



Delaware Communion is an edition of Episcopal News Monthly and has been in continuous publication since 1976. Back copies, to 2006, can be found on our website.

ON THE WEB

www.DiocesefofDelaware.net

IN THIS ISSUE

- B** Bishop's address at the Service of Repentance; New Orleans Mission; Visit by ERD president
- C** Perspectives: Sermons on Proper 23; Green Show in Greenville; Delaware events
- D** Angel Tree Answers Prayers



Remember: Convention is Coming Early!

Feb. 25-26 Sheraton, Dover

Snow date: April 9

Key dates are moved up:

Delegate/alternate

registration due

December 13

Resolutions due

January 11

Acceptances due

January 15

See the full schedule on the Convention page of our website:

www.DiocesefofDelaware.net

DELAWARE Communion

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF DELAWARE

episcopal news monthly

DECEMBER 2010, VOL. 1, NO. 11

CLERGY IN DELAWARE

A Diaconate Journey: The Rev. Rita Nelson Retires

by Jen Mason, Communion Editor

This is my fourth retirement from something or other – it's my retirement from retirement from retirement from retirement!" laughed the Rev. Rita Nelson, Director of the Diocese of Delaware's Diaconal Program. After six years of shaping and shepherding the program, Rita is turning over the leadership to the Rev. Larry Hofer. But he's finding the program in a much different place from what Rita did – when she began, it did not exist.

Anyone who has ever baked a cake from scratch knows that it's more of an exercise in science than anything else. The exact measurement of each ingredient is critical to the success of the finished product. But creating a cake recipe from scratch is not so straightforward.

This rare task requires a deft balance of art and science to achieve – and it's not just any baker who's got what it takes to pull it off.

As it turns out, the same thing goes for crafting a diaconate program.

When Bishop Wright came to Delaware, one of his mandates was to create a path to the vocational diaconate. When he turned his attention to it, Rita was in the midst of one of her retirements and looking for another challenge.

With her extensive background in corporate consulting, a world that is all about process, the bishop knew that this could be a proverbial piece of cake for her to lead.

Rita's first step was recognizing that she could not do it alone. She pulled together a team of ten clergy and lay people to

Rita played an integral part in establishing the program and guiding us all through some challenging times. She was there with us in the journey as mentor and leader – a journey that has forever changed our lives.
—Deacon Patricia Malcolm



PHOTO BY BOB GILLEY

As Delaware's first class of vocational deacons celebrate the first anniversary of their ordination this month, the Rev. Rita Nelson retires from leading the program. Pictured at their ordination with the bishop are (left to right) Deacon Susan Philips, the Rev. Rita Nelson, Deacon Sheila Sharpe, Deacon Cecily Sawyer-Harmon, Deacon Patricia Malcolm, Deacon Dorothy Vuono, and Deacon Thomas McCormick.

develop a process (see a list of participants at www.DiocesefofDelaware.net). They started in September of 2004 by looking at an array of dioceses from around the church, finding out how their deacons were guided through discernment, training, and final selection.

The team quickly realized that they weren't going to find a singular recipe to follow – none of the other dioceses' diaconate programs really suited

Delaware's circumstances. So they identified some best practices from a handful of dioceses which were similarly sized and resourced to our own, gleaned a great deal from the dioceses of Vermont, Maryland, Maine, and Arkansas.

Over the course of the year, they defined the process and developed resources to support it, such as the Diaconate Discernment Guide (which is *continued on back cover (Page D)*)

OWNING OUR LEGACY

Episcopalians Join in Repenting for the Sin of Slavery



PHOTO BY DANNY N. SCHWEERS

On Saturday, October 30, 2010, Delaware Episcopalians filled the Cathedral Church of St. John in Wilmington to the rafters as we publically repented for the church's role in the institution of slavery and our individual culpability in the social ills perpetuated by it.

The event was organized by the Diocesan Committee on Slavery & the Episcopal Church in Delaware, who were pleased with how well the service went. "We felt that the service ex-

Bishop Wayne Wright read the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware's official, institutional apology for the church's role in slavery on October 30 before a standing-room-only crowd of Delaware parishioners at the Cathedral Church of St. John. The service was another step along the path of healing for this terrible, social ill.

pressed the needs of the occasion and set the right tone," said the Rev. Ed Godden, vice-chair of the committee. "We were also very glad to see such a good turnout."

The service culminated in the bishop's reading of the official, institutional apology for the Church of Delaware's role in slavery and his very personal, moving sermon (which is printed on Page B). But, as Fr. Godden noted, any reflection on the service "would be most incomplete without . . . the three personal testimonies which went before it. Those testimonies on 'a personal experience of racism' were given by Lloyd Casson, Pat Van Catledge and Tanisha Julius." Video and audio files of these three testimonies are available at www.DiocesefofDelaware.net.

Attendees were also deeply moved by the Rev. Al Holland's Letter to the Church in Dela-

ware, which he read as the second lesson. Fr. Holland's letter was a call to action, saying, "If the effects of slavery and segregation are finally to be erased, then you have a mighty part to play in advocacy and action in every congregation in your diocese." The complete text is also available on the diocesan website.

Indeed, Joyce Bemby, the committee chair, said, "This service sets a tone for continuing dialogue on race relations and understanding the effect of slavery's legacy on all races." She and her fellow committee members see this public repentance as just the beginning of the church's proactive work to heal the ills of slavery. "Any parish can get help facilitating discussions by calling the bishop's office," said Bemby. "We are also planning to have other offerings to help us during 2011."

See to it that your eyes are open!

by the Rt. Rev. Wayne Wright, Bishop of Delaware

Bishop's Address at the Service of Repentance for Slavery in the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware, Cathedral Church of St. John, Wilmington, Saturday, October 30, 2010

Your eyes are the lamp of your body. When your eyes are open, your whole body is full of light. When your eyes are closed, you are full of blindness. See to it then that your eyes are open!

— Luke 11:34-35

Since my father's recent death I have become a family historian. My mother gave me a collection of mementoes including portraits of my great-grandparents – Jacob Henry Parker and Priscilla Simpson Parker. Their stern, formal Victorian photographs don't reveal the love and respect that my grandmother had for them. As a little boy I remember seeing the photographs hanging in a place of honor over the mantel in my grandparent's home. We were taught to love and respect our ancestors. My middle name is Parker.

When I viewed the documentary, *Traces of the Trade*, I remembered that my own family history is not that different from filmmaker Katrina Brown's. My great-grandparents were both born in the 1840s in North Carolina. They lived their entire lives there. The Parkers were slaveholders. My great-grandfather served in the Confederate Army. In the years following Reconstruction, Henry Jacob Parker was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives. He was one of a generation of leaders who erected the system of Jim Crow laws legalizing segregation and discrimination. This heritage is a part of my family history.

In much the same way we love our Church. We know about its blessings, generosity, and ministry of caring. We have spoken about them often. At the same time we are grateful to Diocesan Committee on Slavery & the Episcopal Church in Delaware for their leadership and to everyone who watched *Traces of the Trade*.

We have learned how the early missionaries who brought us the Gospel from Europe were supported in their ministries by money made from the labor of slaves in Caribbean sugar plantations. We know that many of our earliest church buildings were built by slaves and that congregations provided slaves to our some of our clergy. We have discovered that the earliest fortunes in this city and state were gained from the labor of slaves growing wheat – not cotton, or tobacco, or sugar, but wheat – the Bread of Life – brought to large flour mills here in Wilmington. We know that Episcopalians used Holy Scripture to justify slaveholding and Jim Crow laws enforcing segregation and legalized discrimination.

"Your eyes," Jesus said, "are the Lamp of your Body." What we have learned has opened our eyes, opened our blind eyes. We see our past, our

present, and our future in a new way. This is where repentance begins. We see things differently. "Open, O Lord, the eyes of my heart!" is the prayer of the penitent.

The most powerful New Testament moments are those precious encounters with Jesus as the Living God. What did the man born blind say? "All I know is that whereas once I was blind, now I see." This is the Light of Christ that quickens conscience, changes our minds, and empowers our will.

As descendants and inheritors of a cruel and unjust history, today we take responsibility for it. Racism, prejudice, and bias continue to haunt us, impair our relationships, and stunt human potential.

Take a walk. Look at our neighborhoods. The distance between haves and have-nots is just too great, and it continues to grow. We spend so much on prisons here in Delaware, while campaigning politicians claim we are wasting money on our schools. Social statistics and personal

testimony bear witness to a lack of opportunity and access to the many blessings of this life.

This is the distorted heritage of a world that the slaveholders made, and it is our world too. But, this is not the world that God intends. It is not what it means to respect the dignity of every human being. To repent is to see the world with different eyes, to take responsibility for it, and to make a commitment to a new way of life.

What did the blessed Apostle Paul say? "Be ye transformed by the renewal of your minds." A new life requires new ways of thinking. For us, as a church, this will mean continuing study, dialogue, and reflection on the sin of racism – our role and our responsibility. It will mean cultivating and respecting inclusion and diversity – as individuals and as institutions.

We say the Episcopal Church welcomes you. Now we must mean it! It will mean committing ourselves to lead lives that are compassionate, generous, and just. We will make our voices heard in offices, the polling places, and in the public square.

It is not too much to say that our salvation hinges on these things. You know the words to the old song:

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see."

These are not words of comfort – they are words of challenge. This Light, seen with open eyes, is the Light of Christ. And what did Jesus say about this Light?

"Your eyes are the lamp of your body. When your eyes are open, your whole body is full of light. When your eyes are closed, you are full of blindness. See to it then that your eyes are open!" Amen

Wayne



Episcopal Relief and Development President Visits Delaware

by the Rev. Louise Howlett, St. Anne's School, Middletown

Dr. Robert Radtke and his colleague Sherrye Henry from Episcopal Relief and Development visited the diocese on November 3 and 4. Dr. Radtke spoke to St. Andrew's School and enjoyed discussion time with students and teachers before and after the all-school chapel service. He also gave his presentation about Episcopal Relief and Development's work to St. Anne's Episcopal School students and teachers, a group of clergy and lay supporters in Lewes, and a group of clergy and lay supporters at Bishopstead in the evening.

Dr. Radtke's presentation made several important points about the over 46 countries in which they work, the efficiency and effectiveness of their church-based programs, and their emphasis on local work and empowerment. He also answered questions about the on-going work in Haiti and the African Nets for Life program.

Supporters were encouraged to participate in their Gifts for Life program

(go to ER-D.org or call 800-903-5544 for a catalog) on a personal level and at the parish level. Several deacons are also organizing a diocesan-wide drive called Wells for Hope, using water bottles and mite boxes to collect change between Parish Life Day and Convention in order to buy wells for developing nations through ERD.

Dr. Radtke's final message was "Pray, Learn, Act, and Give."

- **Pray** for those affected by poverty and disease worldwide.
- **Learn** about the issues and advocate for those in need.
- **Act** by getting involved to help us heal a hurting world.
- **Give** to Episcopal Relief and Development.

His PowerPoint presentation is available at www.DioceseofDelaware.net, and more information about his visit and ERD's work is available by calling Louise Howlett at 378-9618, ext. 325.

JOIN THIS YEAR'S MISSION TO

New Orleans

Would you like to be a volunteer on the next trip to New Orleans, as we continue to rebuild the Crescent City? The 2011 trip is scheduled for March 19-26. Volunteers 18 years and older are welcome to join us in working with Episcopal Community Services of New Orleans in their efforts to bring New Orleans back to life after Hurricane Katrina. To learn more, contact Vicki Anthos from Immanuel Church, Highlands at 588-7607.

THE BISHOP'S CALENDAR: DEC. 2010

1 Wednesday, Bishop's Day in Georgetown

5 Sunday, ERD Sunday

5 Sunday, Morning Visitation, St. Nicholas' Church, Newark

6 Monday, Bishop & Council Meeting, St. Anne's Church, Middletown

7 Tuesday, Continuing Education Day, St. Albans Church, Wilmington

8 Wednesday – 9 Thursday, Church Pension Fund Meeting, New York

12 Sunday, Morning Visitation, St. Martin's in the Field, Selbyville

16 Thursday, Trustee's Meeting, Cathedral Church of St. John

19 Sunday, Morning Visitation, Calvary Hillcrest

21 Tuesday, Standing Committee Meeting, St. Andrew's School, Middletown

24 Friday, Christmas Service, Delaware Correctional Service, Smyrna

24 Friday, Christmas Holiday, Bishop's Office Closed

25 Saturday, Christmas Day

27 Monday, Christmas Holiday, Bishop's Office Closed

28 Tuesday – 30 Thursday, Bishop's Office Closed

31 Friday, New Year's Eve Holiday, Bishop's Office Closed

Episcopal News Monthly ISSN 1050-0057 USPS# 177-940 is published monthly by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, Inc. 815 Second Ave, New York, NY 10017. Periodical postage paid in New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:

Send change of address to Episcopal News Monthly, PO Box 2050 Voorhees NJ 08043-8000.

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES: To change subscription addresses, contact Episcopal News Monthly Circulation Department, PO Box 2050, Voorhees NJ 08043-8000, or email elife@aflwebprinting.com or call 1-800-374-9510.



DELAWARE
Communion

The Episcopal Diocese of Delaware

2020 N. Tatnall Street, Wilmington, DE 19802
302 656-5441 • www.DioceseofDelaware.net

The *Delaware Communion* is published monthly from September to June for members and friends of the Diocese of Delaware. Jen Mason, Editor; Danny Schweers, Designer. Find us on the Web at www.DioceseofDelaware.net. The deadline for submissions is the first day of each preceding month. Submission specifications are found on our website. Send submissions and feedback to Jen Mason at editor@DioceseofDelaware.net, the mailing address above, or call 302 656-5443 x104. Those without Web access may obtain Web-published stories from parish offices or from the editor. Please submit subscription and address changes to Carmel Stephano at the Bishop's office at CStephano@DioceseofDelaware.net or call 302 656-5441 x100.

Perspectives: Sermons on Proper 23

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – Luke 17:11-19

One of the benefits of being in a diocesan relationship with other parishes is having access to a variety of perspectives on a variety of things, among those being contemporary issues of the day and what scripture has to offer in response.

From time to time, the *Communion* and www.DioceesofDelaware.net will offer up three or more sermons from around the diocese – sermons that focus on the same set of scriptures but take away different lessons.

The sermons this month drew from

Luke's Gospel story about the ten lepers who approached Jesus for healing. Each of the three sermons focused on a different manifestation of being an outsider. The Rev. Dustin Trowbridge preached at Trinity, Wilmington about the bullying and discrimination faced by youth. The Rev. Jeff Ross preached at St. Peter's, Lewes, about our response to slavery. And the Rev. Louise Howlett preached at St. Anne's, Middletown about Muslim discrimination. An abbreviated version of her sermon is to the right, with complete versions of all three posted on the Sermons page of our website.

What Would Jesus Do? Our Relationship with Islam

by the Rev. Louise Howlett, St. Anne's, Middletown

In a recent Gospel lesson, the healing of the ten lepers, Jesus praises the faith and gratitude of a person who is both a Samaritan and a leper, both considered unworthy and unclean by the society of that time. It seems to me that Muslims are despised and feared like that in our time, in our society. Muslims are depicted over and over in newspapers and other media as people to be rejected for their corrupt faith, to be despised as foreign, scorned as backwards and sexist, and above all, to be feared and distrusted as violent terrorists.

There is no denying 9-11 and the recently-averted Times Square bombing, as well as other terrorist acts around the world, in which Muslims have committed horrible acts which killed innocent people and claimed they were doing it for God. Yet there is also no denying that it was Christians who bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City, and it is Christians who picket military funerals carrying violent signs about God's pleasure in seeing U.S. soldiers die. The KKK claims to be Christian as it preaches white supremacy as God's will. Many Christians preach that gay people are condemned to Hell. It was Christians who deported and imprisoned and killed millions of Jews in the Holocaust, one of the worst atrocities in the history of the world.

Yet we don't usually think to blame our whole religion for any of those events. We know these were misguided people, who perverted justice and twisted their faith to serve their own ends. Given how negatively Muslims are portrayed in our media and politics, we may have a hard time remembering that there are a billion Muslims in the world and that the ones we tend to hear about doing violent things are a small minority who also pervert justice and twist their faith to serve their own ends.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a common heritage, tracing our roots back to Abraham. All three traditions were born in the Middle East, and we share many holy sites, most notably Jerusalem. We share common beliefs in the same God (*Allah* being the Arabic word for God), in the importance of daily prayer, in the necessity of charity to the less fortunate, and in special times of fasting and prayer during the

year. As faiths, we have much more to share than to divide us. Muslims know the Hebrew prophets, honor the Virgin Mary, and respect Jesus as a prophet. All three religions preach peace as the way God ultimately wants us to live.

Whether it's a Christian pastor burning the Quran, a Jewish rabbi scolding Palestinian civil rights, or a Muslim imam encouraging hatred of Americans, any religious leader who preaches hate or prejudice or violence is just not speaking for God. Anyone who encourages fear instead of fellowship and faith is not following Jesus' teaching. Anyone who tries to condemn people for their background or ethnicity, rather than judging them by their beliefs and actions, is not walking in the light of justice.

It has been painful recently to listen and watch as an entire faith, made up of millions and millions of people of varying races and languages and nationalities, has been labeled and misunderstood. Especially when times are hard, people look for a scapegoat, someone to hate, someone to scorn, someone that no one will defend.

That's what Samaritans and lepers and prostitutes and tax-collectors were in Jesus' time, and look who he hung out with! Everywhere he went he broke down barriers of prejudice against women, against the diseased, the mentally ill, non-Jews, foreigners, even the Romans, their occupying enemies. Jesus' way was to build relationship, to foster understanding, to offer compassion and healing to those whom others saw as lesser or even unworthy of God's love.

It's always been human nature to have prejudices and fears of people we don't understand, but it's also been the nature of our great spiritual leaders to call us to rise above those prejudices and conquer those fears. We need to have the courage to look into our hearts and minds right now and see where we still hold onto racism or sexism or homophobia or anti-Islamic feelings and ask God to help us, to heal us, to make us less fearful and more loving in our relationships with others who at first seem different from us. Jesus showed us the way to be loving to one another and taught us that God's love extends to all people, not just our friends and relatives, not just those of our own faith.

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

Christ Church Green Show Promises a Host of Holiday Greens and Much More

Christ Church Christiana Hundred, Greenville, is hosting its annual Green Show on Saturday, Dec. 4, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Celebrating more than 50 years of bringing the community together, the Green Show features fresh holiday greens, handcrafted items, and homemade foods for sale for the Christmas season. Lunch is available and children can get a photo with Santa Claus.

All proceeds from the sale are distributed to more than 30 local social service agencies funded by the church's Outreach Program. Admission is free.

The term "Green Show" refers to the early beginnings of selling only fresh holiday greens. These carefully selected and



beautifully fashioned fresh-cut greens include decorated natural wreaths, fresh evergreen boughs, roping, Christmas trees, and holiday plants.

For information and driving directions visit www.ChristChurchDE.org or call 655-3379.

DELAWARE EVENTS

For the latest listing, see the News & Events page at www.DioceesofDelaware.net.

DECEMBER

Parishes are hosting special Advent and Christmas services and musical events throughout December. Visit www.DioceesofDelaware.net for a listing.

4 Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
St. Barnabas' Church Christmas Bazaar, St. Barnabas', Wilmington. White Elephants, used books, and jewelry; cookie walk and baked goods; crafts, greens and more. Lunch available. Proceeds benefit local charities. Details: 994-6607.

4 Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Green Show, Christ Church Christiana Hundred, Greenville. See above for details.

10 Friday – 11 Saturday
Ecumenical Seminars for Education and Youth Workers re. Bullying and At-Risk Youth, co-sponsored by Integrity USA. Speakers from counseling, education, and faith professions. Seminar Friday followed by candlelight vigil and reception. Believe

Out Loud Seminar followed by Integrity Eucharist and reception Saturday. Details: integrityp3@firstjohn478.com.

11 Saturday, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Advent Quiet Day with the Very Rev. Ian Markham, Dean and President, Virginia Theological Seminary, Christ Church, Greenville. RSVP at 655-3379 or rsvp@christchurchde.org.

13 Monday, 7:00 p.m.
Concert by Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge, Christ Church Christiana Hundred, Greenville. See Page D for details.

JANUARY

8 Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Integrity Delaware Meeting & Potluck Brunch, Christ Church, Dover. Bishop Wright attending. Details: contact Jon Rania at Integrity-Delaware@hotmail.com or 734-5731.

Holiday Brown Bag Concerts

Grace Church, Wilmington, Fridays, 12:15–1:00 p.m.

Bring a bagged lunch – Beverages provided

Dec. 3 – The Brandywiners Ltd. Chorale

Dec. 10 – Concord High School Madrigals and Chorale

Dec. 17 – Robert Welch & Friends

Details: 478-9533



The Angel Tree: An Answer to Prayers by Jen Mason, editor

I read parish newsletters from across the state each month, learning about the church in Delaware and looking for stories to share. In last year's January editions there were several notes of appreciation for our Angel Trees – from organizers and recipients alike. The following letter was received by one of our parishes, but I think that it could be addressed to any of our churches who help our neighbors this time of year.

The Christmas season is filled with a singular sense of wonder and happy anticipation, especially for children. But with the staggering number of families who are struggling on the edge of poverty in this challenging economy, anticipating the holidays can be fraught with stress and pain, instead.

I find it gratifying to know that the efforts that we make to mitigate this stress and pain are truly appreciated and really do make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters. For them, you are the hands of Jesus at this special time.

Letter from an "Angel Tree" Family

As a struggling mother of three who recently lost her job, I wasn't quite sure how I was going to make Christmas possible this year. I figured I might just take this time to teach my young children what Christmas is really about.

My oldest child is now old enough to notice when Mommy is upset. He asked me, "If we pray for help from Jesus, would he be able to make things better for us?" I told him that Jesus always listens to our prayers. So he prayed every night for a way to help Mommy with everything that is making her upset.

As I started to make preparations for the Christmas season, I was contacted by your parish, about an opportunity that I couldn't pass up. Someone had submitted my family to be on your "Angel Tree." I immediately broke down in tears and started to thank Jesus for giving me a way to provide Christmas for my children this year.

When Christmas morning arrived the delight in my children's eyes was an amazing sight to see. They could not believe how many things were there for them. As they made their way through all the gifts, my nine-year-old paused, looked at me, looked at the gifts, looked back at me and said, "But how?" I told him that when you pray to Jesus your prayers are answered.

I want to thank all who donated to the "Angel Tree" this year. It made Christmas possible and wonderful for my three children, and me. My family has made a promise to Jesus that when we have the means, we will give to those who need. We will pay it forward every chance we get.

—Thank You & God Bless!



Jesus is Coming! The renowned combined choirs of Jesus College, Cambridge, England, are embarking on their first U.S. concert tour, and they're stopping in Wilmington on Monday, December 13 at 7:00 p.m. at Christ Church Christiana Hundred, Greenville. The light and festive program of seasonal music is free and open to the public. For more details, visit www.ChristChurchDE.org or call or call 655-3379.

The Rev. Rita Nelson Retires

continued from front page (Page A)

available, along with other diaconal materials, on the Deacons page of www.DioceseofDelaware.net).

Largely following the competency training program used in Arkansas, the team put nine examining chaplains in place. The chaplains each created a syllabus designed to guide would-be deacons in developing core competencies. Also included in the path were: a congregational discernment process; a semester of Clinical Pastoral Education; Safe Church and Inclusiveness training; training in the Canons and Title IV; and continuing education after ordination.

Their next step was gauging interest. They hosted the first Diaconal Information and Discernment Day (DIADD) in 2005. When 65 inquirers registered with their parish priests and vestry representatives, the team realized that there was some pent-up demand for the diaconate. But they also saw that they needed to be doing more to educate people about what being a deacon really means.

Leaving the gathering, 31 inquirers said that they wanted to pursue ordination. The committee asked them to take a month to think about it and then to make a follow-up appointment with the bishop. That process narrowed the group to 17. Due to a variety of personal circumstances, the group reduced to 11 over the course of six months, finally arriving at eight inquirers. Two of these felt called to other ministries, leaving the six individuals who comprised the inaugural class ordained one year ago at St. Stephen's, Harrington.

The proof of any recipe is in the outcome; and Delaware's six new vocational deacons, each involved in vibrant ministries around the diocese, are proof positive, indeed. Bishop Michael Creighton, retired from the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, also conducted an objective review of the entire process, sending a glowing report to Bishop Wright.

"And now this is a perfect time for a leadership transition," said Rita, "since the program itself is also in transition,

and Larry Hofer is the perfect man for the job. We've adjusted the process as we've gone along, but now it needs to be re-scaled to work for a smaller group of inquirers and candidates. I'm a really good creator/planner, but it needs someone who can really put the program on the path to sustainability. With his depth of experience, Larry brings fresh eyes and fresh thoughts, looking at the program from a totally new perspective. And with his great senses of organization and humor, he'll be a real asset for the diocese and the deacons."

And what about Rita? "I'm looking forward to putting my feet up," she said. "I'm not putting anything that isn't absolutely necessary on my calendar for six months. I really want this time to be for Sabbath. I also want to have some room to explore where my passions are at this point, so that when I'm ready to move forward, I'll know that it's really connected to my passion. I've been a very Spirit-driven person, and I hope to be open to the spirit. It's a little scary, but when I've let the spirit make decisions, they've all worked out."

"When I look back on my work with the diaconate and our six deacons, I feel really good about it – I'm really proud of them and of the process that we've worked so hard on over these years. The bishop thinks they're his deacons, but in my heart they will always be 'my deacons,'" she said with a grin.

Rita's efforts for the diaconate in the diocese were dedicated, with many long hours of hard work. I personally would like to thank her for all that she did to help prepare the way for the future.

—Deacon Dottie Vuono

Rita was our "good shepherd." She supported and assisted us while we worked our way through the competencies and other requirements for ordination.

—Deacon Sheila Sharpe

I am very thankful for Rita's leadership and her willingness to step forward to navigate a new path that will have a significant positive impact on the diocese.

—Deacon Cecily Sawyer Harmon



Who is Larry Hofer?



The Rev. Larry Hofer, new leader of the Diaconate Program, began his ordained ministry as a Lutheran pastor in 1964. He served churches in Pennsylvania and then Chicago. He became an Episcopal priest in 1988, after having returned to Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Susan, moved to Delaware from State College, PA, where he served as rector of St. Andrew's for over a decade. They now attend St. Paul's, Georgetown, attracted by the parish's focus on peace, justice, and outreach.

Next Diaconal Information and Discernment Day

Saturday, February 12

Visit the Deacons page of www.DioceseofDelaware.net for resources and details.