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Founder's Forum

Waiting on the Lord

But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. —Isa 40:31

When you understand the circumstances out of which Isaiah wrote, you begin to appreciate the message he proclaimed. Isaiah, with his fellow Jews, are in exile in Babylon. They have been in captivity for many years. They have grown weary of their difficult lot in life. As year after year wears on, they become more worn down. Sound familiar?

I have been taken to task several times in the last year for some of the things I have said in this forum. I welcome such criticism—for the lot of the prophet (or hopeful prophet) is never easy. It is difficult to speak out. The many members of this great church who are women; who are lesbian or gay; the racially defamed and ignored; those who claim the Bible to be more than a collection of proof-texts: these are the friends and companions of Isaiah. These are those who are indeed in exile.

Isaiah's companions cried out, "My way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God." (Isa 40:27) Their despair approached despondency. Sound familiar? In the darkness of the night the prophet places a new star in their sky—or perhaps points the way to one they had for-

gotten—perhaps like those who feel separated from the church, and have not looked up for a long time. "They who wait for the Lord shall *renew* their strength." To wait for the Lord is to wait in faith.

The true faith, the true tradition of the church, the true reason for being, is to love and extend charity.

Living in this trust we need to keep in mind that the church ordains *persons—not sexualities or genders or races*. Many of those who are in these various categories could stand and state that they too are "in exile." The 70th General Convention is a golden opportunity to show the world that we Episcopalians are "different." We have a chance to show the world that we operate out of love; pure, unconditional love—like God's love, which saved us *while we*

were sinners, not waiting for our repentance. You can search the Scriptures from now until the end of the world and one fact shines out above all others: Jesus lived for love and love alone. In the end he loved, and forgave, even those who killed him. No matter what the circumstances, his motive was love.

The true faith, the true tradition of the church, the true reason for being, is to love and extend charity. The Christian faith is a blending of memory and hope. But the memory is such as to provide incentive and daring for the needs of today. And the hope has no validity except as it is grounded in the brave and faithful performance of contemporary responsibilities.

Let us pray that this great church of ours will assume the prophetic role and rise up and make a difference. "They shall walk ... they shall run . . . they shall mount up with wings like eagles." As the everyday resources of God are showered upon us and we wait upon God, we shall walk and not faint.

RTB

Shepherdless sheep

As Jesus went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. —Mark 6:34

When I read the Gospel for this morning, this passage stood out and with lights blinking at me, said, "This is it." "They were like sheep without a shepherd." If we were to paraphrase those words we could come up with something that has a deep meaning for this congregation. That paraphrase might read, "For they were like a parish without a rector."

Now, as true as that is—we being a parish without a rector—we are not without a shepherd or a priest. Because our shepherd, our priest, is not the person placed in charge of the congregation. No, our great shepherd is the Lord Jesus himself. He is the great high priest and it is to him that we owe our allegiance. The earthly priest represents the great high priest, but is not the high priest. Our rector, when one comes—whichever that person chosen is—will be, like each of us, a representative of Christ on earth.

We often get discouraged because we have no rector. It is true. But this is a flourishing parish. We have debts, we become discouraged at times, but this is sure to happen in any family. Let us not be discouraged by temporary problems; let's stick it through.

There is another Bible story that I want to cite. This is from the Old Testament, from the First Book of Samuel. Do you remember the story of how Saul displeased God, and God was annoyed and sorry that he had made Saul the king of Israel? God decided to take the kingship away from him.

Samuel, the prophet of God, was told to go to the house of Jesse, and that from Jesse's sons he would choose a new king for Israel. Well, you know the story. All of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But none of them was the one God had chosen. Samuel asked Jesse if these were all of the sons. Jesse replied, "No, there's one more." And so David was sent for. David was the youngest, and he was out tending the sheep. When David came to the house, God told Samuel, "This is the one." So Samuel anointed him then and there, as the new king of Israel. God had said to Samuel, "The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Sam 16:7)

What do we learn from this? When the right priest comes along to this parish, he or she will be called or chosen by the vestry of the con-

gregation and approved by the bishop. We can interview many priests; we can call many priests; but when the right one comes along, the priest will not ultimately be chosen by calling committees, bishops, or vestries. The priest will be chosen by God and placed among us to do the work of God. The new rector will be chosen by the Holy Spirit, working through the church. Bear this in mind when you are feeling discouraged about not having a rector, a resident priest.

We may feel like a congregation without a shepherd, but we are not really. For God looks down from heaven upon us and tends us as he does the grass and flowers of the fields and the birds of the air. He will not forsake us. Let us not forsake him.

This is a wonderful congregation. We should be proud for carrying on as we have without a rector. Do not get discouraged. Pray for one another and pray that the Great Shepherd will send us a laborer to help in his work; for the Great Shepherd of the sheep looks over us and tends us daily.

*Br William
Bunting died in
1988.*

Meeting the community

Holding fast

Ronald Augustine Fox, n/BSG



Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. —Rom 12:9-12

Shortly after becoming and Episcopalian in 1979, I began serving at the altar in various functions, including gospel-hook bearer and subdeacon. The text quoted above is cited in the Rev Dennis G Michno's book, *A Manual for Acolytes*; the "serve

the Lord" portion not only applies to serving at the altar, but to us in religious life as well.

I think that as a brother it is important for me to continue serving; I certainly don't look upon serving as a job for young children and teens

alone. Many adults, and many teenagers, think it is time to stop serving when they reach adulthood. I think my parish is fortunate that many adults are on the serving roster. When I perform the duties of master of ceremonies, thurifer, crucifer or gospel-book bearer, the Brotherhood

habit is worn, and I see this as a good witness for our community.

Although serving is an important, visible ministry for me as a novice, I knew that I wanted to do more, even while I was in the application process to the community. A friendship with a Roman Catholic Franciscan brought me knowledge of Bonaventure House, a residence for people with AIDS run by the Alexian Brothers. He knew that I was a part of the Brotherhood, and told me that there was an excellent volunteer program at the facility. After speaking with him many times I decided to take the volunteer training program, and after being accepted to the Brotherhood's postulancy, completed the training and now volunteer on a regular basis. The Brotherhood cross never escapes notice, and a comment is always made, be it from a resident or a visitor. Most people are shocked to discover that the Episcopal Church has religious brothers and sis-

ters, and after finding out that we are a contemporary community, want to know more. Being a volunteer for PWAs is a very humbling experience, and I think is an important ministry.

Another pre Brotherhood ministry I am still involved with is the Bishop's Advisory Commission for Alcohol and Drugs. I recently completed a Chicago diocese-wide mailing seeking publicity for our mini-retreats, and to develop parish support teams. As a recovering alcoholic, this ministry is very close to my heart and is something I enjoy very much. When people in recovery find out that I am a brother, it shows them that religious are people who have the same diseases they have, and the concept of God as their "Higher Power" becomes less frightening for them.

A new ministry has begun as I have started studying in the diocesan hospital chaplain training

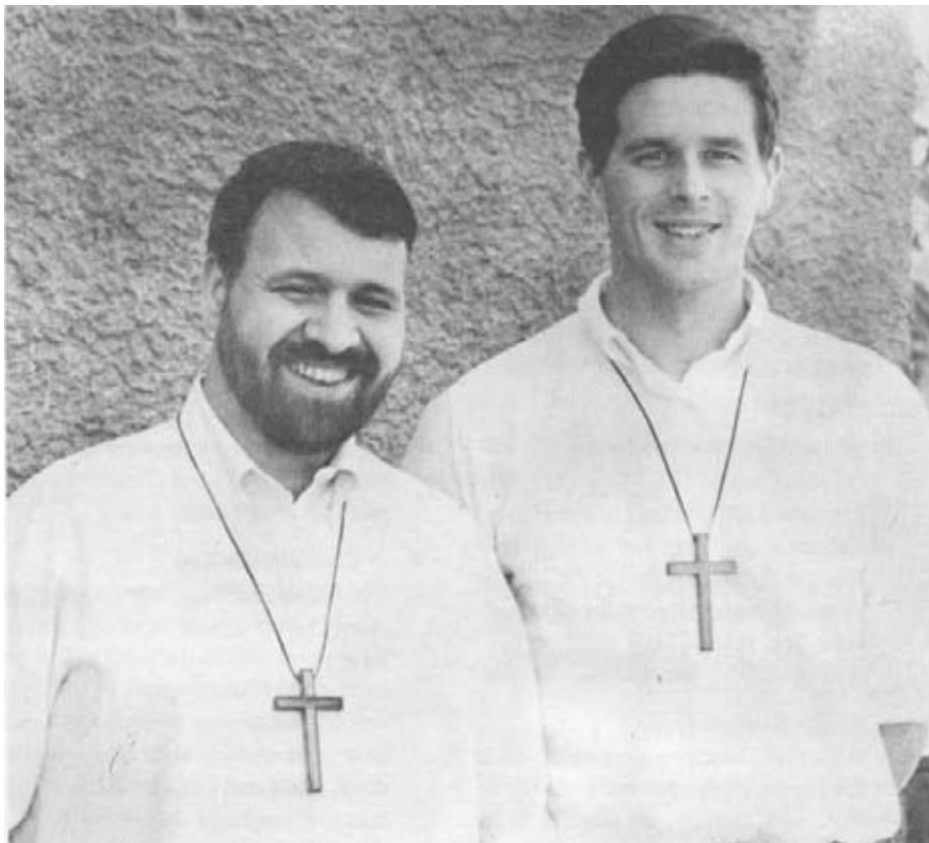
program. Each week, two hours are spent at Cook County Hospital, a huge facility serving mostly black and Hispanic Chicago residents, many of whom are poor and some of whom are homeless.

The Episcopal chaplains wear gray chaplain's shirts; the director of studies suggested that I wear our habit, but I suggested that I wear the "witness shirt." The witness shirt won out and I am now wearing it during my visits. We have class each Thursday night for three hours, and begin with Evening Prayer.

I sometimes wonder if I would be involved in as many ministries if I were not in the Brotherhood. I would certainly still be serving at the altar, and I would be a part of the advisory commission. I thank God that the Brotherhood has become such an important part of my life, and I feel I **have** been guided by the Holy Spirit to enter new ministries.

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community notes



Postulants S Michael Phillips and Steven P Hill.

Province II

Many brothers of Province II attended and participated in the Celebration of a New Ministry for the Rev Philip W Stowell, new rector of St Bartholomew's, White Plains. Not only was Br Richard Thomas Biemacki organist and choirmaster for the service, but our Episcopal Visitor, Bishop Walter D Dennis, presided and celebrated. Bishop Morgan Porteus, retired diocesan of Connecticut, was the preacher. + + + The series on the tithe published in these pages in 1989-90, was transformed into an audio script produced on cassette by the Episcopal Church Center Office of Stewardship. We are happy to report that "God First: A Tithing Catechism" has been awarded the 1991 Polly Bond Award of Merit for special achievement in church communications, by the Episcopal Communicators. The cassette is available from Episcopal Parish Services, and the script, in booklet form, is available from the Brotherhood (see back cover.) + + + Br James Teets assisted at the eucharist held for the annual United Thank Offering grant meeting, at the

Episcopal Church Center. + + + Companion Winifred Mary Hedge, a native of England, has been granted American citizenship.

Province West

Br Michael David

Elvestrøm has been awarded a fellowship to study sculpture, from Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs NY. He recently gave a presentation on religious life at St James', Alexandria LA, for the adult

study forum. + + + Novice Br Ronald Augustine Fox and Companion Brendan Nugent were commissioned by Bishop Frank Griswold III of Chicago as chaplains, in a service at Taylor Chapel of Rush Presbyterian/St Luke's Medical Center.

Kerygma Korner

A vision

I was standing in the courtyard of a massive stone building, four or more stories high, and made of cool, blue-gray stone, carved and ornamented and heavy. The pavement of the courtyard was not stone, but fresh, new grass, green and wet with dew, and lit by sunlight, which made the places upon which it shone golden and bright; though I could not see the sun—nor were there any shadows. But each blade of grass was very clear and distinct. I was facing one of the walls of the massive building, and in it was an arch just under two stories high, ornamented like an arch of triumph: open, and having no doors.

And within, I could see from the knees down to the feet the base of a huge stone crucifix, just beyond the arch. And I wondered that they should have placed our Lord so: as he could not be seen, for the wall of the building above the arch concealed the greater part of the crucifix.

And as I so wondered, suddenly I was in the royal banqueting hall. It was very large, and the walls were hung with tapestries of red and gold; and the floor was carpeted very richly with what seemed to be a leopard pattern, yellow and black. And at the far end of the hall was seated on a throne a figure. But it was so far away I

could not make out its face—only that it was richly crowned, and wore a robe of red and gold. And there were about the figure on the throne others, reclining on couches, and also wearing crowns and robes of bright red and gold. And as I stood in silence, a voice spoke to me, but whether it was from the one who sat upon the throne or another, I do not know, for it seemed very close to me. The voice spoke once and said only this, "There is no salvation in the law." And then the vision faded from my sight.

TSH

From a recent workshop

Prayers for the seven days of creation

■ 1: The Spirit of God

O Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, in the beginning you brooded over the formless waters, shaping them into meaning by the gentle beating of your wings: Form in us your new creation, until we are fully grown into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord; in whose Name we pray. Amen.

■ 2: The Separation of the Waters O God of the Covenant, you split the world in two and marked the division with your name in an arc of colored light: Help us to honor and preserve your creation, in which we serve as stewards, and enjoy with our fellow creatures; to the glory of your Name. Amen.

■ 3: The Plants and Trees O God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, you nourish us and all the

world through the abundant harvest of the plants and trees: Forgive us the destruction we have wrought; keep us mindful of our dependency upon these fragile gifts; and assist us in the stewardship of this life-giving treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

■ 4: The Sun, Moon and Stars

O God, Creator of the heavenly lights: Let your light so shine in our hearts and upon our ways that we may never fear the darkness, even in the shadow of death; we ask this in the Name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

■ 5: The Birds and Fish

Almighty God, you gave to the birds the bright, clear sky, and to the fish the rivers, streams and seas: Help us to respect and preserve their portion of your blessed creation, in which we

live as guests and fellow creatures; in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

■ 6: The Animals and Humankind Lord Jesus, Only-Begotten of the Father, and perfect image of the

invisible God: I help us to rediscover your likeness in our neighbors and ourselves, that we may serve each other and all of your creation to the glory of your Name. Amen.

■ 7: The Sabbath Rest

Lord of the sabbath, whose loving creativity never ceases working: Help us so to persevere in the works of justice, mercy and righteousness, that we may one day enter your rest, and rejoice to hear your word of welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into joy"; in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.