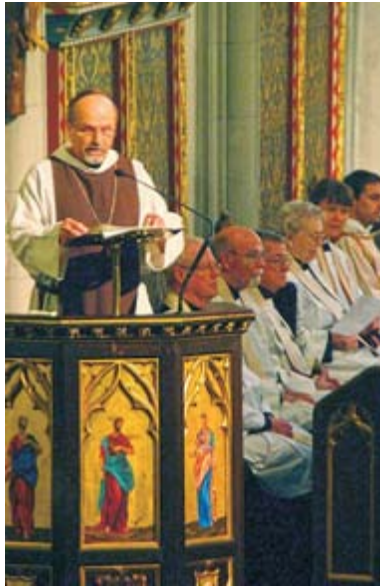


# HE SERVANT



*Ronald Augustine Fox preaching at Church of the Atonement, Chicago*

**#221**  
*Michaelmas 2011*

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Publication	Description	Cost	Qty	Total
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## *The Servant*

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## PROFESSION AND COMMITMENT



So — why are we here? Anyone want to venture an answer? We are a strange bunch. We dress funny, we pray together! We sing together! And — we love each other — genuine and true brotherly love! What makes this happen — possible? Is there some attraction? We are certainly not trendy? Are we fun? What we do would hardly be called fun.

We hear that in the days of Samuel the word of the Lord was rare. Those words: Here I am — you called me.

Called; really? The Word of God was rare; and Eli tells Samuel, “I did not call you; go lie down” It took three times, and again those words: Here I am — you called me!

How many of you here have told your friends you were called by God? What was their reaction? As we move along in community we will continue to hear and feel the call. The Spirit moves where it wills. Pentecost was not only a verbal experience — speaking in differing tongues — it was, and is today, an experience of feeling and touch. Speak Lord, your servant hears: We hear and we feel and we act. The response remains: Here I am!

How I love the Psalms: musical words, words that are *so* lovely they do not need music — but we provide music gladly. How lovely is your dwelling place, and the sparrow has found a nest. Like that sparrow, Blane Frederik and James Patrick have found a nest. It’s filled with strange birds (aren’t we?) but nevertheless it is a nest. First profession is like a new home. You have to furnish it and make it comfortable, secure and pleasant. Your life is enriched; but this remains a pilgrimage. Don’t relax. It does not get easier; it is *not* an easy road. Use the offices; use the brothers as resources. Pray, and then pray some more. And while you take from your brothers — remember to give. For the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.



*Ron Fender makes his life profession of vows.*

So, what about this “Prisoners of the Lord” stuff? First profession is a test to see if the Lord’s prison works for you. Enoch John and Ron, as you now come to life profession, get out the handcuffs because you are about to take on a life sentence. Like

prisoners for life, who have little choice, but a daily schedule and recreation. The offices, meditation, the examination of your life; these take on *more* intensity and yet you will have the strength to bear that kind of restriction as prisoners, for the balance of your natural lives.

All of you making vows today, with the rest of this band of brothers, will continue to build up the body. This building is the work of us all — and if any see another slack off, we will call you on it! God calls us all on it — when we fail.



*James Patrick Hall makes his first profession.*

So *why* are we here? God called us all — even you out in the nave, the friends and family and visitors — do you believe you were called? Do You? The call requires action, the question a response. Can you respond “I am a follower of Jesus the Christ”?

We are a body built up in love. Surrounded by our family of brothers and our blood families and extended families. It is the Christian Village: helping and being there for each other. Do not fear to lean on each other and ask for help — especially

from Christ himself who persevered and endured — and fought back! Take strength from this life of service in this community with joy and celebration and know you are in my prayers and our prayers from this day forward. And all God’s people said: Amen.

*Richard Thomas Biernacki*

*Here and there with the brothers*

## **COMMUNITY NOTES**

*Annual Convocation 2011*

The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory celebrated its 42nd Anniversary of Foundation from July 18th to the 23rd as the brothers gathered for Annual Convocation and Chapter at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls, New York. Gregorian Friars from around the world participated, from as far away as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This annual week together serves as a refresher course in living the vocation the brothers share, centering on the Brotherhood’s Rule of Life and how that Rule is experienced and developed through each friar’s gifts and experiences. The Brotherhood’s Episcopal Visitor Rodney R Michel of the Diocese of Pennsylvania was present for the week, celebrated the Solemn Convocation Mass, preached on the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene and attended each of the week’s events, which was a great blessing to everyone present.

Daily workshops featured a wide variety of topics: Nathanael Deward Rahm led “Singing the BSG Noonday Office;” Mark Andrew Jones delivered “A Gregorian-In-



*Michael Elliott leads a workshop touching on Christian Anarchism.*

spired Approach to Panel Interviewing,” in response to a request by the Brotherhood’s Council; Michael Elliott conducted “The Gospel and Politics;” William Henry Benefield reflected on “Congregational Ministry and Leadership in the Age of Super Anxiety;” and David John Battrick called upon his experience as a theological

educator as he presented “Brothers Acting as Local Encouragers for the Ministry and Mission of the Whole People of God.”



*Recitation of the daily office*

Interspersed between these workshops, the brothers attended to the community’s business as the five provinces met individually and two elected new Ministers Provincial. The brothers met in Chapter, the Ministers Provincial met with the Minister General, and Director of Postulants and Novices William David Everett (assisted by Francis Sebastian Medina), met and counseled with those

in their charge together with their assigned mentors. Over the course of the week seven brothers renewed their Annual Vows in the presence of their Minister Provincial and the Minister General. A moment of festivity marked the observance of Donovan Aidan Bowley’s silver jubilee in profession, and he was presented with a silver platter commemorating the event.

As always, Gregorian Friars celebrated the daily masses during convocation in coordination with Bishop Michel. Tobias Stanislas Haller, Mark Andrew Jones, David John Battrick and Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands were ably assisted by Gregorian deacons Edward Munro, Charles Edward LeClerc, Gordon John Stanley and Thomas Mark



*Donovan Aidan Bowley was deeply moved by the jubilee presentation.*



*(above) Thomas Mark Liotta, Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands and James Teets*



*(right) Michael Elliot leading a workshop on the Church and Politics*

Liotta, serving together with friars in all other roles. Preaching during this week was excellent;

those contributing included Bishop Michel, Minister General Richard Thomas Biernacki, Ron Fender, Michael Elliott and Richard Edward Helmer.

The religious life is celebrated most personally through the Rites of the Brotherhood and this year was as busy as any. Two friars made their Life Profession of Vows: Enoch John Valentine and Ron Fender; and two novices made their First Profession of Vows: Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands and James Patrick Hall. Earlier in the week postulant Richard Edward entered the novitiate; Harold L Slatore, Eric L Shelley and Larry W Reich became postulants. Additionally, Thomas Mark Liotta was commissioned as Minister Provincial of Province 2, Thomas Lawrence Greer was commissioned as Minister Provincial of Province 4, and Richard Matthias was com-



missioned as the community's Cellarer, holding responsibility for securing refreshments during convocation gatherings.

In thanksgiving to the community for his Life Profession, Ron presented the brothers with copies of his book, *These Things I Have Seen*, a moving set of images and reflections on his ministry with the homeless and poor in Chattanooga.

### Province 1

Province 1 held a Quiet Day at Mary House in Spencer, Massachusetts in mid-April. The brothers gathered on the Friday evening for Evening Prayer and dinner at a local restaurant. Saturday was given to a day-long Bible Study led by Minister Provincial Enoch John Valentine, focusing on the ministry of encouragement: of one another in each brother's spiritual journey and of offering ourselves as examples of our community as we live our Rule in relationship with those around us in our parishes and our places of employment, always with the understanding that those we meet may be looking for encouragement to begin their own individual journey as a religious brother. In essence, each Gregorian Friar is an emissary for our community and its Rule.

Ciarán Anthony DellaFera is relieved and celebrating that he has passed his Step 1 US Medical Licensing Exam. It is only the first of several test-hurdles in his journey towards becoming a doctor, but a significant milestone. Congratulations!

### Province 2

Millard Cook fulfilled a dream of many years by taking a 9-week photography class in Manhattan which allowed him to learn the ins and outs of the manual settings on digital cameras, which permit greater control over the final product. At the end of the class, he participated in an exhibition of his final project which he titled "Tikkun Olam, Making the world a better place: A nostalgic look at the interplay between Divine Creation and Human Creativity in Central Park." Most fascinating to Millard was an introduction to black and white photography. In the photo you can see Millard himself at the exhibition. Millard had a special convocation showing of the pictures for the brothers in the Community Room at



*Bishop Michel*



*Millard at his exhibit*

Mount Alvernia. If you would like to see all the photos in his final project visit <http://tinyurl.com/exhibit11>.

At convocation Richard John Lorino chaired the annual meeting of Province 2 as its Minister Provincial; the only business to come before this year's meeting of the Brotherhood's largest and farthest-flung province — which currently includes brothers in Canada, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand — was the election of a new Minister Provincial, and Thomas Mark Liotta was warmly welcomed into that role. With a total of fifteen years in that position, Richard John is the longest-serving Minister Provincial to date in the Brotherhood's 42 year history. Heartfelt thanks to our beloved Brother Rick for his great heart and his passion for compassion, and again, a very warm welcome to Thomas Mark, who also continues his responsibility as the community's Administrator.



*David John Battirick celebrates the Holy Eucharist.*

#### *Province 4*

Amid the tragic and destructive tornados this past spring, our James Patrick Hall of the Diocese of Oklahoma offered the following note: “I thought I might share with you all a small Gregorian presence in the healing process going on in our next door neighbor, Joplin. Some years ago I ran across a litany that had been prepared by the Rev Laurel Barr, from a Uniting Church service in Australia for the victims of the tsunami in Indonesia. With a little reworking, I offered it to Archdeacon John McCann of the Diocese of West Missouri, who adapted it a bit further. Bishop Martin S Field of West Missouri asked that this litany be used in churches throughout the diocese and he also used it in a special memorial service at Saint Phillip's, Joplin. I hope and pray that in some small way, it helped focus the prayers of this community, so terribly devastated.” James Patrick has also been involved in a dental outreach. (See the story later in this issue.)

In late June Ælred Bernard Dean paid a final visit to Chattanooga prior to the end of his term as Minister Provincial — post-graduate studies require focused attention and that does not leave him with sufficient time for this ministry — and he joined with Ron Fender, Bo Alexander Armstrong and Bo Alexander's wife, Lynn, for a call upon the H♥Art Gallery. This art gallery exhibits and markets art by homeless artists, and Bo Alexander is a member of the gallery's board of directors. On Saturday Ælred Bernard and Ron traveled to Knoxville to participate in the ordination and consecration of the new Bishop of East Tennessee, George Dibrell Young III. Both Gregorian Friars were a part of the procession, and the Minister Provincial carried an icon of our Patron, Saint Gregory the Great. Both brothers had an opportunity to speak with Bishop Young and also with Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, who made



sure they knew that the Brotherhood remains in her prayers. Mark Williams, a friend of the Brotherhood and part of the extended family of Province IV, designed and made the new crosier for the bishop.

The press of his studies precluded Ælred Bernard from attending Annual Convocation 2011; he therefore assigned the chair of the annual provincial meeting to Peter Budde, the senior member of that province. The major provincial business at hand was to elect Ælred Bernard's successor as Minister Provincial, and that process was ably accomplished with Thomas Lawrence Greer taking up that role. Together with all of the friars of Province 4, the entire community sends its thanks to Thomas Lawrence for allowing his name to come forward, and we assure him of our prayers for his new ministry among us!

### Province 5

The Rt Rev James W Montgomery, Retired Bishop of Chicago, celebrated a significant birthday over the Memorial Day weekend and Gregorian Friars, along with hundreds of others of his

friends, turned out in force. Festivities began with a huge dinner in his honor at the University Club downtown and continued with a Solemn High Mass at the Church of the Atonement. Bishop Montgomery was the celebrant for this gala service, assisted by 26



concelebrants including XXV Presiding Bishop Frank T Griswold (Bishop Montgomery's successor as Bishop of Chicago). The procession included Joseph Basil Gauss, Will Harpest, and Ronald Augustine Fox (who served as Master of Ceremonies for that service).

Ronald Augustine himself preached at Atonement in early August. At the same liturgy Will was lector and cantor. (Joseph Basil took this issue's cover photo from the gallery.) Well done, brothers all!

### Province 8

The parish Richard Edward Helmer serves as rector, Our Saviour (Mill Valley CA) recently installed a lovely Gregorian testimonial: a mahogany carving of the BSG motto, *Soli Deo Gloria*. Artist Don Churchfield and his wife Pat have lived in Mill Valley for decades, where his woodcarving is legendary. He also carved the corner sign for the parish and recently completed a year-long project carving a



huge depiction of Mt Tamalpais for the local grocery. Don and Pat are avid gardeners and tend the trees, plants, and flowers that grow on the parish labyrinth patio, and they are devoted and much beloved members. Don had read a note Richard Edward wrote for a parish newsletter reflecting on “Soli Deo Gloria” and mentioned he had a carving under way with that motto. When the artist completed the work and showed it to Richard Edward, he knew it had to find a home in the parish.

Thomas Bushnell was in Budapest in early May on a work-related trip and took the opportunity to visit Saint Stephen’s Basilica. He also enjoyed worshiping on two successive Sundays at the small and vibrant community of Saint Margaret’s Anglican Chapel in Budapest. He was overjoyed to find a statue of Gregory the Great at the Basilica which put him in remembrance of all his brothers back home.

Francis Sebastian Medina is thrilled at having been asked to serve as Assistant Director of Postulants and Novices this year, with responsibility for the incoming postulants. William David Everett has announced his intention to resign at the end of his term next summer.

Karekin Madteos Yarian, in his capacity as Project Manager for eProducts at Church Publishing Incorporated, has been working on a long overdue collection of hymnals for tablet readers such as the iPad. They will likely be ready for distribution this fall.

Postulant Harold Slatore was thrilled that his parish’s Saint Paul’s Foundation for International Reconciliation hosted Bishop Christopher Senyonjo during a visit. San Diego was the first stop on his tour of the US. The bishop is an amazing witness to the Gospel and a brave ally speaking out for justice for sexual minorities in Uganda at some personal cost.

Newly noviced Richard Edward returned to Northern California, welcomed by the people of his parish as a Gregorian friar. He and his family are looking forward



*Mark Andrew Jones celebrating at Convocation, assisted by Francis Sebastian Medina*



*Gregory and Thomas in Budapest*



*New postulants Eric Shelley, Larry Reich and Harold Slatore*

to the birth of a baby girl in October. Meantime, his parish welcomed a guest visit from LA Suffragan Bishop Diane Bruce at the end of August, geared up for their annual retreat in September, and hosted the Province 8 brothers for a founding celebration in mid-September.

Richard Edward is also preparing a recital of German Lieder and piano repertoire of Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms in collaboration with a tenor of the Choir of Our Saviour.



*Richard Edward Helmer at his novice clothing*

*Dental  
Outreach in  
Province 4*

## **THE POWER OF A QUESTION**

As some of you may know, I am part of a homeless ministry in Tulsa, at a city park named Owen Park. I pray for (among other things) healing for people. One night I walked up to a man named John and asked him if I could pray for him, and he responded with, “Will it make my teeth stop hurting?” I didn’t know what to say but that it might, but I could not guarantee it. John then told me that his teeth hurt all the time, every day and if I couldn’t make it stop, then go away.

This weighed on my heart, especially because John seemed almost hostile to me after that. I am a person who thinks God wants us to be part of healing this world, so Sunday morning right after mass, I talked to my dentist who also attends Saint Patrick’s. He told me that he was part of a dental ministry with the Oklahoma Dental



(above) Bob Althoff and James Patrick Hall with the Dental Van; (right below) Dental staff at work

Foundation and they had a mobile dental clinic in a large van. Imagine my surprise! We decided to start the process of scheduling visits for the mobile dental van, but we needed a place for the van to park.

It happens I am also involved with the Mental Health Association of Tulsa's homeless housing program, one part of which is the Yale Apts, a fairly new facility with a nice-sized parking lot. That is where we decided to place the mobile dental van. The dental workers were able to spend two full days at Yale Apts, and over that time they were able to serve those in greatest need and in pain. Seventeen people were given relief from constant pain.

This all flowed out that interaction with John last spring. That one statement grew into this event, and an ongoing relationship between the Mental Health Association and all their clients, and the Oklahoma Dental Foundation.

I have not been able to get John to the clinic yet, due to his cancer diagnosis and many other issues, but other arrangements at Catholic Charities or my own personal dentist are in the works, and he is happy and looking forward to getting his teeth finally pain free.

God works, and heals, in many mysterious ways. Sometimes all one needs to do is ask... or be asked!

*James Patrick Hall*



## THE ROLE OF A RULE

We seem to be in a place today where there is a great deal of renewed interest in religious life in the church. Such periods seem to wax and wane as the years go by, but the interest seems to peak when times are troubled and folks are looking for spiritual communities that offer a renewed sense of purpose and spiritual fulfillment.

Having just returned from the Brotherhood's Chapter and Convocation, where we admitted three new postulants, clothed a novice, and had two first and two life professions, I was struck by the thought — look at what we offer the church! In this case, here were a group of men seeking spiritual companionship, and willing to undertake commitment to a community in which to nurture that journey — in some cases for the balance of their natural lives.

The church hungers for community — real, authentic, sustaining community. Too often, the church holds up the parish as the logical place where that is supposed to happen. And too often, it doesn't — leaving people hungry. In the case of clergy, seminaries try to foster community by providing a semi-monastic experience of prayer and worship. But these communities are, by their very nature, temporary. As such, they do not work except to create a hunger for this type of spiritual nurture, which will almost inevitably be disappointed when the newly ordained enter parish life to find that there is no comparable sense of community available to them there.

Clergy can spend fruitless time trying to recreate that experience in the parish only to be disappointed when the expected sense of community and commitment doesn't materialize. We often hear from ordained folks coming to discern a religious vocation that they are hoping to find what they thought they were getting when becoming ordained.

Community in religious life is informed and shaped by the Rule and vows. Being bound to follow a Rule naturally fosters a sense of common purpose among members of the community that informs every aspect of our lives. Parish communities cannot, by their very nature, do this. We come to the table with individual agendas, worship



*The funeral pall is placed over those about to make life profession of vows by brothers who have gone before on that path of dedication. It symbolizes death to self.*



*Enoch John Valentine makes his life vows.*



*Ron Fender preaching*

in common, and then return to those same agendas when we leave. Aside from the assertion of our Baptismal Covenant as a common Rule, there is nothing that necessarily promotes putting aside those parts of our lives that may be at odds with it. In religious life, however, this is the purpose of vows. The great evangelical counsels of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience are intended to accomplish this.

Poverty is the great equalizer of power. Whether it asks us to relinquish personal possessions, or to live in simplicity, or to dedicate the fruit of our labor to the church, it is less about possession than it is about power. The common pursuit of Poverty as an informing proposition in our lives is intended to reset the power dynamics of a community to equality rather than hierarchy.

Chastity is about relinquishing the desire to possess or control those with whom we are in relationship. It is about gracious restraint, individual value and integrity, and accountability for one another's personal and spiritual growth and discernment of gifts for use in service. Chastity is an invitation to love rather than a barrier to it.

Obedience is about the relinquishment of personal agendas — not by letting them go completely, but by relegating them to lesser importance than the needs of the community as a whole. Without Obedience, a true spiritual community will fail. Obedience is about listening for needs, and being willing to meet them for the sake of others.

Is it any wonder that without a Rule and vows, true community can seem transient? The model of the parish is wonderful for so much goodness. But it cannot bear the weight of expectations to provide true and lasting community for those who seek it. Parishes are about *convenient* community. As long as it is close by, the hours of worship are convenient to busy lives,



*Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands makes his first vows.*



*Fellowship and recreation are an important part of community life.*

and the expectations on time, talent, and treasure do not often exceed comfort levels — then it is fine.

Religious orders such as my own take great pleasure in offering a vision of community to the world. We offer a place where the true nature of community, with all of its joys and all of its messiness, can prove sustainable, nourishing and holy. It is the school where we, as individual members, learn what community truly looks like and then take and model it for others.

Our Founder is fond of saying that “everyone who comes to us — changes us.” Isn’t that a vision!? Too many “communities” in the world are formed by a process of selection — where members are chosen based on their reinforcement of who we are, what we like (or don’t like), and where our comfort zones are. We choose people, speaking rather obviously in generalizations, who are like we are or who at the very least don’t necessarily challenge who we are. Religious life is not like this. When a new person comes to us, the dynamics of the community shift to accommodate this new presence. We do not mold them to be like us, but rather let ourselves flow around them, inviting them to bring their authentic personhood in all of its integrity.



*Leaders of two of the current models of Christian dedication to life under a Rule: Robert Sevensky OHC and Richard Thomas Biernacki BSG, at the recent Convocation*

We provide them with a framework — by Rule and vows — to discern their gifts and to use them in the world with quietness, patience, humility, charity, courage and prayer. And it is only in authentic community where those gifts are learned.

This, for me, is what religious life offers the church.

*Karekin Madteos Yarian*

# INTERCESSIONS

## For the Brotherhood

Episcopal Visitor *Sun*  
Rodney R Michel

Episcopal Visitors Emeriti  
*Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91*  
*Paul Moore, jr d 5.1.03*  
*Walter D Dennis d 3.30.03*

### Professed

Richard Thomas Biernacki  
*John Nidecker d 6.20.88*  
James Teets  
Luke Anthony Nowicki  
*John Peter Clark d 2.25.94*  
William Francis Jones *Mon*  
Stephen Storen  
*Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01*  
Tobias Stanislas Haller  
*William Bunting d 10.12.88*  
Edward Munro  
*Charles Kramer d 10.23.06*  
*Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93*

Donovan Aidan Bowley *Tue*  
*Edward Riley d 9.15.05*  
Christopher Stephen Jenks  
Ciarán Anthony DellaFera  
*Damian-Curtis Kellum d 10.9.07*  
Richard John Lorino  
Ronald Augustine Fox  
Maurice John Grove  
Charles Edward LeClerc

Virgilio Fortuna *Wed*  
Gordon John Stanley  
Karekin Madteos Yarian  
William David Everett  
Thomas Bushnell  
Thomas Mark Liotta  
James Mahoney  
*Patrick Ignatius Dickson d 7.20.05*

Robert James McLaughlin *Thu*  
Peter Budde  
John Henry Ernestine  
Francis Sebastian Medina  
Ælred Bernard Dean  
Joseph Basil Gauss  
Mark Andrew Jones  
Richard Matthias

William Henry Benefield *Fri*  
Nathanael Deward Rahm  
Thomas Lawrence Greer  
Enoch John Valentine  
Ron Fender  
Michael Elliott  
David Luke Henton  
David John Battrick  
Will Harpest

Bo Alexander Armstrong *Sat*  
Francis Jonathan Bullock  
Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands  
James Patrick Hall

### Novices

Jonathan Severus Turner  
Millard Cook  
Richard Edward Helmer  
Postulants  
Harold Lee Slatore  
Eric Lee Shelley  
Larry W Reich

### For Religious Communities

Sacramentine & Visitandine Nuns  
Society of the Atonement  
Order of Friars Minor  
Community of the Paraclete  
Companions of Saint Luke~  
Benedictine  
Community of Celebration  
Little Sisters of Saint Clare  
Anamchara Fellowship  
Anglican Order of Preachers  
Rivendell Community  
Sisters of Saint Gregory  
Third Order SSF  
Worker Sisters & Brothers of the  
Holy Spirit  
Camaldolese Benedictines  
Society of Saint John the  
Evangelist  
Anglican Oblates of Saint  
Benedict  
Community of the Transfiguration  
Order of Julian of Norwich  
Order of the Holy Cross  
Order of Saint Helena  
Community of Saint John Baptist  
Society of Saint Francis

### For Ministries

Joseph Richey House  
Fessenden Recovery Ministries  
Baltimore Int'l Seafarers' Center  
Saint Paul's Grayson St, San  
Antonio  
Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry  
Saint James Fordham, Bronx  
Saint Christopher's, Kileen TX  
Saint James, Austin  
White Plains Hospital  
The Community Kitchen

## For the Departed

Benefactors, Friends & Associates:  
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