

NYSSA NEWS



+ THE PARISH NEWSLETTER OF SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO +

May 2008

CLUSTER MINISTRY

By Paul Fromberg

What happens when you cluster churches together? You get CLUSTER MINISTRY! That's what we're calling the cooperative work of the parishes south of Market Street. These include St. John the Evangelist, St. Aidan's, Holy Innocents and Iglesia Episcopal del Buen Samaritano.

Our first meeting was held on April 3 and was a huge success. It was the (first annual) resurrection fish fry. Over 100 people attended. In addition to eating lots of good food we also shared news about the ministries that we either now share, or are planning on starting in the near future. These include food pantries, deanery work and youth ministry.

Lots of exciting possibilities are coming our way through this cooperative ministry plan. Our next SOMA cluster event will be on June 22, when we will host a good old-fashioned square dance at St. Gregory's. Stay tuned for more information - but mark your calendars now. We have so much to celebrate together --- Christ is Risen!

PARTICIPATE IN PROFILING THE PARISH

By Rick Storrs

Dinner at 6:30PM Friday May 2

Program 9AM-2PM Saturday May 3

Annual Parish Meeting 12:30-1PM Sunday May 4

Profiling individuals is an unholy exercise of stereotyping, but profiling our parish is an important piece of our process discerning new leadership. The Parish Profile will be a written document describing our history, our hopes and aspirations (as well as our demographics, finances and physical plant). This document will guide the Vestry in selecting a permanent Rector but will also become part of our culture, on par with the Mission Statement and Member's Agreement. This year's Chapter Meeting offers you a historic chance to make your voice resonate through our future lives together.

Since the beginning of the year our Profile Team has invited you to join their efforts at describing our Parish in many ways: together at Community Luncheons and

Town Hall Meetings, through prayer, individual conversation and e-mail. On Saturday, May 3 the Team will present a draft of the Parish Profile, prior to submitting it to the Vestry. Please come at 9AM and participate in shaping this historic document!

Chapter is the one time we gather as Members, living into our commitment set forth in the Member's Agreement. Chapter begins on Friday night, May 2 with potluck "Feast of Friends" dinners hosted by fellow Members. Dinners begin at 6:30PM; a list of hosts has been e-mailed to you already. PLEASE RSVP to your chosen host!!

The meat of the Chapter meeting is Saturday, May 3 beginning at 9AM. Childcare will be available and lunch will be served. The program will end by 2PM on Saturday. Sunday brings our annual Parish Meeting following the 10:30 service, at which we will elect three new Vestry Commissioners (up this year: Secretary, Finance and Membership) and delegates to the Diocesan Deanery. It's a full weekend with your Saint Gregory's family, and we hope it will be meaningful, fun and productive!

MARK DUKES OPEN STUDIO: MAY 11

By Addie Kugler-Lunt

1:00-3:30 PM, Sunday May 11

2547 Eighth Street #45, Berkeley

They are finished! You are invited to visit Mark Dukes' Berkeley studio for your last chance to marvel over the last nine Dancing Saints Icons, right up close. This informal event takes place the day before the canvas installation begins high on the walls of St. Gregory's. Refreshments and appetizers will be provided. As the project has developed over the years Mark's style has evolved and his best work is in this final group. Join us in celebration of a milestone in the life and art of Mark Dukes and St. Gregory's!

OUR NEW KITCHEN SUPER DEAN

By Alison Ross

For those of you who don't know me, I am the short English woman who is NOT married to Pietro Calogero.

I attend the 10.30 service with my husband Gren and two children, Elinor and Clarke. After sitting at the back of the church for a few years, I decided to get in touch with my inner Martha and lend a hand during coffee hour. A couple of swiftly washed coffee cups (and voila!) here I am.

I have already been introducing myself to a few of you during 10.30 clean up, while trying to learn the ropes. Please introduce yourself to me, as I will try to do also. I'm still trying to find out where everything is and how everything works (I'm from the Method Acting School of Coffee Deans - can't delegate if I haven't done it), so I really appreciate all the help you can give me.

I can be reached at 510-652-4569 in the evenings or by cell phone at 510-529-5010, if you need anything. I have added my work e-mail to the address list, as I read that every day.

I look forward to working alongside you, bringing the gift of hospitality to everyone who walks through our doors on a Sunday!

HEATHER IS GRADUATING FROM SEMINARY

By Paul Fromberg

Heather Payton served as our seminary intern beginning in 2006. After three years of study at CDSP it's time to celebrate Heather's graduation. You are welcome to join Heather and the whole CDSP community for their baccalaureate and commencement events May 21-23: Wednesday, May 21 at 5:30 PM - Sung Evensong at All Saints' Chapel on the CDSP campus; Thursday, May 22 at 5:45 PM - Baccalaureate (in the chapel); Friday, May 23 at 10:30 AM - Commencement (in the chapel).

Please join Heather for one (or all) of these events and help her to celebrate her academic accomplishments.

FAITH IN ACTION AND EL SALVADOR COALITION HOLD WORKSHOP

By Felipe Paris and Mark Lodico

On May 20 over twenty parishioners from St. Aidan's, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Gregory of Nyssa attended an informational workshop on El Salvador at St. Gregory. The Rev. Tommy Dillon from St. Aidan's gave the history of the formation of the Bay Area Consortium for El Salvador, a slide presentation on the last mission trip to Eastern El Salvador, and introduced some of the mission participants who gave testimonials on their experiences there. Jose Artiga, Executive Director of the SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today, led a three-point discussion on a community

action plan to assist Salvadoreans in this country and in El Salvador. This plan consists of influencing U.S. immigration legislation that specifically refers to El Salvador refugees in this country; assisting in the funding of seed packages for farmers in El Salvador; and planning a local 10th anniversary observance in 2010 honoring Archbishop Oscar Romero who was assassinated in San Salvador on March 24, 1980.

Carolyn Feuille, who is the SGN lead person of "Faith in Action", urged the group to write to Congress supporting the Education for All Act (HR 2092, S 1259) to help ensure that every child has an opportunity to go to school. Mark Lodico, a member of the Diocesan Millennium

Development Goal task force and workshop facilitator urged the group to consider individual and community action plans to assist the Consortium. This might include legislative action, volunteer support of local organizations assisting the Salvadorean community, or considering joining the next mission trip to El Salvador. Also, at this workshop Janice Del Fiacco was able to raise a sufficient donation amount toward the completion of the SGN annual Consortium contribution to Cristosal.

For further information concerning how you may become involved in these efforts, contact:

Rev. Tommy Dillon, rectorstaidan@aol.com

Caroly Feuille, cfeuille@rcn.com

Jose Artiga, sharesf@share-elsalvador.org

Mark Lodico, mlodico@pacbell.net

Janice Del Fiacco, delfiac@attglobal.net

ST. GREGORY'S CHOIR IN CONCERT: MARK YOUR CALENDARS

By Sanford Dole

The Dancing Saints: Part I

Saturday, June 28, 8:00pm

Performed in the rotunda of St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, surrounded by Mark Duke's grand icon of the Dancing Saints, St. Gregory's Choir will sing works related to some of those figures represented on the walls. Each composition performed will be preceded by a brief history of the "saint," and why that person was chosen to be honored in this way.

Featured works include William Byrd's Mass for Four Voices, and Swedish composer Nils Lindberg's take on John Coltrane's A Love Supreme. Several of St. Gregory's composers will be presenting new works as well, including Sanford Dole's Prayer of St. Francis, for double choir.

SAN FRANCISCO CABARET OPERA AT ST. GREGORY'S

By Harriet March Page

Friday, May 9, 2008, 8 pm

Welcome to the dark side of our apocalyptic story: Black Horse with a Touch of Gray. We spare nothing to capture every aspect of this Horse, from tragic to comic to clear-headed reporting:

"Death is the end of life. Every living thing eventually dies, but human beings are probably the only creatures that can imagine their own deaths. . . . Some scholars believe that much human progress results from people's efforts to overcome death and gain immortality through lasting achievements."

That must be why we're doing this concert of exciting music and amazing singers!

For tickets call: (415) 289-6877 or come to the Church and buy your ticket at the door: \$15-\$25 - Refreshments will be served!

Opera @ St. Gregory's! Sunday, May 25, 1:30 pm La Boheme, Die Fledermaus, Candide, Faust, and more! Letitia C. Page, Harriet March Page, and surprise guests! For tickets and/or information call: (415) 289-6877

MONEY MATTERS

By Leesy Taggart

In this column, I usually deal with our Operating Fund: how we budget and spend the money you so generously give to support the day-to-day work of the church. As of the end of March, that fund is in pretty good shape: The staff and vestry have worked hard to keep spending at about the same level as last year, and giving is a bit ahead. We seem to have taken on financial independence in a healthy way. Things are tight, but we are on target. Thank you for all you are doing to support St. Gregory's growing ministries!

Let's look at the church's other large, active fund: the Building Fund. This fund supports our larger capital expenditures (mostly repairs) and the repayment of our debt. The Vestry does not budget it, as they do our operating fund, because of the nature of the expenses. Loan repayment -- interest is paid from the Operating Fund, principal from the Building Fund -- is structured like a mortgage or car payment. The church pays \$2500 monthly, which goes first to cover the interest due, with the balance to reduce the amount we owe. Currently, about half the payment reduces our loan, so about \$1200 monthly flows out of the Building Fund to repay our \$266K debt.

The unpredictable part of capital spending depends on when large needs arise. As a church, we try to build reserves, just as an individual or family saves money for large future expenses. This spring, two unexpected repairs arose. The back fence had become unstable, and needed to be fixed quickly so that we could safely and joyfully process through the gate at Palm Sunday and Easter, and of course have an ongoing sturdy fence. And we had to replace flashing and parts of the outer wall on the front of the Admin Building to stop rain leakage and repair damage from previous rainy seasons. These two necessary projects cost about \$11 thousand, which we had saved up over several years.

As a result, our Building Fund is rather depleted, with about \$8000 remaining at the end of March and about \$1000 of bills expected for April. That is less than a 6-month cushion simply for loan payments, with no reserve for further capital needs. And we know that, with a ten-year old building, capital needs will begin to arise more frequently than in past years. It is critical that we rebuild our reserves.

The Building Fund is supported entirely by designated gifts to the church. Some people make an annual donation, beyond their operating pledge. Periodically, someone inherits money, has an unexpectedly good year, or simply wants to express thanksgiving by making a gift. The Vestry is planning a significant fall fundraiser, in connection with our 30th anniversary, to meet the fund-raising component of our operating budget AND to replenish the Building Fund. But in the meantime, if you are considering an extra-mile gift to the church, or a charitable donation of any kind, please think about directing your donation toward making sure we have the reserves available to take care of our community's home.

If you have questions about the Building Fund, capital giving, donating securities, or any other finance matters, please contact me at treasurer@saintgregorys.org.

NOTES FROM THE PANTRY

By Sara Miles

I remember the first time somebody said to me that the food pantry was "St. Gregory's largest service." Apart from the verbal wrangling that ensued about what a "service" was, what struck me back then was the amazing fact that we were holding an event for 250 people every week.

Last Friday we served 622 people at the food pantry--- that's twice as many people as came to the Easter Vigil! And even on calmer weeks, we routinely see more than 500 people on a Friday. It's become clear --as Paul and I have been sharing with other churches--that the pantry is not a social service program, but Eucharist: a Great

Thanksgiving, a way of being church. And despite our fears that size would make it less personal, in fact the pantry feels *more* like a community, even as it grows. We now have over 40 volunteers who serve--most of them people who came to get food and stayed to help out--and their work together transforms lives. Please come and experience the Friday service. We welcome drop-in volunteers of all ages, anytime from 9AM-3PM...or if you're working and only have an hour to spare, come and share lunch with us around 11:30. The quiet, generous donations of so many different people keep the pantry going-- we are deeply grateful for your support. \$50 will buy groceries for a family for an entire year; make checks to "The Food Pantry" and send to the church. For more information contact Sara Miles, sara@saintgregorys.org.

DEANERY NEWS

By Cheryl Hendrickson

Exciting news! The Canons (the laws of the Episcopal Church) of the Diocese of California are changing. The last time the Canons went through this change, we started ordaining women. That was more than thirty years ago. The deanery representatives will vote on the new Canons on May 10th. If you are interested in reading these changes, contact me at hendrickson_cheryl@yahoo.com.

Also, the Diocese of San Joaquin has elected a new interim bishop, Bishop Lamb. Please keep them in your prayers as they work to forge new relationships with other dioceses and reconcile past relationships.

Lastly, Bishop Mark Andrus will be presenting the results of the Beloved Community Visioning events. Go to www.bishopmark.org or www.diocal.org to find out more about the Beloved Community.

NOTES FROM PASTORAL CARE

By Sara Miles

In Jesus' time, the sick were frequently understood to be undergoing punishment for sin: they were shunned, and unclean. In other periods of history, the sick have been seen variously as possessed by demons; as shamans, or as "cases" to be studied. Of course, all of us at different points will be sick, weak, disabled...but in every time and place there seems to be a strong tendency among the (temporarily) healthy and able-bodied to want to separate themselves from the disabled and ill.

In a recent online discussion of healing oil, and the chrism used at baptism—a fairly church-nerdy chat—I

read a post from Tom Ray, in Northern Michigan, and found it striking. Here's a paraphrase of what he said: "In the early Christian communities, the sick had a very special place, a prominent place in the assembly. They were an "order," and revered as icons, images of the redemptive suffering of Jesus. The sick were not hidden or pitied -- they were affirmed, they were very special. When the sick became well, they relinquished this place of honor, this order.

"The sick were revered because they participated in and revealed the suffering of Jesus, which remains, as the Apostle Paul says, a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others. The sick were anointed with oil, but not to heal them. The sick were anointed as royalty, in recognition that they revealed to us the presence of Christ, the suffering messiah, the anointed one.

"Visiting the sick is part of worship: we visit those who are ill anticipating an encounter with Jesus. It's not simply about being nice and including them, but because in relationship with the sick we find the God who suffers with us, and in whose suffering we are transformed."

In our individualized and privatized culture, the dangers of considering sick people as "special" are obvious. It becomes a temptation to romanticize suffering, or to fetishize the sick, and make them into symbols instead of allowing them to be whole persons.

But I don't think those are the only options—either "being nice" to sick people or mystifying them. And I think churches have a great deal to offer the broader culture, including medical culture, as we talk about the kinds of relationships that the sick have with the well. At the heart of community-based pastoral care is the understanding that a church community is more than an aggregation of individuals. If we can understand our selves as very small pieces of one body, understanding the role of sickness and suffering in that body is crucial to understanding the whole thing. The point Tom Ray's making is that we need to see illness and suffering as part of our lives—a part that, like anything else, can help bring us closer to God.

In the coming months, I'll be working with other St. Gregory's members, including Will Hocker, Frances Baxley, and Lynn Dolce (who all work at SF General) to help develop ways to talk with doctors and nurses about non-medical models of relationship with the sick. We're looking forward to a deepened relationship between St. Gregory's and the General, and to the conversation

PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE ADVENTURES

By John Partridge

May 17, 18 2008 - From the cradle to the grave, life's journey is celebrated in words and music by six composers, including George Lam: this year's "Choral Arts Laboratory" winner. The Choral Arts Laboratory is Volti's annual commissioning program for American composers under the age of 35.

PROGRAM

Eric Moe O the Flesh is Hot (2005 Volti commission)
Steven Stucky Cradle Songs (1996)
Aaron J. Kernis excerpts from "Ecstatic Meditations" (1998)
Ronald Caltabiano Metaphor (1993)
William Hawley Two Motets (1981)
George Lam Words Become Unlatched (world premiere/Volti commission)

Saturday, May 17, 8:00 pm
St Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church

TICKETS: \$20 general, \$15 senior citizens, and \$8 students with I.D. Tickets are available by calling (415) 771-3352 or at www.voltisf.org.

FEMALE VOCAL ENSEMBLE SOLSTICE TO CELEBRATE CD RELEASE

By Emily Bender

Over the last year Solstice, the Bay-Area based 12-year old female vocal septet, has reached a new level of visibility and recognition – first winning the 2007 San Francisco Regional Harmony Sweepstakes a cappella competition and award for best original arrangement (for Becca Burrington's arrangement of Joni Mitchell's song Blue) in San Francisco and then placing in the top 3 at the national Harmony Sweepstakes which took place in a packed Marin Civic Center last May.

Not content to rest on these laurels, the hard-working group hit the studio --and after months of recording, will release their 3rd CD, Rise, on May 10th. The eclectic ensemble will join with fans to celebrate with a concert and party at St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, 500 De Haro Street at Mariposa in San Francisco. The concert will include selections from the new CD along with old favorites from their repertoire of 16 languages and 9 centuries including world folk, pop, and classical. The audience will be treated to a tour of the world that includes Finnish folk music, Bluegrass and Jazz as well as music from Palestrina, Björk, and Edith Piaf, reflecting the ensemble's commitment to keep stretching their limits.

"We are so excited about this CD," says Becca Burrington, "We wanted to do something that reflected all the growth that we have experienced over the last four years, and I think it does. The studio recording experience has also challenged us to hear each piece in a deeper way, ultimately pushing us to a new level of musicianship."

Solstice has enthralled audiences with their technically precise and passionate treatments of music for women's voices since 1996. Each Solstice member brings her own musical tastes and talents to the group, which creates a diverse, dynamic repertoire. "Audiences enjoy our performances because we bring a wide variety of musical styles to the table," says bass Krista Enos, "and we make them accessible through the sheer joy that we take in singing."

Solstice includes members Emily Bender, Becca Burrington, Lark Coryell, Krista Enos, Mari Marjamaa, Kim Warsaw, and Sara Webb-Schmitz. In the past, the versatile group has tied for a runner-up slot in the 2001 A Cappella Community Awards with the internationally famous Sweet Honey in the Rock (Solstice's repertoire includes Sweet Honey song "Stay"), they've been seen at Freight and Salvage, Trinity Chamber Music Series, Noe Valley Ministries and many other venues. Members have performed in Carnegie Hall at the invitation of Meredith Monk, with Yo-Yo Ma, and have sung in the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, with the Grammy-nominated Pacific Mozart Ensemble and at the Aspen Festival.

Tickets are \$21 in advance or a CD and ticket package is \$35 at www.solsticesings.com. Tickets will be \$25 at the door. All ages are welcome to attend. For more information please visit www.solsticesings.com or call (415) 453-8160

FEEDING IN FAITH, WITH THANKSGIVING

By Olivia Kuser

My father was hospitalized recently and I knew from experience that unless I was there for every meal, no one would help him to eat. Nurses and aides used to do this work, but nowadays, every hospital is so grossly understaffed that they have no time. The day my father was admitted, for instance, his nurse was working a fourteen-hour shift- an "ordinary" twelve-hour shift, and then filling in for someone who was delayed. My father's illness has progressed to the point where he can no longer use a fork or spoon. He has difficulty swallowing, so he needs to sit upright to eat, and every mouthful must be monitored to see that he doesn't choke. So I spent between six to eight hours every day at the hospital, in three separate visits to make sure I was there for all his meals and to meet with all his doctors when they stopped by his room.

My father has a huge appetite. You never have to urge him to eat. He still eats a breakfast that a working farmer would be proud of. Since his swallowing capabilities have failed so much, my main job, aside from getting the food into his mouth, is to control his bite and sip size, and to make sure that he eats slowly. He hates this. He often roars "More!" when he sees the small spoonful, or tries to stop me from cutting his food into smaller pieces by swatting at my hands. He had a swallowing evaluation while he was in the hospital, at my request, which further reduced his diet to what they called "mechanically altered" foods--in other words, ground up.

We had already removed things like Cheerios and blueberries from his diet as obvious choking hazards, and many meats because they have become too difficult for my father to chew. The first tray we saw after the swallow evaluation was pathetic looking; two little piles of pureed food, one orange (the carrots) and one white (the fish). My father shot me a look as if to say, "this is all your fault" but ate every morsel.

Until I met with the speech therapist, who performed the swallowing evaluation, I was unsure what exactly was going to be "legal". We were jubilant to see ordinary scrambled eggs on the breakfast tray, and then macaroni and cheese on the lunch tray. Not everything looked as if it had been dished out by an ice-cream scoop, like that first terrible dinner.

I thought I knew my father's eating habits pretty well, till I began feeding him. Knowing food preferences is not the same as knowing how a person eats a meal. My father doesn't like his foods to be mixed: he likes only one kind of food on the spoon at a time. Not for him, the peas stirred into the mashed potatoes, as my mother liked it. He likes to eat the foods in order, going around the plate- not clockwise or counter-clockwise, but going protein, vegetable, carbohydrate. It's an intimate act, listening (because he doesn't like to be watched) for the sound of his swallowing and knowing when he is ready for the next bite.

It is so different from when I used to feed my mother. She did not have a good appetite and I often had to coax her to eat. She was perfectly capable of feeding herself, so it was usually a verbal negotiation. But sometimes, when she was really weary of the whole slog, she would turn to me and say, "would you feed me?" and that seemed to soothe and comfort her. Although on the very bad days I would have to play "airplane" and zoom the food around her head till she opened the hangar. Humor usually worked with Mom.

For Mom, before being in the hospital, a meal was a celebration, something to be enjoyed with friends. She loved trying new restaurants, new recipes, new sorts of things to eat. Many years ago, when I first moved to San Francisco, she persuaded me to drink a glass of wheat

grass juice with her, at a health food store- anyone remember wheat grass? She chinked her glass with mine gaily, before we drank. Always polite, she kept her smile on her face while we left the shop, and the pretty young girl who had served us, until we hit the sidewalk outside. "I might like that if I were a cow," she said.

She hated the food at the nursing home, although she loved the food in the hospital- so much so that she actually asked for the recipe for their Yogurt Chicken. The dietician thought it was an odd request-perhaps we were the first people ever to ask for a recipe for hospital food- and then brought us a recipe that served two hundred. I used to try to bring Mom a snack every day from home, so she could have something that wasn't made in an institutional kitchen. Deviled eggs were her favorite. Her eyes would just light up at the sight of a deviled egg. She'd grin at me as she bit into it, and then close her eyes as she ate it, relishing the experience. At the reception after her funeral, I had four deviled eggs- somehow that was the only tray that the waiters passed near me.

Now, I often think of feeding my parents when I take communion. I open my mouth and try to take what is given me. I cannot control or choose the food or even my bite size, much as I want to. I struggle to trust that what I am receiving is nourishing to me, and to remember that it is up to me to digest it and find the nourishment in it. When I'm in Princeton, I go to my old childhood church and worship with Rite I. It's the antithesis of St. Gregory's liturgy, but it's the old, familiar language of my childhood, still known to me by heart. When the priest holds up the bread and wine, she says: " Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving". I love those words. They continue to speak to me.

GREENING TIPS FROM THE GREENING COMMITTEE

By Marina True

St. Gregory's greening committee is looking at ways to make the church and church office greener. We meet once a month for no more than one hour. We are hoping for new members to join us and offer their energy and good ideas. To join or learn more contact Mark Lodico at mlodico@pacbell.net.

Green Tip #3

Save some trees. Lots of trees! Buy only recycled paper products for your kitchen, bathroom, and office. The Clinton Foundation estimates that if every household in the U.S. replaced one box of 85-sheet virgin fiber facial tissues with 100% recycled ones, we could save 87,700 trees, 226,500 cubic feet of landfill space (equal to 330 full garbage trucks), 31 million gallons of water (annual

supply for 240 families of four) and avoid 5,300 pounds of pollution.

When will we celebrate Earth Day, you might wonder? Well, not exactly on Earth Day or the Sunday nearest Earth Day. But we will celebrate it in style by supporting SunNight Solar, a very innovative company that has developed high quality solar powered flashlights *and* a creative program to share a flashlight with someone in the “developing world”. Sometime in early June when their shipment of Super Bogo lights arrive, we will sell these LED solar powered flashlights for \$30. The program is called Bo-go—buy one, give one. The new super bogos are brighter than the currently available ones and are so bright they can illuminate an entire room and will be appropriate for your earthquake preparedness kit. I am very impressed with their quality and you can learn more about these flashlights at <http://www.bogolight.com/>

OUR STORIES

This month Dave Cowen interviews John Stansbury

You mentioned to me that you have become politically active in advocating for the physically disabled. What first inspired you to do this, and what kinds of work do you do in that area?

I have been an advocate most of my adult life. When I was practicing law, I was often called on to help people with mental and physical disabilities. It was gratifying to use my professional skills for people who would otherwise go without help. I also served as a nonprofit board member and participated in community activities that involved advocacy.

In 2002 I took a job as the Interim Executive Director at a new public agency, the IHSS Public Authority of Marin. At the time, I had never heard of IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services) a county state and federal program helping the elderly and people with disabilities live at home and avoid institutional placement. It was an opportunity to use my advocacy skills for people I cared about and get paid for it.

In the last five years, my work has focused on helping people with disabilities discover their own voice. It is a truism that the state budget for the most vulnerable of our citizens is also the most vulnerable to cuts. I believe the only way this can change is if people with disabilities (and others in need of social services) learn to organize themselves and make themselves heard. They have a powerful story to tell, and I help them tell it.

This sounds like incredibly important work. However, you recently mentioned that you are looking for a new

job. What happened to your position with the IHSS? Are you looking for similar work?

They hired me to set up the office, and I stayed five years. I accomplished far more than what I set out to do. It was time for a change. While I am looking for my next position, I help organize a statewide IHSS consumer group.

Is there any particular issue around disability rights you see as most pressing right now?

To me, the biggest overall issue is that we tend to see people who are different from us as “other” and not as members of our same body. So we categorize them and aren’t sensitive to what their needs are, when they want the same things we do. To me, that’s the overall issue—fully including them in society and giving them the same choices the rest of us have.

I learned that you were a lawyer for many years. What kind of law did you practice?

I was a lawyer for about 30 years. I did lots of different kinds of work for lots of different kinds of clients, but most of the time I was doing litigation, mediation, negotiation or arbitration—some form of dispute resolution.

Was this a good background for the kind of advocacy you did later on?

Well, I pretty much had to stop being a lawyer. I got really depressed. I didn’t have a choice about it. I just couldn’t function. I would sit in my office and stare at the wall all day, dreading it all. I was “dead man walking”. What had been a robust legal practice with big name clients declined to nothing. If it weren’t for a few people like Steve, Donald and my mom, I would not have made it.

I don’t know how I got depressed and I can’t say how I found my way out. For me, it is one of those unexplained examples of grace. Part of the miracle is that when I got to the other side of it, all doubts and fears had been cleared out. I had been to the dark side and survived. I had an enthusiasm for life I had never imagined possible. Of course, Rita and the boys play a big part in that. For all those 30 years of being a lawyer, I had done a lot of volunteer work for non-profits, my parish and the Diocese. I had a parallel career doing volunteer work. Instead of making money for corporations, I wanted to do something involving people I cared about.

The first thing I did post lawyer was work for a philanthropic foundation that dealt with environmental health issues and children’s issues. And then I was unemployed for two years. I finally got a job with the

Public Authority as an interim job just to set up the agency, expecting to be there 6 or 8 months until they hired an executive director. I stayed for five years.

The answer to your question is that my legal background and training in sizing up problems, analyzing the issues and where the power positions were and coming up with solutions to resolve issues was a hundred percent transferable.

Public Authorities were a new concept in the state. Because of my legal experience and because I wasn't afraid anymore, I could walk into difficult situations and stand my own without feeling intimidated. I didn't take "no" for an answer. When someone would say, "That's the way we do it here", I would dig down to the real reasons and deal with them.

It was healing for me to again be useful to others and function at a high level.

What happened in short order was that because of that capacity I was thrust into leadership positions at the state level, relating to state budget and policy issues over in-home care.

Did this cause you to be political in a way that maybe you hadn't been in the past?

2004 was Governor Schwarzenegger's first budget. He proposed cutting state support for IHSS wages and benefits to the minimum wage. We were all terrified. We weren't political in the sense of partisan politics. We were a public agency, so we couldn't get involved in campaigns or propositions or anything like that. But, it was appropriate for us to go to Sacramento and advocate with and for the people we served and for the programs we were involved in.

A few other Public Authority directors and I put together a statewide coalition of unions and stakeholder groups to educate people in the state about In-Home Supportive Services and why making cuts was not a wise thing.

The intelligent thing was to strengthen the program rather than weaken it. It costs about one-eighth as much to take care of somebody at home as to take care of that same person in a nursing home. They're also happier, can contribute to the community, be with their families and need less medical care. Eighty-five percent of the care when someone is at home is informal. If you are in a nursing home, a paid person has to do it all. Everybody's better off with a robust home-care program.

We were successful beyond our wildest dreams. Not only did we defeat the proposed budget cuts, we also got a ten percent increase in state support for wages and benefits.

You mentioned that you lived in Antioch. Is that where you grew up?

Yes, I call that my hometown. We moved there when I was in third grade, and I went through high school there. My parents stayed there—I don't know exactly—but around forty years. So that was the place I went home to, and that's where I always called "home."

I understand that you were a friend of St. Gregory's for many years. How did you first become involved with the church?

In November, 1978, the year St. Gregory's was founded, I was a member of St. John's in Oakland. I had been asking my rector about Christian meditation and he recommended a four day workshop on the breath prayer organized by Rick and Donald. The breath prayer is a very simple form of Christian meditation. That was transformative for me. The breath prayer became the foundation of all my spiritual life and kind of was the guiding force in my spiritual and secular life for the next 15 to 20 years.

That established my relationship with Rick and Donald before I'd ever heard of St. Gregory's. Later, Bishop Swing set up a lay training program called the Lay Academy. Donald and I, with some other people, put together a program to teach Christian meditation to various congregations in the diocese so they could have their own contemplative prayer groups and meet on a weekly basis. We did that for three or four years; maybe it was only two, but it seems like more than that.

That led to applying for the spiritual direction program at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington D.C. To be accepted, I had to have a spiritual director, and Donald was somebody I knew, so I asked him, and he said yes. So for ten years Donald was also my spiritual director.

Since the very beginning, St. Gregory's has had a really special place in my life for all kinds of reasons. Donald was my spiritual director, loving me when I couldn't love myself. The core value of the open table spoke deeply to me. The liturgy and music spoke to my deepest self. I met Rita on the front steps of St. Gregory's. She is the person I had been waiting for all those years.

When did you decide to become a member?

It was the result of a marriage coming to an end. One of my best friends was Steve McCormack, and we'd been friends for years. In March 2001, my former wife and I separated. She moved out. It was Easter season and Steve invited me to the Maundy Tuesday supper. Then I went to the Easter Vigil, which I'd been wanting to go to for years, but never had. My wife didn't want to go, and

to leave her home alone on a Saturday night just didn't seem right.

This year I did go, and of course Rick gave one of his really incredible sermons. After the service, I went up and told him if he did not do anything else all year, he earned his keep with that one sermon. He laughed and said it's the same one he always gives. I just said to myself, why am I *not* going to church here? *This* is where I belong.

The next week I came and talked to Donald and he said, "Well, you'd be welcome here." I went and talked to my rector at St John's in Oakland and told him I was leaving but that it didn't have anything to do with him, that it was just where I needed to be in my life right then. And that was that.

You serve as a deacon at St. Gregory's. What prompted you to take on that role?

Margaret Lukens asked me. I just said OK.
What are some of the ways this role nourishes you and challenges you?

I've been involved in church liturgy since I was a kid—acolyte, etc. As an adult, I was the first male member of the St. John's Altar Guild. For Rita and me, St. Gregory's is sort of the organizing principle of our lives. There's almost no part of my life that I can say isn't nourished by St. Gregory's. I've had my share of human suffering with my depression and losing my law practice, and so on. So, I'm at a point in my life right now when I can look back and really appreciate something when I do have it. For me, *these* are the good old days. Being a deacon at St. Gregory's is an integral part of that.

Right now, members of the church are trying to create a parish profile. What are some things you feel most need to be stated in that profile?

My strongest feeling about the transition process has to do with my having been through transitions in other places. We went through two transitions in my former parish. I served two vestry terms there and have been part of the inner circle in Diocesan business. I understand the transition process and the unique relationship that parishioners have with their priests. You can't compare it to any other kind of relationship. It's intimate, but it's also dependant in a way that you don't really even know or fully understand yourself.

St. Gregory's has never been through a transition. It feels like the Diocese is trying to hurry us along and I am uncomfortable with that. I feel it's going to take us years to discover who we are as a people, as a community, without Rick and Donald. It's not just an issue of hire a rector and let's get on with it. We really need to honor

that interim time. We need to let it be as long as it needs to be, while we discover who we are as a community in our own right.

That does not mean we will stagnate. I haven't seen any loss of vibrancy with Paul and Sara. It is still the same place. Rita and I feel continually blessed to be a part of the community.

CALENDAR FOR MAY 2008

Unless noted otherwise, all listed events take place at St. Gregory's.

Every Week at Saint Gregory's

Sunday Services

8:30 am Liturgy and Nursery Care.

10:30 am Liturgy, Sunday School, and Nursery Care.

Weekly Services and Activities

Morning Prayer....Monday through Friday 8:00-8:30 am.
Choir Rehearsal... Thursdays 7:30 pm.

Food Pantry.....Fridays 1:00-4:00 pm. We give away free groceries at the altar to more than 450 families each week. Volunteers of all ages welcome any time from 9:00 am-4:00 pm.

Monthly Vestry Meeting

Tuesday 5/20, Open to our membership. 7:30 pm, Chapel. (*Please note the agenda for the vestry meeting is set two weeks prior. Please contact co-conveners Brad Erickson at brad94134@aol.com or Jessica Anderson jandersonsf@aol.com to add items to the agenda.)

Special Calendar Listings for May

- 5/2 **Chapter Dinners at Members' homes.**
See article in this issue.
- 5/3 **9:00 am-2:00 pm. Chapter Meeting.** *See article in this issue.*
- 5/4 9:30-10:30 am. Schell Library. **Sunday Morning Bible Study.** All are welcome! Contact Will Hocker for more information.
12:30-2:30 pm. Seating area. **Chapter Business Meeting and Elections.** *See article in this issue.*
- 5/9 **8:00 pm. Goat Hall Productions presents: *The Black Horse.*** Famine, plague or any disaster...including traffic and the weather. Go to <http://www.goathall.org/> for tickets.
- 5/10 8:00 am. **Special Convention of the Diocese of California.** Grace Cathedral. **Solstice Concert & CD Release Party.**
See article in this issue.
- 5/11 **Pentecost & Mother's Day**
9:30-10:30 am. Schell Library. **Sunday Morning Bible Study.** See 5/4.
12:30-1:30 pm. Fabian Lounge, **Sunday Afternoon Bible Study.** Contact Will Hocker for more information.
1:30-4:30 pm. Rotunda. **Icon Workshop.** Learn to paint a beautiful icon! Contact Betsy Porter for more information.
- 5/16 6:30 pm. **San Francisco Fellowship.** Potluck dinner at Richard and Jessica Anderson's house. All are welcome!

- 5/17 8:00 am-2:00 pm. Martin de Porres 225 Potrero Avenue. We help answer Christ's call to feed the hungry by volunteering once a month at **St. Martin de Porres House of Hospitality.** We'd welcome your help chopping veggies, cooking and serving a hot meal. There are experienced volunteers there to get you started.
8:00 pm. Volti Concert: *Past, Present, Future Adventures.* *See article in this issue.*
- 5/18 **Bay-to-Breakers foot race**
9:30-10:30 am. Schell Library. **Sunday Morning Bible Study.** See 5/4.
12:30-1:30 pm. Fabian Lounge, **Sunday Afternoon Bible Study.** See 5/11
1:00 pm. Chapel. **Faith in Action/Millennium Development Goals.** Contact Mark Lodico (mlodico@pacbell.net) or Carolyn Feuille (cfeuille@gmail.com) for more information.
1:30-4:30 pm. Rotunda. **Icon Workshop.** See 5/11.
- 5/20 7:30 pm. Chapel. **Vestry Meeting.** See above for more information.
- 5/24 10:00 am-1:00 pm. **Deacon Training.** Contact Andy Jaszewski for more information.
- 5/25 9:30-10:30 am. Schell Library. **Sunday Morning Bible Study.** See 5/4.
12:30-1:30 pm. Fabian Lounge, **Sunday Afternoon Bible Study.** See 5/11.
12:30 pm. Chapel. **Pastoral Caregivers lunch.** Contact Sara Miles for more information.
- 5/26 **Memorial Day Holiday – Office Closed.**

DANCING SAINTS FOR MAY

Li Tim Oi

(1907-1992) Hong Kong Chinese Anglican. She accepted ordination as the British were fleeing Hong Kong in World War II and served faithfully during the Japanese occupation. After the war she returned to her original and primary calling as a teacher and catechist. The example of this first woman ordained in the Anglican Communion invites us all, men and women, to put less value on privilege or rank, lay or ordained, so that we might simply embrace whatever God asks of us. (May 5)

Casper David Friedrich

(1774-1840) German Romantic painter whose awesome landscapes and seascapes express the profound mystical presence of God in the dark side of existence. (May 7).

Julian of Norwich

(1342-c.1417) English mystic, anchoress and spiritual director, author of Revelations of Divine Love, the first work written in modern English. Living in the midst of the horrors of the Black Death and of church torture and burning of heretics, Julian's startlingly realistic visions of Jesus' sufferings on the cross and her loving conversations with him moved her to believe the words she heard him say: "All shall be well and all manner of

things shall be well and that despite any imaginable sin, suffering or evil." (May 8)

Jenny Read

(1945-1976) Artistically gifted, intellectually and spiritually inquisitive young Episcopal sculptor in San Francisco who was raped and murdered while at work on a sculpture of St. John of the Cross. (May 18)

Theosebia

(4th Century) Wife of Gregory of Nyssa. Monastic historians have tried to eradicate the memory of Theosebia, but Gregory was one of the last married bishops before new church laws required that all bishops be celibate monks. When Gregory wrote of the love, physical longing and communion of bride and bridegroom, or when he explained that in mystical union with Christ, the new "mother-in-law" of each of our souls is God, he was writing from his own experience of marriage and married love. We remember Theosebia with gratitude as Gregory's wife and partner in body and spirit.

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