



# Listening to the diocese

## 2,000 mile trip, visits with 23 parishes, yields status report on Eastern Oregon

By Jeanie Senior

It was sort of a fact-finding mission, the 2,000 mile journey that The Rev. Canon Lee Kiefer and The Rev. Ivor Hughes made around the diocese in April.

What emerged after their travels was a five-page, single-spaced report discussing the health of the diocese, presented to the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council at their June meeting. Kiefer, canon for transition ministry, and Hughes, priest in charge at St. Paul's, Klamath Falls, visited all 23 parishes, counting Ascension School in Cove.

Attendance at the meetings ranged from five to 27 people, with about 15 the average turnout. At each session, the two priests asked the same general questions.

"We are pleased to report that without exception the parishes are in good spirits," they wrote in their summary. "Some congregations are small in number and there are common anxieties, but we heard stories that indicated great faithfulness, hope, enthusiasm, busy-ness. There was a sense that many parishes saw themselves on a new path."

Some churches, they said, "had come through a difficult time either through the breakdown of relationships with a priest or Bishop Gregg or because of an interim." Others had issues with the election of The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire, who is openly gay. "The details of what happened in individual parishes are immaterial but the fact that so many parishes have suffered so much over the years is astounding and appalling," the report said.

However, Kiefer and Hughes wrote, whatever the struggle, the churches "felt they were stronger for it. Certainly there were signs of hurt and

anger at what had happened but there was also a strong recognition in most places that these things were in the past and no longer dominating their life or diminishing their ministry."

They offered several recommendations for "urgent consideration" by Standing Committee and Diocesan Council, regarding the diocese, the bishop search process, parishes, and diocesan clergy.

Among them: establishing a clear understanding of the diocese, its purpose and mission; healing "the strong sense of disconnect between parishes and central structure. There is a marginal sense of leadership within the diocese at the present time."

There needs to be a program that

promotes awareness of what it means to be part of the Episcopal church, they wrote, ideally as a focus of diocesan convention in 2008 or as a "must" for 2009—"can we get the Presiding Bishop?"

To counter what they described as "a weak sense of purpose or mission, little excitement or optimism...an overwhelming sense of anxiety, apathy," they said, "there needs to be a renewed vision to move us out of the survival mode and into a more creative, spiritual and mission-driven mode."

With the parishes, "there is a strong need to overcome the feelings of isolation and 'congregationalism' that are so prevalent."

The recommendations also called for work on congregational development, greater emphasis on cooperation through convocations, and meetings where senior wardens could air their concerns and advice and get encouragement and support for their ministries.

Kiefer and Hughes voiced strong concern for diocesan clergy, calling them "a rich and diligent mixture of priests and deacons. Yet, for many...there is also a sense that their ministry has not been recognized or appreciated. Several are feeling frustrated, fatigued and betrayed by a structure that appeared to be top down and out of touch...such feelings

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## Bishop search: what's next?

A provisional bishop, a bishop-rector and an "ordinary bishop" are options being explored as Standing Committee and Diocesan Council prepare to launch the search for the next bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon.

"You are on the cutting edge of the church in the 21st Century, whether you want to be or not," when it comes to finding a new bishop, a consultant told members of the two governing groups at their June meeting in Bend.

The diocese "is poised for some exciting possibilities," The Rev. Ann Hallisey said, pointing to "a call to develop and live into a new model of the episcopate."

But Hallisey said it also is important not to deny "true and real" anxiety arising from the fact that the diocese now has been without a bishop for over a year, since The Rt. Rev. William O. Gregg resigned to become assistant bishop in the Diocese of North Carolina.



Consultant The Rev. Ann Hallisey reviews options involving the search for a bishop to Diocesan Council and Standing Committee at their June meeting.

Ecclesiastical authority now is in the hands of Standing Committee.

First on Hallisey's list of ideas for the episcopate was employing a full-time bishop, a process that would take 14-18 months and cost up to \$100,000 for search and other expenses.

A provisional bishop would be a retired bishop, recommended by the Presiding Bishop and hired for three years. Functioning in a way as an interim, a provisional bishop "could help you think of a new way of being a diocese," Hallisey said.

She called the rector-bishop idea "is the old Wild West model," with a priest serving the majority of time as bishop, but also serving one church as a part-time rector. It would require design of a new search process, she said.

Standing committee is considering the ideas and evaluating each option. It will report its recommendations when the two boards meet August 15-16 in The Dalles.

Among the questions to be answered: what can the diocese afford?

**INSIDE:** 1 News from parishes, 2 nHouse of God takes new meaning at St. Alban's, 3 nWith Lambeth Conference fast approaching, seminarian Michelle Meech offers thoughts, prayers, 3 nMore on diocesan report, 4 nAscension News, continuing education presenter named, 4

# News from EDEO parishes

## **Church of the Redeemer, Pendleton**

Building for the Future, the recently-launched capital campaign at Church of the Redeemer, Pendleton, is aimed at raising \$133,000 to preserve the church's buildings.

At a special parish meeting in May, church members voted unanimously to embark on the campaign.

Among the needs, as outlined in a recent mailing: \$43,000 to replace the roof on the church building, a job first recommended five years ago.

Also on the list: \$36,000 to renovate the 1928 Hinners pipe organ, which is valued at \$100,000. The needed work includes replacing the original leather pipe regulators, and upgrading the console. Other items include \$14,132 for painting exterior wood surfaces, some of which are badly deteriorated. \$10,400 for two new furnaces, \$10,000 for carpentry work, \$8,000 for new kitchen stoves, \$5,000 for the childrens bathroom; \$3,129 for an alarm system, \$3,000 for new carpet in the church.

"All of the items in our capital campaign are intended to restore to pristine condition this place which we so dearly love," The Rev. Frank H Moss III, interim rector, and Steven Corey, chair of the capital campaign committee, wrote in an appeal letter.

## **All Saints of the Cascades--Sunriver Christian Fellowship**

Well-known liturgical composer Marty Haugen, whose works include the Holden Evening Prayer service, and The Rev. Susan Briehl, a Lutheran pastor, will present several workshops on "Worship as a way of life" at Sunriver Christian Fellowship November 21-23. There also will be a songfest, Grateful Hearts and Voices Will Arise, on Friday evening and a Sunday festival church service, when Briehl will preach and Haugen will lead the music.

Workshops on Saturday will explore music as an encounter with the Living Christ. More information is available at the church website, [www.sunriver-christianfellowship.org](http://www.sunriver-christianfellowship.org)

## **St. Paul's, The Dalles**

"MaryEllen Lowe came to Vestry to report that our very limited youth group is joining with the Zion Lutheran youth group and planning functions that can be done jointly," St. Paul's Senior Warden John Mabrey wrote in the *St. Paul's Messenger*. "Vestry was very excited with the prospect of growth in youth activities and voted to authorize additional funding to help with those events that require travel."

One member of the St. Paul's youth group, Hailee Olheiser, is the Wasco County Fair and Rodeo Queen; she recently rode in the Rose Festival Parade in Portland.

A Rebuild New Orleans benefit dinner at St. Paul's raised \$1,299 for the Diocese of Louisiana's Rebuild Project to aid Katrina victims.

St. Paul's, which held an Aloha farewell dinner (complete with roast pig) in late April for interim priest The Rev. Alison Dingley, is engaged in a renewed search for a new rector, and hopes to call a priest as soon as September.

## **St. Paul's, Klamath Falls**

A Final Friday Social at St. Paul's featured Klamath history---and pizza.

The St. Paul's youth group is collecting suitcases, backpacks and duffle bags for the some 400 kids in

Klamath County who move in and out of foster care on a regular basis. The youth group also staffed a cookie and lemonade stand at the church rummage sale June 7, raising money for medical supplies for an orphanage in Kenya.

"We need to be looking at more than just changes in congregational life and church programs," The Rev. Ivor Hughes wrote in his June letter in *The Link*, the church newsletter. "We need to be talking transformation of heart and mind."

## **St. John's, Hermiston**

The Rev. George Walter, rector of St. John's, resigned in June to take a post at a church in the Diocese of Montana.

In May, St. John's hosted the North Central Convocation, which also includes Redeemer, Pendleton, St. James, Milton-Freewater and All Saints, Heppner. It was a chance for St. John's to show off its new electronic piano, purchased after a recent fund drive.

## **St. James, Milton-Freewater**

Members of St. James contributed \$650 to Episcopal Relief and Development during the Lenten Appeal.

The *St. James Messenger* congratulated longtime parishioner Charlotte Cannon, now residing in Walla Walla, on her 101st birthday: "She is feeling well but really misses her car. Charlotte has been one of St. James' strongest supporters over the years. She has provided the money to roof two of our buildings, established a fund that provides income for the maintenance of the buildings, and has given many other contributions. We miss her at the church but she is a joy to visit."

## **All Saints Episcopal & Hope Lutheran, Heppner**

The Rev. Janis Johnson, adjusting to a diagnosis of a long-term balance problem, is following the suggestion of her doctors as well as the diocese and the synod, and taking a month off to work on balance rehabilitation and learn habits that will help her not just now, but in the future. "Although this time off is something I have tried to avoid, it is time," she wrote in the church newsletter, noting that she will continue to be available for pastoral emergencies. "I believe this is within God's over-arching plan. Please continue to keep me in your prayers; I will keep you in mine. I am very thankful for your love, support and encouragement during the past months and the days to come! And yes, I will call when I need something--I promise."

All Saints and Hope Lutheran celebrated 10 years of shared ministry June 29 with a worship service and potluck lunch.

## **Church of the Transfiguration, Sisters**

The Rev. Ted Rodrigues, rector, reached a milestone in his ordained ministry on June 14: "On that day I will celebrate 20 years in the priesthood of Christ's church," he wrote in *The Transcript*, the church newsletter. There was a special combined service at Transfiguration on June 15 to celebrate the anniversary.

Parishioners at Transfiguration are working on preparations for the church's County Fair and Art Show, Aug 8 and 9. It is both a major project and major fund-raiser for the church. Last year \$16,000 in earnings were distributed to 18 local community support agencies, from Habitat for Humanity to the local food bank, Head Start, and a reading program.

**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 23 parishes and more than 2,600 Episcopalians in the diocese.

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**The Episcopal Church**, organized in 1789, is a community of 2.5 million members in 114 dioceses in North American and abroad.

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# St. Alban's hires interim, looks to build new church

REDMOND--St. Alban's, Redmond, has put its search for a priest on temporary hold and hired The Rev. Charles (Chuck) Christopher to be interim for six months.

Christopher, recently interim rector at Trinity, Bend, will work at St. Alban's for 24 hours a week, including three Sunday services.

"We felt that we needed someone to help us decide what God is calling us to do and what our mission for the future is," Senior Warden Don Scott wrote in a message to parishioners. "We will be pulling back from our priest search during his six months with us, and feel that his guidance will allow us to proceed at the end of this year with a better understanding of ourselves and how we should continue our search for a permanent priest."

St. Alban's, which has not employed a priest for many years, has been served by a locally ordained priest and two deacons, all non-stipendiary.

When a state highway construction project forced the parish from its church on the south side of Redmond four years ago, members met in a former Catholic church, and rented

an office in downtown Redmond. After they bought a parcel of land just north of the city limits, they moved church and office to the house on the property, also home to St. Alban's community garden.

Meanwhile, the cement block ranch house has been transformed quite literally into a House of God.

The pews from the old church were sold. "Everybody said they were uncomfortable," said parishioner Laverne Eriksen, whose husband Gard is junior warden. New folding chairs were purchased, and parishioners made fabric chair back covers to hold hymnals and prayer books.

During services, the altar is moved away from the wall. After church, the chairs are put away and the space becomes the parish hall.

The plan is to build a new church on the property, but first the land needs to be annexed into the city of Redmond, and the bureaucracy is moving slowly.

Summer attendance, averaging just under 40, is taxing the present space--not an unhappy development, to be sure. But if the number climbs higher, St. Alban's is going to have to find another space to hold services, the Eriksens said.



St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Redmond, at home for now in a ranch house on NW 10th St., on property where the parish hopes to build a new church. Lower photo: longtime parishioner Laverne Eriksen in the room that serves both as sanctuary and parish hall.

# Michelle Meech: A prayer for Lambeth

One of the benefits of being a student at Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSPP) is that it's a part of the greater Graduate Theological Union (GTU).

The GTU is an inter-faith network of graduate schools, most of which are Christian. This past semester, I took a class called *Notes from Seminary* Interreligious Dialogue from



*Notes from Seminary*

one of the Roman Catholic schools, the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley (JSTB)--eventually, you get used to all the acronyms.

In this class, we discussed Christian theology of the multi-faith context, theories of comparative religion and the practice of interreligious dialogue itself. One of our assignments was to interact with people of another religion to understand what it really means to engage someone in a discussion of faith when the points of view aren't necessarily the same.

For example, have you ever been in a conversation with someone when

you become aware that this other person really isn't listening to anything you have to say, but instead is only interested in telling you what they have to say or in convincing you of their beliefs? It happens all the time. I even catch myself doing it occasionally when I've stopped listening and am just waiting to make my next point. It can be an easy habit to slip into when we're feeling a little insecure about the situation or about the discussion itself.

True dialogue has no room for this type of behavior. True dialogue, first and foremost, comes from a desire for friendship, it comes from love. In order to be able to truly engage in dialogue we not only have to open ourselves up to the humanity of the other person, but to the humanity of ourselves. This means we know ourselves and are grounded so deeply and securely in our beliefs that making our own point is much less important than hearing the other person. In other words, it's not a debate. There will be no winners if there are any losers at all.

The key is to remain who we are while being open to conversion.

Have you ever been in conversation with someone and then because of something that they have said, you suddenly see things from a different perspective?

That's a paradigm shift. That's conversion. It doesn't mean that you give up being who you are, it means that you've allowed the light to shine into your awareness to give you a new understanding of your world and yourself.

I wanted to talk about dialogue in this issue because of the upcoming Lambeth Conference. On July 20, all of the bishops from the Anglican Communion all over the world will meet in Canterbury. For 15 days, all of our ecclesiastical authorities will discuss the state of the Communion.

As you know, there is talk of schism over the Episcopal Church's decision to allow the election of an openly gay bishop, Gene Robinson.

As you also may be aware, Bishop Robinson was not invited to the Lambeth Conference. We've also had some of our own Episcopal bishops and churches pull away from the Church and seek oversight from African bishops. And another pecu-

liar element is that this is the first Lambeth Conference to have a woman attend as a Presiding Bishop.

Everyone is coming to Lambeth from different places and different viewpoints. With all of the positions, ideas, beliefs, stances and personalities coming together in the same place, can true dialogue possibly occur?

There has been discussion over several ways to resolve the crisis, one being an Anglican covenant that would create a document of authority and set out steps for discipline if any Church should violate the covenant. Others have said that schism is a part of the history of Christianity, so why fight it?

I would hope that before either of those things happen, the bishops are able to dialogue, to truly listen to one another.

And that will be my prayer for the Lambeth Conference this year, so that as a Communion, we can stop worrying about trying to convert one another to our own viewpoint and start converting people to the reign of God, which is the reign of love.

Will you pray with me?

# Ascension School set for busy summer

Congregational development and discernment will be the focus when The Rev. Dr. James B. Lemler leads Continuing Education camp at Ascension School in Cove July 31-Aug. 3.

The former director of mission for the Episcopal Church and before that the dean and president of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Illinois, Lemler now is priest in charge at Christ Church in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Lemler, author of the recently-pub-

lished book *Transforming Congregations*, has been called one of America's finest Protestant mainline preachers.

Camp-goers there to hear Lemler will get an added bonus on Aug. 1: a concert as part of Cove's annual Music Over the Valley series. That evening, the 234th Army Band--Oregon's Own--will perform on the lawn by French Hall.

Camp dates are listed in the Diocesan Calendar on this page. "We're encouraging people to get

kids into camp--their kids or grand-kids, the kids next door," said The Rev. Dcn. Sherry Hartley, executive director of Ascension School. She noted that most parishes have camp scholarships available.

Ascension School also is looking forward to campers hosted by the Caring and Sharing scholarships for children whose parents are incarcerated in prisons in eastern Oregon. Funds were raised to pay for 46 scholarships.

Several campers this summer are coming for the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, which sold its diocesan camp and now has an agreement to send youth to camps operated by the United Methodist church. Parents sending campers to Ascension School "wanted their child to go to an Episcopal camp," Hartley said.

She called this spring's Work Weekend "phenomenal" in terms of what was accomplished. Among other projects, a bell tower was constructed next to Kimsey Commons. The tower's bell--there to be rung to summon people to gatherings--was donated by The Rev. Rustin Kimsey, former bishop of Eastern Oregon. It came from Kimsey's grandfather's ranch near Antelope.

Besides diocesan camps, events planned at Ascension include five weddings, mostly involving former campers; a statewide SEIU meeting, a high schools football camp, a family reunion, and a family camp for the Catholic diocese of Baker City.

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are a cause for alarm, need to be taken seriously and dealt with."

The report writers suggested creation of a part-time diocesan Dean of Clergy, who would provide pastoral care for clergy and mentor persons in the search process as well as newly-ordained deacons and priests.

That could help clergy overcome the sense of isolation, bring about much-needed healing and spiritual renewal, they said.

Under "genuine areas of anxiety that need attention," the report listed the 25 percent diocesan assessment, suggesting discussion with a member of Diocesan Council or the diocesan treasurer to explain the assessment and how it is used.

Commenting on another area of concern--lack of children and young people, they noted it is a problem affecting not just the Episcopal Church but all mainline and liturgical churches. "We believe there should be greater confidence in valuing what we have rather than being overly concerned with those things we do not have. Our calling is to be faithful within our circumstances."

Under the heading "The Bishop and the sense of Diocese," Kiefer and Hughes wrote that "It does seem that serious thought needs to be given to promoting a sense of belonging to something bigger--both Diocese and Episcopal Church. More recently that family has been severely fractured and parishes have become defensively insular."

Much was said in the meetings about Bishop Gregg's episcopate. Summarizing, Kiefer said that the bishop's management style and pastoral approach may not have been the best fit for this diocese--which led to "an almost unanimous plea that the next bishop should not come from 'back East.'"

At the same time, "there was an almost universal longing for a Bishop (who) was personal, pastoral, approachable and understandable.

"Someone who gets us."

Kiefer added, "we recognized that there are deep wounds in the diocese, some of them dating back decades, that have not been healed. Pastoral sensitivity to that is an important part of our moving forward."

Reviewing the parishes' responses against the five major marks of "being church"--fellowship, worship, service, learning, evangelism--Kiefer and Hughes offered these comments:

"The majority of our churches may be small, the congregations elderly but the level of community involvement and social concern was very impressive. It seems we do not always recognize and honor the work we do and the impact we have within our communities.

"The question, 'what are you good at?' in almost all cases produced the response, 'Being family!' Pastoral care within congregations in this diocese appears to be at a high level whether or not there is a full time or part time priest...indeed, it is at a very high level where there is no priest.

"We sensed a degree of apprehension about leading worship...a fear that 'we might get it wrong.' The question arises, 'who determines what is right and what is wrong.' Some congregations and clergy need to have greater confidence in what they are doing."

On learning: "Several parishes thought they were weak in this area."

On evangelism: "The 'e' word that so troubles Episcopalians. On the grounds that 'what you do' speaks as well as 'what you say,' the parishes are doing well in proclaiming love for neighbor..."

"However, we could be a little bolder in giving account of what we hold dear in matters of Christian life and discipleship. There is a feeling around that suggests, 'perhaps we should and perhaps we could, if only we knew how.'"



Tony Clemants and Bob DeSpain put finishing touches on Ascension School's new bell tower. lower photo: Bp. Rustin Kimsey dedicates tower.

### Diocesan Calendar

**July 6-12** Beginners Camp grades 3-5 Ascension School, Cove

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

**July 16-Aug 3** Lambeth Conference, England

**July 20-26** Ascension- Intermediate Camp grades 5-7

**July 31-Aug 3** Ascension-Adult/ Continuing Education Camp

**August 5** Safeguarding God's Children Trinity, Bend, 5 p.m.

**August 8-9** Art Show, Country Fair Transfiguration, Sisters

**August 14-17** Ascension-Art & Music Camp, Cherry Fair All Ages

**August 15-16** Diocesan Council meeting, The Dalles

**Sept 6** Commission on Ministry Trinity, Bend

**Sept 12-14** Ministry Weekend, Ascension School

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

**Oct 10-12** 38th Annual Diocesan Convention, Baker City

**Oct 13** Diocesan office closed

**Nov. 14-16** Diocesan Council retreat, Ascension School

**Dec. 26-28** Christmas Retreat, Ascension School

### Diocesan Cycle of Prayer

**July 6** For all campers who are attending youth camps at Ascension School

**July 13** For all who serve on the Commissions, Committees, and Boards of the Diocese

**July 20** For Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Communion

**July 27** For Adult Education Camp and for individual growth and formation in our faith

**August 3** For the Columbia Gorge Convocation

**August 10** For St. Paul's, The Dalles

**August 17** For St. Mark's, Hood River

**August 24** For all Vestries and Wardens

**August 31** For Diocesan Staff

**Sept 7** For those who teach and those who learn, as the new academic year begins