

NAM News

NORTHSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ST . AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Advent 2013 Vol. 3 Issue 4



ST. AIDAN'S HAS A HANDBELL CHOIR

Sue Wyman

Vicar Judith has experience with handbells so she was very excited when St. John's Howell loaned us their beautiful three-octave set of handbells, 24 bells from tiny to large. Six brave souls decided to try to learn how to play the bells and five will play along with Judith on November 3rd. There is a technique to producing a sound with a bell just as there is with any instrument and everyone learned from Judith how to ring properly and follow the color-coded music to play their bells at just the right moment. Along with Judith the ringers are Rachel Baird, Jim Mogenson, Edward Burks, Sue Smereck, and Sue Wyman with Betty Rees as an eager participant who decided to watch and pray instead of ring. Ringing for an hour's rehearsal is exacting and with luck the group will be even bigger and better by Christmas Eve. Join us if you want to make some beautiful sounds at our second performance. Be sure to hear this melodious group at its encore performance because the bells go back to Howell at the end of December.

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Northside Presbyterian Church

Northside Presbyterian Church is a faith community focused on glorifying God by being welcoming in worship, inclusive by intention, joyful in doing justice, and liberal in love.

www.northsidepres.org

Pastor: The Rev. Brooke Pickrell

St. Aidan's Episcopal Church

The church in the woods which demonstrates God's love through inclusive community, thoughtful exploration, loving service, and dedication to ecological ministry

www.staidan.org

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Judith Harmon

Sunday Schedule:

10:00 Episcopal Holy Communion

10:00 Presbyterian Worship

NamNews Editors

Caroline Richardson

Fran Board

Why Go to the Diocese of Michigan Convention?

By Sue Pfoutz-Smerek

The 2013 convention was my third convention as a delegate. This convention was remarkable in that there was really no controversy or difficulty. I would like to share some of my experiences from this year.

During the convention there were three opportunities to interact with Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori. I was delighted to hear her responses to attendee questions regarding theological issues and the direction of the larger church. She is a warm and open person who is passionately interested in the mission of the Episcopal Church to spread the word of God. She emphasized the value of small congregations which are the model of the early church and much of our history. She presented a wonderful message during the Friday Eucharist.

On Saturday she provided a thoughtful overview of the challenges facing the larger church as well as individual parishes. I was struck by her openness to new approaches and structures for meeting the needs of people within the church and our communities. Bishop Schori reminded us that the accurate name for the Episcopal Church is the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. The Episcopal Church includes geographic areas in Asia, South America, Haiti, the U.S. and British Virgin Islands and some nations in Europe. She encouraged us to have: 1) energy for the big questions of life, 2) true conversations, 3) a wider variety of liturgies and spaces, 4) new methods of training religious professionals with more local formation of clergy. She highlighted the work of TREC (Task force to re-imagine the Episcopal Church).

A focus for mission are the Millennium Goals which address poverty and hunger, education, empowerment of women, decrease of child and maternal mortality, decrease in communicable disease, achieving clean water and sanitation. She also reported that the last general convention framed the church budget around the five marks of mission. "We need to learn that God gives us what we need. There is enough if we are in community."

The highlight of the convention for me is usually the Friday night Eucharist. Sharing this aspect of worship with people from throughout the diocese is very rewarding. I love the opportunity to connect with members of the wider church. This year the service was a rather traditional setting with lovely music.

The business meeting proceeded without much controversy, punctuated by morning and noon prayer. There was a review of several ministries of the diocese including youth ministry and Whitaker institute. The bishop's address urged the honoring of our past, celebrating the present, and embracing the future.

It was encouraging that he highlighted St. Aidan's for our environmental ministries including GreenFaith certification. We were mentioned as a resource for other congregations. For the future, the bishop encouraged partnerships with other groups to achieve our goals. One partnership is with ELCA for a Latino ministry in southeast Detroit. He highlighted the five marks of mission as directions forward. They include proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, teaching and baptizing and nurturing new believers, loving service, challenging injustice and supporting the integrity of creation.

I value this connection to the wider church. Thank you for electing me. Our congregation has an opportunity to connect with the larger church through Resolution #3 that was approved during the convention. Each congregation is directed to review the resolutions approved by the General Convention to identify those aspects of mission that our congregation has chosen to address or are already addressing. After this review, we are required to report our plan of action to Covenant 5 by May 1, 2014. I have submitted a copy of the resolutions to the Bishop's Committee for consideration and action.

Thank you again for electing me as your representative to the convention.

St. Aidanites Take Part in “Places of Faith” Interfaith Visitations

By Geoffrey Smereck

Congregants from St. Aidan’s have been active, even passionate, participants in the “Places of Faith” program of interfaith visitations among Ann Arbor places of worship. During October, they visited, interviewed the clergy of, toured the sacred sanctuaries of, and shared sacred dialogue with, the Jewel Heart Buddhist Center, the Vineyard Evangelical Christian Church of Ann Arbor, and the Chabad House (Orthodox Judaism). Each visit lasted from 7 to 9 pm, provided Congregants with a court packet of basic tenets and liturgical practices, and gave participants extraordinary opportunities to learn about, respect, and experience Comparative Religion to the fullest. As George Lambrides, the “Places of Faith” director, told Rabbi Goldstein of Chabad House on Oct. 23, 2013 (who was stunned by the interest the Congregants were demonstrating in his presentation), “this group likes to ask lots of serious questions!”

Participants were struck by many things: the graciousness of the places of worship (who gave remarkable access to their inner-most sacred places), the candor and authenticity of their clergy in answering any and all questions about their religious doctrines and traditions, the remarkable opportunity to sense how all peoples yearn to know more about their God, and the shared desire all people have to live their best lives possible and most acceptably to God.

Some congregants asked clergy particularly searching questions which compared-and-contrasted their own religious doctrines from those of other Faiths: What does it mean to be in “communion” with your God? How is your God different from mine? Why and how is evil in this world? Did God create Satan? Is there Heaven, and Hell? And what are they like? How may I achieve Holiness? How should we confront evil-doers? How can I (we) become more pure of heart?

All congregants seemed awe-struck by their remarkable access to sacred places: for example, the inner Sanctuary of the Jewel Buddhist shrine, on whose rug the Dalai Lama prayed on His Holiness’s most recent visit to Ann Arbor; the worship places of

the Vineyard Evangelical Church devoted to single moms getting spiritual respite from their harried, stressful lives; the scrolled Torah in the Synagogue. Participants ended each visitation with a communal meal of foods from each Faith’s traditions, and wonderful fellowship.

Contact information for future Interfaith Round Table “Places of Faith” visitations:

“George Lambrides” <gbrides@umich.edu>

“Susan King” <sking@umich.edu>.

Poetry Tea

Saturday, January 18, 2014, 2:30pm

St. Aidan’s Episcopal Church

By Janet Lamb

You are cordially invited to a poetry tea at St. Aidan’s. Please bring your favorite poem(s) to share with us. Remember, the Psalms are poetry, too.

Janet Lamb will read a few of her poems and several from other faith traditions. Sue Wyman will read excerpts from a novel she is writing.

If you would like to attend, please call Janet at 662-9011 so we can plan seating and snacks. If you would like to read your own or someone else’s work, please call to let Janet know.

Warm beverages and finger food will be served.

Transitions

By John Board

I have been asked "What's it like to transition from one faith community to another?" In a word, "surreal," like being strangers in a strange land, sojourners with a foot in each world.

Previous moves for Fran and I were abrupt and over considerable distance. Good-byes were definitive and heartfelt, knowing that relationships could not be sustained at their current levels. It was easy to drop responsibilities; doing otherwise was not an option. New opportunities and relationships were eagerly established and nurtured, like the dawn of a new day. That was thirty-three years ago.

Whereas, today we are in a period of evolution, a process of gradual change. We moved to Maumee, Ohio, June 2012, in order to be closer to family and are getting to know the Episcopal Church where our son is Rector. Time and distance constraints are minimal and we return to Ann Arbor frequently. Previously established relationships are being held onto tightly and we are finding it difficult to put closure on old responsibilities. There is always "one more thing to do" before putting them aside. In our new parish, we have been welcomed with open arms, knowing all the while that there is a public role to be played by the parents of the rector. This is a very different milieu for us. We are slowly choosing our particular ministries, altar guild and food pantry for Fran, and even I am enjoying participation in the infamous semi-annual rummage sale. And, we are greatly enjoying a progressive theology discussion group.

That said, the Spirit is calling us to this new place; there will be work to be done here. Our contributions at St. Aidan's/Northside must come to an end. That is good; everything will be fine. And, while our new role is yet to be fully revealed, that too will be fine.

Paz y amor

St. Aidan's Treasurer's Report

By Alan Vayda

As we come to the end of 2013, everyone's thoughts turn to the financial status of their church. Well, not everyone, mostly just the treasurer and the members of the Bishop's Committee. Everyone else is thinking about Christmas. As St. Aidan's new treasurer, I am happy to report that we are financially stable. We started the year with a balanced budget with income and expenses of around \$95,000. Our expenses are on track to come in at or below budget. Income is more difficult to predict but appears close to being on track. Fundraising income is slightly higher than budgeted but loose offerings are only one half of budget. Pledge income is lagging slightly but typically catches up by the end of the year. Our cash flow is manageable and we are able to pay all of our bills on time. If the generosity of St. Aidan's members continues through the end of the year then we will be fine.

Here is a breakdown of our expense budget:

53% - \$50,000 for vicar
29% - \$27,619 for NAM including 11% - \$10,623 for building and 18% - \$17,000 for administration and program
8% - \$7,400 for diocese (70% of our tithe in 2013)
10% other such as musician, mission, discretionary fund, etc.

Here is a breakdown of our income budget:

93% - \$87,960 pledges
4% - \$4,000 loose
3% - \$3,000 fund raisers

Many thanks to former treasurer Rachel Baird and financial secretary Gail Graham for handing over the finances in such good shape. Also, thanks to our new financial secretary team of Janet Lamb and George Harmon.

Reflections on My Experiences with Thirty-Three Years Of Relationship Between St. Aidan's and Northside

Fran Board, with Input from a Presbyterian Friend, Lolly Lockhart

At my retirement party from Wayne State University in 2002, my college roommate, Lolly Lockhart, flew to Detroit to embellish my reputation with a speech about my notable achievements. Or so I thought. I anticipated plenty of lies and humorous reflections and was not disappointed. Students and faculty alike enjoyed the parts about the high heels and smoking; Lolly considers that speech her finest performance to this day. Also, however, she surprised me with a statement about our early relationship together. "Fran with her Anglican-Episcopalian background and me Reformed Presbyterian: an unlikely pair to become such dear friends."

The surprise to me was the renewed recognition that we ever considered our religious affiliations or spiritual leanings any different. In the late 1950's, when we were in college, there were stirrings of ecumenism at the same time as an emphasis on precise identities for individual denominations. Lolly and I knew that we worshiped the same Lord and had great appreciation for that. Our real difference was not religion however. It was that I was an uptight city girl with limited experience in anything, and Lolly was "fresh off the range"; she could do anything, including skinning snakes and playing the guitar. Whoever assigned dorm rooms probably did not know what to do with us and put us together.

The reason for my surprise at her statement of our differences was this: my understanding of singularity or affiliation had changed through the years because of my years of experience in a church intimately related to a Presbyterian congregation. I had experienced a transformation in my soul. In my early years at St. Aidan's, I became friends with many Presbyterians. We grew to know each other as friends in the same way as my budding friendships with Episcopalians. We studied together in Christian Education, planned together in Social Action, slept feet away during Shelter week, and pulled weeds together in the front yard. We struggled in finances

together in NAM business meetings and set the altar together in joint services. We sang together and buried our friends together.

When I reflect on differences I have experienced among the membership of NAM, the memories flow out to be the same as conflicts in any community. Someone is unfair, someone is domineering, or someone is too loud or too quiet. They all boil down to within-group dynamics, rarely between-group differences.

At the same time, I am cognizant of the fact that there are both theological and polity differences between the denominations. Most of the polity (how we do things) differences flow from the theological, based on our roots in the history of Christianity. Here is my version. The Episcopal Church has been deeply wedded to our origins in Roman Catholicism ever since the Elizabethan Settlement (1558) declared the Church of England to be both catholic and protestant. The Presbyterian Church is strongly aligned with the Reform movement, which occurred over several hundred years. In addition, the time since Lolly and I were roommates in the 1960's has seen vast changes in church attendance, involvement, and demographics among American Christian denominations. Smaller attendance, more flexible liturgy, enlightened perspectives on "the other", e.g., race, practices, gender or sexual differences, all have impacted our worship and our sense of identity as Christians.

Since John and I have moved to Ohio and must say good-bye to formal relationship with St. Aidan's, I have reflected on my experience with the relationship between St. Aidan's and Northside. These words represent only my opinion. First, I credit my intimate experience with a Presbyterian church as the major reason for my broadened perspective on the Christian world and the place of denominations and individuals within it. I have become more tolerant, more curious, and more understanding of others' views. If I ever had a penchant for the "right way", it is gone.

Second, it is clear that a joint organization between two denominations increases both financial security and bureaucratic machinery. Building expenses are less costly, and committees and meetings are at least doubled. Joint services offer special blessings and particular grace and also sometimes discomfort, for example, in practices of the Sacraments. NAM as an organization is one way of interreligious affiliation; there are others.

Finally, the enduring friendships I feel with the Presbyterians have made solving problems and celebrating joys easier. I think it is important that, as in any relationship, we value authenticity in communications. We cannot be afraid to be honest in the name of preserving relationship. Fear makes for weak relationship. For me, our relationship together is an affirmation of Jesus' commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love others as yourself. Borg, among others, reminds us of love being central to Christianity. The development of friendships with Presbyterians has fostered love for me, and love always helps in working together.

Generation of this article provided my friend and I a rich opportunity for discussion of religion, the past and the future. All religions have more in common than not. In the future, as various denominations evolve and mature, as they all do, there may be even less differences.

Addendum: I really did weed in the garden once or twice, many years ago.

An Invitation to Celebrate the Life of George Johnson

**Sunday, December 15, at 12:15 PM
St. Aidan's Lounge**

Fran and John Board would like to invite our friends at NAM to a light luncheon on Sunday, December 15 in the Lounge. We want to thank everyone for their continuing support in letters, email, and prayers, and hugs during the long illness of George, Fran's brother. John and Fran are hosting the lunch; there is no need to bring anything. The celebration will occur immediately following Christian Education, and we hope to see you there.



On Sunday, October 13th, St. Aidan's celebrated the one year anniversary of the tenure of The Rev. Dr. Judith Harmon as our Vicar. We continue our welcome and joy in working together with her.

You are Invited to Join the Altar Guild **Susan Pfoutz-Smerek**

Upon coming to St. Aidan's, the first service I embarked upon was the Altar Guild. I have remained with this service and later became the chair of this plucky group. In January, 2014 there will be an opening for a new Altar Guild member. Fran Board, who has served even for longer than I have, is resigning due to her move to Ohio.

How can I tell you about this wonderful service opportunity? In Adult Education, we read and discussed a book by Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity after Religion*. There was a wonderful story about Altar Guild. A member of the Altar Guild asked Diana Butler Bass to serve. When Diana asked her why she should do this, the woman responded that she had done this service for 35 years, and now it was someone else's turn. Diana Butler Bass responded that this sounded like holy housework while there could be more inviting reasons to participate.

Yes, Altar Guild service has similarities with housework; yet there is so much more. Our denomination centers worship on the Eucharist. Working with our vicar to facilitate worship, to carefully set the service, and to clean and reset the worship materials is an honor. Altar Guild service also provides an opportunity for meditation and is part of one's own worship. Members set the altar and clean the vessels afterward only once a month, and present members: Michael Earle, Mary Bartkowiak, and myself are happy to trade Sundays to meet individual conveniences.

Won't you join us?

Interesting Religious or Spiritual Sites on Facebook **By Fran Board**

For those who enjoy Facebook, here are some interesting sites to "Like" if you are interested in learning more about the topics. There may be further web pages; these are solely Facebook sites, and of course, there are many more.

The Hymnal 1982

Gregorian Chant is for Everyone – getting started, learning more

Diana Butler Bass

Marcus Borg

John Dominic Crossen

Christians Tired of Being Misrepresented

Heifer International

Sojourners

Human Rights Campaign

Progressive Christianity (several)

Episcopal Relief and Development

General Convention of the Episcopal Church

Native American Indigenous Ministries of the Episcopal Church

St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan (maintained by Alan Vayda and Kim Zaugg)

St. Aidan's/Northside Presbyterian Natural Habitat

The Episcopal Church

Anglicans Online

Canterbury House

Episcopal Relief and Development

Grace Cathedral San Francisco

Sylvania United Church of Christ

ANNOUNCING
N.A.M.'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE
A GREAT FUNDRAISER FOR YOUR CHURCH!
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2013
8:30AM - 1PM

CINDY AND JIM PIERSON WILL OFFER FOR SALE THEIR
AWARD WINNING JEWELRY INCLUDING NECKLACES, BRACELETS,
AND EARRINGS. THEIR MANY NEW DESIGNS FOR FALL 2013 CONSIST
OF PRECIOUS AND SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES, 14K GOLD, STERLING
AND FINE SILVER,
RARE FOSSILS, UNUSUAL CULTURED PEARLS, UNIQUE SHELLS,
DISTINCTIVE ANTIQUE PIECES, AND OTHER NATURAL
MATERIALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. MASTERCARD, VISA,
DISCOVER, CASH, AND CHECKS ARE ACCEPTED

STEPHEN UCHE WILL OFFER FOR SALE HIS DISTINCTIVE AFRICAN
ARTIFACTS INCLUDING JEWELRY, SCULPTURE, MUSICAL
INSTRUMENTS, BASKETS, AND CLOTHING FROM MANY
COUNTRIES IN AFRICA.

SUE SMERECK WILL OFFER HER UNIQUE AND VERY ATTRACTIVE
BEADING WORK AND HER DELICIOUS READY TO USE COOKIE
PREPARATIONS.

REMEMBER, UP TO 50% OF YOUR PURCHASE WILL GO DIRECTLY BACK
TO YOUR CHURCH!