



# The Mike

The Newsletter of St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Studio City, CA

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 9 • October 2010

## Love or Fear, Heaven or Hell?

By the Reverend Canon Mark Shier

Sermon given at St. Michael's on August 29, 2010

So, has it been hot enough for you this week? I could make one of those preacher jokes you read on the internet about a hotter place, but I don't think I will. I've never thought fear, even fear of hell, to be a good motivator. Fear twists and deforms the person who is fearful, limiting their life, rather than enlarging it. Love, on the other hand, invites the candidate into a larger and larger life. It, too, remakes the personality but in a creative, beautiful sense that leads the person to even greater joy. That is why God tries Her best to motivate us with love of Himself and love of our neighbor and love of our self, rather than fear of hell. Love is so much more powerful than fear. And love is eternal, whereas fear (thank God!) eventually ceases.

All by way of saying that the Gospel of Jesus Christ invites us with love rather than threatens us with fear. Jesus, the supreme realist, talks of a hellish state of soul where the person is turned in upon himself and indifferent to the reality and presence of others, including the Ultimate Other, God. God, Ultimate Gentleman or Ultimate Lady that He is, will not force a human soul to something even as lovely as salvation. So there is the real possibility of an eternal turning in upon oneself, an eternal refusal of the divine invitation to join the party of the rest of creation. That eternal separateness is hell, cut off from God and from every one else, and it is a fearful, painful state of soul, both here and hereafter.

But the way you hear some Christians talk about God and human life you would think that God has made the human race just to see how many He can catch in sin and lock up forever in hellish torture, how many souls God can dangle by a slim thread over the yawning pit of hell. There are, of course, the lucky few that escape and manage to scrape into heaven, but they are the exception. And when some Christians talk about this sort of thing, one has the feeling that they are disappointed that even these few escape everlasting punishment (all except themselves, of course).

Now contrast that attitude with orthodox Christian teaching. God, who is supremely happy within Him/Herself, who does not need anything outside of Himself to be happy, loved the possibilities in Her mind of what we know as creation, the universe, or maybe many



universes. So, out of love for what could be, God created—set off the Big Bang, or whatever wonderful, energy that evolved eventually into sun, moon, and stars, Andromeda and Jupiter, aardvarks and zebras, Andrea and Zebedee. And God was so infatuated with this creation that He arranged for some of it to escape its inevitable running down, the ultimate death of universal entropy at the end of time. This is what the theologians call heaven, the kingdom of God, salvation. The words don't matter, but the concept does. Some parts of a beautiful, glorious reality escape the inevitable running down of the universe's batteries.

So the second crucial question (after the first one is answered, that is, that God cares enough, is infatuated enough, to save for eternity)—the second crucial question is who or what gets to escape the universal death of entropy, the running down of things? Who or what gets to be with God forever? Traditional Christian thought has answered human persons and angelic persons. I'm also plumping for dogs, cats, turtles, polar bears, pandas, butterflies, roses, redwoods, agates, carnelians, whatever. I'm hoping that every kind of creature is transformed into an eternal, what-Saint-Paul-calls-spiritual, reality. That is, our essential and complete identity is preserved and enhanced, to be with God forever. And all because of love, because of God' infinite infatuation with us, Her creation.

The next part of this issue is what percentage of the possible candidates gets to be eternal? Only a few, or lots, or all? Twisted Christian

thought says only a few and even they have to work hard at becoming worthy, usually giving up anything that is beautiful and pleasing. Orthodox Christian thinking, relying on the expression of that incredible love that began the creation, says all, or virtually all, persons get to be with God forever. The mechanism for this is not the efforts of those who are candidates for eternity but rather the love and determination of God. God wants us to be with Her; all we have to do is trust that desire, trust God—what the Church calls faith. We get to be with God forever, not by being good, but by being trusting. And the evidence for that trust is the simple fact that we are, that we exist, when we didn't have to. Creation itself is an incredibly powerful sign of God's love. (By the way, being and acting good is not irrelevant, as goodness reinforces the power of trust, as well as helping to create the world that God wants. Goodness doesn't get us into heaven, but it sure reassures us that God is on our side, thus releasing wonderful, creative energies in ourselves for God's purposes.)

But there is even more, the mysterious event and reality we call Jesus Christ. In this human being, the Church sees God continuing God's creative energies. God inserts Himself into  
*See LOVE OR FEAR, page 2*

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## Love or Fear *from page 1*

Her creation in a particularly focused fashion that continues and transforms the original creative energies. In Jesus Christ, the universal, salvific energies of God become particular in a way that we can know and love. And through this particularity, we are taken up into God's universalism. Neat, huh?

Now I have to admit something to you. This is not the sermon I set out to compose. But I started early in the week with a throwaway line about the heat and ended up with this meditation on heaven and hell, hate and love, not even on today's scripture readings. Just goes to show you that you can never tell where you will end up when a theologian begins to cogitate about something even as common as the weather. Thank God for the moderating effects of oceans and swimming pools and air conditioning. Do you suppose that these are all signs of God's love?

In closing, let us pray for those who shall choose a rector for this parish: Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The full text of Canon Shier's sermons at St. Michael's may be read at [www.stmikessc.org/sermons\\_index.htm](http://www.stmikessc.org/sermons_index.htm).*

**As you do your weekly grocery shopping, remember these items that are always needed by the North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry**

*Canned fruit and vegetables.*

*Baby food in plastic jars.*

*Tuna.*

*Peanut butter in plastic jars.*

*Powdered milk in individual packets.*

*Individual size snacks.*

*Bags of dry beans and rice.*

*Plastic and paper shopping bags.*

*Diapers and feminine hygiene items.*

*Travel-size soap, toothpaste & disposable razors.*

*And money!*

## October Birthdays

### Day Name

3	Caitlyn Fields
4	Diane Collins
5	Bruce Rankin
6	Irene Gibson
9	Justin Adams
13	Emily Magers
15	Marjie Hathaway
16	Rodney Dickson
18	Peter Stenquist
24	James Benjamin
26	Ging Molera
29	Kristyne Moulton
31	Kyra Grace

## October Anniversaries

### Day Name

1	Bill & Karen Haddock
3	Ging Molera & Amador Rondilla
10	David & Melissa Basta
24	Andre & Louisa Herrmann

**Should you be listed here?** Or, if you wish to leave your birthday or anniversary unpublished, give the church office a call or e-mail ([administrator@stmikessc.org](mailto:administrator@stmikessc.org)) to let us know. *Please Note: Birthdays and Anniversaries will be celebrated on the last Sunday of each month.*

## Thanksgiving for a Job Well Done

To: Jane Wilson, the Community Outreach Projects Committee, and all those who helped make the Angel Awards dinner such a wonderful event.

Margie Mullen for all her work to make Welcome Back Sunday such a success.

*Please give these individuals heartfelt thanks for their contributions.*

*In the months that follow, the Vestry will continue to recognize the gifts of work and time that help keep St. Michael's a beautiful and useful campus, and a thriving parish.*

**Read the MIKE Online! All you do is go to the website, [www.stmikessc.org](http://www.stmikessc.org), and click on "THE MIKE ONLINE." Back issues are available there as well. And while you're at the website, you can shop at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) through its link. St. Michael's gets a small rebate for each purchase made through this link.**

## Blessing of Animals

**Sunday, October 3, at the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist**

***Invite your four-legged friends  
and your two-legged friends as well!***





## From the Vestry

Anne Kelly, Senior Warden  
David Connors, Junior Warden

By David Connors



As the sunny days and warm nights of a Southern California summer turn into the sunny days and warm nights of a Southern California fall, it gives me cause to reflect. I remember the autumns of my youth in the Mid-West where, from the end of August through the beginning of November, there actually was a significant change in the weather. For me, fall was a very exciting time. In September there was the back to school excitement of being in a new grade and a year older as my September birthday kicked off the academic year. October, November, and December each had a big holiday at the end of the month. The time seemed to creep by as there was so much anticipation for each big celebration. Now, I seem to blink (it used to be twice, now it's just once) and we seem to have gone from

September to Christmas.

As I reflect on this current fall and St. Michael and All Angels, I am again filled with joy and excitement. I love the Sunday services and the fellowship after each service. Choir has resumed and I can again collectively raise my voice in anthems and hymns of praise. The many outreach activities are great fun to attend and they allow me opportunities to connect with more of my fellow parishioners.

When I look around the congregation, it is evident that God is taking such great care of St. Michaels and that we are exactly right where we are supposed to be. The Rector Search Committee has met a number of times. With input from the Vestry and the entire congregation, they are finalizing their search criteria and search process.

Very soon they will be meeting with a representative from the Bishop's office to begin looking at three candidates.

Stewardship season is upon us and Consecration Sunday is October 10, 2010. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to examine how I want to contribute to God's work through the ministries of St. Michaels. I have the opportunity to give back to God in thanksgiving for all that God has done for me.

As the hot days and warm nights of summer gradually turn into the hot days and warm nights of autumn, I give thanks to God for St. Michael's. We are a very loving, spiritual community dedicated to doing God's work. I feel truly blessed to be able to worship in the midst of such a strong community of faith.



## Treasurer's Corner *Margie Mullen, Treasurer*

### August 2010—Revenue and Expense Summary

	August Actual	August Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Total Revenue	\$ 26,390	\$ 28,255	\$214,842	\$228,634
Total Expense	19,906	30,076	271,997	307,665
Net	\$ 6,484	(\$ 1,821)	(\$ 57,155)	(\$ 79,031)

## The Healing Comfort of Pastoral Care

By Betty Ferrell

The lay ministry of pastoral care at St. Michael's is like a warm and comforting quilt of many patterns and colors. The "quilt blocks" of our pastoral care include lay Eucharistic visitors (LEVs) who have been very busy in recent months serving our parishioners in their homes, hospitals and other care settings. The LEVs offer communion and prayer but most of all they offer a caring presence in times of illness and distress. These visits comfort the person receiving communion but all would agree that the LEV is also blessed by the experience of sharing God's grace.

Another very vibrant quilt block in our pastoral care has been our Prayer Shawl volunteers. When this ministry began we had no idea of the comfort these shawls would provide to people facing crisis and illness. Our shawls have been given to those just confronting a new illness, those facing surgery or

chemotherapy, to bereaved family members and to those amidst a life transition. Each shawl is blessed by our congregation and given with a written blessing. We are so fortunate to have the dedicated volunteers including Charlotte Oliver who leads this effort and to all the knitters whose care is woven into each shawl.

Some blocks in our caring quilt of pastoral care are subtle, sometimes going unnoticed but vital to our ministry. Tom Heuer provides services to the elderly residents at Studio City Convalescent Home offering great love and ministry to these often isolated men and women. Others in our parish offer rides to church for those who otherwise would not be able to come worship with us. Their small gesture of a ride to church is an enormous act of kindness.

One of our more recent blocks in our quilt of care is the Healing Prayer group lead by Rae Markus and Kathleen Taylor. Their ministry offers prayer and

fellowship and is a ministry of presence.

Pastoral care is woven together by so many individuals who by washing wigs, driving, delivering meals, knitting and praying are creating an amazing quilt of comfort.

As we begin our church year and members consider ways to deepen their connections to our parish and their commitment to Christian life, we encourage you to become a part of this quilt. Your life will be blessed.

### November 2010 MIKE Deadline

Please send copy and/or pictures via e-mail to administrator@stmikessc.org by Tuesday, October 19. If you don't have a computer, bring your articles to the Parish Office by that time.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

# Bob and Sarah Thomas

By Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey

In 2002 Sarah Thomas was a stay-at-home mom looking for a toddler group for her two-year-old daughter Hailey Grace. Once her daughter was safely enrolled, she began asking herself what she was supposed to be doing with her life.

Having worked for eighteen years as a preschool teacher and later assistant director at Wagon Wheel Preschool in Hancock Park, she had a lot of ideas about early education but no idea what to do with them. Where to begin?

She confided to her husband Bob, a successful businessman who provides marketing and public relations services for manufacturing and technology companies that she wanted to start a "Toddler and Me" class.

He offered his full support. "Working with children has always been Sarah's passion," he said. "And she has the academic credentials (a BA in child development from Cal State LA and an associate degree from Pacific Oaks in Pasadena) and the experience to go with it."

Sarah had heard that the school at St. Michael's had closed and thought there might be empty classrooms she could use. She called the church office and Peter Ackerman answered. He invited her to meet with him and look over

the campus. "Peter was so kind and so helpful," Sarah remembered. "I told him I didn't really know what I was doing and he gave me the confidence to begin."

Sunnyside opened in 2003 in one room with two toddlers. Sarah's strong belief in play-based learning soon attracted other parents and afternoon classes were added. At the end of two years, there were two hundred families enrolled.

"We've never advertised. We've always relied on word of mouth," Sarah said. "In the beginning the church wouldn't allow us to have a sign. Parents would complain they couldn't find us. But now we like the fact there's no sign. We feel very safe and sheltered here."

The presence of the preschool is a gift that keeps on giving to St. Michael's. As the school has expanded Bob and Sarah have made visual and valuable improvements to the campus—building a choir room, refurbishing Sunday School rooms, and, most recently, installing a new lawn on the quadrangle.

They have also lent enthusiastic support to our community outreach programs, providing art supplies for Big Sunday, teddy bears for Get on the Bus, gifts for Holiday Cheer, and food for the



North Hollywood Food Pantry.

As the toddlers in the early years grew older, the parents urged Sarah to continue their education through preschool up until kindergarten. The year-long school now occupies seven rooms and has a staff of twenty-one people. The waiting list was so long that this fall Bob and Sarah opened a second facility—Sunnyside Preschool—Sherman Oaks.

Though it is only location that officially connects Sunnyside—Studio City with St. Michael's, our shared values provide a strong spiritual connection. "We are a community of families who value diversity," Sarah emphasizes.

And we at St. Michael's value the many contributions of Bob and Sarah Thomas to our community.

*(This article is the first in a monthly series by Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey)*

## Volunteering for PRISM

By Margie Mullen

In the spring of 2009 Catherine Wager asked for volunteers to go to the Men's County Jail to help with the weekly Eucharist. From my Catholic background, I thought that meant handing out communion and I envisioned many volunteers in a line across the front of a prison chapel giving communion to hundreds of prisoners. I figured, hey, I'm an acolyte. I know how to do that, so I volunteered, but not being one to ask a lot of questions before jumping in, little did I know.

PRISM is a diocesan ministry and part of the St. Michael and All Angels pastoral care committee. I am uncomfortable taking communion to our parish elderly who do not know me, but for some reason, I am very comfortable taking communion to prisoners. Once a month a few of us carpool to downtown L.A. to help Dennis Gibbs, Chaplain of the Episcopal PRISM ministry. There are usually a number of other volunteer chaplains from other parishes, as well.

We are first admitted to the jail and escorted to the Chaplain's office where we get our assignments for the day, usually a certain floor and cell block where we are to say the Eucharist from prepared Sunday bulletins, much like ours at church.

We are escorted to our assignment area where prison trustees help us put together the room, usually 25 plastic chairs and a square table. From the Chaplain's office we have brought a Eucharist kit to use: altar tablecloths, crucifix, battery-operated candle, pre-consecrated hosts, CD player with church music and 25 bulletins.

The prisoners on the floor are notified that church is available for those who want to attend. Most don't want to attend, but some watch from behind the glass walls. Those that do attend are respectful and ready for prayer. Usually just one of us goes to a floor to lead a service, but sometimes we double up. For the August visit, I prepared a short homily of 3-5 minutes based on the gospel for the day. We worked in teams

that day and I was teamed with Betty Ferrell who led the service and I read the Gospel, preached on it and handed out communion. When each reading was read by a prisoner, Betty then solicited thoughts on parts that she thought were meaningful. (By the way, the guards are behind us in a glassed-in 360 degree room.)

I find it very interesting that I am so comfortable doing this ministry, looking forward to it each month. I do not know why this speaks to me — maybe my life as a juvenile delinquent and my parents' warnings about where I'd end up. Mostly I think it involves a curiosity that I have had in the last 10 years since I was the unintended victim of a gang bullet that shattered my left leg. The police never caught the shooter and although I am still very afraid to be out at night, I am at peace in the jail. I know I forgave the man many years ago, but just in case he is there for something else, I get to be of service to him.

For more information on PRISM, go to <http://ministries.ladiocese.org/prism.html>.



# The Calendar

October 2010

**Sunday Schedule** • *Sunday Services are 8:00 am (no choir) and 10:30 am (with choir) in the Sanctuary.*  
 • *Sunday School (Godly Play, Middle School, Sr. High, and Adult Forums) and Adult Choir begin at 9:30 am.*  
 • *Children's Church begins at 10:30 in the Blue Room and the children are brought into Eucharist for the Peace.*  
 • *Coffee Hour immediately follows the 10:30 am service unless otherwise noted.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<b>1</b> 12:00 NOON Fourth Quarter Luncheon (CO)	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b> Pentecost 19 <b>Blessing of Animals</b> 12:15 PM Healing Prayer Gathering (FR)	<b>4</b> Francis of Assisi, Friar, 1226	<b>5</b> 7:00 PM Transition Management Team (CO) 7:30 PM SMCOP (YL)	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (MR)	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 8:00 PM Lit.Up! (PH)
<b>10</b> Pentecost 20 <b>Consecration Sunday</b> 12:00 NOON Consecration Sunday Luncheon	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 7:00 PM Finance Committee (CO)	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 7:00 PM Search Committee (CO)	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> Pentecost 21 12:15 PM Healing Prayer Gathering (FR)	<b>18</b> Saint Luke the Evangelist	<b>19</b> 7:00 PM Vestry (UR)	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (MR)	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Saint James of Jerusalem
<b>24</b> Pentecost 22	<b>25</b> 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl Group (YL) 7:00 PM Prayer Shawl Group (YL)	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Saint Simon & Saint Jude	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> Pentecost 23 <b>All Hallows' Eve</b> 12:15 PM Pastoral Care Committee (FR)						

*Locations:*  
 CO: Church Office  
 CR: Choir Room  
 MR: Music Room  
 FR: Fireside Room  
 PH: Parish Hall  
 UR: Upper Room  
 YL: Youth Lounge  
 S: Sanctuary

# Community Outreach News

By Jane Wilson

## Lit.Up!

The next show will be at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 9th, in the Parish Hall and stars Scott Carter, Beverly Sanders, Lou DiMaggio, Loretta Fox, Stirling Gardner and Wendy Wilkins. Hosted by Gary Lucy. This month's theme is "Little Creatures" and the box office will be going to North Valley Caring Services, a poverty center in North Hills serving one of the poorest communities in the Los Angeles area.

## Angel Awards

Thanks to all who helps us pull off another highly successful dinner and ceremony. We are getting closer and closer to raising the funds needed to place solar panels on MEND poverty center in Pacoima. A special thanks to the following: Betsy Meiman, head of St. Michael's Solar Outreach Project, SMCOP Committee Members who helped David Rosenberg. Louisa Herrmann. Betty Ferrell, Betsy Meiman, Charlotte Oliver, Paul Reese, Meredith Rimmer, Gail Wright and Nancy Woods. Mary Ann Jacobson and Norma Johnson for their awesome desserts. Cynthia Mazza for the appetizers. Invitation Design by Gary Lucy (art) and Lauren Azeltine (layout). Program Design by Pete Handelman, Technical Set-up/Operation by Hank Meiman and the wonderful DVD Presentation by Bill Haddock. Thanks also to Gail Green, Liz Mullen, Eddie Mullen, Alex Morales and David Conners for help with the mailing and set-up, Ging Molera for helping us with clean-up, Rodney Dickson for his wine donation, Melissa Basta for the gorgeous angel necklaces/keychains she helped Betsy create for the awardees. Thanks to Gail

Green and Diane Collins for donating their lovely artwork to the silent auction as well as Ed Sugar's donation of framed pieces. Thanks, too to Ed and Leonard Harmon for all the press they did for the event. Very special thanks to Duane Steadman for all the extra work he does in the office to help us with this huge event and to Margie & Liz Mullen, Jon Albert & William Hendley and Amador Rondilla for their amazing financial contributions.

## A Special Plea!

We really need folks to join St. Michael's Community Outreach Projects. Our numbers a little small right now and we have so many things to accomplish in this next year. If you've ever considered taking on a leadership role in our endeavors to serve people living in extreme need, we need you. We are especially in need of some very focused team leaders for Holiday Cheer, our annual outreach event for moms and kids. Please do come to our meetings and jump right on in!

## Put It on Your Calendar

Next SMCOP meeting: Tuesday, October 5th, 7:30 p.m., Junior High/Project Room  
Sunday, October 17th: planning session for Holiday Cheer  
Sunday, November 21st: final day of food collection for North Valley Caring Services  
Saturday, December 11th: Holiday Cheer, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Questions/Comments: Call Jane Wilson 818.267.4058.

## Sing With Us!

By Kristen Toedtman  
Music Director

Whether from the choir loft or from the pews, we want you to enjoy the pleasure of singing. In fact, our choir member Stephen Billington shared a beautiful passage on singing from William Law's "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life" (c. 1700) recently, and I thought it absolutely necessary to share it with all of you. On singing psalms, Law says:

"Whilst you only read it you only like it, and this is all; but as soon as you sing it, then you enjoy it, you feel the delight of it; it has got hold of you, your passions keep pace with it, and you feel the same spirit within you that seems to be in the words. If you were to tell a person that has such a song, that he need not sing it, that it was sufficient to peruse it, he would wonder what you meant, and would think you as absurd as if you were to tell him that he should only look at his food, to see if it was good, but need not eat it: for a song of praise not sung, is very like any other good thing not made use of. You will perhaps say, that singing

is a particular talent, that belongs only to particular people, and that you have neither voice nor ear to make any music. If you had said that singing is a general talent, and that people differ in that as they do in all other things, you had said something much truer.... But it is full as just for a person to think himself excused from thinking upon God, from reasoning about his duty to Him, or discoursing about the means of salvation, because he has not these talents in any fine degree; this is full as just, as for a person to think himself excused from singing the praises of God, because he has not a fine ear, or a musical voice. For as it is speaking, and not graceful speaking, that is a required part of prayer; as it is bowing, and not genteel bowing that is a proper part of adoration; so it is singing, and not artful, fine singing, that is a required way of praising God.... Our blessed Saviour and His Apostles sang a hymn; but it may reasonably be supposed that they rather rejoiced in God, than made fine music.... He therefore that saith he wants a voice or an ear, to sing a psalm, mistakes the case: he wants that spirit that really rejoices in God, the dulness is in his heart, and not in his ear.... Secondly,...as singing is a natural effect of joy in the heart, so it

has also a natural power of rendering the heart joyful."

So please, sing heartily and fully and connected to the spirit within you each Sunday! If you'd like to sing with us from the front of the church, please contact me [kristentoedtman@gmail.com](mailto:kristentoedtman@gmail.com) or 323.496.1502 to discuss the schedule.

We're working on a lighter schedule to save funds for our church. That said, the paid singers were left OUT of the budget this year, counting on us to raise the needed funds. I've shaved off \$1,350 needed for the remaining 4 months of the year, but we still need \$5,000 to keep our choir intact. Will you help us? For a \$25 donation, you'll be a part of the *new* Friends of St. Michael's Music group and will be supporting one hour of pay for a section leader (\$100 will cover an entire week!). We'll then keep you in the loop on everything Choir (!) and promise you a CD compilation at the end of the year *plus* an exclusive invitation to our end-of-year potluck dinner. Please write your checks to St. Michael's with FRIENDS OF MUSIC in the subject line and we'll be forever grateful. Want to adopt a singer? \$100 gets us one fine singer for one week (rehearsal and service), and gets you a 'thank you' in Sunday's bulletin.

See you Sunday!

# House of Bishops Issues “Theological Resource,” Pastoral Letter on Immigration

## Episcopalians should respect migrants’ human dignity, differences of opinion on policies

*From Episcopal News Service*

The House of Bishops, at the conclusion of the September 16–21 meeting in Phoenix, told the Episcopal Church that the starting point for any effort towards immigration reform begins with “an obligation to advocate for every undocumented worker as already being a citizen of God’s reign on earth and one for whom Christ died.”

The statement came in a 17-page document titled “The Nation and the Common Good: Reflections on Immigration Reform,” ([http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/HOB\\_theological\\_resource\\_on\\_immigration.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/HOB_theological_resource_on_immigration.pdf)) which is meant to be used as a theological resource on migration and immigration.

The document was issued with this accompanying pastoral letter:

### A Pastoral Letter from the House of Bishops

Phoenix, Arizona, September 21, 2010

*There shall be for you and the resident alien a single statute, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you and the alien shall be alike before the Lord. You and the alien who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance* (Numbers 15:15-16).

*So [Christ] came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God* (Ephesians 2:17-19).

Dear People of God,

Throughout our meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, we have reflected on the immigration crisis facing our host state, the United States, and all nations globally. A number of us visited the United States-Mexico border and saw first hand the many troubling and complex issues that face migrants, immigrants, the border patrol, local ranchers, and Christian communities seeking to minister to all of these groups. We are also mindful that similar border issues confront other nations represented in The Episcopal Church, especially countries in Europe, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and Colombia and Ecuador.

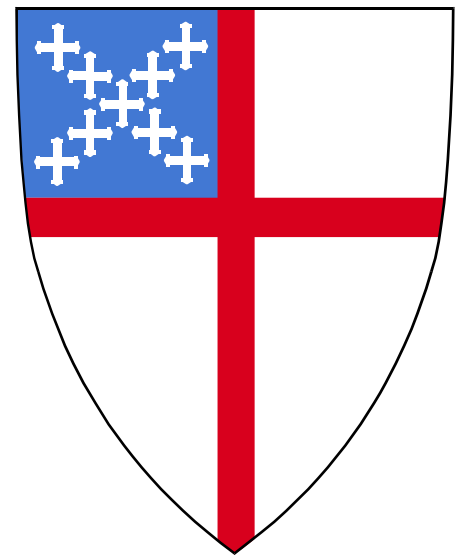
Holy Scripture teaches us that all human beings are made in the image of God, and that Jesus Christ gave his life for all people. Furthermore, both the Old and New Testaments declare the importance of hospitality to resident alien and strangers, a hospitality that rests on our common humanity. All human beings are therefore deserving of dignity and respect, as we affirm in our Baptismal Covenant (Book of Common Prayer, p. 305). So our gracious welcome of immigrants, documented or undocumented, is a reflection of God’s grace poured out on us and on all. In this light:

(1) Ours is a migratory world in which many people move across borders to escape poverty, hunger, injustice and violence. We categorically reject efforts to criminalize undocumented migrants and immigrants, and deplore the separation of families and the unnecessary incarceration of undocumented workers. Since, as we are convinced, it is natural to seek gainful employment to sustain oneself and one’s family, we cannot agree that the efforts of undocumented workers to feed and shelter their households through honest labor are criminal.

(2) We profess that inhumane policies directed against undocumented persons (raids, separation of families, denial of health services) are intolerable on religious and humanitarian grounds, as is attested by the consensus of a wide range of religious bodies on this matter.

(3) We call on the government of the United States and all governments to create fair and humane immigration policies that honor the dignity of people on all sides of this issue. In the United States, we seek a reasonable path to citizenship for undocumented workers; a plan to reunite families; and a viable system for receiving temporary or seasonal guest-workers, with clearly identified points of entry. These measures would free the United States border patrol to concentrate its efforts on the apprehension of drug traffickers, terrorists, and other criminals, and not on ordinary people who are simply seeking a better life for themselves and their children.

(4) We acknowledge the duty of governments to protect their people, including the securing of borders. The church has always respected this duty, which is grounded in government’s Godgiven duty to protect innocent people and



punish wrongdoers (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

(5) We recognize that racism and bigotry impact debates over migration and immigration. The Episcopal Church is committed to the eradication of all forms of racism, and decries the use of racial profiling in the arrest of persons suspected of being undocumented.

(6) We confess our own complicit sinfulness as people who benefit from the labor of undocumented workers without recognizing our responsibility to them. We passively tolerate an economic and political system that accepts this labor from millions of undocumented workers, and which has received approximately \$520 billion in social security revenue from them--revenue from which they will never benefit. Yet at the same time we treat them as a threat.

(7) We do not discount the concerns of our fellow citizens regarding the danger uncontrolled immigration poses to our safety and economic well-being. We insist, however, that these concerns be approached within the broader context of a national commitment and covenant to inclusion and fellowship across all lines for the sake of the common good.

(8) We take seriously our commitment to and responsibility for our fellow citizens, as we strive to face the spiritual, moral and economic challenges of life in all sixteen nations represented in The Episcopal Church. We call on our fellow citizens to remember that the good of a nation lies beyond its own self-interest, toward a vision of a humanity restored in Jesus Christ, for in him “you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

(9) We offer for additional study a theological resource, “The Nation and the Common Good: Reflections on Immigration Reform.”

God’s grace be with us all.

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### Vision Statement

*We are a welcoming and evolving community of conscience engaged in the renewal of our faith by embracing diversity and encouraging growth through prayer, scholarship, social action, and artistic endeavor.*

### Our Mission Priority

*Our mission priority is to focus on the United Nations' First Millennium Goal: To eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.*