

Board of Missions Report to the 222nd Diocesan Convention

The Board of Missions is in the process of transitioning as we attempt to fulfill our mission of supporting and encouraging the mission congregations of the Diocese of New Jersey. Changes in support personnel and changes of procedures are listed below:

During the summer of 2005, the Rev. Janet Johnson and the Rev. Dcn. Eric Elley both left Diocesan staff as they moved to Maryland and Connecticut, respectively. Janet had worked part-time to coordinate all official reporting contacts with the mission churches, which included audit process and scheduling, submission of Parochial reports and annual reports, and the process of receiving and reviewing grant applications. Eric worked as the full time assistant to the Canon to the Ordinary. In that role he prepared agendas for and took minutes at Board of Missions meetings, and assisted Canon Powers in contacts with mission clergy and lay leadership. We wish Janet and Eric well in their new ministries, and we offer profound thanks for their service to our Diocese.

A major goal of the Board of Missions is to increase personal contact with and attention to the needs of our mission congregations. We continued doing this by hosting two Vicar's Dinners in February (at St. Alban's, New Brunswick), and March (at Trinity Church, Vineland). In a new initiative designed to make the relationship between the Board of Missions and mission congregations more personal, we assigned each mission congregation a Board member to serve as its liaison with the Board. Those Board members received and reviewed the reports and materials submitted by the mission churches, made personal contacts with them, in some cases including visits, in order to be personally responsive and better able to make recommendations to the Board concerning applications for mission grant assistance. The Diocesan Council received the report and recommendations of the Board concerning grant requests, and approved grants in 2006 to sixteen churches, totaling \$408,050.

About the Vicar's dinners: Representatives from thirty-one of the forty-six mission congregations attended these dinners, along with fifteen Board and staff members. It was a time for sharing and listening so that we could learn from each other. Those who attended expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet people who share their experience, and learn about the joys they experience and the challenges they face in their various settings. Many expressed appreciation for the clergy who serve in their missions, usually with little support of staff and resources. In small group gatherings, everyone was asked to talk about the joys and challenges they face, and their hopes for the future. A summary of representative comments is listed below:

Joys: Many said that the "family" feel of the church is what keeps them there. Newcomers are quickly integrated into the life of the church. They lean on their neighbors with shared programs, and are thankful for meaningful Convocation and Diocesan programs that give them access to things they couldn't do alone. They often provide important ministries in their communities, which usually have lots of needs. Examples were: food pantries, thrift shops, ESL and after-school tutoring, citizenship assistance, and hosting AA and NA meetings and the Scouts. Fellowship with neighboring churches during Lent is very meaningful. They also expressed satisfaction in paying all or most of their Fair Share to the Diocese.

Challenges: The obvious ones are insufficient resources for meaningful programs. They have to be creative in doing things like Sunday School. There is a weariness from constant fundraising: the older members are getting tired, and many of the younger members are just overloaded and unable to share in ministry. Frequent clergy turnover is the main frustration: just when things get going, the priest leaves and there is a transition and restart. Demographic changes in their communities call for new strategies, which they often don't know how to handle, and which some resist. Insufficient buildings, with little hope of being able to expand, and neglected maintenance create problems that can be overwhelming. Suggestions of cooperative ministry (sharing of clergy) create fears of closure. Stewardship development is always a struggle: new members rarely support at the same level as long-term ones who move away or die. Audits seem impossible.

Hopes for the future: Like all churches, they hope for growth in members and resources. They want to become more involved with their communities. They would like to have a priest stay more than 2-3 years. They want to expand their buildings, and provide for lay ministry training for their members. Some even say it: "We want to become a parish."

The Board of Missions was enriched by the sharing of the members of our mission congregations. The 46 mission congregations and about a dozen parishes with less than full time clerical ministry make up nearly 40%

of our churches. There's lots of life in most of these congregations: and lots of challenges. We are working to identify ways to be more supportive and helpful to these congregations and the clergy who serve them.

Organizing to support our mission churches:

We need your help. The Board of Missions can have up to twenty members. Each Convocation selects a lay and clergy representative, and the Diocesan Council and the Bishop can also appoint two representatives. One of the representatives from each Convocation should be from a mission congregation. Although Canon 27, Section 1 stipulates that "no more than one third of the membership shall end their terms in a given year," we find the Board presently constituted with fifteen members, and eight of their terms end in 2006. The ending date (based upon the year the Convocation meeting elected them) of each member's term is listed next to his or her name at the end of this report. Canon 27, Section 1 states that these elections should take place at the Spring Convocation meeting. I wrote to the Diocesan Council, the Bishop and the Deans of the Convocations, suggesting a staggering of terms for new appointments to bring this back into compliance, and outlining the responsibilities that Board members will be asked to assume. A heart for small churches, a willingness to visit three or four each year, personal interaction with two or three missions as Board liaison, and gift for ministry vision and development, are the traits we are looking for in representatives on the Board of Missions. If you know of someone with those skills, encourage her or him to consider serving our mission churches, and tell your Convocation Dean before your next meeting.

We wish to say farewell to some clergy who were serving in mission churches, and welcome those who have assumed leadership during the past year. We offer thanks to the Revs. Karin Mitchell (St. Francis, Dunellen), Barbara Harris (St. Stephen's, Florence), Georgia Cohen (Annunciation, Lawnside), Harry Collins (St. Stephen's, Mullica Hill), Janet Johnson (Trinity, Rocky Hill), and Wayne Reynolds (Holy Spirit, Tuckerton), for their loving ministries and pray for the Lord's blessing on their next steps in ministry. We welcome the Revs. Linda Moeller (St. Stephen's, Florence), E. Roland Clemons (All Saints, Highland Park), Valerie Balling (St. Stephen's, Mullica Hill), and Terry Martin (Holy Spirit, Tuckerton), as they assume leadership of mission congregations. And we are pleased to announce that the Rev. Linus Amonu and the members of St. Peter's Igbo Church are now worshipping in the former St. Andrew's Church in Trenton. May the Lord bless all these new beginnings in ministry.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Rev. Kenneth Aldrich (Bishop's Appointee), Mr. David Chandler (Monmouth Convocation), the Rev. Deacon Eric Elley (Staff), the Rev. Douglas Freer (Diocesan Council), the Rev. Janet Johnson (Staff), Ms. Leslie Oliver (Watchung Convocation), Ms. Marie Reynolds (Atlantic Convocation) and the Rev. Gretchen Zimmerman (Monmouth Convocation), for their ministry to the mission churches, and the present members of the Board of Missions listed below for their devotion to the service of the mission congregations of the Diocese of New Jersey.

Representing	Lay members	Clergy Members (the Revs.)
Atlantic Convocation	vacant by resignation	Thomas Sweeny (2008)
Burlington Convocation	Richard Baitzel (2006)	J. Leroy Saunders (2007)
Camden Convocation	Mona Andrews (2006)	Derrick Wedderburn (2006)
Monmouth Convocation	Dennis Bellars (2008)	vacant by resignation
Northern Convocation	Glenda Simmons* (2005)	Servio Moscoso* (2005)
Trenton Convocation	Lynette Darling (2008)	Francisco Pozo (2006)
Watchung Convocation	vacant by resignation	John Cerrato (2006)
Woodbury Convocation	Rebecca Purchase (2006)	Raewynne Whiteley (2006)
Bishop Councill	vacant	vacant
Diocesan Council	Charles Perfater (2006)	Mark Van Sant (2008)

*continuing to serve until new members are elected

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Lee Powers, Chairman
Canon to the Ordinary