



By God's grace we are transformed...

by The Rev. Rebecca Hendricks,
St. James, Milton-Freewater

*As we look out at the mountains,
the snow line is slowly receding
and the green of the winter wheat
around us is indeed a welcomed
sight.*



photo by Jeanie Senior

The weather in the past few weeks has gradually become more settled, making calving season a little less stressful, and allowing the farmers in our area to be able to get into the fields.

We've had a great deal of work to do to get our new places ready for spring cropping, and our neighbors have also needed our help. Since some of these places haven't been farmed for awhile, the preparation has been especially extensive with many days on the tractors. The work continues between the wind and rain showers, frequently checking the cows, and fixing the breakdowns which are an inevitable part of farming.

Early one recent morning, a reading from the daily lectionary particularly caught my attention. In the fourth chapter of Jeremiah, the people of Israel are being called to repent and amend their ways, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among the thorns."

One of the many blessings of living in eastern Oregon is having a kinship with those who farmed in Biblical times—the agricultural examples are not lost on us. We have an innate understanding of the importance of preparing soil for new growth, whether the soil is the hardened hearts of the Israelites who had wandered away from God over two thousand years ago, the hardened soil in our own fields, or the hardened areas of our souls that God is calling us to refresh during the Lenten season. Fallow ground needs preparation and sowing among thorns is not a good farming practice in any sense. We know that there are no short-cuts around the hard work which will lead to good growth and new life.

Staying with it even when the days may be cold and the wind gritty eventually allows us to move forward, whether we are working the fallow ground of fields or the fallow ground of our souls. Slowly, by God's generous and infinite grace, we are transformed.

Late yesterday afternoon the last of the spring wheat was planted, and this morning two more calves were born. For this we say "Thanks be to God!"

Moving towards the search for a bishop: profiling the diocese

The search for a new bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon officially will launch at Diocesan Convention this October in Baker City, when the diocese also will mark its centennial.

Meanwhile, however, a series of meetings held during April at each of the 22 parishes in eastern Oregon and at Ascension School, represent an initial step in the search process: gathering information for a diocesan profile.

The Rev. Lee Kiefer, canon for transition ministry, and The Rev. Ivor Hughes, priest in charge at St. Paul's, Klamath Falls, are traveling around the diocese to conduct the meetings, "doing one part of information gathering, on the level of taking the pulse and temperature" of the diocese, The Rev. Ted Rodrigues, Sisters, said at the joint meeting of Standing Committee and Diocesan Council, held April 4 and 5.

Rodrigues, president of standing committee, said each convocation in the diocese has been asked to recommend lay and clergy representatives to serve on the profile committee. A search committee will be selected later.

"This is an exercise in us listening," Kiefer said of the meetings. "We hope to take a "snapshot of the diocese--who are we, where are we, by congregation--and how does that help us complete the big

picture of who we are as a diocese." The last of their visits was scheduled for April 29.

Each meeting also offers a chance to survey the condition of church buildings, Kiefer told the council. In places, "there's a fair amount of deferred maintenance; it is a concern, it has an impact on our fiscal health."

Kiefer said he and Hughes had been welcomed warmly at the first meetings, held before the diocesan council meeting.

When their report is completed, "we don't think it's going to be a definitive document but we think it's going to be an important one," he said.

"It's a starting place for delivering information; we believe that what we are doing is a pastoral response to the diocese; it is a matter of letting the congregations know that the diocese cares. And people are deeply appreciative that the diocese is willing to put the effort forward."

In other business the council hired The Rev. Alison Dingley, immediate past interim at St. Paul's, The Dalles, to a half-time diocesan position.

She will provide training in conflict resolution and mission strategy planning to diocesan leadership, convocations and congregations. Dingley also will offer workshops and training in faith-based reconciliation.

Inside:

† St. Alban's, Redmond, is searching for a full-time priest, *page 2*; † At St. Thomas, Canyon City, youngsters decorate the Easter cross, *page 2*; † Muckrakers from Eastern Oregon head to New Orleans to work on Katrina relief, *page 3*; † Trinity, Bend's new rector gets quite a welcome, *page 3*; † Seminarian Michelle Meech writes about her first year at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, *page 4*.

St. Alban's Seeks Priest

St. Alban's in Redmond, a growing parish in a growing city, is looking to hire a priest.

The parish has not employed a full-time rector for many years. One priest who held the job decades ago was The Rev. Rustin Kimsey, who later became Bishop of Eastern Oregon. Most recently, a locally-ordained priest and two non-stipendiary deacons have served St. Alban's.

Two candidates pre-approved by Diocesan Standing Committee were set for late April interviews, according to Laverne Eriksen, a member of the church's search committee.

After a highway expansion project forced St. Alban's to relocate, the church bought five acres just outside the Redmond city limits. Services now are held in a small house on the property, but Eriksen said expanding attendance may mean renting a larger space.

Eventually, the parish plans to build a new church on the property.

The parish profile says St. Alban's is seeking "a leader /priest /missioner to spend 50-65 percent of his/her time in church 'planting' " while building a congregation large enough to support youth, music and extensive community service programs.

Standing Committee seeks new lay member

Interested in getting involved in Diocesan governance? There is an opening for a lay member of the six-person Standing Committee. Member William Albee resigned when he moved from Cove to Walla Walla.

In the absence of a bishop, the three lay and three clergy members of Standing Committee hold ecclesiastical authority in the diocese. For a more detailed description of the group's duties, go to www.episdioeo.org and look under Convention.

Letters of interest in the position should be sent to The Rev. Ted Rodrigues, Standing Committee President, c/o Diocesan Office, P.O. Box 1548, The Dalles, OR 97058. The person appointed will be eligible for election at Diocesan Convention this October.



Easter in Canyon City

The children at St. Thomas, Canyon City followed tradition on Easter Sunday, decorating a cross with spring flowers. Clockwise, beginning at bottom left: Gavin Stecher, Eli Speth, Trejan Speth, Brianna Zwegardt, Jadon Bachtold, Amaya Zwegardt, Asher Bachtold, Declan Zwegardt, Summer Spell, Kara Spell, J.W. Phillips, Ryland Beil, Ellie Cornell. Photo by Jim Spell.

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

May 9 New Orleans Relief Benefit dinner, St. Paul's, The Dalles

May 16-17 Collegium Meeting - Trinity, Bend

May 24 Safeguarding God's Children training, St. Peter's, La Grande

May 23-26 Family Camp/Work Weekend - Ascension

May 26 Diocesan Office Closed - Memorial Day

May 29 Energy Stewardship workshop, Hood River

May 30-June 1 ELCA Synod meeting

June 6-7 Diocesan Council meeting

June 14 Commission on Ministry meeting, Ascension

June 18-28 Sr. High Camp

June 26-28 Province VIII Congregational Development Conference, Portland

June 29-July 1 Discovery Camp, pre-K-grade 3 +adult

July 6-12 Beginners Camp grades 3-5

July 13-19 Jr. High Camp grades 7-9

July 20-26 Intermediate Camp grades 5-7

July 29-Aug 3 Adult/ Continuing Education Camp

Aug 14-17 Art & Music Camp, Cherry Fair All Ages

August 15-16 Diocesan Council meeting, The Dalles

Sept 1 Diocesan office closed, Labor Day

Sept 12-14 Ministry Weekend

Sept 19-20 Collegium meeting, St. Paul's, Klamath Falls

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon, founded as the Missionary District of Oregon in 1907, became a diocese in 1970. It includes all of Oregon east of the Cascade Mountains as well as Klickitat County, Washington—some 69,000 square miles. There are 22 parishes and more than 2,600 Episcopalians in the diocese.

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EO Muckrakers tackle New Orleans damage



Members of the Muckrakers on a Mission crew from Eastern Oregon, who went to New Orleans in March to help with the giant task of restoring homes ravaged by Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed. Above, L-R, beginning with the back row: Diane Walworth, John Adams, The Dalles; Michelle from Hawaii, Harriet Langfeldt, Sally Forster, The Dalles; front: Rick Thew, Richard Thew, Cove; Carolyn Thomas, Kaethe Worcester, The Dalles. At right, top: Thomas and Worcester, who learned to miter and frame windows; bottom, Langfeldt, bagging trash. Also on the trip; Willis Moore and The Rev. Alison Dingley. Photos courtesy of Harriet Langfeldt



by Carolyn Thomas, St. Paul's, The Dalles

A tourist to New Orleans asked our Muckraker group why we were there: "After all, isn't it over by now?"

So I share my images of New Orleans:

Empty homes.... for miles. Boarded windows rotting or simply no windows. Blue tarp roofs. Rusted iron grillwork. White FEMA trailers, huddled next to damaged homes, still housing families.

No, it is not over for them.

Yellow-flowered cats claw creeps over roofs, wires and debris. Ancient black limbed live oaks majestically line the streets. A grey haired woman tends her flowers near solitary stone steps leading tonothing.

"Plant sunflowers to remove toxins from the soil and throw away the heads," a "homesteader" tells me.

"Plants I've never seen before are growing in my yard," another offers.

A young woman wearing her work clothes riding home on the streetcar says seriously, "Today is my birthday." Her eyes grow misty and she stares out the open

window as I foolishly ask about Katrina.

A musician sings his favorite song "Precious Lord take me home...." with tear-glittered eyes. He tells us Portland took him in. "Portland, Oregon can do no wrong," he says.

Smiles, waves, and applause greet us. "Thank you for coming to help us." is spoken sincerely over and over again. A handshake and a mother's quiet voice during the passing of the peace "Thank you for remembering us."

St. Anna's church adding, too frequently, a new name of a murder victim, and attempting to lift spirits by feeding, clothing and providing an "open mike" for musicians and others.

Shopping malls vacant, with green weeds reclaiming the parking lot, sit lonely. T.F.W.: (Toxic Flood Waters) spray painted on buildings remind us again and again.

Cars drive by where we work, honk and wave, smiling at us. Other cars stop and request, hopefully, that their home, or their mother's home, be put on "the list to get help."

No, it is not over for them.

Always the music: A well-known trumpeter practiced in Christ Church Cathedral in another room

during our orientation. He gave the sermon in the same place on our last day.

Another musician, with his two band members, invited his audience to join them under a 15' x 20' awning to get us out of the rain.

Children tap dance, on the sidewalk using pop can lids on tennis

shoes, dancing for a dollar.

A New Orleans native said simply, "It is all about music, food and fellowship," as we left a free dinner at a church.

No, it is not over for them.

Though gravely wounded, the spirit and soul of New Orleans lives on.

Welcome to Trinity, Christy

There it was, on the red-painted front door of Trinity, Bend, confronting The Rev. Christy Close Erskine as she arrived for her first day of work on April 1: an official looking foreclosure notice, announcing the building would be sold at auction on Sunday.

Erskine knew it was April Fool's day, but two vandal-shattered windows and crime scene tape--for real--caused her to take the notice a bit more seriously although "I've never heard of quite this same thing happening and I've been in the church all my life," she said.

"It's good to have you here, but a couple of things have come up," Senior Warden Jack



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PROPERTY: TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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LOCATION: Lot 81 and part of Lots 42, 44, 46 all located in the SW 1/4 of SE 1/3 of Sec 1218, R70E, M6, Range 184M, Northwest Territory, Oregon, USA, as partly described by Joseph Smith, Suggs, Jerry Garcia, and Harry Potter.

OWNER: The Great Grand and Average Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon, Southern Oregon, Western Oregon, Central Oregon, Oregon, Far Eastern Oregon, and Rest of Central Oregon.

LENDER: Bank of Crater, 007 Bend St. Bend, OR 97701

AMOUNT: More than you can pay, apparently.

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Sharing her journey: CDSPP seminarian Michelle Meech

Editor's note: Michelle Meech, a member of Trinity, Bend, is attending seminary in Berkeley. She will be writing occasional pieces for The Oregon Trail Evangelist.

Hello everyone! My name is Michelle Meech and I'm a postulant for the priesthood here in the diocese of Eastern Oregon. About four years ago, I sat down in the rector's office at Trinity in Bend for a conversation with Bill Ellis in which I asked what it was like to receive a calling. He said that it was rarely an experience where the clouds open up and the angels sing. Instead, he said, it was more like something that just won't leave you alone. I replied, "Then we need to talk."

And now, four years later, here I am... in my first year at Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSPP) in Berkeley, CA. At the risk of sounding hackneyed, I would never in a million years have thought I would end up here. Yet here I am, trying to more clearly understand what it is that God is calling me to do and why in the world I'm a postulant for the priesthood in the Episcopal Church. But more on that in a minute.

First, I want to let you know why it is that I'm taking up space in the diocesan newspaper. I was asked by the editor, Jeanie Senior, to document my life in seminary for you as I move through this process, and to give you all a better understanding of the preparation involved in becoming an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church.

Seminary-, locally-trained

Many of our priests in Eastern Oregon were trained extensively in the diocese to perform their sacramental duties. We are one of the few dioceses in the country that trains priests in that way, as you probably know. The reason is simple, different dioceses have different needs.

As to why I'm so surprised to find myself here-- I had, at best, a nominal upbringing in Christianity. I grew up in western Pennsylvania where my older cousin would take me to Sunday School sometimes. Later on, I went to church with a friend's family for a while but stopped

going altogether during high school. I was baptized in the Episcopal Church when I was 21 but I only become a regular church-goer after moving to Bend. For years, I was "seeking" and have, at various times, subscribed to various beliefs and faiths. But I came home to Christianity at Trinity.

Although many people tried, no one could have prepared me for this first year in seminary. Even my classmates who are "cradle Episcopalians" feel that way.

Study, and more study

Academically, it's very challenging. I take four classes per semester and the workload assigned for each class is given at a three to one ratio: three hours of work for every one hour in class. So, on top of the 12 hours per week that I'm in class, I have about 36 hours worth of work to do. However, when a paper is due, all bets are off and I just work until it gets done.

We have many required classes and as a first-year student, I've tried to stay close to the recommended list. Last semester I took Hebrew, Early Church History, Introduction to Anglicanism and an Old Testament class. This semester I'm taking Interreligious Dialogue, Medieval and Reformation Church History, Pastoral Theology and a New Testament class. Interreligious Dialogue is not required but I'm taking it because of my passion for interfaith work, dialogue and ministry.

Learning, in chapel

We are also required to participate in the chapel services, serving as sacristan, lector, lay assistant, crucifer, torch bearer, and even thurifer (the incense-bearer). With 3 services per day during the week (morning prayer, mid-day Eucharist, and evening prayer) we have plenty of opportunities to "suit-up". Most of our services closely follow the Book of Common Prayer, however we also create "experimental liturgies."

I was on the planning committee for one such experimental liturgy, our Eucharist in commemoration



Michelle Meech, a member of Trinity, Bend, and a seminarian at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. Photo by Beth Hartwell.

of the death of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that we held on April 4. We started in the courtyard and processed into the chapel singing a gospel hymn.

Reading Dr. King

Instead of the typical Liturgy of the Word followed by a sermon, we used the readings for that day interspersed with passages from Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and our own short reflections. We walked forward as we sang the prayers and ended up circled around the Eucharistic table where we gave each other communion. We then processed out at after our dismissal. It was a really wonderful way to bring to mind what Dr. King's life meant to us, using simple movement, song and his own powerful words.

My life, although busy, is pretty ordered and simple. I live in the dormitory this year in a 9 x 14 room that overlooks a lovely garden and fountain. We eat in the refectory during the week and cook our own meals on the week-ends. I sold my car so I use public transit (which is extremely accessible) when I need to travel anywhere and we have many shopping options within walking distance.

It's very easy to spend weeks without leaving the area of about one city block. But my friends and I make efforts to get out when we can. They treated me to a fortieth birthday celebration last week, when we ate some of the best sushi I've ever had, in a jazz

club called Yoshi's. Those outings are few and far between so we try to make the most of them. There are approximately 40 people in my class (which is considered to be a big class) from all over the country and we are also blessed to have an exchange student from England for a year. These are some truly inspiring and gifted people. I feel privileged to be in class with them and learning with them and from them every day.

Great teachers

Our faculty is nothing short of amazing in their overwhelming breadth of knowledge and their generosity and commitment of time to us and our learning. These are people who sincerely want us to know everything that they do. Many of them "wrote the book" on the subjects they teach.

I have many more experiences ahead of me since it will take at least two more years to complete this program. I'm extremely excited about it even though, I must say, it's a little daunting to be living on student loans for that long. There isn't much time for an outside job, considering the time it takes to complete the class requirements.

I have many more experiences ahead of me since it will take at least two more years to complete this program. I'm extremely excited about it even though, I must say, it's a little daunting to be living on student loans for that long. As you can probably see from the description thus far, there isn't much time for a job.

I feel so blessed

But even though seminary is challenging in many ways, I have to say that I just feel so blessed to be able to live and study in such a beautiful and diverse place and to be called to serve in a church that continually uses all of her resources to understand how to better serve all the people of God.

Thank you all for being interested enough about my life in seminary to take the time to read this. I'll be writing in the newsletter regularly and now that I've introduced myself, I'll be able to talk more about the content of what I'm learning the next time I write. I'm looking forward to sharing with you. God's peace be with you.