband Marcus Spiegelman, and their daughter Rebekah (Michele Lewis's sister and family), Maria Cabieses, Clara, Jeremy & Kyra Grant (Jane Bishop's daughter and family), Louis Newton (step-father of Gretchen McMullen), Maria Navarrete, Tom Rozzell (father of Liane), and all those who have been commended to our prayers.

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ON THE COVER...

Sophia Varol

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