

GOOD NEWS IN THE DIOCESE
Monthly Report from the Office of The Bishop
September 2009



A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP KIMSEY

For my brothers and sisters in Christ in and beyond Alaska.....

If you were in church last Sunday (9/06) or if you were reading your Scriptures at home you heard in the Gospel of Mark (7:24-37) that disturbing story of the Gentile woman who confronts Jesus and begs him to heal her daughter. Jesus' response to her is difficult for us to hear: "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But the woman responded with determination: "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then Jesus said to her, "For saying that, you may go....the demon has left your daughter." And she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

You can imagine the number of interpretations of this incident. Some say Jesus was simply reciting an ancient Jewish riddle about the Jews being the favored of God (the children) and the Gentiles the less (the dogs), and that Jesus was simply testing the woman...pushing the envelope....to see what her response would be. There is another interpretation that addresses the question of when did Jesus break out of his Jewishness and embrace his mission to be God's gift for all humanity...not just for the Jewish people. This focus on the story emphasizes the faith of the Gentile woman and her perseverance to have this man whom she trusted heal her daughter. Those who hold to this meaning of the story believe that before this incident Jesus may have believed his ministry was only to the Jewish people, but that because of the tenacity and faithfulness of this Gentile woman Jesus' heart and will were broken open and his mission to the Gentile world begun.

wounds or grudges or ignorance do we carry that block the healing power of Jesus? The moment to turn to a new understanding ...to embrace an ancient foe....to offer a word of compassion to one we have neglected is ever before us. May God grant us the grace that filled the life of Jesus to enter such moments.

Beginning Thursday, September 10th, I will be headed for Wrangell, Fairbanks, Eagle, Minto, Stevens Village, Allakaket, Hughes, Huslia, Kotzebue, Point Hope, Kivalina and Anchorage for our Convention. Gretchen will join me in Kotzebue for the last leg of our journey into your precious and holy land. We are so privileged to be with you!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Rustin, Assisting Bishop for Alaska



BISHOP DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

By: Stacy Thorpe, Committee Communication Liaison

The deadline for receiving all nomination application materials was August 15th. As of that deadline, we officially have 24 new applicants for the 8th Bishop of Alaska!

The Bishop Discernment Committee is entering into a publicly silent phase of the discernment process. This is the stage where each member of the discernment committee privately and prayerfully studies each candidate's application materials. This is also the time we have begun contacting some references of our candidates.

For those wondering how this next part of the process takes place, each candidate's information is prayerfully read through the Gospel eyes of each of our committee members. We are keeping close in mind the criteria developed in our Diocesan

Profile, specifically those listed on pages 15-16 (also available at www.alaskabishopsearch.org). Some of these include “deep, spiritual prayer life, multicultural awareness, advocate for ministry and growth, listens from the heart...” to name a few. The individual committee members prayerfully consider each candidate, based on the information submitted. At the end of September, the Discernment Committee will gather together face to face in Anchorage to collectively lift up and discuss each candidate. As we prayerfully consider each candidate, we will assign a numerical ranking based on the strength of the candidate’s skills, experience and personal qualifications related to the criteria. From that work, we will decide whom we would like to continue in conversation with, via telephone interviews. Those who will not be continuing in the process after that point, will be contacted and thanked for their ministry and willingness to having their name put forth.

Following the telephone interviews in October, we will continue reference and background checks. We will also begin readying ourselves to make on-site visits to the finalist candidates in November. These visits will be the final determining factor before we gather one final time in December to prayerfully decide the names to present in January to the Standing Committee for consideration of the 8th Bishop of Alaska. If all continues as planned, our final candidates will participate in a fly-about, around our diocese in late February, early March 2010. At this time, we fully anticipate our electing convention of the 8th Bishop of Alaska to take place April 9-10, 2010.

During this silent phase of our discernment process, please continue to lift up those candidates and their families who are willing to venture forward in this process with our Diocese. As well, please continue to hold the Bishop’s Discernment Committee, Standing Committee and Bishop’s staff, in your daily prayers.

Stay Informed at:
www.alaskabishopsearch.org
Subscribe to the RSS feed and you’ll know the minute
an update is posted on the website!



DIOCESAN CONVENTION UPDATE

The 34th Diocesan Convention is slated for October 8-11, 2009 in Anchorage. The Clergy Conference will precede the convention on October 7th.

One of the major items to be addressed at convention will be committee and commission elections and nominations:

Commission on Ministry

Arctic Coast Lay Position - Elected
Currently held by Joe Swan
Term: 3 years

Voc. Deacon- Bishop Appointment
Currently held by Georgia Giacobbe
Term: 3 years

FIT (Faith Into Tomorrow)

(1) Clergy Position, elected
Currently held by Rev. Oral Hawley
Term: 4 years

(1) Bishop Appointment Position
(either clergy or lay)
Currently held by Laura Bender
Term: 4 years

Standing Committee

Seat #1, Arctic Coast - Lay
Currently held by
Martin Oktollik
Term: Liturgical Year A, 2011

Seat #2, Interior Clergy
Currently held by
The Rev. John Holz
Term: Liturgical Year A, 2011

Seat #3, Southeast Clergy
Currently held by
The Rev. Dawn Allen-Herron
Term: Liturgical Year A, 2011

Seat #4, South Central Lay
Currently held by
John Crittenden
Term: Liturgical Year B, 2012

Seat #5, At Large Bishop Nominee
Currently held by
The Rev. Bob Stevens
Term: Liturgical Year B, 2012

Seat #6, Southeast Lay
Currently held by
Barbara Learmonth
Term: Liturgical Year B, 2012

Seat #7, Arctic Coast Clergy
Currently held by
The Rev. Jerry Norton
Term: Liturgical Year C, 2010

Seat #8, South Central Clergy
Currently held by
The Rev. Connie Jones
Term: Liturgical Year C, 2010

Ecclesiastical Court

Seat C, Clergy
Currently Vacant
Term: 5 years

Youth Commission

Appointed by Bishop.
One youth and One Adult who has worked with Youth, per deanery.

St. Simeon and St. Anna

There is no longer a limit on the number of nominations per deanery. Nominations are made by the local congregation and affirmed by Deanery in prayer. (**Note:** Crosses given to selected nominees are paid for by local churches and congregations at a cost of \$25 each.)

DEANERY NOMINATIONS

INTERIOR DEANERY:

- Standing Committee, Clergy – The Rev. John Holz
- Youth Commission – The Rev. Bessie Titus, Adult
Whitney Demientieff, Youth

SOUTH CENTRAL DEANERY:

- Ecclesiastical Court – The Rev. Gayle Nauska
- Standing Committee – Clergy: The Rev. Connie Jones
Lay: Ms. Barbara Chase
- Youth Commission - Gail Loken, Adult
Jessie Burke, Youth

SOUTHEAST DEANERY:

- Standing Committee - Clergy: The Rev. Bob Stevens
Lay: Ms. Barbara Learmonth
- Youth Commission - Wilson Valentine, Adult;
Emily Valentine, Youth

ARCTIC COAST DEANERY

- FIT - The Rev. Oral Hawley
- Standing Committee - Clergy: The Rev. Jerry Norton
Lay: Mr. Martin Oktollik
- Commission on Ministry - Joe Swan
- Youth commission - Lillian Johnson, Adult
Christopher Downey, Youth



CLERGY NEWS



IN MEMORIAM

The Rev. George Beacom, 86, passed away August 31, 2009, in Palmer. He first came to Alaska by boat, with his parents, arriving in Nome in May 1941. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and later moved to Sitka. He discerned his call to the Episcopal ministry in 1966 and began serving the Church in 1970 as a priest in Sitka. In 1976 he and his family moved to Palmer, where he became the priest at St. Bartholomew's. He retired in 1988. Fr. Beacom is survived by his wife, Edna Beacom; children Valerie Beacom and Kurt Beacom; and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

REV. BARBARA SMITH OFF TO NEW ADVENTURES

By: The Ven. Mark Boesser

A call from the Rev. Barbara Smith, priest at Cordova, informs us that she will soon be joining a Carmelite community, "The Episcopal Carmel of St. Teresa", in Rising Sun, Maryland. She says this is the fulfillment of a long held dream! September 27th will be her last service as rector at St. George's, Cordova. It's also her 74th birthday!

She plans to set out September 29th on the Alaska State Ferry for Valdez and then drive out with Joy Rollins, a member of St. George's, helpfully accompanying her. She says Bishop Robert Elaff, retired bishop of Maryland, will serve as their bishop, and she will be quite near four other dioceses. She and another will be beginning a new monastery, with newly acquired house, chapel and grounds. While she is moved to tears at the thought of leaving St. George's, Cordova and Alaska, she is greatly excited about this new venture of faith.

She certainly goes forth with our utmost gratitude as well as our prayers, encouragement and support. Best wishes to you and your family and may the blessings of Christ be deeply and personally yours.

THE REV. DR. PAULA SAMPSON JOINS VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY IN NEW CAPACITY

The Rev. Dr. Paula Sampson joined the Vancouver School of Theology (VST) faculty as Director of the Native Ministries Program (NMP) and Assistant Professor of Ethics and First Nations Studies, effective July 1, 2009. Dr. Sampson has been involved with VST for some time, serving as a NMP tutor, professor, and member of the Board of Governors. In the Diocese of Alaska she most recently served at St. Phillip's Church in Wrangell. We wish her the very best in her new endeavors!



INDIGENOUS CLERGY & LAY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The Indigenous Clergy and Lay Leadership Conference is scheduled for October 10-14, 2009 in Salt Lake City, Utah. The conference is presented by the Episcopal Office of Native American Ministries and The Indigenous Theological Training Institute. The theme of the gathering is "Building Circles of Leadership". Limited travel grants are available and the registration deadline is very near – September 15th. More information is available by contacting Amanda Norman at 1-800-818-0466.

