# NEWS FROM Celebration!

A People Serving the Church

Spring 2005


## ACE Women's Training Project update

One of our biggest adventures of the past few years started with the partnership with John Stanley and the Church Army and has included engagement by Community members in the efforts to bring new life to people in Aliquippa, our neighbors. Less than two years ago we began the ACE Women's Training Project. For up to two sessions each week, Alison Stanley, assisted by May McKeown, has led a program offering new opportunities to local women. To date, most of our women have come on work release from the county jail.

Many women whose lives have been blighted by poverty, violence and abuse have missed out on education and personal development and have lost all hope of turning themselves and their children around. Simple activities designed to help them achieve new skills or reflect afresh on their own lives can be the beginning of a complete turnaround.



*Alison and friend at work*

Alison has discovered her own skills in quilt making and for one morning each week taught the women the craft, using sewing machine, choosing the fabrics, joining the patches and adding a border. One woman wrote at the end, "I enjoyed Celebration. By doing and finishing a quilt I feel I actually accomplished something, a product to see. The women give me inspiration for everyday. I can't wait for the next session."

Marcia, a friend of Celebration, ran "Wellness, let it begin with me." She led the group in exploring stress and anger management, recognizing the effects in our bodies and at each session covered some information about nutrition. The women enjoyed using the chapel for meditation and with their own noonday prayers were

*(Continued on page 2)*

## All Saints House

By the middle of April, All Saints House (owned by Maggie Durran, our friend from England) will be home to its first guests. The second floor is being remodeled to create new guest spaces.

Right now work is moving along with James fitting new doors, Bill painting and Maggie's sister, Phyllis, visiting from England, fitting new blinds to all the windows.



*Maggie and Phyllis*

Within days we will bring in furniture, make the beds, put flowers on tables and a youth group preparing for confirmation from a church in Ohio will move in for their pre-confirmation retreat.

By then, the garden of All Saints House will begin to reward the effort invested in it as the daffodils come into bloom. As the summer progresses we have more bookings that will occupy the space, our first new guest spaces for some years, reflecting the increased interest from many of you for spending time here in fellowship or on retreat. This new space gives us much more opportunity to accommodate groups from churches that may have their own program to run using our facilities. Also we can accommodate the growing demand from people wanting to join our conferences and Celebration-led events. We do enjoy having our friends with us in our own chapel and homes rather than having to go away to a conference facility.



*Guest room in All Saints House*

*(Women's Training Project, continued)*

keen to pray for one another. A very special Valentine's Day breakfast was a treat with fresh fruit and fresh baked muffins. Marcia also helped the group look at the "five languages of love" in their own lives: how we give and receive love in quality time, acts of service, words of encouragement, gifts and physical touch. It struck a chord with the women who explored their own feelings quite deeply. To round the course out, Marcia introduced a little physical activity in aerobic exercise and a drumming circle.



*May and friend at work*

In the past few months we have received several generous donations to the ACE Women's Training Project. From England we received two gifts totaling nearly $4,000 and friends in the US have donated $1,500. We received a grant for $2,500 from a Pittsburgh-area bank and a local foundation is considering the project for a grant of $12,000. This latter will enable us to move the project into the first floor of All Saints House where a large room will be adapted to accommodate computers as well as the craft-based and personal development programs we have already built up.

We want to extend the ACE Women's Training Project to new sessions and larger numbers, especially reaching out to local women who, like those from the jail, have very little hope in their lives just now. So please pray that the local grant comes through and do consider whether you can make a donation that will improve facilities and provide materials for the women and their children in All Saints House.

## Reflections on the life and ministry of Susan Abbott



*1936 - 2005*

"How I wish I might have been there to present her before the throne." These words, spoken by the late great Tommy Tyson when his wife died, resonate with me about our beloved sister-in-Christ Susan Abbott. How honored I would have been, or any who knew and loved her, to be there at her presentation before the throne of God.

Susan's remarkable life of loving service was many-faceted, offering a kaleidoscope of colorful gifts to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She has been described as a woman of great faith, a role model for women in the Christian walk. She possessed tremendous wisdom, but was always gracious in her manner. She believed the Lord in other people, and they sensed that. As a spirit-led teacher she gained the respect of men in an era when few women were accepted in roles of spiritual leadership. One man credits her with changing his whole attitude about women in ministry, based on their shared teaching experience.

Her practical skills were no less impressive. She was an accomplished multi-tasker before the term evolved. She could cook a meal for a household of twelve, coordinate schedules and offer pastoral counsel simultaneously – without burning the beans! Always attentive to basic needs in the faith community where she lived, she helped organize a vegetable co-op at Church of the Redeemer, to enable ministering households to function economically and with good nutrition. (They used to call the two of us the "greens queens" because of our love of green leafy vegetables, *and* we made a few converts along the way.)

When I first met her, Susan Bassett was a young single woman, a Spanish teacher in the Houston public schools. Her romance with Gordon Abbott blossomed into marriage at about the same time that the renewal movement at Redeemer blossomed into a rich experience of community. For this reason their wedding stands out in my memory as a terribly exciting moment – not only for them, but for all who shared it. It showed us what could happen when an entire faith-community pools its resources of time and talent to celebrate an event, which in a real sense belongs to all. It was beautiful – from flowers, to music, to food; and it did not break the bank - neither theirs nor ours!

Reaching out to bless those in the neighborhood around us was a natural avenue for Susan's linguistic gifts. She transformed a fledgling literacy program into evening classes where English as a second language was taught to many. Not only that, but she authored a book for use in this teaching program. Later, during her years in the U.K., Susan touched many lives through her wisdom and empathy as a counselor.

Certainly she was one of those "five talent" persons to whom Jesus referred, one who went out and invested her gifts, leaving none un-used. "Well done," says the Master to such faithful servants. "Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Betty Pulkingham
April 2005

Bright colors are a hallmark of the Church Army's Community Café. Work is approaching completion. Soon and very soon...



*John Stanley discusses the progress with Dennis, Bill and Phyllis*

## Palm Sunday



*Palm Sunday gathering outside All Saints House*



*Processing into the Chapel*

## Easter Vigil





Saturday night's Easter Vigil was full of rejoicing in the Light of Christ.

(Yes, Zac's hair really was blue.)







David Gustafson, a carpenter as well as a pastor, has made a Paschal Candle stand to be used in our Easter celebrations, beginning with this year's Vigil.

We are enjoying the large icon (39 x 40.5 inches) of the Old Testament Trinity written by Companion Rose Krupansky. It complements the two smaller icons written by Rose during her time with the Community.





All of you who have visited will be familiar with the rock that bubbles with water at the entrance to our chapel. It is symbolic of the traditional font at the door of the church where newcomers were baptized into membership. An enormous joy to all of us last year were the baptisms of Luke, Ben and Zac Stanley at our 'font.' They are not newcomers to the community but newly determined to make their own statements of faith.



*Alison and John with the newly baptized*

# 2005 Annual Conference

## A Healing River: Exploring Restorative Justice

Spring has arrived in Aliquippa. As the snow disappeared the first snowdrops and crocuses burst into bloom and we breathed in the fresh air and began the detailed tasks of what will be a very busy summer of events and visitors.

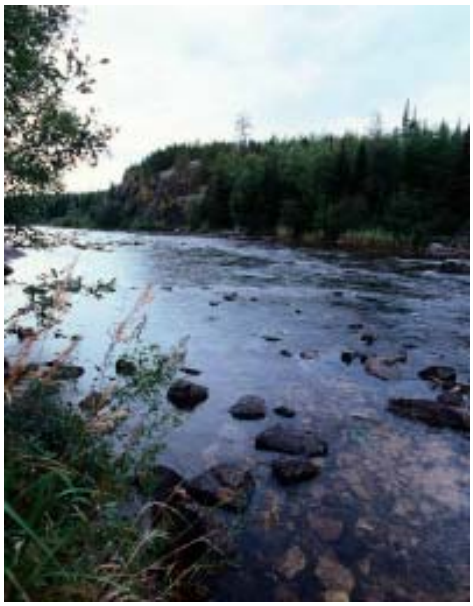
Having a redemptive approach to the troubles of our world and our society enables us to hold our heads above the potential to despair at the inhumanity and waste that wars and social ills bring to bear.



Dave Gustafson will lead our conference this summer from June 10th to 12th, with a one-day event on the same theme on the 13th. Dave moved on from the Community of Celebration in the UK to train as a pastor and is now Co-Director of Fraser Region Community Justice Initiatives Association in Canada.

Restorative justice is the challenge of Dave's work and the principles and practice will be explored at the conference. Crime and conflict violate people and relationships and the restorative justice approach looks at the obligations and liabilities that are present if healing is to take place in those relationships. Both those who have caused harm and their victims have a part to play if good is going to be re-created. Communities seek to find ways to mend the rifts in their life that result from conflict, crime, and other destructive offences.

Dave Gustafson will share real life stories of people and events, and conferees will have the opportunity to explore not just the theological and philosophical roots of restorative justice but also the methods that lead to healing, rehabilitation, treatment and trauma recovery.



*A Healing River: Exploring Restorative Justice* is a challenging theme, and one that, in the turmoil of our world, is another sign that spring follows the winter of waste around us.

# Notes

After struggling for several years with MSA, a debilitating neurological disease, Susan Abbott died peacefully on February 19th. (See *Reflections...* on page 2)

Steven McKeown continues as interim priest at St. Paul's, Steubenville, Ohio -- a position he began in August 2004.

Bill and Mimi Farra welcomed Owen Randall Farra, their first grandchild, on February 17th.

Since our last newsletter Phil and Margaret Bradshaw, who maintain a Celebration house in the UK, have visited old community friends in Australia and New Zealand, and participated in several UK reunions, including a visit from Edward and Sherrell Prebble. In addition to Phil's writing work, they continue to be active in parish ministry, most recently as part of a Lenten course entitled *The Power of Small Choices*. Recently retired from her job, Margaret is finding many ways to stay busy.

Please pray for Mimi Farra this summer. She is having her left knee replaced with an artificial joint, matching the right knee she had replaced three years ago. We all joke about her 'bionic' knee but know that the summer will be a struggle until her leg heals.

# 2005 Schedule

Trinity Episcopal Church in Findlay, Ohio is sending a group of young people for a pre-confirmation retreat.

The Diocesan Commission on Racism, led by Bishop Henry Scriven, has scheduled a day workshop to look at strategies the church can undertake to combat racism.

St. Peter's Church in Hamden, Connecticut will bring a group of young people led by the Rev. Sandy Stayner, former member of Celebration, for a weeklong program.

The Celebration Annual Conference in June will be led by Dave Gustafson. The topic is Restorative Justice.

September will begin with our Annual Labor Day Houseparty. Everyone is welcome to join in relaxation and reflection together. We sing and pray, renew and refresh our relationships, have fun, and eat lots of good food. Do think of joining us.

Sounds like a busy program but there are spaces and we could fit in further groups if your church has need. We also welcome individuals on retreat or vacation.

For information, contact:

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