

A BISHOP'S LIFE • HEALTH AND ETHICS • THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW

SPIRIT

Episcopal Diocese
of West Missouri

LEADERSHIP
IN
TRANSITION





SPIRIT



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By *the Rev. Marshall Scott*



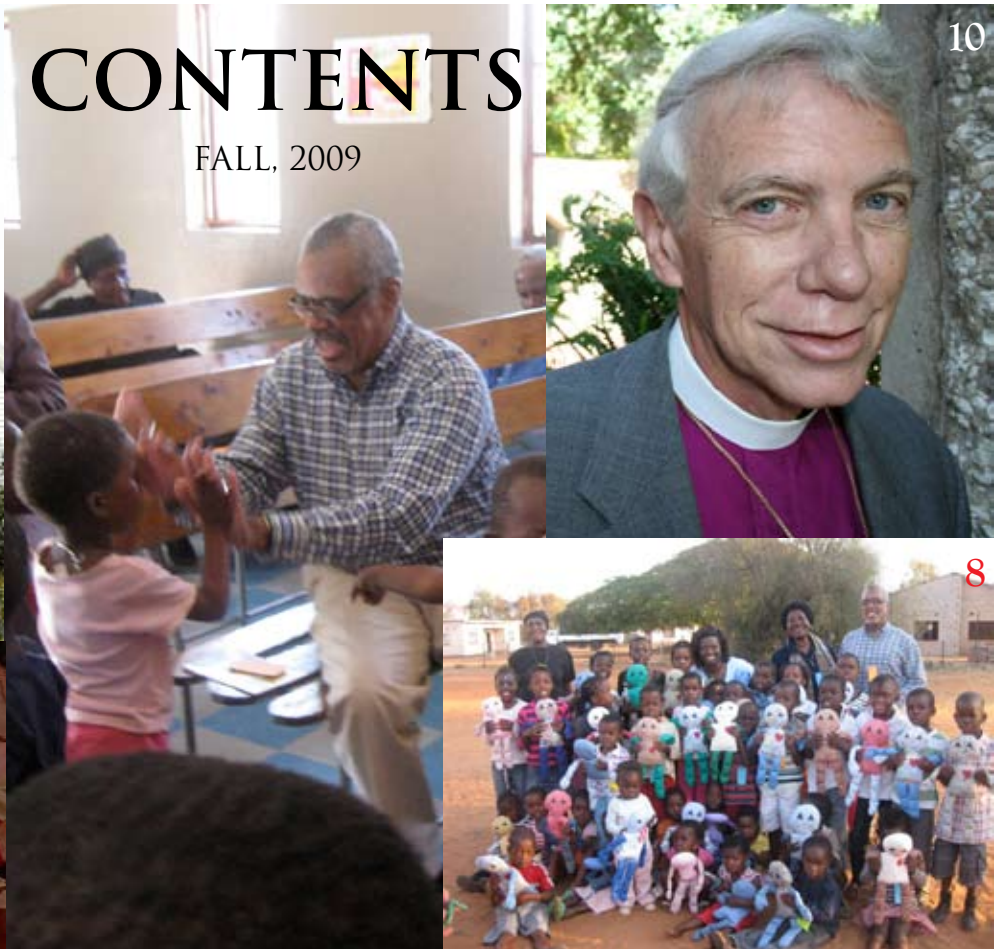
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Ezgi Saribay, who was recently hired by the diocese as a campus ministry intern at Drury University in Springfield, spent most of her life in Turkey, where she was raised a Muslim. In the summer of 2006, Saribay came to the United States as a high school exchange student. Less than a year later, she was baptized a Christian. Saribay explains her past – and her newfound passion.

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Is your congregation the church of 1950 or the church of 2050? Here are four diocesan churches – St. Alban's in Bolivar, St. Paul's in Lee's Summit, Grace Church in Liberty and St. Paul's in Kansas City – that represent the future.

By *Hugh Welsh*



Bishop Talk

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW BISHOP

By the Rt. Rev. Barry R. Howe

The realization of a “Transition in Leadership,” which headlines our debut edition of this magazine, can mean a number of things to different groups of people.

For some, it raises a great deal of anxiety about unknown changes that will be occurring in their lives. This is most true in the business world when jobs are “on the line” and policies are “up for review.”

For others, it brings a sense of joy – glad to have the incumbent moving on and hoping for some significant changes in leadership more to their liking.

Most people, however, greet the news of transition in leadership with mixed feelings, and with the awareness that such a happening is always inevitable.

These people usually want to be kept informed of new developments in the search process, and they find it important to be able to offer their thoughts and hopes during the search for new leadership.

We Episcopalians are very blessed to have the opportunity of electing the next bishop.

Almost all other church denominations and groups appoint leaders, with the ones or one making the appointment in a position removed from the people in the pew. Not so for us!

Our polity encourages everyone to take part in the search by contributing to a diocesan profile – by electing representatives from each congregation to represent them at the electing convention, and by exchanging ideas and thoughts with members



of the Nominating Committee and the Transition Committee.

Moreover, at the time of the election, a bishop is not chosen until there is a plurality of votes of both the clergy voting and the laity voting.

Sometimes the voting can take many ballots in this system. But when a person is elected, it means that there has been a thorough consideration on the part of all.

The Standing Committee of our diocese has begun the supervision of the search process. You will be able to know of all they are doing through their regular reports accessible on the diocesan website.

When candidates are being considered, their names will

remain confidential until the final list of nominees is published. Please

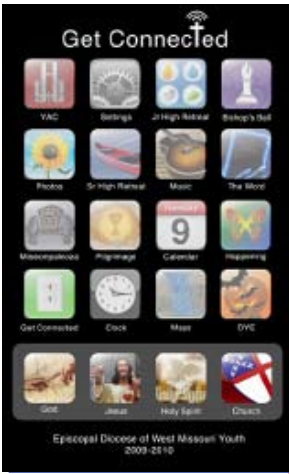
be informed, and take an active part in this search.

One active thing you can be doing daily is praying to the Lord for His guidance and empowering Spirit in this process.

When we are together in prayer as a community throughout the diocese, there is tremendous spiritual power being unleashed. Commit yourself to share in that divine power.

Mary and I are still very privileged to be with you and among you until the consecration of the new bishop of West Missouri.

Please be informed, and take an active part in the search for a new bishop.



Get Connected

WEST MISSOURI YOUTH

HOW DO YOU CONNECT TO GOD?

PENELOPE SANCHEZ, 18, KANSAS CITY



"I connect through daily meditation and through the church and I don't mean brick and mortar! For me, Christ's body is showing itself more and more through Facebook and blogs."

KATHRYN SPICER, 15, OVERLAND PARK

"The music is what really connects me. It's cliché, but I believe songs bring out the God in everyone."



MICHAEL PEARSON, 17, LEE'S SUMMIT

"God is everywhere! God is with me in my car. God is with me at school. God is with me at work. God is everywhere!"

THE

MIDDLE

GROUND



By the Rev.
Marshall Scott

HEALTH CARE REFORM

As Christians purporting to love each other, we must make health care available to all.

PRO

Health care reform will raise our national debt and allow illegal immigrants access to medical treatment.

CON

Some years ago at clergy conference I found myself in intense discussion with a colleague from the Southern Deanery. He was more conservative and I more liberal, but the discussion was really good.

We were discussing how best to provide for the poor. What made the discussion good had little to do with how. We didn't agree on that much at all.

We could, however, agree that as much as we disagreed about how, we were called as Christians to be concerned for the poor.

We could disagree respectfully about the means because we could certainly agree about the end.

Certainly, there are a number of pros and cons related to universal access to health care. Whether we speak about "health care reform" or "health insurance reform," there are certainly different points we might consider.

We can have respectful arguments about the means. We can ask just how much government action is required, and how much we need to focus on personal accountability.

We can think about how to balance employer mandates and individual mandates and subsidies to help the working poor buy insurance. We can discuss balancing cost control for physicians with tort reform.

We can discuss various means to provide access to health care for all Americans.

However, what we can all agree about as Episcopalians is that providing that access to health care is an appropriate end.

At General Convention we have called on our government to pursue health care reform since at least 1985. We have reaffirmed it as recently as

this summer when, at General Convention, three resolutions passed regarding universal access to health care.

We take that position because it's consistent with our faith. It is consistent with the Summary of the Law – that in addition to loving the Lord our God, we are called to love neighbor as self.

It is consistent with the Baptismal Covenant; for the apostles' teaching calls us to proclaim by word and example, serving Christ in all persons. So, for us this is the end on which we can agree, even if we see pros and cons about how.

Unfortunately, there are those who do disagree that this is an appropriate end. They may argue that we lose freedom if the government is involved. They may argue that an informed individual can make better decisions for his or her own good than any bureaucrat.

However, if we listen carefully we will discover that their arguments come back to a single theme: that I have a right to make the decision that is best for me and mine without regard for anyone else.

That may be legal, but we wouldn't call it "true," because it isn't true to the faith as the Episcopal Church has received it.

We continue to believe we are called to love neighbor as self in ways that proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ.

And so we agree that this goal, this service, and the specific strategies to achieve it – like universal access to health care – is an end to which God calls us, even if we might disagree about the means.

The Rev. Marshall Scott is a chaplain with St. Luke's Health System in Kansas City.

F.A.Q.

“Now that the bishop has announced his resignation, what’s next?”



By the Rev. Russ Johnson



At the Sept. 18 meeting of the Standing Committee, the Rt. Rev. Barry Howe announced he is calling for the election of a new bishop. In the Episcopal Church, the Standing Committee is responsible for forming committees to search for candidates for the position and to deal with the transitional aspects of the election. These transitional activities will also support Bishop Howe until the consecration of the next bishop takes place (hopefully March, 2011), when he will officially retire.

If you have been through the process of searching for a new rector, think about choosing a rector for half the state of Missouri! There are 51 parishes in our diocese, which include 9,733 communicants in good standing. Four to six final candidates selected by the Search/Nomination Committee will go through background checks as well as screening, interviewing and visits to our diocese. It will be the Transition Committee’s responsibility to inform you about what is happening as we move toward the election of the next bishop. The Transition Committee also plans the consecration service and works with Bishop Howe and his wife Mary as they conclude their ministries among us.

Dr. Linda Robertson – a member of St. John’s Church, Springfield – has been appointed to lead the Search/Nominating Committee. Robertson concluded her work on the Standing Committee at the 2009 Convention, and she is faithful in many other diocesan departments. The Rev. Dr. Douglas Johnson – rector of St. Peter’s Church, Harrisonville – will chair the Transition Committee. Johnson, a long-time priest, has served in many leadership roles in this diocese. The Rev. Carol Sanford will serve as chaplain to the committees.

Since Bishop Howe’s announcement, the Standing

Committee has developed a theological statement regarding the election process and a prayer especially for the election of a new bishop, which will be presented at the Diocesan Convention. We hope every parish in the diocese will recite it weekly until the election.

It has been a blessing (thanks to Bishop Howe’s vision) that each year the diocese has reserved \$10,000 to help pay for search-process expenses, such as traveling to see potential candidates in action, bringing candidates to visit our diocese and providing the consecration and retirement events.

Each deanery will be equally represented in clergy and laity in both Search/Nomination and Transition Committees. All elected and selected committee members, plus members of the Standing Committee, will be gathering Nov. 14 for a retreat at St. Paul’s, Lee’s Summit.

The retreat will be under the supervision of our consultant, the Very Rev. Ronald Clingenpeel, retired dean of Christ Cathedral, St. Louis. Clingenpeel has been consulting with dioceses in search processes for 10 years, and he is currently consulting with the dioceses of Minnesota and Kentucky.

January and February will be busy months as the Search/Nomination Committee will be conducting surveys and developing a profile of our diocese. Please watch for and participate in focus groups since your input in seeking a new bishop is vital to the future of our diocese.

It is our plan that the election for the next bishop will take place Nov. 5 and 6 during the 2010 Diocesan Convention in Kansas City.

The Rev. Russ Johnson is president of the Standing Committee and rector of St. Peter’s Church in Kansas City.



ENGAGING



BY HUGH WELSH

A part of Botswana never left Dennis Robinson. Years earlier, a safari swept him through the northern part of the country, which lies in south-central Africa. Botswana is approximately the size of Texas, though its population of two million is clustered along its eastern border away from the Kalihari Desert.

As much as Robinson was wowed by the wildlife, it was the people he never forgot. "The people of Botswana are so friendly, so warm," says Robinson, who now chairs the Companion Diocese Committee, which coordinates the diocese's partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Botswana. Robinson is a member at St. Mary's in Kansas City.

Robinson says he became involved with the committee because of his bond with the Rt. Rev. Barry R. Howe. "The bishop opened my eyes," Robinson says. "He made me believe this was a way for me to assist a people with real needs."

Robinson was one of seven members of the committee to travel to Botswana in November of 2008. His mindset for the trip was, naturally, a little different than his previous visit. "I was well-educated about the situation there," Robinson says. "It was about more than sight seeing."

Botswana differs from those sub-Saharan African countries that make headline news because their governments stand more for civil injustice

than civil liberties. "Botswana is a country that wants to be sophisticated but lacks the means," Robinson says. "The government, which is democratic, is trying its best." Botswana ails from an AIDS epidemic that afflicts one in every four. The result: a nation of orphans.

Robinson says that when he arrived in the capital city of Gaborone he saw children running amok - bare-ribbed, rummaging Dumpsters for whatever's edible.

Later, the group made the three-hour drive to Palapye, where they found a community consisting of a couple of families, all of whom were living in tents without access to running water. The grandmother was

the landowner and matriarch. All children under the age of 5 stayed with her. Not far away was Joana Mokandla, the Sunday school teacher from St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church. Mokandla is a member of the Mother's Union Association, which functions similarly to Episcopal Church Women. Mokandla was serious about her role in the association, acting as a kind of godmother to the children. Her running water was available to any of them.

"That was the fact-finding mission," Robinson says. In their 10-day stay, the committee's itinerary was cast hundreds of miles and peppered with

visits to AIDS hospice centers and day cares.

One year later, from late August through early

BOTSWANA



THE COMMITTEE

The Companion Diocese Committee creates an alliance between the Diocese of West Missouri and the Diocese of Botswana in the Province of Central Africa. Presently, its duties include:

- Offering opportunities for Christian friendship, education and support.
- Facilitating cultural understanding through correspondence and personal visits.
- Raising awareness and providing monetary assistance to communities in need.



FIRSTPERSON



MELISSA BOLDEN

What affected you most about the trip?

MB: The people of Botswana are extremely warm and welcoming. God's spirit was among them despite the uncomfortable conditions. In the pictures I'd seen, everyone was smiling, and it was the same when I got there. Their happiness comes from within, not from material items. The basic staples of food, clothing, water and shelter were missing. I'll always look up to Joana (Mokandla) for her selfless involvement with the children. What the committee is working on are all very, very doable projects. I'm going to step behind the cross and let God lead the way.

which would be initially built to accommodate 50 children and expanded as funding permits.

For every email Robinson sends, it is weeks before a response is received – and usually it is not to his satisfaction. He still does not know how much a day care facility would cost.

Robinson is leaning toward a return trip to Botswana, one that would extend beyond a week or a month. "The bishop has said that he'd love for me to move to Botswana," Robinson says. "Now that I know the needs over there, it's getting difficult for me not to go."

Dennis Robinson and Joana Mokandla are pictured top right. Photos by Melissa Bolden.

September of 2009, Robinson returned to Botswana along with Melissa Bolden – a parishioner at St. Augustine's in Kansas City – who did not participate in the original trip.

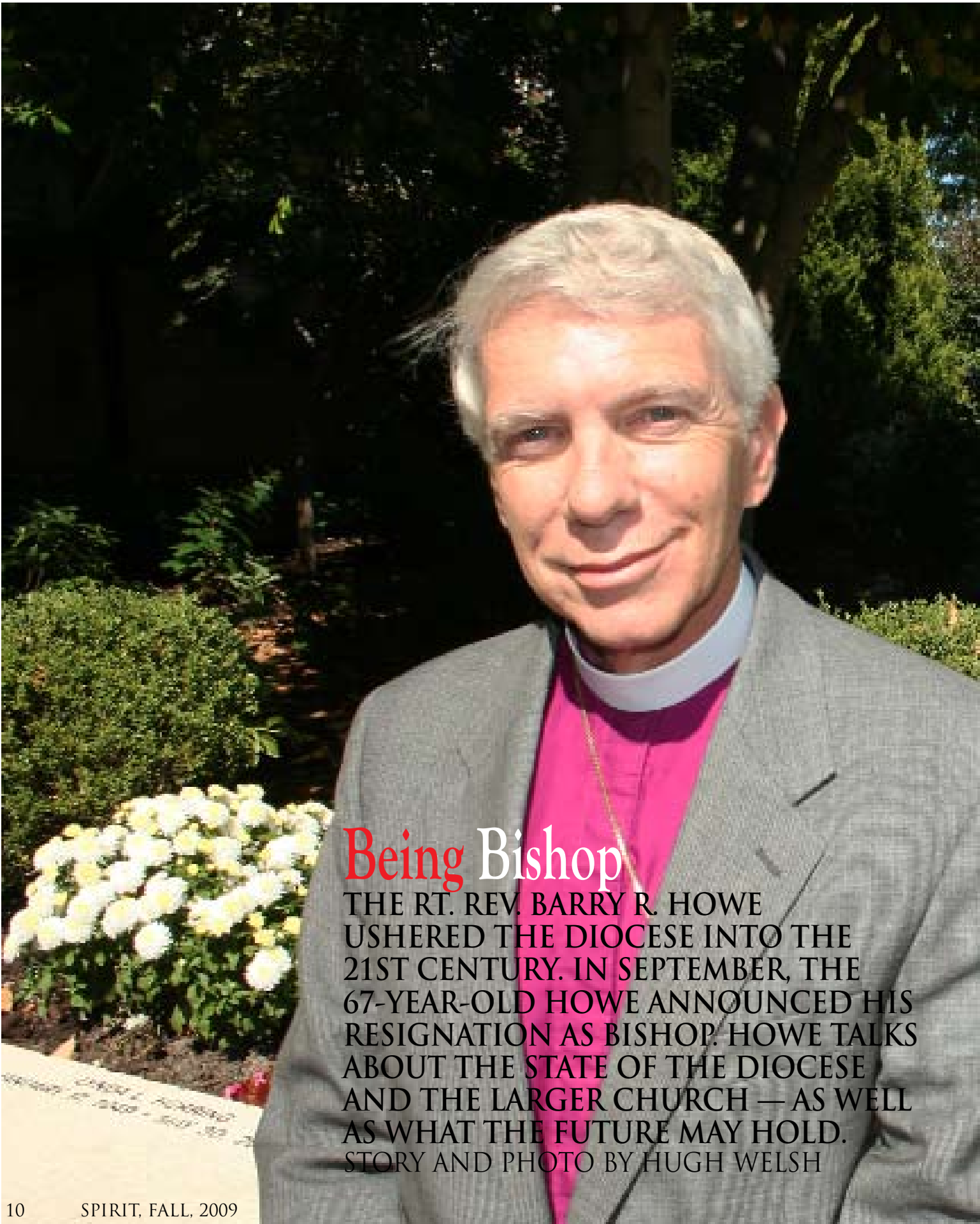
Upon arriving in Palapye, he and Bolden showered the children with handmade rag dolls, toothpaste, toothbrushes and flip-flops, for which he used his own money to ensure each child had a pair. But the smiles on the faces of the children were masking something.

A few weeks before, the grandmother had died, leaving the estate to her eldest daughter, who was pregnant and mentally unstable. One of the tents had been replaced by temporary government housing. The other tent was still standing. Living in it were about 30 children ages 2 to 8 – filthy, underfed and unsupervised save the round-the-clock caregiving of Mokandla and her 23-year-old son, Witness. Running water and toilet facilities

were nowhere. "It was a desperate situation," Robinson says.

Robinson met with Father Abrey Molatlhwe, the new priest at St. Mary Magdalene. Molatlhwe explained to Robinson the tribal influence over land settlements: a chief and land board would determine the property's rightful heir, who Robinson hopes will be the youngest sister.

When Robinson and Bolden left Botswana, the property's ownership remained in flux. Unless one person has ownership, any progress is difficult. The Companion Diocese Committee would like to see: running water to the property (the cost is \$100 for installation and about \$10 per month thereafter), immediate aid to the families (the committee is working to get the families registered with the government so food baskets can be delivered there) and housing. A further goal of the committee is the construction of a day care in Palapye,



Being Bishop

THE RT. REV. BARRY R. HOWE USHERED THE DIOCESE INTO THE 21ST CENTURY. IN SEPTEMBER, THE 67-YEAR-OLD HOWE ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION AS BISHOP. HOWE TALKS ABOUT THE STATE OF THE DIOCESE AND THE LARGER CHURCH — AS WELL AS WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HOLD. STORY AND PHOTO BY HUGH WELSH



Following the consecration of a new bishop in early 2011, Bishop Barry R. Howe will leave Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral behind, settling in St. Petersburg, Fla.

IT WASN'T AN EPIPHANY THAT LED TO

the Rt. Rev. Barry R. Howe's decision to retire as bishop. "It was a gradual process in which I looked at the demands of my personal life, my family, age and years of service," Howe says. "I'm responsible to the people of the diocese, and I feel new leadership is important."

Howe will remain bishop until the consecration of his successor, which will take place sometime in early 2011.

Howe, 67, was consecrated in 1998 and became diocesan bishop in 2000. While the larger Episcopal Church has been embroiled the past 10 years in such hot-button issues as capital punishment, abortion and human sexuality, Howe has held strong to the belief that the best course is listening and understanding one another.

"This diocese has avoided the turmoil the Church has experienced the last 10 years because it remains focused on the gospel," Howe says. "People shouldn't be broken into splinter groups; people should take their relationship with the Lord seriously."

In Howe's tenure as bishop, the diocese has not lost any congregations. He says it would be misleading, however, if he said he doesn't have a personal outlook on issues. "My personal opinion is best left private," he says, "but I think we as a church need to be more understanding in terms of race, ethnic origin and sexual identity."

Howe is open about his position on one church matter: mission work.

"It is very definitely a passion of mine," he says.

When it came to cutting the national Church's budget at July's General Convention, Howe was opposed to bridging the shortfall by eliminating mission opportunities.

"Medical clinics, the building of schools - this is where our hearts need to be," he says.

Howe has made a visit to Botswana, West Missouri's companion diocese. It is a country challenged by poverty, drought, malaria and the AIDS epidemic. (See article on p. 8.)

"In Botswana, we're supporting a community of orphans with their most basic needs," Howe says.

Domestically, Howe cites fiscal responsibility as important to him. In the last five years, the companion diocese has partnered with half a dozen congregations in need of special support. "Resource sharing has allowed congregations to be responsive to their expectations," Howe says. The agreement exists on a descending scale so each congregation can ultimately achieve self-sufficiency.



In November of last year, Bishop Barry R. Howe traveled to Botswana. Above, Howe meets with the two archdeacons of the Anglican Diocese of Botswana. Photo by Mary Howe.

Howe says he is also pleased with the growth of mutual ministry training in the diocese's smaller congregations. Such training allows lay persons to identify specific ministries to which they're called. It stresses that there is one ministry in Christ in which all baptized people can participate.

The fruition of the George Herbert Institute - a basic program for the education and formation of priests who cannot attend seminary - is another point of pride for Howe, who says the institute fulfills a have-not among some smaller congregations in the diocese. "Having full-time clergy is not always a possibility," he says.

Howe says he's long been impressed by the dutifulness of the diocese's members. "I continue to see a deep spiritual hunger in people," Howe says, "and I think young people are expressing hunger in ways that show a new sense of compassion in their communities."

Upon his resignation, Howe and his wife, Mary, will move to St. Petersburg, Fla., where their children and grandchildren live. Before moving to Missouri, Howe was the Dean of St. Peter's Cathedral there. Like the bishop who preceded him, Howe intends to mentor his replacement up until the consecration - then hand over the reins. "For me, one of the most important things for a new bishop is to be free of any influence of the predecessor," Howe says. "Giving the new person the room to do what he or she wishes to do is the greatest gift I can give."

While Howe may no longer be officially affiliated with the Diocese of West Missouri after his resignation, his presence in the larger Church can be assured. "When I travel, I don't like to go as a tourist," he says.

PROFILE : EZGI SARIBAY

BY HUGH WELSH

Ezgi Saribay's accent has the command of a gavel. "I'm here to live the American dream," says the 20-year-old Saribay, who was recently hired by the diocese to represent the Episcopal Church as a campus ministry intern at Drury University. "Aren't you?"

When she's finished speaking, Saribay is silent. She wants to hear the other perspective - not to tear it to shreds but to build a friendly foundation. She loves to talk, but she loves to listen more.

Saribay spent a majority of her life in Izmir, Turkey - a modern coastal city. She says both her parents are dutiful Muslims who are frequent in prayer and quick to help others. "I come from a spiritual family," Saribay says. "They're supportive of everything I do."

When at 17 she expressed her desire to spend a year in the U.S. as an exchange student, they consented. The family she was assigned was the Ordways, a Christian household outside Springfield. Every Sunday, she was to rise early and attend services at Chapel Hill Baptist Church with them. It wasn't long before the words she was reading in the pews went beyond fodder for theological debate. Saribay found herself wanting to learn more. She participated in church activities and quizzed Christians about their faith. Scripture began to dominate leisure time. The figure of Jesus Christ gave her "a peace of mind I'd never felt before," she says.

Saribay was baptized in April 2007 in the frigid waters of Jack's Fork in southeastern Missouri. "I chose to be Christian," Saribay says.

Saribay's handle on the English language is remarkable given she's only been speaking it for three years. "I talk," she says, "a lot."

The U.S. and Turkey are not without their differences: in Turkey, people welcome each other with kisses on the cheek; in Turkey, hamburgers, hotdogs and pizza aren't culinary staples. Saribay says her favorite aspect

of American living is the freedom. Turkey is a society in which men are the assumed breadwinners and women the caregivers. The political realm is an all-male fraternity. Turkey is also not a country of individualism; personal ambition is squelched by public need.

Saribay has not wasted any of the freedom afforded her. In fall 2007, she enrolled at Drury University, where she is majoring in accounting. But her role in her newfound faith is her biggest talking point.

"I bring Episcopal students and faculty together in fellowship," says Saribay, whose responsibilities as chaplain intern include coordinating on-campus events for



Episcopalians (such as Noonday Prayer and monthly lunches), contacting Episcopal students about activities at Christ Church and St. John's Church in Springfield and inviting anyone interested in the Episcopal Church to inquirers' classes. She also plays the viola and sings in the choir at St. John's.

Saribay says she adores the Episcopal Church for many reasons. "There's great diversity and great tradition," she says. "I'm an old soul who likes Rite One and singing in Latin."

Naturally, Saribay has an interest in interfaith dialogue, something she says is particularly encouraged in the Episcopal Church. "It's emphasized that we are to treat everyone as Christ," Saribay says.

Among her dorm mates is a Muslim woman who emigrated from Afghanistan. "It's important as Christians that we listen and have a friendly exchange of ideas before sharing our knowledge of Jesus and who he was," Saribay says.

Saribay's major may be accounting, but her heart lies elsewhere. "I plan to attend seminary and be ordained," she says.

According to Saribay, it was she who chose Christianity. It may be more accurate to say that Christ chose her.

The Church of 2050

A stylized illustration of a church building with a steeple, rendered in shades of blue and purple against a dark background. The church has a prominent steeple with a bell tower, a gabled roof, and a circular window. The overall style is graphic and artistic.

ILLUSTRATION AND
STORIES BY HUGH WELSH

is not science fiction.

FOUR DIOCESAN CHURCHES THAT ARE BEYOND BELIEF.



Submitted by Cathy Cox

The church with the red roof wasn't supposed to be successful. In the small town of Bolivar in southwest Missouri, St. Alban's Church is planted on Baptist soil. "It's not natural to have an Episcopal church here," says the Rev. Cathy Cox, St. Alban's vicar. Cox was a Rivendell Community resident at the Motherhouse when she was named vicar at St. Alban's several years ago, when debt issues at the parish made a half-time clergy stipend impossible. "There's even a Baptist university nearby."

Cox says it's within reason to believe an Episcopal church would fail there. That's why St. Alban's is a miracle — and a church of the future. A congregation of 62, St. Alban's Sunday attendance ranges from 90 to 100 percent. "We all hold each other accountable," Cox says. "It's just a real unified place."

Cox equates St. Alban's membership to a spiritual fog that drifts and hovers wherever it is most needed. In late September, the church assisted the First Christian Church of Bolivar with its annual fundraiser, Pork & Pie. And any given Sunday, St. Alban's prays not only for the people of its parish and the Episcopal Church; it prays for another church in the area. "Somebody in our congregation communicates with that church to tell us who to pray for," Cox says. "It's been surprisingly powerful."

At St. Alban's, everything is determined by popular — if not unanimous — vote. In fact, when a new metal roof was installed, the color red was the majority choice. "Red was chosen," Cox says, "because it's the color of the Pentecost, and it's bold, enthusiastic and forward going."

The building is free to use and the food pantry is available at no income requirement. "We don't keep records here," Cox says.

Contributing to the pantry is St. Alban's garden project of the last two years. Known as the "Cannables" Food Preservation Project, it began with a \$1,000 grant from the diocese, which allowed the church to buy jars, pressure cookers and food dehydrators.

Members of the parish donate mulch, compost, equipment, seeds and their time to tend to the project, now comprised of three gardens and three orchards, one of which can be seen through the windows of the sanctuary. Parishioners also can and make pies of leftovers. Last year, two people donated cows to butcher.

But perhaps St. Alban's most unique outreach is directed toward its younger members, the church's next generation. Cox says each child is required to participate in one outreach project. Among these are highway cleanup and Operation Christmas Child in which St. Alban's younger members prepare 60 shoe-box gifts for needy children around the world. Youth at St. Alban's also take turns reading scripture during Sunday services.

"If this were a congregation of 200 people, I'd have 50 people doing everything and 150 people I'd have to babysit," Cox says. "I'm lucky to be surrounded by active, innovative people who are absolutely amazing."



St. Paul's in Lee's Summit

The old sanctuary at St. Paul's in Lee's Summit dates to 1884. Photo by Hugh Welsh.

Two years ago, the Rev. Mark McGuire — the rector at St. Paul's in Lee's Summit — was advised by the Bandy Consultant Group that a third worship service would be a good idea if the church is to be relevant in the future.

How to go about doing that was left to him.

McGuire says "contemporary" came immediately to mind. But what was he to make of the word? Should he add an entertainment-centered service and ditch organ pipes for a loudspeaker? Should the sermon be delivered in rhymes with a choirboy spitting a beat? "I decided that would be a bogus way to go," says McGuire who, before becoming rector, was vicar at St. Paul's for five years. "But it was important to me that it be an alternative service."

As opposed to assuming what a younger demographic would prefer, McGuire — a one-time reporter for the *Independence Examiner* newspaper — went to the source,

calling upon a group of teenagers who were regulars in the pews.

"I found that what they wanted flew in the face of what I was told in seminary," McGuire says.

What the teens wanted was something ultra-traditional, something that could distance them from the frenetic pulse of day to day. One of the group's members told McGuire that the God he worships is different from that of his parents. "His parents saw God as an extension of themselves," McGuire says. "He saw God as a divine being greater than himself."

Instead of sing-a-long, they suggested old-time chanting and bells. Instead of a sermon conducted in the language of today, they wanted one peppered with thous and thees. They longed for the use of incense and the flicker of a candle in lieu of artificial lighting. "They were much more philosophical than you'd ever think," McGuire says. "Christianity is about taking things that are out of practice or secularized and re-



The once unpopular addition at St. Paul's in Lee's Summit is now home to Saturday worship. Photo by Hugh Welsh.

symbolizing them.”

McGuire took the counsel seriously, designing a service that evokes the era of Elizabeth I: a Rite One service. And because Sunday is a day to recuperate and Saturday afternoon is too early and Saturday evening too late, 5:30 p.m. Saturday was determined as the time for the third service. The service would be located in the church's addition, once a bone of contention but now a place of new life for a growing congregation. “There was a lot of antagonism toward it,” McGuire says. “There were some people who thought it represented all that's wrong with the church; Christianity can also re-symbolize the perverse.”

Constructed in the mid-1990s as a multipurpose center (it also functioned as a coffee shop), the space was revamped in spring of last year. Its color changed from hospital white to shades of beige, today the addition includes a bargain-basement organ (bought for \$15,000 vs. a retail value in the six figures), a handcrafted altar (made from donated walnut lumber) and windows matching those in the original sanctuary, which dates to 1884. McGuire says the Saturday service

fetches about two dozen people each week, most of whom are “youngish,” McGuire says.

Following Bandy's recommendation that the church find outreach opportunities off-site, St. Paul's has also combined forces with St. Anne's of Lee's Summit in partnering with Hillcrest Transitional Living. Hillcrest is a not-for-profit organization for homeless families that requires its residents to work full time, obey program guidelines and attend classes in such areas as employment, community living and fiscal responsibility. The goal is to move families from homelessness to self-sufficiency within 90 days. In addition to allotting funds, both churches sponsor an apartment at Hillcrest's new living facility in Lee's Summit. “Hillcrest is no-nonsense hard love that's not designed to keep people repressed or subservient,” McGuire says.

But perhaps an old Biblical phrase says it best, because among St. Paul's Saturday churchgoers are individuals who once called Hillcrest home. “Simply put: It bears fruit,” McGuire says.



Grace Church in Liberty

(Left) Lighted by multi-colored glass, a baptismal font lies at the entry to Grace Church's sanctuary. (Right) Grace Church's exterior is abundant in Biblical plant life, many of which bear fruit. Photos by Hugh Welsh.

Flanked by franchises in a town known for its Baptist heritage and conservatism, one church offers a safe harbor for those seeking something different.

Grace Church offers a “distinctive, yet fundamentally Anglican theological voice,” says the Very Rev. Susan McCann, the church’s rector for the past 13 years. “We are not a church of like-minded people; our unity is found in the sacrament of Holy Baptism.”

Located in Liberty, Grace Church holds tightly to Jesus’ words found in Matthew 7:8: “For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Entering the church, visitors encounter a window checkered in multicolored square glass panes. To the right is the baptismal font, its waters welcoming all who wish to become part of the Body of Christ. To enter the nave, one must turn toward the altar. “We want people to consciously think about turning their lives to Christ before they worship,” McCann

says.

The church has grown each year that McCann’s been the rector and has a youthful membership; more than 30 percent are under 16. “We have grown,” McCann says, “because we are a community of radical welcome, radical inclusion. All people are honored and valued because every human being, created in the image of God, is a reflection of the Divine.”

Grace Church is grateful for all people. “We don’t simply tolerate persons of diverse backgrounds, interests, ideologies, family structure or sexual orientation,” McCann says. “We celebrate the gifts and uniqueness of each and every person and recognize that their presence at Grace enriches the whole community of faith.” Beyond welcome, those who become members of Grace Church are invited to ask questions of faith directly and honestly. “We want people to seriously engage and wrestle with scripture,” McCann says. “That’s an attractive alternative to many whose experience with ‘church’ has meant being told what to think and believe.”

Future-leaning churches serve the world in Christ’s name. At Grace Church that work is all about feeding people in an ecologically dynamic way.

About four years ago, the church decided to focus on one unmet community need. After conducting extensive community interviews, parishioners believed God was calling them to feed hungry people. “The gospel imperative ‘Feed my sheep’ undergirds the ministry,” McCann says.

Grace’s Franklin Friends has been the prototype for similar feeding programs in the Kansas City area. The program provides six simple weekend meals for children at Franklin Elementary School, which has the highest proportion of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches in the Liberty area. It also provides food for siblings of these children.

Through its year-round Nourishing Neighbors ministry, church members provide and deliver weekend food to homebound elderly people. Grace’s Grocery is always well stocked with food for hungry people who come to

the church seeking help. The feeding ministries are funded through Grace members' pledges to the operating budget and through one fundraising event: a Pumpkin Patch that can raise as much as \$3,000 of the approximately \$8,000 needed to fund these feeding ministries.

But the church has more ideas about how to feed people who are hungry. Grace recently broke ground on its Urban Community Garden, an unfenced haven for vegetables and fruits, including orchards of apples and pears.

Unlike Eden, this garden will be without prohibition. "Whoever wants to eat from the fruits of this garden is welcome to do so," says McCann.

The testimony to God's work at Grace is powerful enough to come from the ground itself. One garden at the church features Biblical plants, including a fig tree that should be barely alive in a climate so foreign. Instead, this summer, it overflowed with succulent fruit.



The House that Abraham Built: an interfaith ministry that works. Submitted photo.



St. Paul's in Kansas City

Located at 40th and Main streets in Kansas City, St. Paul's is in the middle of everything. "With our new addition (as part of the church's day school completed in late 2008) horizontal to Main Street, we're more visible than ever before," says the Rev. Stan Runnels, the church's rector for nearly four years.

Long before becoming rector, Runnels was brainstorming a concept integral to the church of 2050: a collaborative ministry fusing Christians with Jews and Muslims, the other Abrahamic religions. The House that Abraham Built is the realization of that dream.

Involved in the project, a low-income housing partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Kansas City, have been four Episcopal churches (St. Paul's, St. Andrew's, Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral and All Saints), Al Inshirah Islamic Center and Congregation Ohev Shalom. Also participating are members of the Catholic Church and the Emergent movement. "In Kansas City, there is a large Jewish population and a growing Muslim one," Runnels says. "It was important to find something that's

non-controversial."

The House that Abraham Built recently completed its second house; a third house is slated to be built sometime in 2011. Runnels says it's his goal to enlarge the interfaith relationship every year. Conversational Tables – a program in which Christians, Jews and Muslims will discuss various passages from scripture – will soon be underway. Runnels says he has received a lot of phone calls about the House that Abraham Built. "The idea of interfaith dialogue as a mechanism for a better world has a lot of traction with our members," Runnels says.

Because it's a large church, Runnels says St. Paul's can commit nearly six figures to outreach ministries annually, which includes a covenant with the people of Ravine a l'Anse in Haiti and a food pantry, which was recently moved into a space six times larger than what was previously available. Runnels says he wants people to see St. Paul's as more than just a refurbished façade. "I want people to see that where we are is related to who we are."



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