Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the Diocese of the Rio Grande we are faithfully continuing to embrace endings and new beginnings. On July 16th we will celebrate the new beginning of +Daniel Gutierrez as Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. This beginning marked the end of +Daniel’s ministry as Canon of the Ordinary in the DRG, as well as signaled the beginning of Canon Raymond Raney’s new ministry as Canon to the Ordinary.

The evolution of time in the Church’s Jesus movement and local history always seems to entail evidence of the Spirit of God in our midst, admonishing and leading us in every moment towards a new future. What happens at endings and beginnings results in receiving new spiritual gifts of life giving and engaging divine purpose and new directions, which I believe are now unfolding in our midst.

Today in this issue of Together I am happy to announce some new appointments, which will further strengthen our diocesan witness as a missionary Diocese in New Mexico and Far West Texas. It is with great enthusiasm and profound gratitude to the people and leadership of the Episcopal Church in the DRG that I will faithfully continue to embrace the challenging missional goals and Gospel initiatives of our wonderful Diocese.

For me personally at this juncture in our history a long time dream, prayer and hope is coming to potential fruition for the Diocese of the Rio Grande. With these newly focused missional goals and Gospel initiatives of our wonderful Episcopal Church in the DRG, as well as signaled the beginning of Canon Raymond Raney’s new ministry as Canon to the Ordinary.

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I am happy to introduce the following servant leaders:

- Ms. Donna Addkison – Youth and Young Adult Missioner
- The Rev’d Canon J. J. Bernal - Canon for Hispanic Ministry
- The Rev’d Jean Campbell – Canon for Eccumenical Affairs
- Dr. Guy Gronquist – Chair, Poverty and Outreach Board
- Ms. Amy Malick – Missioner to the Displaced Community in far-flung rural towns have been a daunting and an incredible challenge. Today our Diocese’s public presence of outreach, mission and compassionate ministries is being realized in every rural and urban setting.

Every spring and summer the leadership teams of the finance committee, Diocesan Council, Standing Committee, and people of the Diocese set aside quality time to review how we are managing our God-given assets, offerings and resources for spreading the Gospel message, and building up the Body of Christ. We also set before us a kind of “checklist” for mission activities evaluating every missional emphasis we place in our diocesan budget.

Our 2017 budget will be presented to all four deacnary gatherings on July 23, and will be published in the September/October Convention issue of Together. Each line item in the budget highlights the church’s Gospel priorities.

As you know, during the past six years as your Bishop, I have encouraged the laity and clergy leadership of the Diocese to creatively, faithfully and responsibly increase our annual funding of these important line items that represent challenging ministries and new grass-roots missional strategies.

**Among our missional focus for 2017 will be:**

- Supportive aid to our smaller mission congregations;
- Funds for Young Adult/College, Youth ministries and the Triennial Episcopal Youth Event to be held in Oklahoma City next year;
- Bishop’s Ridge/Camp Stoney: funding for summer programs and support for year-round adult activities;
- The Bishop’s School for Education and Formation;
- Chaplains to Retired Clergy, Spouses and Surviving Spouses;
- Missioner to the urban displaced, marginalized and street ministries;
- Funding to enable deacnary team ministries and community building;
- Outreach and ministry assistance to the abandoned poor along our Borderlands;
- Formation and support for Vocational Deacons;
- Poverty and Outreach Board efforts to feed, cloth and care for the needy and underserved;
- Outreach to the Hispanic communities;
- Co-operative Native American communications and presence both in our companion Diocese of Navajoland and neighboring reservations;
- An expanded role for Congregational Life and Development assistance;
- Recovery Ministry programs;
- Support for our DRG Women’s Ministries, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew and Daughters of the King;
- Clergy spouse fellowship-gatherings;
- Support for community building activities, such as our annual Matsarch and Patrons events, as well as our Deanery and Clericus programs.

All these line items and more reflect our commitment to Christ’s Gospel imperatives as described in the Five Marks of Mission that guides The Episcopal Church. Please consider these Marks of Mission as you review the DRG’s missional activities, goals and our fiduciary responsibility to use the Lord’s resources effectively.

Here is the checklist for every church’s budget and a focus for a more critical review of Christ’s mandate for building the Kingdom of God embodied in the Five Marks of Mission:

- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

At this particular time in the DRG, the decision to engage highly qualified appointed missioners and adopt some new paradigms of reaching the “church outside the walls” will be greatly benefited by all the offerings of God’s people. In our Diocese, as our new young adult and youth missioner commented, “the missing generations have not always been on the church’s pastoral radar. Now they are.” Over the past decade the mission and evangelization efforts of the Diocese, which were thought to have been limited by financial resources, have dramatically increased each year. Thanks be to God! As we acknowledge the Lord’s abundance, his gifts only continue to increase in our lives and in our communities. Today we welcome endings of old beliefs and fears and embrace new beginnings. The future is bright.

It is clear at this juncture in our diocesan life that we now have more dedicated and highly qualified leaders throughout this large Diocese who are faithful, energetic, and accountable believers in the Jesus Movement. Embracing all God’s children in this Diocese is clearly a top priority, and I am grateful to the Lord for this gift. What happens at endings and beginnings results in receiving new spiritual gifts to enable us to carry on the work of Christ Jesus in our time. We are carrying on the ministry of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God! Blessings everyone. God’s peace be with you.
My Brothers and Sisters in the Diocese,

I say goodbye, and I want you to know that I love you. The Diocese of the Rio Grande has played a transformative role in my ministry. This Diocese is a beautiful home to hold the sacred presence of our Lord. We found Jesus Christ present in the lives, ministries, worship and outreach of this place. We continually discovered a community of hopeful and loving people who graced every aspect of our life. You will always be part of me.

I was called to the Priesthood and served as the Canon to the Ordinary in this Diocese. I will never forget the faces, conversations, prayers, laughter and tears. I will miss every part of this Diocese. The Diocese, the people who graced every aspect of our life. You will always be part of me. I will miss the laughter, the faithfulness, the friendship and that community of faith.

Working together, we have transformed this Diocese. I am grateful for allowing me to serve you. You have prepared me to serve as the Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

Finally, I want to express my thanks to the Diocesan staff, Mary, Raymond, Lisa, Paty, Annette, Carol, and Toye. It was an honor and joy serving with you. I will miss the laughter, the faithfulness, the friendship and that community of faith.

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Watching the future of the Church at Camp

By the Very Rev. Mike Olsen

Sandy and I spent the week with 32 preteens, their counselors and many wonderful volunteers the end of June.

The children were exploring their beliefs and learning about the Love of God through C.S. Lewis’ Narnia stories, plays, arts, worship and Bible studies. I also learned more about God by hearing and seeing the stories through the eyes of preteens.

I was very moved as a group of campers heard the story of Jesus washing the disciples feet and then took turns washing each other's feet. There were the expected giggles when they began, but suddenly a hush overcame the room as one after another they washed the feet of one of their cabin mates.
The other day I saw a story on the news, about a little girl who had a prosthetic leg. The story was not about her leg, or how she lost it, it was about her friend. This little girl was blonde, and she wanted a doll that was just like her to be her friend. Her parents bought her an American Girl doll, with blonde hair that looked just like her. She had seen plenty of blonde headed dolls, and she politely told her parents that while they were blonde, they weren’t like her. The story on the news showed the video her parents took of her opening her new doll. The reaction of sheer amazement and thrill made the video a Facebook sensation. The doll had been modified by a prosthetic company in New York to have a removable prosthetic leg that looked and worked just like hers. The tears of joy from this little girl were infectious; finally a doll that was just like her, a friend she could play with! If you would like to see the video for yourself, and you are reading this on-line, click here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yj5U-tr-E24 I don’t think you will see a more uplifting video this week. I’ll warn you, you won’t be able to watch this without crying. I love the squeal of delight from the little sister, who can’t contain herself because she thought if she learned from another kid, it would be different from the elderly lady she had to learn from. So I invited her to come to my house to sew. It wasn’t really different, just a different atmosphere for her. And now she wants to tell the elderly lady friend, that she has learned some more sewing. So she has two sewing friends now.

Just yesterday I met a girl that was 17. She was told by her grandmother (who raised her) that I know how to sew. She asked me if I could show her how to use a sewing machine, because it had been years since she had had the opportunity to use one, and she had forgotten. So now I have two sewing friends, one slightly older, one slightly younger, but close to my age, that I can sew with, that have the same goals and that I enjoy spending time with. I have had adult friends who encouraged me to sew. Sometimes you hold friends close to your own age in a different regard than adult friends, but both are necessary and help make us who we are.

I guess that young people reading this story might say, “Well, sewing is sort of weird.” It may be weird to some, but to me, it is what makes me happy, it is part of my identity. I am just as I am, because it is relatively harmless to society, and I’m helping boost the fabric industry!

If we weren’t unique, how would He tell us apart?

By Ms. Madeleine Fazenbaker (age 13)
St. John’s Episcopal Church, Alamogordo
First Woman Ordained Priest at Good Shepherd


On May 14th amuse bells and incense the Rt. Rev. Michael Vono, 9th bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande, ordained Deacon Sarah Gack to the sacred order of priests in a two-hour ceremony at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City.

The Rev. Deacon Thomas Burns preached; the Rev. Paul Moore, rector of Good Shepherd, was host, hunter and litanist. Larry McEllan and Jeanie Locicero served as cantors. Linda Shay made her debut as verger. The children present at the ceremony took up an offering that will be available to Pastor Sarah for discretionary spending for the relief of the needy. After the service the new priest offered her first blessings with oil to a long line of people who had attended the service.

This is the first ordination of a woman to occur at the Church of the Good Shepherd in its 124-year life. Pastor Sarah will serve as assistant to Fr. Moore in the life of the parish, focusing on evening of prayer, service, and evangelism, in the Diocese of the Rio Grande at their diocesan Assembly August 5-6 at Good Shepherd Church, Silver City.

In May nearly 20 women from the northern part of the diocese gathered at St. James, Taos for an Ice Cream Social. Women who were already Daughters and women who were curious about the Order joined in conversation and a lovely time of fellowship, complete with delicious ice cream, thanks to the Santiago Chapter at St. James.

If you missed the Ice Cream Social, you can attend the Justice and Mission Tea at Good Shepherd Church in Silver City on August 5 to learn more about the Order. The Daughters of the King diocesan board will be hosting this Tea for all Daughters attending the Assembly, as well as any interested women.

The Order of the Daughters of the King in the Diocese of the Rio Grande will celebrate 120 years of prayer, service, and evangelism in the Diocese of the Rio Grande at their diocesan Assembly August 5-6 at Good Shepherd Church, Silver City.

The Rev. Jan Hosea, St. Chad’s Episcopal Church, in a sermon: “An attitude of gratitude is how we recognize all the intelligence and wealth for the purpose of love and justice.”

Abraham Heschel: “It is gratefulness which makes the soul great.” and, “What we need is a total mobilization of heart, intelligence and wealth for the purpose of love and justice.”

The Rev. Jan Hosea, St. Chad’s Episcopal Church, in a sermon: “An attitude of gratitude is how we recognize all the good in our lives and give thanks for every good thing that comes to us.”

AA. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh: “Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.”

Maya Angelou, Celebrations: “Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayers.” and “We give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.”

Looking for Expressions of Gratitude

By Ms. Rickey Steerrill
Diocesan UTO coordinator

Everywhere I go, everything I read, see or hear, I am always on the watch for what exemplifies gratitude and charity. Here’s a few of the gems I’ve found:

1. John Wesley: “A church that is not a missionary church is a missing church.”

2. Abraham Heschel: “It is gratefulness which makes the soul great.” and, “What we need is a total mobilization of heart, intelligence and wealth for the purpose of love and justice.”

3. The Rev. Jan Hosea, St. Chad’s Episcopal Church, in a sermon: “An attitude of gratitude is how we recognize all the good in our lives and give thanks for every good thing that comes to us.”

4. A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh: “Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.”

5. Maya Angelou, Celebrations: “Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayers.” and “We give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.”

Women Reach Hands Across the Diocese

Coming up: 5th Annual Bosque Center Gathering November 18-19
By Ms. Cindy Davis
Coordinator, Diocesan Women’s Ministry

The 4th annual weekend for women of the diocese was held at St. John’s, Farmington on June 19-11. Two dozen women, representing 6 congregations, came together to explore how, in the words of Madeline L’Engle “we were made to be co-creators with our maker.” (from Walking on Water)

We also considered the ideas of Hildegar德 of Bingen and Julian of Norwich, and explored creativity through the work of Vida Dutton Scudder who said, “It is through creating, not possessing, that life is revealed.”

The final activity was to choose a packet of beads, share some with one or more others, and then make a bracelet. The result is a ‘hands across the diocese’ image of women committed to living their God-given creativity in whatever form that takes. Attendees came away with a deeper understanding that “Creativity is a way of living life, no matter what our vocation, or how we earn our living.” (Madeline L’Engle, Walking on Water)

The next event is our 5th Annual Bosque Center Gathering on November 18-19. This will be an opportunity for fellowship, worship, and delving into YOU...Yearning, Owning, Understanding the Puzzle Pieces of your Life. Because God is active in our lives, we all have Yearnings. Some of these have come to fullness, others have not. We must Own and recognize where we are on our journey. This will help us understand how everything that happens is part of the Puzzle of our life. Tools we use to put together the puzzle include learning practical, prayerful, and personal ways to use the Bible and Book of Common Prayer. Registrations for this event will be available on the women’s website later this year.

Coming in 2017 is an exciting collaboration of the Women of the Diocese and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew for a Lent Retreat in the Big Bend area. This will include a chance to visit Big Bend National Park as an inspirational way to explore the wildernesses of our lives. Mark your calendar now for March 23-27, so you can attend.

E-mail Cindy Davis, Coordinator of Women’s Ministries (cdavis@cynthiadavisauthor.com) if you aren’t yet on the e-news list. You can also check out upcoming events and registrations on the women’s website (VarietiesOfGifts.blogspot.com) and on the Women’s page on Facebook (Facebook.com/ Women’sMinistryODRG). You can also join the weekly e-study by sending an email to wmneld@gmail.com to sign up.

Women display their icons
“Let Your Light Shine” (Matthew 5:16) was the theme for the recent Cursillo weekend held at the Bosque Center June 23-26. Twenty team member and twenty-four candidates from throughout the Diocese gathered for a time of worship, study, prayer, laughter and tears. Fr. Colin Kelly, from St. Jerome’s, Chama, served as Head Spiritual Advisor, and Kathleen Pittman, from St. Andrew’s, Roswell, served as Rector.

Our next Cursillo will be July 13-16, 2017. John Phinizy, from St. Andrew’s, Roswell, will be the Rector. A Cursillo booth will be available during the Diocesan Convention in October. If you have not been to Cursillo, or want to be on the next team, come by and see what it is all about. Applications will be available at that time.

“Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ.” For more information about the Episcopal Cursillo Ministry, go to our website at http://episcopalcursilloministry.org/ Ultreya!

Virginia Bishop Suffragan made Assisting Bishop of Liverpool in Historic Appointment

(Diocese of Virginia) A historic moment in the lives of the dioceses of Virginia and Liverpool occurred May 2 at Shrine Mont Retreat Center when Virginia Bishop Suffragan Susan Goff was commissioned by Shannon S. Johnston, bishop of Virginia, and Paul Bayes, bishop of Liverpool, as assisting bishop of Liverpool.

Bayes presented the letters commissary to Goff and both Bayes and Johnston prayed over her while the room spontaneously rose to its feet with applause, love and affection. The dioceses of Liverpool and Virginia are companion dioceses, focusing on Jesus and Justice, that together, a bigger church might make a bigger difference in the world. As part of the link, Goff has visited Liverpool and her ministry of teaching and support has been very much welcomed not just by women in the diocese but by all.

“The link with the Diocese of Virginia has been important to us in Liverpool for many years,” said Bayes. “At my installation eighteen months ago it was a privilege to welcome Bishop Shannon Johnston as a guest of honor. Now, with Bishop Susan Goff’s appointment as one of our assisting bishops, we are able to strengthen our bond still further. Bishop Susan is no stranger to Liverpool and we look forward to being enriched by her wisdom as a teacher and pastor of pastors whenever she visits us.”

Among Goff’s first responsibilities in Liverpool, she will be sharing in the ordination of priests with Bayes in June and speaking at the clergy conference in July. Goff will continue to reside in Virginia but will make trips to Liverpool, in addition to using technology, to connect the dioceses and support our ministries. Her appointment deepens our long-standing missional relationship which includes parish to parish links, youth pilgrimages, sabbaticals, joint mission trips, and even a connection between two preschools.

“What I most look forward to and am most excited about in this new relationship is the ways we will teach and learn from each other,” said Goff. “We share many common experiences across our two dioceses but we also have unique experiences in terms of what it means to be the church now in the beginning of the 21st century. And I look forward to what I will learn from Bishop Paul and from the diocese of Liverpool and to the things that I’ll be able to share from our experiences here in Virginia. I anticipate through that both dioceses will grow in our strength and faithfulness.”

This appointment comes with the blessing of the Archbishop of York John Sentamu and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.
Groups Join to Clean up Homeless Area

Members of local churches and community organizations recently banded together to clean up trash from a riparian area along Berrendo Creek on the north side of Roswell where several homeless people live. Around 40 volunteers picked up and hauled out 6,300 pounds of trash over the three days, said Jeneva Martinez, a Roswell woman who organized the project.

The immigrant experience into the lives of immigrants

On May 27 and 28, eight members of San Gabriel the Archangel Episcopal Church, Corrales, including our pastor, the Rev. Rhonda Smith McIntire, joined the NM Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice for an immersion experience with individuals who have been living with HIV in Albuquerque. These two days would turn out to be a first hand experience learning about the immigrants and their struggles, working side by side with these individuals as they clean up trash, feed their families, and share a meal with those who are hungry.

A staff member from the New Mexico Department of Health also volunteered. Photos from the project can be seen on Martinez’s Facebook page, “Sending Love to Roswell.”

Immigrant Immersion Experience Promotes Understanding

By Laurence Bussetti and Cathi Wong Bussetti
San Gabriel parishioners

An important feature of the two-day immersion was how varied faith-based communities worked towards providing services and caring of these immigrants. Our group spoke with servants of several Catholic agencies that provided food, housing, support groups and language classes. Immanuel Presbyterian Church offered its van for the two days for use by the group as well as its meeting areas for supper and fellowship. East Central Ministries in the International District, administered by a group of Evangelical Christians, provides housing, gathering places, help with home gardens, and a health clinic. Other groups provide legal services, educational classes, domestic violence counseling and advocacy. Despite the loving kindness and compassion of the individuals serving this population, the need for additional services is endless. However, none of these people who we met seemed in despair or deserted. One almost could feel the joy, the energy, and the grace that is personified in these servants of the immigrants and of the Lord.

It was an eye opener for all of the immersion participants. The immigrants we met are fortified with their faith and hope for the future and the gift of their company. Still, they face a life of constant fear of deportation, detention and discrimination as long as their legal status was established. Another undocumented immigrant spoke of his gratitude to the agencies helping him and his family with housing, food and legal services. He had escaped torture and discrimination in his own country, survived six months of detention in the U.S., and was eager to find a way to support his family once his legal status was established.

These immigrants have carved out a life based on strong family values and a deep faith in God. We saw these both first hand when we attended a Spanish-speaking service at San Martin Catholic Church whose congregation is comprised largely of immigrants. We were impressed by their resiliency and their desire to work to help others in their community. The immigrant families expressed gratitude that we took time out to listen to their stories and validate their experiences.

Tour of the Gila Bikes Blessed

For the third year in a row the Rev. Paul Moore and the Rev. Sarah Guck were on hand on the beginning of the world-class Tour of the Gila bike race for the blessing of the bikes.

After a short introduction and prayers they walked through the ranks of each group of racers sprinkling them with holy water and talking with them. Most of them were appreciative, some greatly so.

Some requested special prayers and appreciated a moment to speak with a clergy person before the ordeal of the races. Paul was also on hand on Day 2, and Sarah was at the final finish line.

Bishop Vono’s Visit blesses Grace Carlisle

Grace Episcopal Church in Carlisle was blessed by Bishop Michael Vono on Sunday, May 1, 2016. The Bishop’s sermon inspired us with a vision of a painting by a European artist entitled Peace. It is a painting of a raging storm, not peaceful at all, almost frightening. A mother bird is sitting on a nest with her little babies tucked underneath her, sleeping soundly. That is peace! Peace is not just the absence of a storm, but rest in the middle of the storm. Many of us could use that kind of peace, and it is the kind of peace that you can have right now if you’re resting where you ought to be.

The rest of his sermon was about subliminal messages we see in every day advertising. What are the subliminal messages we receive? All three of the sixth Sunday of Easter readings are about subliminal messages: Acts 16:9-15; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; and John 14:23-29.

Between services we had a wonderful coffee hour with the Bishop hosted by Grace Church women. Our Confirmations during the 10:30AM service were Cory Calvani and Kevin Calvani.
Memorial Day Celebrated at St Chad’s
By the Rev. Ian Henry
St. Chad’s Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, celebrated Memorial Day in grand style. Patriotic hymns and readings focused on the understanding that there are very many armors that we can put on for God. We celebrated the many military members, veterans and para-military in our congregation. We are blessed by their presence and glad to honor them.

One of the veterans who participated commented: “Thank you for the Memorial Day church service. It was very meaningful and inclusive. For all my years in the military, and since, I have felt a level of exclusion, or at best tolerance, by the churches I attended because I was a person who perpetuated war, not peace. The service really touched me.”

Bishop in Training
Bishop Jerry Lamb shared his ministry with young Joel during his visit to St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Las Cruces, the Rev. Deacon Barbara Albers reported to Bishop Michael Vono.

“The wonderful story that goes with the picture, has to do with Lita Miller in the process of adopting three siblings,” Deacon Albers wrote. “The parish has had the honor of watching and sharing in this ‘new family’ and all that Lita has done to make that happen.

“The remarkable part of the story was that Lita’s husband and daughter died a couple of years ago and according to Lita they wanted to take on Foster children after retirement. She has followed up on that desire and the parish has the opportunity to share in this story in a small way.”

St. Andrew’s Needle Art Ministry
By Debbi Smith and Elly Mulkey

The Needle Arts of St. Andrew’s ministry has been active for well over three years now, initially knitting and crocheting prayer shawls for the sick and homebound to let folks know they are not forgotten and in our prayers. While continuing on with the shawls that are distributed by our priest or deacon, we branched out one year to working up scarves and (approximately 60 “X 60”) piece of fleece is cut for a throw to a patient. We distribute.”

One of our new endeavors is the Prayer Blanket. The Prayer Blanket is an idea “borrowed” from First United Methodist Church in Richardson, Texas. Prayer blankets have been requested for members of our congregation and others going through a stressful time - loss of a loved one, illness, heading off to college, new baby - any time that someone feels that the recipient could use a little extra support. Once a prayer blanket is requested, a large (approximately 60 “X 60”) piece of fleece is cut with 5 to 6 inch strips on each side.

During the Sunday services, Father Dale announces that a Prayer Blanket has been requested and, if available, provides information on who it is for and why it is needed. The blanket is placed in the Parish Hall and, following each service, parishioners go and tie a knot in strips, two strips to a knot. As they are tying the knots they say a prayer for the person for whom it is being made. When all the strips have been tied, the blanket is delivered to the person with a note explaining the meaning of the knots.

Our most recent project is making receiving blankets for newborns, who the nurses at both hospitals know are in need of the basics when they go home. These blankets are being made by both members of the group and by member of the Parish. Our second delivery in May consisted of six blankets to each hospital. Those in charge of the labor and delivery floors said there was definitely a need for these blankets. During a second delivery in early June, all the May receiving blankets had already been distributed.

The St. Andrew’s Needle Art Ministry group meets once a month on the third Monday of the month.

Interfaith & Ecumenical Passover at Grace Church, Carlsbad

We had our 2nd Annual Passover Seder on the last night of Passover, April 30th. The Reformed Jewish Synagogue Temple Beth El hosted an educational children’s Seder for local Jewish and Christian communities at Grace Episcopal Church, Carlsbad.

This year we were graced with Bishop Vono’s presence as well. The children asked the important four questions, we read the Exodus passages of the Plagues of Egypt, and had a sermonette on why we set a place and open the door for Elijah.

As most Seder go, it was a short service of about 4 hours with a fun time had by all. Grace Church is a normal, ordinary church that, like all churches, knows without a doubt our church is truly the Jewel in the Desert.

Of course we humbly know that we are special. We have been blessed with renovations inside and are still growing spiritually. The sense that Elijah is present in all of us, that we are the miracle for other people is ever strong here as it is in every church.

If Jewish synagogues and Christian churches have the sense that they are part of a larger picture, it was certainly present in this Seder. Everything we do is practice for a time to come. Angels and Archangels are present in every act of worship. The Word of G-d is at work here.
House Building in Juárez Once Again
By Gerry Fairbrother, PhD, with additions and suggestions from others

From March 30 to April 2 a group of thirteen volunteers from St. Bede’s Episcopal Church and the larger Santa Fe community, and Trinity-on-the-Hill, Los Alamos, combined forces to build a house for a family in need in Juárez, Mexico. The humanitarian project was sponsored by Mission Ministries, an organization based in Denver that constructs small single family dwellings in impoverished areas of Juárez, Mexico, at no cost to the recipients themselves. The organization also provides other services to the community, including a medical clinic and two libraries with after-school opportunities, including computers, for children and young people.

The construction crew from St. Bede’s and Trinity-on-the-Hill was both ecletic and eager to serve. The volunteers came from different professions and were of different ages. Many were retired. Most had been on similar projects — a few had built houses in Juárez as many as ten times or more. There was only one “first timer” (your author) in one of the vans that came down from Santa Fe. The total trip time, which included travel, lodging, and the construction of the house itself was only four days.

Those four days, however, changed the life of a needy family forever. And the experience also brought deep emotional rewards to the volunteers and marked them as well. The family that was given the house consisted of a father, mother, and two girls ages six and three. They were originally from Chiapas, Mexico, where they had owned a house by the ocean. The father (a fisherman by trade) had a boat, which allowed him to feed his family with the fish that he caught. While their daughters smiled from behind their mother’s skirt and played with neighbors in the yard, their parents spoke of the good life that the four of them had lived in Chiapas. Then tragedy struck. Their second child developed a life-threatening tumor on her thyroid. Treatment of the tumor required an expensive operation for removal and subsequent medical care.

To pay for the operation, the family had to sell their house and boat in Chiapas. They moved to Juarez, where an aunt was living, as their vans approached a concrete slab in a hard-dirt yard, and chickens cackled in the fenced yards. On the first day, as their vans approached a concrete slab in a hard-dirt yard, the volunteers knew that this was “the site.”

Building the house: The first day of the “build” was sunny with some puffy clouds in the sky and not too much wind — good weather for building. The house to be built was located in one of the colonies (residential areas) on the outskirts of Juarez, almost 20 miles from the border. It was in a neighborhood of dirt roads, small houses fenced in with sticks, chicken wire or adobe. Dogs freely roamed the streets and chickens cackled in the fenced yards. On the first day, as their vans approached a concrete slab in a hard-dirt yard, the volunteers knew that this was “the site.”

From its framing to its dedication, the house in Juarez was totally complete in two days. In such projects, a day and a half is allotted for the “build.” In the afternoon of the second day, the keys are turned over to the chosen family. When the Team arrived at the concrete slab, they found that workers from Mission Ministries had already cut the lumber to specifications, with location of windows and the door clearly marked out. On the morning of the first day, the frames for the outer walls were assembled and siding was nailed to them. Then the walls themselves were stood up and the roof was put on. In the afternoon, insulation went in, inside walls went up, seams were taped and plastered, and the walls were prepared for painting.

On the morning of the second day, the interior of the house was painted a mushroom neutral color and the outside was painted a periwinkle blue. In addition to the basic structure, the volunteers provided the family with an outhouse, and a cistern from which can be drawn water, an absolute must in any area with no running water. Along with building a shelter for a family in need, the volunteers usually decide what to give in addition to the house itself. On this occasion, the group from St. Bede’s, Santa Fe, and Trinity-on-the-Hill gave the two daughters bunk beds, toys, and clothing while presenting the home with the most indispensable of items, a kitchen stove.

Other activities: While building the house was the centerpiece of the trip, the volunteers engaged in other activities. They served a light lunch of nachos, juice and popsicles to the community and they also attended a service Friday night at our family’s church. The service was marked with spirited singing, accompanied by a youth band, as well as by statements from the family, the pastor, community members and the volunteers. The family and others made statements of gratitude for the work that had been done in the prior two days. The volunteers also made statements about their own gratitude at being part of the endeavor. And as a final statement, the Team recited the Lord’s Prayer in Spanish.

House Dedication: The dedication ceremony was the highlight of the house-building project in Juarez. With a local news team on hand, the event began with prayer, followed by words from the volunteers about the meaningfulness of the house building to them. With tears in their eyes, the mother and father of the family lamented the loss of everything in Chiapas. However, they expressed their deep gratitude both for their new home and for the medical assistance that the volunteers are providing for their young daughter. The volunteers also spoke of the deep rewards they had received from getting to know this family and this community and from working together to build the house.

Upon receiving the keys to their new home, the family crossed in threshold for the first time. They were both surprised and overwhelmed when they discovered that the place was already partly furnished. At first, the two girls went at the site of their new beds. Then they raced each other up the ladder to the top bunk!
Together in the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande

MINISTRY ALONG THE BORDER

Big Bend Mission Equips kitchen at Casa Hogar Across the Border

By the Rev. Kay Jennings
Big Bend Episcopal Mission

The last week in June I went to Casa Hogar in Ojinaga with Petra, who is president of the Alpine branch of this enterprise, which gives children a good and safe place around their school hours. Mike Soukup from our diocese’s Borderland Ministries went with us, and he had purchased many large kettles and skillets for the Casa’s kitchen. It was good to see that project blossom and bear fruit.

Nancy Antrim has been our point person with Casa Hogar for years and she knows the history. She is currently on the Casa board here in Alpine. Many churches, corporations and individuals come together in Alpine to provide this help across the border. Corporate and government help comes in Ojinaga as well.

This is love in action directed towards children who need it when their parents work in the big companies that have moved into Mexico. The Casa provides a place where the children can have tutoring, counseling, good meals, and even showers before school starts. When we were there a group left for afternoon classes, all looking sharp in their clean uniforms.

The Casa affiliates in Alpine (CHOI) provide a great deal of the funds, food, and materials (94% last year) to keep the doors open. A dance from Tecuichi provides the ways for a psychologist to work with children at the Casa who have problems related to abuse, neglect, or lack of developmental education.

This is God’s work specific to our land on the border.

Casa Hogar

Students were ready for school after a morning at Casa Hogar. The bigger people are Casa staff and Mike Soukup and Kay Jennings who are with Borderlands Ministries of the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

Borderlands Ministry is Cookin!

Mike soukup delivered needed kettles to Albergue Casa Hogar in Ojinaga Mexico, June 22. This was a gift from Borderlands Ministry. Volunteer Sylvia accepted the cookware. The kitchen wasn’t the only place that was hot.

Temps in Ojinaga reached 110 F when Mike traveled there. Alpine Casa Hogar volunteers Petra, Kay and Jim.

Voces de Ambos Lados/Voices from Both Sides

By Mike Soukup
DRG Liaison, Borderland Ministries

It happened again and for the 4th time. One of the happiest days of the year came and went and was enjoyed by many.

On May 21st, family, friends, strangers, media, and tourists gathered to witness, yet another sweet celebration called Voces de Ambos Lados/Voices from Both Sides.

This event is referred to as a Fiesta Protesta in reaction to the closing of the historically recognized border crossing between Lajitas, Texas and Paso Lajitas, Mexico.

Post 9/11 measures to secure America’s borders resulted in many family members being cut-off from seeing each other as they were used to and stopped the tourism experience of riding a small boat across the narrow river to enjoy some delicious food and the welcoming Hispanic culture.

The event was also enjoyed by Rio Grande Borderland Ministries own Mike Soukup who traveled all the way from Albuquerque, New Mexico to attend. Evident blessings of love, freedom, and peace were flowing just like the Rio Grande.

RIO Grande Borderland Ministries (RGBM) is an agency of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande. This agency supports nonprofits, charitable mission work on both sides of the US - Mexico border from the Big Bend region of Texas to the Arizona state line with New Mexico. Food pantries, clothing collections, small parishes in remote locations, microloans to help impoverished families, and co-ops are examples of this support.

Pentecost Revives Celebrations at Lajitas Chapel

By the Rev. Kay Jennings

Big Bend Episcopal Mission celebrated Pentecost with Holy Eucharist at the first service in the reopened Chapel of St. Mary and St. Joseph in Lajitas May 13. The Chapel was open to several faiths through the years, originally Roman Catholic.

Fr. Mde Lafollette (Episcopalian) had monthly services there at one time. It has been refurbished from the early 1900 adobe into the present structure. Stained glass windows, beautiful pews and altar, and even air conditioning have been provided.

Services will be 3rd Sundays at 4 p.m. with the BBEM priest providing Eucharist for resort employees and guests and for all who live nearby. The resort facilitates this by sending out announcements, turning on the cooling system, and helping set up the worship space.

Libi Rhodes, a member of St. James, Alpine, is a worship leader and Eucharistic minister who helps with services. She remembers working with Fr. Mde there and providing Morning Prayer when he or the Rev. Judy Burgess could not be at Lajitas. She speaks Spanish and the services are available in English, Spanish, or an integration of the two languages. She is happy to return to that place of her earlier ministry.

The BBEM plans to continue services there on 3rd Sundays and to have another service at 6:30 p.m. at Santa Fe in Terlingua in September. This will be in addition to weekly services in Alpine at 11:00 a.m. and 1st Saturday evening Eucharist at Santa Fe. God speaks to those who travel in that ruggedly beautiful Big Bend State Park and National Park area. Plan to include a mission service in any vacation you have in that area of the Rio Grande.
Mission Conference 2016: How to Grow Your Church

More than 50 lay and clergy members from across the Diocese gathered at the Bosque Center May 6 for a day of informational sessions on “How to Grow Your Church.” The sessions included speakers on Congregational Life & Development, Mutual Ministry Reviews, Poverty and Outreach grants, and Making Stewardship Work with special guest speaker Toni Sutliff from the Diocese of Utah. Although attendance was required for all missions seeking financial assistance in 2017, clergy and laity from a variety of parishes gained valuable information to enhance their operations during the year ahead.

The workshop is an annual event put on by the Diocese to provide guidance to mission congregations in completing materials necessary to pursue diocesan funding. The purpose of the day-long sessions was expanded two years ago to increase awareness of financial and operational resources available in the Diocese.

Administrators get Away to Learn and Recoup

Many of the congregational administrators of the Diocese gathered at Church of the Holy Faith, Santa Fe, on May 16. The day-long workshop was hosted by Bishop's Executive Assistant Mary Jewell and Diocesan Administrative Assistant Toye Robertson.

The workshop included a review of the “nuts and bolts” of administration, resources available, communications, Diocesan Convention, and the Safeguarding God's Children training. The group discussed what makes a “great bulletin,” and the ins and outs of office health and wellness.

The Rev. Canon Colin Kelly and the Rev. Madelynn Johnston joined the group in the afternoon for a clergy panel: “Everything you wanted to know, but were afraid to ask.” The informative day closed with a Eucharist in the recently remodeled Holy Faith Chapel.

Pictured following the Eucharist are (from left) Mary Beth Libby of St. Mark's, Albuquerque; Cynthia Biddlecombe of Trinity on the Hill, Las Alamos; Donna Lukas of Holy Faith, Cindy Davis of St. John's Cathedral, Albuquerque; the Rev. Canon Colin Kelly, Vicar of St. Jerome's, Chama; Erin Cook of St. Mark's, Cathedral, Albuquerque; the Rev. Canon Patty Soukup; Lexi Santos of Good Shepherd, Silver City; and the Rev. Madelynn Johnston, Vicar of St. Paul's/Peace, Las Vegas. (Photo by Mary Jewell). Not pictured, Ms. Jane Beth Libbey of St. Mark's, Albuquerque; Cynthia Vono welcome participants. (Photo by Dale Plummer)

Construction begins at St. Philip’s

The Rt. Rev. Michael Vono, Bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande, broke ground for construction at St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Rio Communities/Belen on April 26. The construction is the culmination of a long process of recovery for the people of St. Philip’s following the fire that destroyed the modular office and storage facility at the church last year. The Bishop was assisted in the ceremonies by Canon Liturgist, the Rev. Canon Patty Soukup.

The life of the Rev. Deacon Allan (Al) Richard Ruth was celebrated at St. Chad’s Episcopal Church the afternoon of June 4, 2016. He was honored with full military honors following the services in the church.

Allen was born in New Britain, CT and was the third born of seven children. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1959, was commissioned as an Office, and was married on the same day. He later earned two Master degrees in civil engineering and business administration. Lt. Com. Ruth retired from the U.S. Navy in 1979 and went on to two successful careers with Honeywell and the State of Florida. He was also a member of the Rotary Club International for more than 30 years. Allen was Ordained a Deacon in the Episcopal Church in Florida in 2002—one of his proudest moments.

He is survived by his wife Ellen of nearly 57 years; his children Deborah Price and husband Wade and their children, Cameron and Alyssa, of Everett, WA; Lt. Col. USAF Allen Charles Ruth and wife Colleen and their daughter, Adrienne, of Columbus, MS; and Lani McCarson and husband Tim and their son, William, of Albuquerque, NM. Allen is also survived by one brother, Marc Ruth and wife Monica, of Torrance, CA.

Known as a “Prince” by people that knew him, Allen was always a gentleman and had a true love for his family and church. He will be truly missed.

The Rev. Deacon Allen Richard Ruth April 7, 1938 – April 30, 2016

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Faith Communities offer Hope and Action

By Sr. Joan Brown, OSF
Director of NM Interfaith Power & Light

It is heartening to see more and more people of religious traditions making connections with their faith and the need to be stewards of Earth and witnesses to climate change action. The national Interfaith Power and Light meeting in Washington, DC in May revealed so much good work and a lot by Episcopalians!!! New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light (NMIPL) commends all of the Episcopal Congregations taking action. I would love to note several that stand out.

St. Mark’s on the Mesa, Albuquerque is taking their wisdom from becoming an in-house LLC in order to install solar panels to other faith communities including the Monuments in Albuquerque and Christian Reformed in Gallup. They also continue to work on energy efficiency in their facility.

St. Bede’s, Santa Fe is currently utilizing the NMIPL no interest loan fund and other sources to work on large plan of energy efficiency moving into solar. NMIPL is pleased to have Robin Bloom of that congregation serving on the NMIPL board.

St. Thomas of Canterbury, Albuquerque continues stewardship of creation as they investigate solar for their house of worship. In the meantime, they continue to be aware of education, worship and action to care for God’s creation. Their Rev. Sylvia, their rector, is serving on a committee to plan an interfaith worship service for World Food Day, October 16. This service will connect the concerns of food justice and climate change. Keep your eyes peeled for further details.

In addition to the Interfaith World Food Day service in Albuquerque, NMIPL will be working with volunteers to coordinate interfaith services in other parts of the state. NMIPL will offer a workshop and action aids for the service. Let us know if you are in another part of the state and interested.

Actions you can take

NMIPL continues to offer postcards encouraging federal legislators to act for $750 million funding for the Green Climate Fund for adaptation and mitigation to assist brothers and sisters who are suffering from climate change repercussions around the world.

We are also still inviting faith communities and individuals to sign up for the Parn Pledge and Beyond to reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2030 and 100% by 2050. On the NM scene we continue to work for strong guidelines addressing methane pollution and waste around the EPA methane guidelines. NMIPL has a petition that you could pass around in your congregation or community.

Let us know how we might serve you with information and resources regarding energy efficiency, solar, events, speakers or advocacy actions.

May the summer months remind us of the beauty of God’s creation. Their Rev. Sylvia, their rector, is serving on a committee to plan a workshop and action aids for the service. Let us know if you are in another part of the state and interested.

Workshop Writes Iconic Archangel

Because of the overwhelming appreciation from our Bishop Michael Vento and the 2015 Episcopal Convention held in Albuquerque, The New Mexico School of Sacred Arts held a 7-day Iconography Workshop hosted by The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Silver City, NM, and its rector, the Rev. Paul Moore.

Icon Instructors Lin Marksbury and Pat Catlett explored theology, meditation, and technique of praying with and creating an Icon in the ancient Byzantine style, using egg tempera on a gessoed wood board with the Good Shepherd community. Eight of us completed an Icon of an Archangel.

Journey with Jesus through His Land and Time

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Jordan

February 19 – March 3, 2017

$4,445 round trip Albuquerque – Tel Aviv

Additional single supplement $800

Father Scott Ruthven and Deacon Beth Noland will lead their sixth visit to the places where Jesus and the prophets walked more than 2,000 years ago.

Plans for this visit include exploring the famous red-rock city of the Nabataeans in Petra, Jordan, where the famous temple of “Raiders of the Lost Ark” was filmed. Free time is built into the itinerary, and evenings will include teaching and sharing in the quiet beauty of our accommodations and their surroundings.

Father Scott, Deacon Beth and the Khoury family of Shepherds Tours know this land well. They are in the business of seeing that their clients fully enjoy their experiences. The bus driver and guide carry cell phones and can communicate at all times. Fr. Scott, Mary Jo and De. Beth have been to the Holy Land many times and your safety and comfort are their foremost concern.

Tourism is flourishing in the Holy Land. There are many good background books and guides, among them The Christian Traveler’s Guide to the Holy Land by Dryer and Hatteburg, and O Jerusalem! by Collins and Lapierre. Call Deacon Beth at 505-345-0851 with questions.
The registration fee is $165, which includes two nights lodging and five meals at The Bosque Center. Those who live nearby may register as commuters for $80 and save the cost of lodging. Join us for dinner Friday night for $16, and stay for the speaker meeting.

Registration forms are available from churches in the Diocese and from Fr. Richard Murphy – frrichardsf@gmail.com. The Serenity Retreat has been an annual event in the Rio Grande for many years, and this 2016 Serenity Retreat continues that history. It is one of the primary ways we reach out to support those whose lives are touched by addiction and substance abuse.

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Spanish Broom (Spartium junceum) The Bosque Center
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