

The hard work of our Inaugural Synod has been accomplished. We now have a Constitution and Canons and we have procedures and structures to guide us as we seek to do God's work in these formative years of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints.

The theme prayerfully chosen for this Retreat is *Doing the Mission of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Let's begin by looking at the word *mission*. One might try looking for it in the Bible. But, I'll tell you something that will save you a great deal of time and effort. Don't look for the word *mission* in the King James Version. You won't find it because it isn't there.

However, if you consult the Greek and Hebrew texts you will discover its meaning. The Greek New Testament uses the word *Apostello*. We recognize it as a form of the English word *Apostle*. It means to "set apart" or to "send out." The Hebrew Old Testament uses a word I can't pronounce and you probably wouldn't remember so I will just tell you that it has two very different meanings. Abstractly it has the favorable meaning *release* and concretely it has the unfavorable meaning of something like a *dishonorable discharge from the Army*.

Well, while the word *mission* does not appear in the King James Version and, I might add, is used quite sparingly in other translations, the concept of mission is most certainly not.

Matthew 28:16-20

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*

Go wherever Jesus tells you to go. Worship Him in Trinity even in times of doubt. All authority of the Father has been given to the Son. We are set apart and sent out as the power of the Holy Spirit has been released. The Church is called to baptize, teach, observe and command others to observe all that we as followers of Christ have received from His Word.

The Mission of Christ is the same in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as it was in the 1<sup>st</sup>. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever. It is the

Church's concept of mission which has changed. The change is not in the *mission*, but rather in the *doing*.

One of my earliest images of mission comes from my parish church back in the 1950's. Every year at the beginning of Lent the boys and girls were given those little cardboard "mite boxes." No one bothered to explain why they were called by that name or gave instruction as to how they were to be assembled, but we all knew that we were expected to put our pennies in the box. Then on a Sunday during the Easter Season my Sunday School classmates and I would proudly process to the Chancel step and place our boxes one by one into another box which was cleverly made in the form of the cross. We never saw the boxes or the pennies again, but we were told that the money would be sent to a faraway land to help the poor children.

I remember the stereotypical posters which accompanied our forty days of missionary zeal: A white priest baptizing a non-white baby in Africa or Asia. Mission operated in only one direction: us to them. That was the understanding of mission for me and most adults at that time.

The Mission of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is for the Church to reclaim her identity of being missionary by her very nature. Every

local church and every diocese should regard mission in two directions: sending and receiving. The churches of the “Global South” were once considered the *missions*. They were on the receiving end. Today, they are the fastest growing *missions* in the world: Some twenty million Anglicans in Nigeria alone. And guess who is now on the receiving end of mission? We are. As the so-called “mainline” churches in the United States and Canada drifted further and further away from orthodox Christianity it was the Global South who came on mission to us and it that missionary endeavor which now leads us to the Anglican Church in North America. Clearly, mission is no longer a one way relationship.

Certainly, the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century must embrace many aspects of missionary work. There is still a tremendous need for medical missionaries, teaching missionaries, food, shelter, clothing, clean water, charitable and social work ministries. But it cannot be denied that the main work of those who are sent out is to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ.

Doing the Mission of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a difficult task to be sure. You see, my friends, we have an enemy.

Ephesians 6:12

*For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Our enemy is the prince of darkness himself. Mission is not pleasing to the evil one. He will seek to destroy the mission of the Church as he has sought to do in ages past. In this 21<sup>st</sup> Century the devil uses new methods. He has invaded the internet and the mass media. He is active in politics and religion. So much of what we see, hear and read is influenced by him and by the lethal poison he spreads. He preys on our human weakness. When we expose our weakness to him he pounces like a roaring beast. One of the ways he attacks is to try to convince us that we should just go along to get along. That we should just admit to ourselves that society is changing for the better and that “inclusiveness” now trumps the word of God. And this is nothing new.

W. R. Inge served as Dean of a Cathedral in England from 1911 to 1934. He died over half a century ago and not many remember his name though they may be familiar with something he wrote: *“Whoever marries the spirit of this age is certain to be a widow in the next.”*

How can we avoid such an unfortunate union? Saint Paul tells us in the Sixth Chapter of his Letter to the Ephesians, verses 13-18:

*Therefore take the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*

I would like at this time for us to consider one phrase: *Take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*

I don't remember where I heard the following story so I apologize to the author for not giving credit where credit is due.

*Many years ago, the author visited Hannibal Missouri - the boyhood home of Mark Twain. It is a trim, little white house with green shutters, set right in the middle of downtown Hannibal. There's even a white picket fence around it. (Maybe it's the one that Tom Sawyer had Becky Thatcher and her friends paint for*

*him, who knows?) Anyway it cost the author \$2.00 to get inside the fence and walk around the yard. If you haven't been there, it's kind of a disappointment. You can't go inside the house. All you can do is walk around the outside of it and peek in through the windows and below each window is a little box with a recorded message about each room. But if you look closely, you can see the Armstrong vinyl flooring in some of the rooms and exposed electric wires and sprinkler heads clumsily evident in every room.*

*While I was there going around the house, writes the author, I remember asking another person visiting, "What do you think?" The stranger turned out to be quite friendly and replied cheerfully, "It's great, isn't it? I come here every time I visit Hannibal, two or three times a year. I must have been here at least 20 times already. The author wrote that he remembers thinking that was kind of weird, but he didn't say anything about it. Instead he asked, "Well, would you say the house is pretty much like the way Twain described it in his books?" To which the stranger replied, "Oh, I wouldn't know about that. I've never read any of his stories."*

There are many so-called believers who are content with a Sunday kind of religion. It is a superficial Christianity which is quite satisfied, thank you very much, with going to Church now and then but never interested enough to read the Book. Sadly,

there are some folks, even folks we may see in our congregations every Sunday who like the idea of Jesus, but are not overly concerned with what He has to say.

Part of our mission in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century is to strive for biblical literacy for ourselves and for others. Perhaps, a good place to start would be to share with others some words from II Timothy 3:16-17. *All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is one of the tools we need for carrying on the Mission of Christ.

Scripture is one of the tools. It is not the only one. During my nearly thirty years of ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church I would receive packets of information containing the national program du jour. Most of them ended up in the round file. Maybe you remember the “Decade of Evangelism.” As Dr. Phil might say, “So, how’s that working for you?” Anyway, it worked. The world did indeed quite successfully evangelize The Episcopal Church!

There was one program, however that I found very helpful in assessing the mission of the local congregation and discovering where one came up short. Like many modern programs and

organizations it bore the title as an acronym. Perhaps you remember SWEEP? Service, Worship, Evangelism, Education and Pastoral Care. SWEEP was effective in organizing my thinking and planning. It is still a very good way to approach mission at the local and diocesan level.

I would like for us to think about each of these five components of effective mission and perhaps we will be motivated to use them as a tool when we return to our parishes. I will approach these components individually, but you will soon discover that each is entwined with the other. For example, one cannot speak of pastoral care without speaking of service. Likewise, one cannot speak of mission without speaking of evangelism and education and worship. I'm sure you see my point.

## SERVICE

The following story is found in The Best of Bits and Pieces and A Third Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul.

President Abraham Lincoln often visited hospitals to talk with wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Once, doctors pointed out a young soldier who was near death and Lincoln went over to his bedside. "Is there anything I can do for you?" asked the President.

The soldier obviously didn't recognize Lincoln, and with some effort he was able to whisper, "Would you please write a letter to my mother?" A pen and paper were provided and the President carefully began writing down what the young man was able to say: "My dearest mother, I was badly hurt while doing my duty. I'm afraid I'm not going to recover. Don't grieve too much for me, please. Kiss Mary and John for me. May God bless you and father." The soldier was too weak to continue, so Lincoln signed the letter for him and added, "Written for your son by Abraham Lincoln." The young man asked to see the note and was astonished when he discovered who had written it. "Are you really the President?" he asked. "Yes, I am," Lincoln replied quietly. Then he asked if there was anything else he could do. "Would you please hold my hand?" the soldier asked. "It will help to see me through to the end." In the hushed room, the tall gaunt President took the boy's hand in his and spoke warm words of encouragement until death came.

I know you get my point now: A humble act of service and an outstanding example of pastoral care.

Christians are called to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Reaching out in service to a hurting world takes effort. Christian Service meets both practical and spiritual needs. And we

understand that not everyone can go on mission trips to Africa or to Appalachia for that matter. Before your congregation assumes what service projects or programs would be beneficial for the community in which you are planted it would be a good idea to just ask some folks.

The parish I currently serve in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh asked the question several years ago. We discovered many things:

- We learned that there weren't many truly homeless people in our community. But, there were a lot of people who were unemployed or underemployed. The population was aging and there were more than a fare number of lonely folks. We decided it may be a good idea to get these folks together for food and fellowship. The result was a ministry now in its eleventh year. Appropriate for a parish church named Saint Mary's we call this ministry "Mom's Place." All members of the community are invited to come together every Sunday evening and share a meal. Volunteers from the parish and the community prepare and serve the meals. There is time for fellowship and sharing and prayer and plenty of opportunities for pastoral ministry. In a small way we believe

Mom's Place helps fulfill the Mission of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- This ministry led us to another. We soon found that there were disabled and elderly folks who were unable to leave their homes and unable to prepare many of their own food. So, the people of Saint Mary's deliver Meals on Wheels five weeks out of every year.
- The younger people in our rust belt community had little to do and precious little money to do it with. Many were getting into trouble in school and some in trouble with the police. Saint Mary's now sponsors a Cub Scout Pack and a Boy Scout Troup. In the last 7 years we have seen 15 young men elevated to Eagle Scout.

One need not look very far to find opportunities for Service. In the winter of 2010, our community was hit by a terrible snow storm. So, we started knocking on doors. It didn't take very long for the able-bodied neighbors to join us. We spent the entire day clearing snow and ice from our own and our elderly neighbor's properties. We made trips to the pharmacy to fill prescriptions and several trips to the grocery store. The storm turned out to be a blessing in disguise. We now know each other much better. We understand our neighbor's needs and we check up on their well-being

regularly. And you know what? The whole experience turned out to be a great deal of fun!

Talk to your neighbors and government leaders. Let your local police department and fire department, mayor and city council know that your congregation is willing to serve the needs of your community. You will pass up many opportunities for mission if you never ask the questions. Our MDAS parishes have a light. Let your light so shine before men, that they see your good works and give glory to you Father who is in heaven.

## WORSHIP

As the Church, the Body of Christ, we come to worship and adore the One Living God and we leave strengthened by the Word of God to do His will. Worship empowers the Church for Mission.

*The words of God are words of power. They bring to pass what they declare. At creation God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. In the Mass, God says, "This is my Body, This is my Blood," and it is so. Although it is the priest who stands at the altar, it is still Christ who speaks the words of power; the bread and wine become his body and blood, his real and true presence. (St. Augustine's Prayer Book)*

*This Sacrament was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper with his disciples. There he gave new meaning to the Passover meal by identifying himself with the sacrificial lambs, declaring that the bread and wine were his own body and blood, and that henceforth, this was to be done “in remembrance of me.” (The Church obeys his command) The Mass has been offered for every conceivable need and circumstance from the birth of a child to the repose of departed souls. Over and over, day by day, the Mass is offered at altars around the world in thanksgiving and supplication, strengthening the people of God. It is holy food for a people being made holy.*

*The Mass is “our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.” By acknowledging the Mass as sacrifice, we remember that Jesus freely gave of himself in love that we might have new life in him. The sacrifice of the Mass “participates” in the offering of Jesus at the Last Supper, in the offering of Jesus on the Cross, and in the continual offering of Jesus to his Father in Heaven. It also reminds us that we, too, are to live sacrificially.*

*Other common names for the Mass include the Holy Mysteries, because the fullness of the gift surpasses our understanding; Holy Communion because we corporately share in the reception of his*

*presence; the Blessed Sacrament because it is the greatest and holiest of Spiritual joys.*

*When we take the bread and wine (the Offertory), give thanks (the Eucharistic Prayer), break the bread (the Fraction), and then receive Christ's Body and Blood (Communion), we are following Christ's command. It is a command of love, as we are fed by grace and united with him. It is important that our souls be nourished with the Bread of Heaven and Cup of Salvation as it is for our earthly bodies to be nourished by food and drink.*

*Careful preparation by prayer and self-examination are required before receiving Communion. I Corinthians 11:27-29: "Whoever, therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself."*

I was once present at a gathering of clergy where the rather young Rector was scheduled celebrate the Mass. Upon seeing an elderly, well-known and respected priest sitting in the nave, he approached the old priest and invited him to be Celebrant. The priest looked at his watch and said, "I couldn't possibly do that,

Father. I haven't time to prepare myself with prayer." My brothers and sisters receive this lesson from a faithful priest and contrast his witness to a scene I have all too often observed. A young priest (and sometimes a not very young priest) charging into the Sacristy five minutes before Mass, vesting himself without prayer and preparation and breathlessly approaching the altar with "Blessed be God."

One would be foolish to approach, for example, a mission trip without preparation and prayer. And one is equally foolish to approach the altar of God without the same kind of care.

*Every intending communicant, lay and ordained, must be free from willful sin, in charity with all, and in reverent fear of God, clean both in heart and soul, with full purpose to remain so. When a communicant's conscience is not clear, before approaching the Sacrament, the communicant should first seek counsel, penance and absolution from a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fasting is another traditional method of preparation by which we empty ourselves physically so that we may receive him spiritually.*

*In the Eucharist, we most clearly find ourselves transformed into the holy people of God. We are God's creatures, fallen, yet*

*redeemed in love; his own dear children, whom he willed to make "partakers of the divine nature."*

## **Worship in the Missionary Diocese of All Saints**

High Church, Broad Church and Low Church are categories familiar to cradle Anglicans. Some here may remember this: "Low and lazy, Broad and Hazy, High and Crazy." Humorous, yes, but hardly complimentary.

It has become popular in Anglicanism to speak of "Three Streams." It is an attempt to be descriptive of a particular Anglican or group of Anglicans by placing them into categories on the basis of theology, liturgical practice and the like. The categories are perhaps helpful for Anglicans because we are "inclusive" enough (in the best meaning of that word) to embrace a wide body of believers: Catholic, Charismatic and Evangelical.

We need to understand that these three streams converge; they come together to form a mighty river: The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. When someone asks me if I am Catholic, Charismatic or Evangelical, my answer is "Yes."

This is a clear departure from the way I used to think and the way I used to describe myself. I was reminded as I prepared this teaching of a 2003 article written by David Bennett titled “I Can’t be Charismatic...I’m Anglican Catholic!” Apparently, there was a time when Bennett and I thought alike. It was one or the other. It couldn’t be both. Both David Bennett and I were wrong.

The Missionary Diocese of All Saints is, like Forward in Faith North America, committed to Evangelical Faith, Catholic Truth, Apostolic Order and Godly Life. Regardless of what particular stream our individual members are more likely to swim in we are all headed for the same river.

We worship God in consecrated churches, borrowed churches, rented churches, basement chapels, private homes, storefronts and cathedrals. We praise God with traditional and contemporary music: piano, organ, guitar and tambourine. We lift our hearts and we raise our hands. We do prayer and praise service and we celebrate Solemn High Mass. But the point is that together we worship God in Spirit and Truth.

When we approach the Altar we do so with, as Father John Alexander has written “a sense of reverence, awe and mystery in the presence of the Holy One before whom even the angels in heaven veil their faces.”

## EVANGELISM

The following is taken from a website I will not identify since this teaching is being recorded and I am not particularly fond of lawsuits!

*Stop! Here is important information you simply MUST know in order to DOUBLE...even TRIPLE your attendance and membership!*

*Just imagine...*

*Imagine what it would be like...to lead a growing, vibrant, and relevant church ministry...!*

*Just imagine your pews overflowing every Sunday with excited, enthusiastic worshipers, worshipers from all generations, and from all walks of life...*

*Just imagine being able to add on to your existing facility, or build a new facility, without the burden of a long-term mortgage, with offering plates filled each week.*

*The technology, tools and information you need is available today!*

*Wouldn't that be worth something to you?*

*How much? ...\$1,000...5,000...or more?*

*But now here's the good news - If you order now you can have this dynamic program at the specially discounted price of just \$147!*

*But Wait!*

*If you call in the next 30 minutes you won't have to pay \$147, not even \$97, but just \$37!*

Evangelism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Are you kidding me!

I did not reach for my credit card. Instead, I typed the word "Evangelism" into a search engine and the result was 587,000 hits. Over half a million organizations, some of them reputable and others less so, trying to convince the rest of us that they have discovered the remedy for the decline of organized religion in our time.

Still, I think we must be honest enough to admit that when it comes to Evangelism, most of us are not doing as well as we should. Doing the work of an evangelist in 21<sup>st</sup> Century North America requires a 21<sup>st</sup> Century approach. Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is a working definition of insanity.

In the years leading up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century local churches targeted non-Christians at tent revivals. Attendees walked the center aisle and gave their lives to Jesus. And that was the end of that. The tent was folded and the revival moved on to the next town. Thousands of Damascus Road converts never saw their temporary pastor again.

In his book, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelism*, William M. Easum observes that “canned programs” and outdated methods are ineffective in this century. In prior times the world, he believes, “took a cognitive approach to discipleship, beginning with belief, moving to belonging, and resulting in behaving. Today’s experiential culture requires just the opposite. Discipleship moves from changing one’s behavior, to becoming part of a community of friends, to belief in the God seen in those new friends’ lives.”

There is precedent for Easum’s point of view. Luke 24 tells what happened on the Road to Emmaus. Jesus appears to two men walking the road. Along the way the men share the events of Jesus recent days without realizing that they were talking with Jesus himself.

When the two men arrived at their destination, Jesus was about to move on when they urged him not to. *Stay with us, for it is toward*

*evening and the day is now far spent. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"*

Evangelism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is not about programs or revivals. Evangelism in our time requires the development of long-term, disciple making relationships. Easum writes, *"We are moving from "being saved" to "being transformed."* Being saved is an event. Being transformed is a process. As the process unfolds, behavior and belief come together and the fruit of that union is a personal call to mission and our 21<sup>st</sup> Century world is transformed...one person at a time.

## EDUCATION

I was about very young when I first experienced Christian Education in an Episcopal Church. It went something like this: Children gathered with their parents in the "big church" for the beginning of worship. We sang hymns and prayed and listened to the Scripture readings. Then came the "Sermon Hymn" during

which the Rector knelt in prayer for a reason I did not quite understand since everyone else was standing. The “acolyte” [a term which further mystified me] would lead the kids and their teachers out of the “big church” and into the “little church” in the basement where we would sing a “children’s hymn,” pray more “age appropriate” prayers and then break up into smaller groups segregated by age. We kids would be told a Bible story and occasionally work on a craft project we would take home to impress our parents with how much we had learned today. It was all very boring, except for when we got to the juice and cookies part.

I remember thinking about what was going on in the ‘big church.’ Whatever it was it must be important and it must be for “adults only.” Anyway, that’s the way it was Sunday after Sunday and year after year. Finally, I was told it was time for me to attend Confirmation Class. The bad news was that I was now apparently expected to really learn something and the equally bad news was that my days of juice and cookies were over. The good news was that I was now regarded as adult enough to stay in the “big church” for the whole time and learn what secrets the older adults were guarding so closely.

Just after the bishop laid his hands on my head and prayed, *“Defend, O Lord, this thy child with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thine everlasting Kingdom,”* I decided that I now knew everything I needed to know about the Christian Faith, so I made myself a promise. I would never go to Sunday school again!

Of course that was wrong, but what did I know! I was only 12 years old and my idea that Christian education was just for kids was reinforced by the fact that I had never heard any rumors that there were classes for adults: at least not in **my** church!

The takeaway from my first twelve years as is Christian is this: I learned much more from my full participation in the Liturgy of the Church than I ever learned in Sunday school.

I have come to several other conclusions as a result:

- Never exclude children from full participation in the life of the Church.
- Do not by word or action teach children that Confirmation is the door to adulthood.

- Don't underestimate or fail to take advantage of the many opportunities for education provided by Liturgy.
- Recognize that Christian education is not just for kids.
- And teach parents that the primary responsibility for the education of children is theirs.

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall **teach** them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise."* Deuteronomy 6:4-7

A word spoken is a word taught. God spoke the word to Israel, Israel heard and obeyed. Parents speak the word to their children, not once, but repeatedly in all the daily tasks and so teach their children. The words spoken are never empty words, they always have power.

Family teaching was particularly important to Deuteronomy for covenants were entered into not by individuals but by families, so the head of the house was responsible if any member of the

family broke the covenant. Teaching here means more than information, but includes discipleship, that is, training in living.

The history of Israel reveals that the father of the family was responsible for instructing his children in the ways and words of the Lord. The Book of Proverbs [22:6] also tells us to *“train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*

The message is repeated in the New Testament. Saint Paul writes in Ephesians 6:4 that fathers are to *“bring [their children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Now, the word of the Lord is not saying that only parents are to educate children. God does not direct parents to avoid education outside the home. Rather, the Bible teaches that the ultimate responsibility for education, including but not limited to Christian education belongs to parents.

The Church shares the responsibility for providing Christian education and training for discipleship with the parents. But, the challenge confronting the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church is this: The Church has been neglectful when it comes to religious education for all ages. Therefore, if we are to reclaim the Church’s responsibility in

the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we must understand that Christian Education does not begin with children, but with adults.

Jesus loved children, but we have no record of him teaching them. But we have many, many stories of Jesus teaching adults.

Talking about Adult Christian Education is far easier than bringing it to pass. We can complain about the obvious challenges like an economic environment which requires both parents to work in order to support the family or the enormous amount of sports and other activities available to our kids. [And, by the way, my opinion is that our 21<sup>st</sup> century kids are in danger. Modern parents are burning their kids out by offering them too many activities and offering them at too early an age] Well, back to the main point.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church must offer Christian Education for adults in a variety of formats, schedules, and approaches. Doing so will require lay as well as clerical leadership. Contrary to popular belief, the clergy really can't do everything, nor should they try.

Religious education for adults should be offered at a variety of times. Sunday mornings, weeknights, weekday mornings and one-day events. One of the more effective adult education classes I ever led was an early breakfast and Bible study every Tuesday

before the participants went to their respective places of employment.

Make use of different approaches such as those which are lectionary-based, topical or character studies. Perhaps the Church should consider some short-term classes for those who can't or are reluctant to commit to long-term study.

Opportunities and approaches to Christian education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are many. Experiment to see what works and what doesn't work in your congregation. The only wrong decision one can make is to give up trying. Education is a vital component of the Mission of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## PASTORAL CARE

One of the final tasks assigned to me when I was just a few months away from seminary graduation was to complete the requirements for CPE: Clinical Pastoral Education. It is a requirement which can strike fear in the hearts of seminarians.

I was assigned to the Pastoral Care Department of Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. Lovingly referred to as "Agony G,"

it is the major trauma center for Southwestern Pennsylvania. My specific assignment: Life Flight and Trauma.

It was a Sunday afternoon when I was paged to the Trauma Department. A helicopter had just landed. Inside was a 17 year old girl, I will call Jackie. She had been at home with her parents, 12 siblings and her boyfriend having just returned from Mass at their local Roman Catholic Church which was within walking distance of the family home.

Jackie was sitting on the living room floor playing with her little brother when her boyfriend walked by. Playfully, Jackie reached out and grabbed his ankle. The young man lost his balance and fell on the back of Jackie's neck. In the twinkling of an eye, Jackie became a quadriplegic.

I thought about this young woman who had lost so very much. I wondered what comfort I could possibly provide and I prayed. I remember trying to compose myself before approaching her bedside later that night.

I walked over to her bed, looked into her eyes and I froze. Tears were welling up in my eyes and there was no way of stemming the flood. Jackie spoke these words: "Please don't cry, Father. Jesus

loves me.” Sobbing, I took Jackie by the hand forgetting that she was incapable of feeling my touch.

Over the following weeks and months I got to know Jackie and her family very well. When Jackie was finally released from the rehabilitation hospital she thanked me. *“But, I didn’t do anything,”* I said. *“Yes you did, Father. You came to me and you held my hand.”*

Everything I need to know about Pastoral Care I learned from Jackie. Just four words, spoken by a traumatized teenager provide the model for Pastoral Care in every generation. You came to me.

*“Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see the hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee? And the King will answer*

*them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” Matthew 25:34-40*

In thinking about pastoral care it is important to understand that meeting the expectations some congregants have of their clergy can be quite challenging. See if the following sounds familiar: A member of your parish comes to you and tells you that, “*Joe Jones is really upset.*” [Notice first that it was not “Joe” who told you so.] You ask the obvious question? “*Really, what’s Joe so upset about?*” “*Well, he was in the hospital for four days last week and you didn’t visit or even call him.*” “*I’m sorry...I didn’t know he was in the hospital. Nobody told me. Did you know Joe was in the hospital?*” “*Well, yes I did...everybody knew!*” “*I wish you had called me. Then I would have known what everybody knew. I would have visited him.*” And, though you may not say it aloud you’re thinking that apparently Joe thinks you have a crystal ball and the really bad news is that Joe is not the only one who thinks you do. It takes a pretty thick skin sometimes to be a pastoral care provider.

I know you’ve all heard this before: “*The best pastor we ever had is the one who just left and the worst pastor we ever had is the one we have now!*”

As hard as you try to meet your parishioners legitimate needs for pastoral care it is nevertheless true: You can please some of the people some of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time.

Well, let's look at the brighter side. Carl Dudley wrote a book titled *Making the Small Church Effective*. He says that people in small congregations want a "Lover." The people who inhabit the pews are not nearly as concerned about the theological acumen of the clergy as they are about the personal attributes of the clergy. I can count on one hand if not on one finger how many times I have heard someone say, *"I love Father what's his name. He is such a brilliant theologian."* What I have heard over and over again is *I love my priest. He is so friendly, warm, caring and compassionate."* A pastoral care provider must above all else be a "Lover." Being an effective pastor requires a pastor's heart. And one cannot learn how to be a lover of souls by reading a book. Being a pastor is not something one does. Being a pastor is something one is. Having a pastor's heart is a gift from the hand of God.

Pastoral care is not the responsibility of the clergy alone. It is an important responsibility of the entire congregation and it has many incarnations. Recently, a member of my parish was building an

addition on his home. Lois and I together with others spent a Saturday helping him pour a concrete floor. It was by my definition pastoral care. He needed help and we came to him. Last fall I needed to get rid of a tree in my front yard. A man and his wife, both members of my vestry came to us. They brought with them a chainsaw and a truck to haul away the debris. Pastoral care.

- Parish nurses to provide blood pressure screening and are available to discuss health related issues with members.
- Prayer teams whose members pray daily for those on our prayer list.
- Drivers who take a member to a Doctor's appointment
- Emergency babysitting.
- Taking a meal to a person recuperating at home.
- Small home repair.
- Yard work for an elderly or infirm person.

Please feel free to add to the list.

Service, Worship, Evangelism, Education and Pastoral Care: responses to the Mission of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Thank you for your time and attention and most of all thank you for your ministry to Christ and His Church.

Let us pray.