

# HE SERVANT



*Bishop Christopher Epting on the art of preaching*

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**# 192**

*Lent 2004*

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## A PRAYER FOR LENT

There is so much going on in the world; so much which takes our energy and saps our strength—I decided the most beneficial thing for me to do is offer a prayer:

Lord, let me fast, most truly and profitably, by feeding in prayer on your Spirit: reveal me to myself in the light of holiness.

Suffer me never to think that I have knowledge enough to need no teaching, wisdom enough to need no correction, talents enough to need no grace, goodness enough to need no progress, humility enough to need no repentance, devotion enough to need no quickening, strength sufficient without your Spirit; lest, standing still, I fall back forever.

Show me the desires that should be disciplined, and sloths to be slain. Show me the omissions to be made up and habits to be mended.

And behind these, weaken, humble and annihilate in me self-will, self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency, self-assertion and vainglory.

May my whole effort be to return to you. O make it serious and sincere, persevering and fruitful in result, by the help of your Holy Spirit and to your glory, my Lord and my God. Amen.

RTB



*Here and there with the brothers*

## COMMUNITY NOTES

*Winter Convocation 2004*

After waiting impatiently for five whole months since the last convocation, three quarters of the Gregorian friars from across the country gathered at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls, New York, in late January for prayer and refreshment—both spiritual and physical. Twelve brothers couldn't attend, but they were much in the daily prayers of those who were present. There was the requisite snow-



*Bishop Epting preaches to an attentive gathering of brothers.*

pho-pher's presentation held the interest of every friar present, as he is a widely-respected preacher and had much to share with the community gathered. His easy and open style is compelling and he provided opportunity for interaction with his experience as preacher. He also gave an overview of the history and current functions of his office at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City, and the state of ecumenical and interfaith relationships. It was a wonderful occasion to have such a skilled and highly regarded bishop lead us toward the "Preaching Event." Bishop Christopher also demonstrated his skill for the community, as he celebrated the Holy Eucharist twice and preached once. Other preachers during the week were Tobias Stanislas Haller, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera, Charles Edward LeClerc and Peter Budde, and each added to the week's reflective nature.

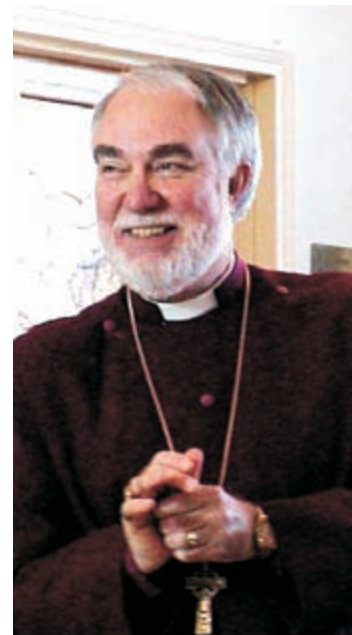
Council met during the week, and made Outreach Grants to the Agape Fund, St Barnabas Church in the Central Philippines, St John the Evangelist in Boston, Dove House in Arkansas, the Office of the Anglican Observer to the UN, and Fessenden Supportive Housing Ministries in Yonkers.

As always, the week gathered the friars around the altar for the Daily Office and the Holy Eucharist. At week's end there is a certain sadness at parting company, and many recount the time and effort it takes to get back into personal routines at home, always looking forward to the next gathering, and the next, and the next. Soli Deo Gloria—To God Alone the Glory!

storm as well, which brought ten inches of the white stuff to add to what was already there, but the blizzard came in mid-week, so few experienced impaired travel.

Bishop Visitor Rodney R Michel spent three days with his Gregorian charges, just prior to beginning a well-deserved sabbatical. Bishop Rodney celebrated the Eucharist, preached and continued his individual private interviews with the brothers.

The retreat portion of the week was a two-day, four session seminar on preaching, led by Bishop C Christopher Epting, the Presiding Bishop's Deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations. Bishop Christo-



*Bishop Epting shares his abundant good humor with the community.*

## *Providence RI*

Postulant Kevin Valentine reports a busy autumn at the Cathedral of Saint John, where he is head sacristan. With the support of both the cathedral's dean and his bishop, liturgical innovation is not only tolerated, it's encouraged (always with good taste, though, as we're Anglicans!), and Kevin and his sacristy staff have been hard at work. An example: "We have just finished working on the master plan for a renovation of the cathedral. We have been working with the architectural firm of Beyer, Blinder and Belle. I was asked to be a consultant on the Liturgical Space Team. We have come up with a wonderful plan for the use of our worship space and the rest of the property. Now on to fund-raising!" Kevin also officiated at Morning Prayer at the cathedral on Monday through Saturday during Advent.

## *New York*

Tobias Stanislas Haller was invited by Integrity/New York to deliver the sermon at their annual patronal festival on the Feast of Aelred of Rievaulx, this year held at the Church of the Ascension, Fifth Avenue. Basing his text in the "New Commandment" given by Christ to his disciples, he addressed the matters of human sexuality which today draw such heated debate throughout the Anglican Communion and ecumenically. The sermon has since been published as part of the "Do Justice" series at <http://rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/dojustice/j161.html>. James Teets, William Francis Jones and Aelred Bernard Dean also attended the liturgy, at which the Rev Howard Blunt was celebrant.

It is not unusual for a Head of State to visit New York City, but it is quite unusual for a Head of State to visit the Episcopal Church Center there. Nevertheless, on February 5th the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, His Excellency C Gyude Bryant, paid a visit to the Presiding Bishop, to the Office of Anglican and Global Relations, and to a conference room packed with Liberian refugees, clergy and supporters from the National and World Councils of Churches, as well as a number of denominations. Chairman Bryant is an active member of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, the chair of the diocesan Board of Trustees, and throughout the past 15+ years of civil war, violence and unrest in his homeland, he has been a faithful and reliable source of communication between the diocese and much of the rest of the Anglican world, and especially with the Episcopal Church and the Office of Anglican and Global Relations. And through all of those years of political disaster and destruction, Chairman Bryant has developed a strong and collegial friendship with James Teets, with whom he has worked closely in matters of securing food for the starving population of Monrovia, the capital, and in the many administrative transactions and grants from the Episco-



*James with Chairman Bryant of Liberia  
Photo: Paul Ferdinand*

pal Church that have done so much to provide education and a sense of stability amid chaos in Liberia. Chairman Bryant warmly embraced James upon his arrival at the conference and he publicly thanked him for his continuing assistance and for his friendship.

Tobias Stanislas' essay in response to the Rev Dr Paul Zahl's critique of the Episcopal Church has been published by *The Witness* on-line at [www.thewitness.org/agw](http://www.thewitness.org/agw). The Claiming the Blessing Coalition included it as part of the "amicus" material submitted to Archbishop Eames' "Lambeth Commission" studying the question of communion.

### *Chattanooga TN*

Postulant Ron Fender recounted this tale of Thanksgiving Day in his ministry: "It is difficult to feel chosen for the rapture when you are wearing a big old turkey costume on Thanksgiving morning. Every year our city has a three-mile run and walk called the Grateful Gobbler. People donate ten bucks to walk or run through downtown in a Grateful Gobbler t-shirt early on Thanksgiving morning. The money goes to the local Food Bank and to the Community Kitchen, where I do my work. So, I get to dress up as the Grateful Gobbler himself. The costume involves enormous tail-feathers and a headdress that is part Plains Indian and part Groucho Marx. You get the picture. Local television crews and newspaper photographers have no mercy. At least at the end of the day, I know that whatever redemption I need to earn the grace of God, I have perhaps a few more tokens in my account!" Somebody say Amen!

### *Seward, Alaska*

The first Confirmation Class at Saint Peter's, Seward, has begun after a lapse of eight years, and our own Emmanuel Williamson is leading it. This very small parish has begun to show signs of growth again, and our brother asks for prayers that this new class will bear fruit.

### *Sermon on the Unity of the Church*

## **WHEREIN IS OUR STRENGTH**

What an amazing moment in history, what an incredible and pivotal moment in Jesus' life! Can you *imagine* that night? Can you put yourself in that moment?

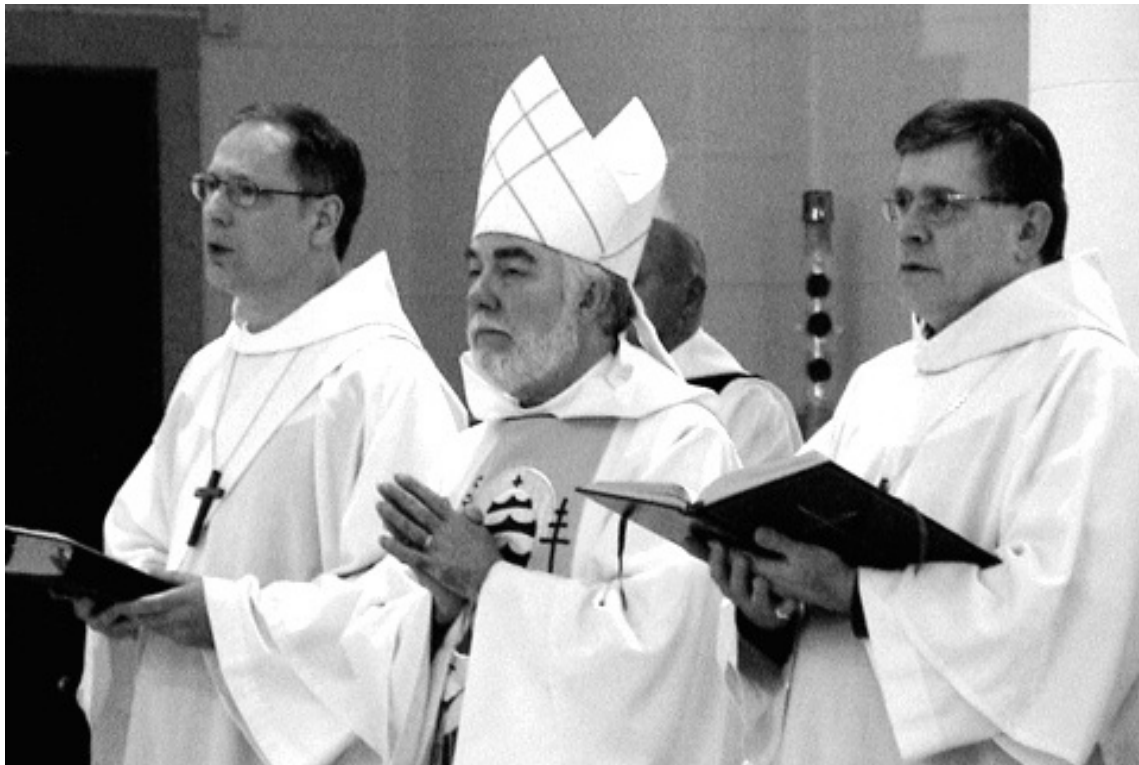
It was night and supper, the *Last Supper*, had ended. With nothing more than a morsel of bread dipped in wine and the admonition, "Do quickly what you have to do," Judas is gone. The long night in the garden and Christ's passion is yet to come. Several times John tells us strikingly how emotional the night had already been, setting the tone for what is to come.

Jesus' time with them is drawing to a close, and the apostles are still struggling to understand him. Plagued by fear, uncertainty, and doubt they continue to ask questions of him: "Who will sit at your right hand?" "Why do you not speak plainly?" "Where are you going?" Knowing that his time is short, Jesus must enable the apostles to carry on his work.

In this, their remaining time together, he must *both* impart an indelible understanding of who he truly is, and equip them for the work that they must do. It is in this pivotal moment that Jesus does an incredible thing: He prays that the love of God be made known to them, as it is known to him. He prays that they become perfectly united, caught up into the very union of God through him. “I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.”

What an amazing and incomprehensible thing that must have been to the apostles! There is so much at stake, so much division, taking of sides, and entrenching of factions. Even at that very moment Judas is off plotting to betray him into the hands of the authorities. They stand at that moment in a place between the light that has been, and the coming darkness, between walking in the light of Christ and living through his impending crucifixion and death. They stand at the end of his earthly ministry and the yet unrevealed glory of his resurrection; between the candle and the star. Surely they were expecting something more, something that they could use against the authorities? Perhaps a set of logical arguments, a defense plan, or instructions for strengthening the church against what it must weather in the months, no, the centuries, to come. Or perhaps, just maybe, this is precisely what he has done?

In this, the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus has given the apostles the one thing that they truly need: the all-encompassing love of God made manifest, made real, in himself. He gathers the apostles and prays that God’s love be the source of their union and in so doing lays the foundation of the church: “... that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one...”



*Bishop Epting, flanked by Gordon John Stanley and James Teets*



*Bishop Rodney Michel preaches to the brothers.*

This is the seed that is planted and lies dormant with the apostles in the dark soil of the days of doubt and fear ahead. Once watered by the Holy Spirit, from this seed springs forth the church. To quote Archbishop William Temple, writing in his reflections on John's Gospel: "The apostolic mission of the Son is the pivot of human history regarded as an arena wherein the divine purpose is being accomplished. All turns on that. From that flows the apostleship of church and ministry. Truly it is not the church that has a mission, but God who has a mission, and that mission is the church. If God sent the Son, then the witness of the church and its challenge to the world has divine authority."

The church, then and now, continues this witness and challenge to the world, and in so doing, continues to encounter conflicts that threaten to fracture the church and scatter the flock.

We have just passed an historic crossroad for the church, the consecration of Gene Robinson: the consecration of the first openly gay man as a bishop of the church. In doing this we have indeed raised to consciousness an important

witness and challenge to the world. And as we well know, no great undertaking is without risk and with risk comes fear, doubt, and uncertainty. To be sure, there are many such as ourselves, who see beyond such fears, doubts, and uncertainty, but this is a delicate time for the church and we must nurture and support the people of God as best we are able.

As many of you know, I have been taking the time between Advent and Lent as a chance to visit a number of different parishes in the Diocese of Massachusetts. As I have traveled around the diocese I have seen a great deal of love and support for Bishop Robinson. But I have also seen uncertainty of what this means for the future of the Anglican Communion, fear of the unknown, and doubts as to whether we did the right thing. The period of time after such a big decision is a crucial one. I urge you all to be visible and supportive in your dioceses. The church needs to see a strong witness to the all-encompassing love of God in each and every one of us. The love of God is the uniting strength that Christ gave to the apostles, and the uniting strength that we can offer the people of God.



It is not that we must do great things; after all, we do not need to save the church; that was taken care of two thousand years ago! What we must do are small but important things that support and nurture the church. As our Rule says: we are not the ones who shall finally bring the light... but messengers for the One who is the light.

I can point to one small but powerful witness to this, one priceless moment that occurred just after Bishop Robinson's consecration. The day had been a bit of an emotional roller coaster, uplifting and joyous, while at the same time worrisome about whether things would play out peacefully. We had entered the arena to the jeers of troubled and angry detractors and I was not looking forward to the same as we left. As we exited the arena I prepared myself for another assault of angry opposition. Remarkably, as Aelred Bernard and I came around a corner, we were startled to find a group of young college kids who shouted to us: "Thank you! We love you!" When the words finally sunk in we laughed and called back: "Thank you! We love you too!" As the relief washed over us, with none of the opposition in sight, I thought: truly love does conquer all.

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In his book, *The Diary of a Russian Priest*, Aleksei Khomiakov writes: "Ignorance and sin are characteristic of isolated individuals. Only in the unity of the church do we find these defects overcome. Man finds his true self in the church alone; not in the helplessness of spiritual isolation but in the strength of his communion with his brothers and his Savior." Together we will remain a church united in the love of God, a strong witness against ignorance and sin: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, on God and Father of us all."

So, my brothers, turn back fear, show faith in the face of doubt, and carry the certainty of the saving love of God in Jesus Christ. This is why we are in the world, this is why we are following the apostolic pattern: that we may, as our Rule says, "endeavor to witness to our Redeemer's love with quietness, patience, humility, charity, courage, and prayer."

Write these words in your heart, keep them in your mind, and go forth into the world: "Be humble always and gentle, and patient too, putting up with one another's failings in the spirit of love. Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives." (Eph 4:2-3) Remember, Jesus had only twelve; how much more blessed are we to have 42!

*Ciarán Anthony DellaFera*

## IMPLICATIONS OF FEET

In today's Gospel we hear that Jesus knew his time to leave this world had come. He also knew that God the Father had put all things under him.

Despite this—no, because of this—he got up after the meal and began to wash the feet of the disciples. And when he was finished, Jesus explained that he had given us an example—that we should do as he had done.

In Luke's Gospel our Lord is recorded as saying: "But I am among you as one who serves." (22:27) The Word made flesh: God incarnate as a human being, serving and dying for all human beings, for all of us.

In a few days we will celebrate his resurrection and later his ascension to God the Father. When Jesus ascended to the Father he took with him all that it is and all that it means to be human. When the Word returns to the Father, our very humanity is taken into the Godhead. That which is created in the image of God is then incorporated into God.

The Eucharist which we are about to celebrate is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality. We are in him and he is in us. So to serve is not so much an act of humility as it is an act of worship.

We know from Matthew that it is an act of worship to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and to visit the sick and those in prison; because he is in us and we are in him.

**A**ll life and labor is sacred  
because he is in us  
and we are in him  
and he is among us as one who serves.

It is also an act of worship to clean and diaper a baby, to set the dinner table, to help others grow as might a teacher, to work at a job producing goods and services as an engineer, for example, or a doctor, a machinist, a farmer or factory worker, a janitor, a carpenter. All life and labor is sacred because he is in us and we are in him and he is among us as one who serves.

Let us therefore in love offer up all that we do—and certainly our work in service of others—to the glory of God alone: for he is in us and we are in him, and we are among each other as ones who serve by his example and in his name.

*Mark Andrew Jones*

## LETTER FROM THE CRESCENT

*The legend of the Traveler appears in every civilization, perpetually assuming new forms, afflictions, powers and symbols. Through every age he walks in utter solitude toward penance and redemption.—Notes from a Bottle Found on the Beach, Evan S Connell, Jr*

Beloved Brothers,

It is late on Sunday night and it occurs to me that I am, indeed, riding on “that midnight train to Georgia.” Where, O where are the Pips when we truly need them?

This train is called the Crescent, I assume for the lovely arc it cuts through the American South on its journey from New York to New Orleans. The snow played out somewhere around Washington except for little patches and dustings here and there. At some point we will be descending into the Carolinas and something primal in my blood will long for the Blue Ridge Mountains of my birth. In the night, little towns pass by the window. The train is very fast. Thomas Merton wrote in the first of “Three Postcards from the Monastery”—

The pilgrim passes swiftly.  
All the strange towns,  
wrapped in their double cloaks  
(of rain and non-entity)  
veil their elusive faces.

Very true. We may pass these towns, but never know their secrets.

My mind is still at Mount Alvernia: I can still smell the incense in the chapel and the onions cooking in the kitchen. I still see snow and stars and the long frozen river. I still hear our prayers and see your wonderful and handsome faces. I still taste the stout coffee and pralines sent from the exotic kitchen in the great, dark Delta. I still long for “our absent brothers.”

So, now, the train is rocking me to sleep, and then another day begins in the familiar.

A short geography lesson:

I was cradled in the Mountains, and the River runs through my work and waking day and all my prayers. But, *home* is where the Brothers are.

Goodnight.

*Ron Fender*



# INTERCESSIONS

<u>The Brotherhood</u>		<u>The Associates and Friends of the Brotherhood</u>	Henry N Fukui
Episcopal Visitor	Sun	Religious Communities	J Steward Slocum
Rodney R Michel		The Sisters of Saint Gregory	James R Gundrum
Episcopal Visitors Emeriti		Sacramentine & Visitandine Nuns	Vito DiMicco
<i>Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91</i>		Society of the Atonement	Karen W Talton
<i>Paul Moore, jr d 5.1.03</i>		Order of Agapé & Reconciliation	Isolyn Thompson
<i>Walter D Dennis d 3.30.03</i>		Camaldolese Benedictines	Elaine Reagan
<u>Life and Annual Professed</u>		Society of Saint John the Evangelist	Scholastica Marie, OJN
Richard Thomas Biernacki		Community of the Paraclete	C Judson Child
<i>John Nidecker d 6.20.88</i>		Congregation of the Anglican Oblates of Saint Benedict	Gabriela Peters
James Teets		Community of the Transfiguration	Enone Rice
<u>Luke Anthony Nowicki</u>		The Order of Julian of Norwich	Dean Paxton Rice
<i>John Peter Clark d 2.25.94</i>	Mon	<b>For healing</b>	Elliott Zupnick
William Francis Jones		Our brothers Luke Anthony, Charles, Damian-Curtis, William Edward, Edward Riley, Patrick Ignatius, William David, James Mahoney	Ernest Milson
Stephen Storen		For all who live with HIV/AIDS	Catherine
<i>Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01</i>		Ian, Jane, Mary, David	William Sellar
Tobias Stanislas Haller		Lou	Frank Barr Jr
<i>William Bunting d 10.12.88</i>		Jim	Charles Day
<u>Edward Munro</u>		Don & Art	Winiford Authier
Charles Kramer	Tue	Katie	Jackie Roberts
<i>Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93</i>		Asher	Joanne Martino Kearney
Donovan Aidan Bowley		Bob & Allene	Donovan Adriel Bowley
Michael David Elvestrøm		Carma Jean	Bob Keeshan
Edward Riley		Joe	Ulysses Grant
Christopher Stephen Jenks		James	Furman Stough
<u>Ciarán Anthony DellaFera</u>		Mike	David Negash
William Edward Orce	Wed	Jeanette	Bob Boissenin
Damian-Curtis Kellum		Laura Aucoin	Martha Jackson
Richard John Lorino		Elizabeth	<b>Intentions</b>
Ronald Augustine Fox		Jay & Bobbie	Joseph Richey House
Maurice John Grove		James	Fessenden Recovery Ministries
Charles Edward LeClerc		Randy & Dawn	Dove House
<u>Virgilio Fortuna</u>		Basil Peavey	Baltimore International
Gordon John Stanley	Thu	Sheldon	Seafarers' Center
Karekin Madteos Yarian		Michael	Saint James' Fordham; Trinity, Stoughton MA; Christ Church, San Antonio; Saint John's, Brooklyn; Saint Peter's, Chicago; Grace Church, Norwalk
Patrick Thompson		Jim	Our brothers Karekin Madteos, William David, William Francis, Thomas Bushnell, Tobias Stanislas
William David Everett		Christina	Our Lady of the Rosary, Yonkers; Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry
Thomas Bushnell		Jean & John	Jack, Terry & Shawn Moore
Thomas Liotta		Bonnie	Francine Citrone
James Mahoney		Bob	Dorothy, Jamel, Emma, Frances and Delia
<u>Patrick Ignatius Dickson</u>		Anthony-Francis	Bill and Natalie
Robert James McLaughlin	Fri	Barbara	Leonard Jackson
Peter Budde		Jeanne	Rose Anne Lianzo
John Henry Ernestine		Kwan Wong Kam	Ellen Francis OSH, for safe travel
Francis Sebastian Medina		Ray	St Julian's, Kenya
Aelred Bernard Dean		David	<b>Thanksgiving</b>
Joseph Basil Gauss		Clyde	Healing for Charlie
Mark Andrew Jones		<b>Departed</b>	The marriage of Richard and Nancy Matthias
<u>Emmanuel Williamson</u>		Charlotte B Morgan	The 90th Birthday of Helen Bernice Lovell, SSG
<u>Novices</u>	Sat	Arsene and Louise Lemarier	
Richard Matthias		J Norman Hall	
William Henry Benefield		George T Koerner	
Nathanael Deward Rahm			
Thomas Lawrence Greer			
<u>Postulants</u>			
Kevin Harrop Valentine			
Ron E Fender			