



ECC NEWS

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In this issue:

- Christmas Message from Bishop Peter J. Hickman
- Reflections on 2006 Retreat – Jackie Huetter
- Synod 2007 – A Call to the Sunshine State – Rev. Steven Roszczewski
- Commission on the Episcopacy II – Rev. David Kenney
- Introducing the Southwest/Midwest Vicariate – Rev. Jim Lehman
- Meet Deacon Jessica Rowley – My Story of Uncomfortable Grace
- Welcoming to the ECC – San Damiano ECC – Fred Ball, OEF

Upcoming Events

- **January 27, 2007** – Ordination of Fred Ball, OEF, of the San Damiano ECC
- **October 24-27, 2007** – Synod 2007 at Holy Spirit ECC in Clearwater, Florida

A Christmas Reflection from our Presiding Bishop Peter J. Hickman

The Paradox of the Manger

In the infant Jesus...
The Almighty becomes helpless;
The infinite Creator of all that is,
Is now born of the finite human creature;

The One who holds the vastness and the entirety of the universe
Within the grasp of his hand,
Is now held and embraced within the arms of
The humble virgin mother;

The eternal One, who dwells in the resplendent glory of the heavens,
now dwells in the dark and damp filth of a stable;
The One who is enthroned upon a chariot of the angels,
now lies helpless within a manger of straw.
“...for foxes have dens, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has
nowhere to lay his head...”

The One who knows all,
From whom no secret is hidden,
now knows only the hunger for his mother's milk;
The one who possesses all things,
All wealth and riches,
now has become poor,
Possessing nothing,
Save the tender love of his mother.

Yet, He became poor to make us rich;
He embraces our suffering to bring us healing;
He was counted as sin that we might be counted as righteous;
He died in time that we might live in eternity.

On that first Christmas night,
He took on our humanity that we might partake of His divinity.

Reflections on 2006 Rochester Retreat

Jackie Huetter
Spiritus Dei
South Sound Region
Washington

One more time. One more time. You allowed us to come together one more time...

There's nothing like a Spiritus Christi welcome to remind us that Jesus dwells in the hearts of his people. From the first welcoming embrace to the last departing hugs, we knew--really knew--we were loved.

With Reverends Mary Ramerman, Denise Donato, Jim Callan and our Spiritus Christi friends, we rediscovered that no one's a stranger. We're all part of God's family.

With Edwina Gately, we learned to be bold! To say "yes" to our dreams, no matter the cost.

With Jim Ramerman, we found a safe place to face our weaknesses so we could grow stronger.

With Myra Brown, we experienced praise that sprang from the song in her heart.

With Bishop Peter Hickman we learned to be true to Love's prayer and to move with the Spirit's prompting.

With each other, we found new ways to love, trust and laugh! We listened to each other with our hearts as well as our minds.

Together, we saw God's unfolding miracles (some amazingly profound, some intimately tender) that instilled in us the deep knowing that we truly are priestly people..."And that's good. That's REAL good!"

Synod 2007

A Call to the Sunshine State!

Rev. Steven M. Roszczewski
Holy Spirit ECC
Clearwater, Florida

With great joy, we announce the 2007 Synod for the Ecumenical Catholic Communion to be held in St. Pete Beach, Florida from Wednesday, October 24th through Saturday, October 27th at the Sirata Beach Resort and Conference Center. It is indeed the privilege and pleasure of the community of Holy Spirit ECC, Clearwater, to

host this historic event in the life of our "communion of communities."

The term Synod comes to us from the Greek *συνοδος* (*synodos*) meaning "assembly" or "meeting", and it is first used in a 4th century C.E. collection of directives for the life and governance of the Christian community. Truly, our ECC Synod is also an assembly of diverse communities, with equally diverse lay and pastoral leadership coming together to discern matters of our life in communion with one another. What a tremendous act of faith and trust in the Spirit!

The term "autumn" means many things depending upon your location and can offer a variety in the spectrum of temperature and climate. For example, in October the mean temperatures in some of our ECC cities are: Orange, 68. Las Cruces, 61. St. Louis, 58. Aurora, St. Paul and Rochester, 51. Seattle, 54. Little Rock, 64! Then there is this special place in west central Florida called St. Petersburg at 84 degrees!

While some of you may need to leave cold and blustery environments for this journey, we are sure that you will be richly blessed as you arrive to our beachfront conference center on the sun-laden and breezy shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Miles of sandy beaches, warm waters for swimming, and spectacular sunsets await your embrace as you join with your sisters and brothers in prayerful dialog and decision in assembly. May you enjoy this corner of paradise as much as we do!

The Sirata is offering the ECC room rates that are reasonable (single/double, \$99 to quad, \$114), and are offered to you three days prior and three days following the actual Synod. Our greater Tampa Bay area is home to numerous wonderful sights and activities from Busch Gardens, Fort DeSoto Park (voted the best beach in the nation this year), Ybor City (center for Cuban life and culture) to the Disney World attractions in Orlando (an hour and a half away). So much to see and to do before or after the "business" of the Synod!

Information packets will be mailed to each of the delegates to the House of Laity and the House of Pastors after the Christmas holidays. Our ECC website will feature the latest information about the Synod and the ability to register early.

Plan now to be an important part of the 2007 Synod. Mark your calendars and put in for

vacation time from work. Join in this assembly of the Spirit in St. Pete Beach, Florida next October 24th-27th.

For more information, visit:
Sirata Beach Resort and Conference Center:

www.sirata.com

Tampa International Airport:

www.tampaairport.com

St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport:

www.fly2pie.com

St. Petersburg/Clearwater Visitor's Bureau:

www.floridasbeach.com

Tampa Bay Visitor's Bureau:

www.visittampabay.com

News from the Commission on the Episcopacy II

Rev. David W. Kenney
Church of St. Augustine ECC
Denver, Colorado

Following the Retreat in Rochester, the Leadership Council, in concert with three returning members of the original Commission on the Episcopacy, appointed a new, expanded Commission with the goal of refining and completing the work submitted at the Retreat.

The renewed Commission has begun to meet, via conference call, and is dividing its considerable workload in an effort to reckon with the ambitious schedule set forth by the Leadership Council anticipating the preparation needed for the Synod of 2007. We've been asked to complete our work by early June – a daunting task. We accept the challenge, and are committed to doing our very best. Our group, which is genuinely representative of the whole Communion both geographically and philosophically, has already adopted a process of consensus decision-making.

We have recently sent an email to all member communities, soliciting constructive input. What is lacking in the documents? What requires amplification or clarification? What – substantively – would improve the documents? On the other hand, what is well said, worthy, and sufficient?

After reviewing the comments received, we will prepare a memo to all communities, identifying any remaining issues in contention. Further comments will be sought and reviewed, and the process will conclude with our final, edited documents. This will include recommendations

for incorporating appropriate elements into Constitutional or Canonical form.

The contributions of every individual member and every community in the ECC will be vital for this vital process. We ask for your prayerful support and look forward to your input.

The Commission on the Episcopacy II

Blake Anderson	Sheila Gilmore
Tony Battaglia	Lynne Hamilton
Bob Caruso	David Kenney
Charlie Davis	Delores Kropf
Denise Donato	John Warrington

Editor's note: The ECC extends its appreciation for the efforts and dedication of the Commission on the Episcopacy I. Members include Mary Franch, Sheila Gilmore, Rev. David Kenney, Rev. Delores Knopf, Rev. Mary Ramerman and Rev. Don Rickard.

It is with deep gratitude that we welcome the new and returning members to the Commission on the Episcopacy II.

Greetings from the Southwest/Midwest Vicariate

Rev. Jim Lehman
Holy Family ECC
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Introducing the Vicar...

I am Father Jim Lehman and I have worked in the Church all my life. As a young man I was a member of the Alexian Brothers, a Roman Catholic Papal Congregation that cared for the sick. After leaving the Alexian Brothers, I continued my studies graduating with a Masters in Social Work in 1975. After leaving the Order I continued my work in the church and was ordained a Roman Catholic Permanent Deacon by Archbishop Sanchez of Santa Fe in 1986. I continued my studies at the College of Santa Fe (Christian Brothers) graduating in 1993 with a degree in Religious Studies, and during this time I worked as the Parish Administrator of Immaculate Heart of Mary Cathedral in Las Cruces, NM.

In 1994, I left the Cathedral and the Roman Catholic Church due to a desire to find an inclusive church where all were welcome. A core group formed Holy Family Parish where in 1996 I was ordained an Anglican priest. In 2003, I completed a Doctor of Psychology degree

focusing on the spiritual and psychological effects of abuse and neglect. I continue to maintain a private practice doing counseling.

Get to know the community...

Holy Family ECC is 10 years old this year and we have grown to over 75 families with one third of our members being under the age of eighteen. We are a young and inclusive parish where truly all are welcome.

At this point we have outgrown our present facility (Disciple of Christ chapel) and as of the beginning of February 2007, we will be in a new space. The parish unanimously voted on December 10 to purchase the Temple Beth El, as they are moving to a new space. It is a 6400 square foot facility located on 1.9 acres of land. We have had a long relationship with the temple and we are excited about continuing our ministry in their space. The temple is located in a mature residential neighborhood near downtown. This is an exciting time for us as we are growing up, and so keep us in your prayers. My life partner Charlie, with whom I have been for the last 32 years, shares my ministry and I could not function without his help.

Geographically speaking...

The Southwest/Midwest Vicariate goes from the Mexico border to that of Canada. The other vicariate parishes are in Arizona, Missouri, Minnesota, and a community in Tulsa that is exploring their relationship with us.

My Story of Uncomfortable Grace

Deacon Jessica Rowley
Sts. Clare and Francis ECC
St. Louis, Missouri

We all have our unique stories of discovery, those stories we tell when people stutter, "Ecumenical Catholic – huh?" My story is not a long one. I am privileged to have stumbled across the ECC as a twenty-something seminary student. Today, I am a deacon in my local parish and a candidate for the ECC priesthood. Following is a snapshot of my story.

Four years ago I was a Roman Catholic student at Marquette University trying to respond to a restlessness in my heart (St. Augustine would be proud). I visited convents, worked for University Ministry, and then, the clincher, I fell in love. Not the good Catholic boy my grandfather had in mind for me, but a talented and passionate man headed for seminary in St.

Louis to pursue a call to ordination in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Joe and I were married in 2004.

Through Joe, my narrow visions of church exploded. Christ was present with uncomfortable grace. I experienced God as bigger and the church as more expansive than I ever imagined. Faithfulness began to take a different shape. I needed to discern my call in a world bigger than the one that raised me.

Eden Theological Seminary caught me as I fell from good standing with the church that nurtured me from infancy. But, once again, the trauma of following Christ created room for more spiritual fruit. In Eden's ecumenical environment the diversity of the Body of Christ blossomed. I fell in love with get-up-and-dance gospel music, I marveled at expertly crafted sermon events, and I wept as we gathered around Christ's table – ordained, lay, black, white, evangelical, progressive, Unitarian, Trinitarian, all ages and nationalities, from a dozen different denominations – God's Catholic Church.

When I encountered Sts. Clare and Francis ECC there was no dramatic epiphany, no crash of lightening or booming voice. But there was community; community willing to live in the tensions – Catholic but not Roman, free but bound together, nurturing but also prophetic, eucharistic but not exclusive. The people of Sts. Clare and Francis are Christ for me and they continue to challenge each other into the uncomfortable new places where God's grace lives.

I dare not speak for an entire generation, but the ECC blessed this twenty-something with renewed faith in the church. I am proud to call myself Catholic again, even if it necessitates the telling of a story.

San Damiano ECC

Fred Ball, OEF
Little Rock, Arkansas

San Damiano Ecumenical Catholic Church is a new, Franciscan-flavored faith community emerging in Little Rock, growing out of a vision of a church shaped by Franciscan spirituality. Fred Ball, OEF, the pastor of the community, has been a member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans since 1989, serving for nine years as the Minister General of the order. That experience, along with his experience in shaping

other congregations “in the Franciscan way,” is an important part of the inspiration behind his vision for San Damiano.

“Especially during my most recent parish work,” Fred explains, “I began to see how the Franciscan identity began to take root in the congregation. After almost three and a half years with them as their interim pastor, they had begun to be formed in a new way. Here were Protestants coming to me with stories of other Franciscan work they had read about in the news, traveling with me to Assisi, and beginning to see through the lens of Franciscan values.”

While Fred served as an interim pastor for the Presbyterian congregation, the vision of developing a community with a specifically Franciscan charism began to take root in his heart. He learned of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion through Bob Blattner, OEF.

Excited about what he heard about the ECC, and strongly encouraged by his wife, Sarah, he began to communicate with Bishop Peter Hickman, and visited the 2005 Synod meeting in Las Cruces to get a look at the Communion firsthand.

“I was amazed at the Las Cruces experience. The first thing I noticed when I walked into the meeting area was the San Damiano cross on the registration packets – and several other places as well. It didn’t take long to realize that the ECC has a very Franciscan character about it. People were welcoming, encouraging, and genuinely interested in what we wanted to do in Little Rock. It very quickly felt like home to me.”

That the ECC feels like home maybe a bit of a surprise given Fred’s background. For twenty years, he worked as a pastor in Southern Baptist churches and mission settings. However, he was personally nourished by Catholic spirituality, and found himself constantly urging Baptist congregations to a recovery of their earliest roots through liturgical worship and the development of a Eucharistic spirituality. He obtained his Ph.D. in liturgical theology, particularly focusing on Eucharistic liturgies and theologies. Ultimately, in 1999, Fred left Baptist life and became an Episcopalian, where he enjoyed the richness of that tradition. With permission of the Episcopal Bishop of Arkansas, he served as an interim pastor for a local Presbyterian parish.

Originally, Fred intended to seek orders within the Episcopal tradition. However, a series of what he now describes as “providential delays” enabled him to discover and explore the ECC. When he returned from Las Cruces full of enthusiasm about the Communion, Fred and Sarah spent many hours in conversation and discernment about what to do next.

“Sarah was crucial in getting me moving in this direction. She helped me to see how the ECC, by providing encouragement, support, and freedom, as well as connection with the larger Church, could really assist us in the realization of our vision for a Franciscan parish.”

In February, a small group of people began gathering in the Balls’ home to discuss forming a new faith community. Some were people who had known Fred in previous parish ministries. Others were friends from other contexts, who were looking for something different out of church. All shared enthusiasm for the idea of an open, welcoming faith community that is rooted in the Catholic heritage, while reaching out to embrace the challenges and changes of the postmodern world.

The group worships weekly now in Fred and Sarah’s home. They are intentionally waiting to “go public” until after Fred’s ordination scheduled for January 27, 2007.

“We look forward to a Catholic ordination before we expand the circle and announce to the world that we are San Damiano Ecumenical Catholic Church.”

The ordination and subsequent weekly worship gatherings of the San Damiano community will be held at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church in Little Rock, where Fred, Sarah, and their four children also worship regularly. The priest at St. Michael’s, Father Ed Wills, sees potential for the two communities to share more than meeting space – he envisions active engagement in ministry together. Parishioners at St. Michael’s are excited and encouraging about the new venture..

“By God’s grace, and with the support of the ECC family and the folks at St. Michael’s, we expect some exciting things to happen once we formally open the doors of San Damiano to the Little Rock community.”

Contact info:
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