

# NEWS FROM

# Celebration!

## A People Serving the Church

Fall 2007

### Transition to a Still Place in a Busy World

Autumn is a time to take a deep breath and re-establish the still place in our community life. The summer was busy with visitors, community and local events, including a dramatic flash flood on the fifth of July.

It was a great joy to have lots of “little visitors” all at the same time. Graham and Jen Farra came with Owen, Stephanie McKeown Tubman brought daughters Gwenyth and Fiona, and Companions Martyn and Jen Hawkes introduced Anya to the Community ethos where they first met. Companion Phil Dinwiddie, Jen’s brother, and his wife Melanie stopped by on their way back to Michigan. An interruption into this family gathering was the flash flood



*(L to R) Stephanie, Phil, Fiona, Gwenyth, Owen, Jen*



that turned Franklin Avenue into a river and almost washed away one of our cars. We, along with all the other residents, received care packages of brooms and mops from the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, as we sluiced out basements and began the repairs and, even longer term, the recovery.

Our conference, led by Kevin Hackett, explored forgiveness. (see p. 4) We were full to overflowing with a greater

number of local people than ever joining with us. So our overnight accommodation could have taken more participants, if only we could add to the dining space. Here we are only a couple of years down the line with our wonderful chapel and hospitality center and we seem to be pushing at the walls!

The busy summer over, we are now taking time for our own personal and community retreats and annual vacation time. The verdant world of Beaver County reminds us to respond to the God of creation as it, too, celebrates a fruitful summer in a flurry of red and golden leaves before hunkering down to renew itself in the quiet (and usually snow-covered) season of winter.



*1st row: Jen, Anya, Gwenyth, Stephanie, May, Fiona (in front), Mary, Owen, Jen, Mimi*

*2nd row: Martyn, Joe, Steven, Graham, James, Michelle, Bill*

## Annual Conference June 20 - 22, 2008

### MY NEIGHBOR – A GIFT OF GOD

#### Relating to those who are different from us

The Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF, is an Episcopal priest and Pastor of the Church of the Atonement, Bronx, New York. Born into an interfaith family (Christian and Islamic), and a professed member and pastoral officer of The Third Order, Society of Saint Francis, he has acquired a profound appreciation for the many ways people experience and relate to God. His work invites persons to discover the *everywhereness* of God – the ways God can be experienced in persons and places beyond ones expectations. He serves as a member of the Liturgical Commission and was recently appointed Chair of the Episcopal-Muslim Relations Committee of The Episcopal Diocese of New York.

Events in the USA and Internationally, including 9/11, have forced many of us to consider, and to reconsider, our attitudes and opinions about “the other” regarding race, ethnicity, culture and religion. Many of us who previously felt secure within the realm of those “like us” are increasingly challenged to think about and even interact with those who differ from ourselves.

What does the Christian tradition and spirituality have to offer us in our quest to be faithful to God, as we understand and know God, and yet to be appreciative of those whose faith and practice are so different from our own? This conference will guide participants through a process of reflecting on and discussing some of the core precepts of Christian faith and spirituality to work towards responsible, practical responses to our current reality.



### The Women's Program

Our new autumn program returns to a past topic, *Wellness*, and Marcia Lehman, a local friend of the Community, will help Alison lead the Monday sessions. Companion Nancy O'Leary will join Alison in facilitating *Crafts* on Thursday mornings. Some women, after their release from jail, have continued contact by visiting the Uncommon Grounds Café, a local ministry of the Church Army. The friendship and respect they experience during their brief times at Celebration often prove to be a spark of support for trying to reclaim a healthier lifestyle.

### GOAL

Global Outreach for Addiction Leadership has now firmly established its office on the first floor of All Saints House, 801 Franklin Avenue. Companion Terry Webb, founding organizer of GOAL, is now handing over the executive reins, and new permanent staff is bringing an added dimension to our life as some join noonday prayers and share their concerns and their fellowship.



*Steven and Executive Director Grace Kizzie at the office blessing*

### UK News

Margaret and Phil Bradshaw, members from England, joined us in August to meet with our Episcopal Visitor, Bishop Christopher Epting, and stayed over for the Labor Day House Party weekend. We discussed a number of issues of mutual interest, including plans to travel together when Bill and May are in Britain this autumn for the annual Community Trust meeting. Phil and Margaret's trip to Israel earlier this year has led to a number of spin-offs, including an Advent course in their own church on the current situation between Israelis and Palestinians. They have also been invited to lead an Alpha weekend in the Hague in November.

## Aliquippa Impact Ministry

Aliquippa Impact Ministry (AIM) has worked for three summers with children and youth from Linmar, a local neighborhood with major educational challenges. Volunteers, all young adults from Toccoa Falls College in Georgia, live in one of our row houses. They spend the summer developing and implementing supportive programs and interacting with the children, and occasionally with the parent(s). The local Crestmont Alliance Church is home-base for many of these intern missionaries.



*An "Electric Slide" ice-breaker with Aliquippa youth*



AIM's founder Joel Repic and his wife, Chelsea, moved into one of the row houses after their marriage last January. Their home became the focal point for a weekly youth group gathering during the summer months. We are encouraged by the extra activity that comes with this type of reaching out.

As a parting gift, the AIM volunteers gave us an entire day of work time to help spruce up our property, and we could hardly keep up with their energy level!

## Summer Activities



*Enjoying games of Kubb throughout the summer*



*Jam session with Joe and Hilary (Church Army Intern from Canada)*

*Grilling the old-fashioned way*



*Firing up the Earth Oven*



*Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day... any excuse for a backyard picnic!*



*Here comes the pizza*

*In September we had a grand celebration in honor of Maggie Durran's 60th birthday, complete with a live jazz guitarist and five of her friends from England.*



## Reflections on the Annual Conference



*Teaching session*

Family and friends from near and far came together for the Community of Celebration's Annual Conference on June 15-17, 2007 in Aliquippa. This year we were blessed with the topic of "Seven Times Seventy: The Practice of Forgiveness" and graced with the presence of Kevin Hackett, SSJE, as our speaker, facilitator and wise teacher.

Kevin set the foundation for the weekend with the theme that forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel and that Jesus embodies the ways of forgiveness. The highlight was the word of God as a "living word" and he emphasized being open to new life-giving insights, new learnings and new awareness in scripture. In Biblical times the Jewish Scriptures were never discussed in a

"once-delivered, final-document-mindset." Rather, the Hebrew Scriptures

were openly debated, argued and discussed at length and seen as inexhaustible. Kevin underlined, "When reading the Bible, be very careful when you strongly identify with the good guy, because you are probably missing the point of the story."

An example of sorely needed clarification, illumination and re-naming ("how you call it matters!") is Luke 15: 11-32. Kevin launched us into this text and gave us new awareness of "The Parable of the Father's Love," most commonly (and erroneously) known as "The Prodigal Son." What a refreshing approach as we learned how "prodigious" the father's love was: extraordinarily loving, extraordinarily compassionate, forgiving and abundantly generous. This text is all about the persistence of the search and the longing and anticipation of the father to have his son return safely.

Having discussed the meaning and substance of forgiveness, we then explored some concrete and practical applications in our own personal relationships, our communities and the present geo-political struggles in our world. Forgiveness starts in human relationships and its vital and creative power is



*Small groups in the backyard*



*Gathering for worship*

greatest when situations seem most hopeless. We cannot change another's heart and we cannot force anyone to accept forgiveness from us—so we are really talking about changing aspects of ourselves and letting go of resentment. A lack of forgiveness chains us to the past and keeps good things from happening in the present.

In our war-torn world, Kevin gave a simple clarion-call: one who uses violence to counteract violence becomes a violent person—the cycle just keeps repeating itself. There is no future without forgiveness, individually, in the community and globally.

*Marcia Lehman*



*2007 Conferees*



*Some actually find craft activities relaxing*