

MECA

The Newsletter of the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association

Mission – IV

By the Rt. Rev. Edmund Sherrill

MECA is pleased to print this thoughtful response from Bishop Sherrill to Ian Douglas's series on Mission. Bishop Sherrill writes, "Although 50 years have passed since I was a part of the clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts, I have kept in touch a bit through my sister, Prue, and her husband, my classmate at ETS, Mason Wilson, Jr. Mason recently sent me a copy of the Newsletter of the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association featuring an article on Holy Orders and mission by Professor Ian T. Douglas. This response may add to the furthering of the Companion Relationship between the Diocese of Massachusetts and the IEAB." Those who wish to respond directly may contact Bishop Sherrill by E-mail at: edsherr@iis.com.br and may reach Ian Douglas at: douglas@episdivschool.edu.

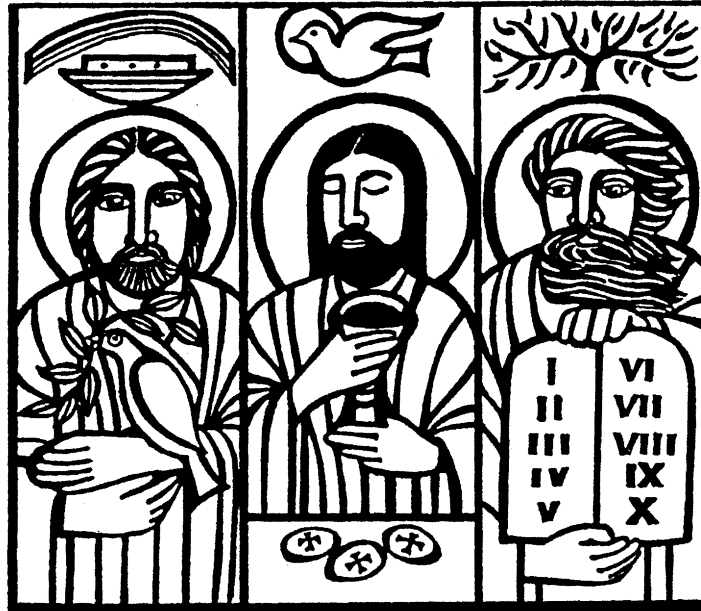
Ministry and Mission

These two words refer to a single reality. The mission can be conceived as the divine objective and the ministry as our human response, but, in any case, there is no alternative objective, nor are there any exemptions from ministry for Christians. The constant perception of the twin reality of mission and ministry must mold and override all distinctions of gifts, orders, functions, and vocations in the Body of Christ. The measure of anyone's faith, the proof of anyone's spirituality, is taken by the evidence of obedience in mission and ministry. The one

question is, what are we doing to respond to the love of God for all the world. Therefore, it is important in every aspect of the life of the Church from liturgy to administration, from teaching to prophecy or martyrdom, not to emphasize distinctions to the degree that the single objective is forgotten, or obscured, or hampered. Indeed, there do exist clergy and laity, bishops, priests, and deacons, monks, nuns, and all the rest, striving to fulfill their various purposes. In the light of universal mission and ministry, the resolutions, canons, and customs that regulate their interaction in the Anglican Communion as a whole, and in the Episcopal Church in particular, require a more radical reformation than is suggested by Professor Douglas.

Priesthood

As a missionary bishop, I have been led to perceive that a lot of the trouble one faces comes from the priests. So do most of the blessings. Priests are pastors more truly and regularly than the bishops because they care for the persons, adults and children, in our parishes and other congregations, communities in which the vast majority experience the Christian life. Someone, (my memory tells me it was Mr. Speaker Sam Rayburn), once said, "All politics is local". How much more the spiritual life, which is a relationship to God and to the person right beside you! In the New Testament texts it is difficult to perceive the distinction between bishops (overseers), and presbyters



Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent ministers of a new covenant.

2 Corinthians 3: 5-6



(elders). It is true that the bishop has an indispensable role in the selecting, preparing, and commissioning of those in holy orders, but only with the active participation of others, especially priests. The identification and liberation of gifts of the Spirit normally occurs in a parish or other local group such as a college Christian association under the guidance of a priest. Identifying gifts, recruiting and preparing persons for ministry is a primary responsibility of any priest, not to be left to a bishop or Commission on Ministry.

Although the priesthood is the most important of the orders composing the clergy, it is my impression that there are too many priests in the church in the USA, most of them associates or assistants. Ideally, a priest, presbyter, elder, is a locally anchored bishop or overseer, enjoying the confidence of his diocesan bishop and his fellow priests as well as that of the local laity, considered sufficiently experienced to preside over and guide one or more communities that may contain any number of members. The multiplication of assistant priests tends to obscure and impede the development of the ministry of deacons and of the many forms of lay ministers. An obvious restriction here is the limitation

to priests and bishops of the celebration of the Eucharist. The Archdiocese of Sydney in Australia is one place where the extension of this function to other orders including to the laity has been under discussion. A better proposal would be to extend it to deacons under the direction of the local priest-in-charge with the specific license of the bishop, and for a given time and place, which also combats the impression that priests and bishops monopolize this activity because they are of a superior spiritual nature than merely baptized Christians. Certainly the following suggestion from the article by Professor Douglas is worthy of serious consideration: “.the Episcopal Church should consider ordaining individuals to serve in one or more of the offices of priest, deacon and bishop without necessarily serving in the others.” Persons should be ordained as priests when clearly called to preside in one or more communities of the faithful, not because they have concluded a course of study or served time in some other order of ministry.

Diaconate

For years we have been hearing that the diaconate is a venerable and necessary order which ought to be “restored”. This objective will not be reached while it continues to be used as a preliminary and probational initiation to the priesthood. There lies the importance of Professor Douglas’s recommendation that qualified persons be ordained to all three orders directly, as the case may be, under changes in the canon law that can be designed to include appropriate safeguards. A person should be ordained in response to a divine and specific vocation, not *en route* to one. The key to the significance of the order of deacons is not communication and interpretation, which applies to all orders, but service through Christ to the needy, as enshrined in tradition. Such service may occur in the work of a deacon as an agent of the Church under the direction of a bishop or priest, but, more importantly, may represent the recognition by the Church of distinguished service to the Lord outside any ecclesiastical institution. Men and women who attend persons in need or peril or suffering of any of the innumerable sorts and conditions in this world: health care personnel, lawyers, teachers, social workers, for example, and who know themselves called as servants of Christ in these activities, may be ordained as an affirmation of spiritual gifts already exercised and as a strengthening of such gifts through the common prayer of the Church. Deacons of this stamp would be most instrumental in helping the bishops to see the world as their diocese, and the priests as their parish.

None of this will lead us anywhere unless the great importance and dignity of the diaconate is appropriately

integrated into the councils of the church. Deacons must be represented in equality with priests in synods, conventions, commissions, and the like. No doubt some form of affirmative action would be necessary to bring this about over time. In the article prepared by Professor Douglas we read:

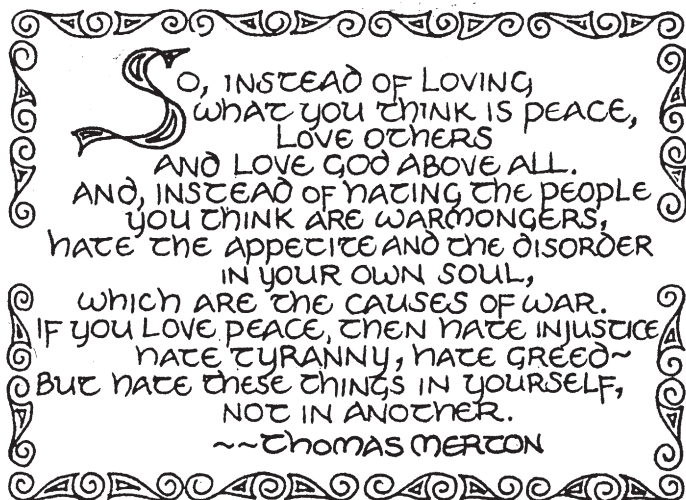
“Over the last few years the diaconate in Massachusetts has been restored as a full order in and of itself. The diocese’s ordination handbook delineates the difference between individuals called to lifelong service as deacons and those persons who are called to the priesthood but must serve, by canon, as transitional deacons for about a year. This emphasis on the diaconate as a unique and full order in and of itself has begun to liberate the diaconate from its associations with the priesthood.”

Why not change the canon?

Episcopate

As Episcopalians it is appropriate to conclude with a consideration of the office of bishop. The work of bishops varies greatly. I grew up in the house of a Bishop of Massachusetts and was accustomed to see Dad home for supper, at least while on activities in his diocese. I became the Bishop of Central Brazil in 1959, a territory as large as the continental USA, that is, without Alaska, with perhaps one twentieth of the members in eastern Massachusetts in a population of one hundred million or so.

My childhood memories were not much help. During the twenty seven years of my active episcopate, I tried to keep as priorities two major objectives: autonomy, that is, freedom from dependence upon the church in the USA, and national mission, the embracing of responsibility for mission throughout a large and increasingly unified country. These objectives were never unanimously accepted by the church in Brazil,



nor are they to this day, but the pursuit of them by many persons in all orders of ministry has certainly transformed the “Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil” both nationally and as a participating province of the Anglican Communion.

Bishops must make choices indicated by personal preference and vocation, the advice and consent of colleagues and others, and an estimation of the possibilities of their dioceses. A bishop should see “the world as his diocese”, but the extent of such a vision imposes selection. As an example, Almir dos Santos was chosen some years ago to be the Bishop of Brasília, a diocese including the Federal District with its millions of inhabitants plus huge sparsely populated but fast growing areas to the north and west. The Federal District alone is a field that could well occupy all a bishop’s time and energy. Nevertheless, with the support of the Synod and his own clergy and people, Bishop Almir has chosen as a priority the founding of new mission stations and missionary dioceses in territory not previously reached. The point here is to avoid just going through established motions and maintaining a *status quo*. The specific responsibility of a bishop is to preside, which means to require that options be identified, priorities accepted, and procedures adopted to pursue them. Selection risks division, which invokes the bishop’s vocation to maintain unity, perhaps more by establishing direction and movement than by trying to squeeze people together.

The Anglican Communion has made a great deal of the collegiality of bishops and accorded an ample reputation to the Lambeth Conference. Efforts have been made to include the other orders of the church in the perspectives of world mission, but with indifferent results. I recall the Anglican Congress in Toronto in 1963 as an experiment which foundered in part due to the disproportionate participation and power exercised by archbishops and bishops, even though some, but not enough, distinguished persons were present from clergy and laity around the world. It is imperative that the grip of the Anglican Episcopate on matters of world mission be loosened so as to take better advantage of all the richness of experience and the untapped creativity of Church members around the globe.

In recent years in the Church of Brazil we have seen more than one occasion in which bishops have continued on in the exercise of jurisdiction when, due to illnesses in the cases I have in mind, they should have been substituted. Of course it is important to protect clergy leadership by tenure, but by tenure that can be abrogated more easily than the canons I know of provide. Also, we have examples such as the Deanship of EDS where bishops in full command of their gifts and

talents have found it possible to resign jurisdictions and serve in that capacity. More diocesan conventions should be encouraged to give serious consideration in the election of a bishop to candidates already serving as such somewhere else. In our world of constant change, bishops, like other people, should be able to make a contribution and then move on, or out.

Conclusion

I am sure that hundreds of persons who care about the church could come up with better suggestions than those presented above. I wonder how many agree with me that in terms of obedience to mission the Episcopal Church is not doing very well. Ours is a church too much governed by habit and too easily satisfied with token commitment and partial obedience. A revision of the theology of Holy Orders and an accompanying reformation of their use would be a good way to begin to do better.

Dear Bishop Sherrill:

Thank you very much for your excellent, well-reasoned, and well articulated response to my article "Mission III" published in the MECA Newsletter. I do hope you had a chance to see the two previous articles on mission, as the three were presented together as a whole at last fall's clergy conference here in Massachusetts.

I am honored that you would take the time to respond to my thoughts. All I can add to your response is a loud AMEN and ALLELUIA!

As a student of the foreign mission work of the Episcopal Church, I have known for years of you and your ministry in Brazil. It is no surprise that you, as one of the Episcopal Church's last true missionary bishops, not only support my ideas about mission and holy orders but in fact offer even more radical suggestions. I have found that the most expansive, most creative, and most courageous ideas about what God is up to and how the Church should respond often come from missionaries who have served outside of their home contexts. Your response is yet another example of the wonderful gifts that missionaries have to offer to the Church here in the United States. Thank you so very much.

The only clarification I might add to your response is that I think it was Tip O'Neill (my own Congressman from North Cambridge) that said "All politics are local."

If you ever come to Massachusetts, I would love to sit down and talk with you further about mission and the Episcopal Church today.

Faithfully yours, Ian



Finding Our Way: A Christian Perspective

**A statement from
the Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold**

All through these many months of debates and discussions about our government's policy and actions toward Iraq I have expressed my opposition to war. Joined by leaders and members of other faith communities, I have supported the alternatives to war that would both address the legitimate concerns of our nation and recognize that war at this point is not the solution. At what appears to be the eleventh hour, I remain convinced that military action is the course of last resort and could have unintended negative consequences beyond our imagining. I do not believe it an exaggeration to say that decisions made now will affect our global future for good or ill.

Over these last weeks an undercurrent has entered the debates and discussions that I might describe as the "God factor." I have read and heard a great deal about how religion, and faith in God, bear on this situation. In one sense, this is welcome in that people of faith are obliged to bring their perspectives to matters of public policy. At the same time, to invoke God's name and assume God's blessing on our acts is not something that can be done in a spirit of self-justification, but rather in

a spirit of humility and constant openness to being led into deeper understandings of God's desire.

"FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NOR ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, SAYS THE LORD" (ISAIAH 55).

Our images of God's ways and God's will are rooted in the Bible. Scripture, however, contains different understandings of God and God's will. As Christians we look to the view which is most faithful to the life and death of Jesus Christ. God sent his Son to reconcile the world and its people to himself and to show us how to live into the fullness of our humanity. In Christ we see power surrendered in favor of vulnerability, service to others, and a compassion and love for his enemies that leads him to the cross.

I am deeply disturbed that some Christians are animated by notions of a God of vengeance and retribution, and adopt simplistic views of good and evil. The task of people of faith, indeed those of the three Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—is to point us all toward a God abounding in compassion and love for each one of us. What are the implications for us, the followers of Jesus, as we ponder the present situation? How do we see ourselves as a nation? How is our national character—historically marked by generosity, mutual respect, and a love of freedom--being shaped by our present experiences?

Following the terrible events of September 11, 2001 and the outpouring of expressions of solidarity from people around the world—many of whom experience the effects of terrorism daily—I had hoped that we as a nation would come to a new consciousness that would enable us to see ourselves less in terms of "offended power" and more as belonging to a vulnerable and interdependent global community in which we are called to bear one another's burdens and share one another's sufferings. Since that day I have said that as our nation is a superpower, we are also called to be a super servant genuinely concerned for the welfare of the world beyond our own perceived self interest. Those who argue for war have said that war can be an act of service to the global community, and religious language is employed to justify such an action.

How can this be when war would have a profoundly damaging effect upon countless innocent people? How can this be when war would further fuel the anger and frustration so many people around the globe, far beyond the borders of Iraq, feel towards our country?

Instead of waging war, our faith calls us to wage reconciliation. This involves the demanding and difficult challenge of loving our enemies and embracing policies of generosity of spirit that build up the global commu-

nity. I am also concerned that the call for war and the attendant rhetoric have profoundly polarized our nation. Anxiety and self-preoccupation have become a way of life and we are fast losing our ability to see ourselves as part of a global community. Critics are dismissed as unpatriotic and nations that fail to do our bidding are ridiculed and demeaned. Our national spirit is being slowly poisoned. This may be Osama bin Laden's greatest triumph.

From my office window in New York I can see the United Nations building. These days every time I glance at it I say a prayer for its members, particularly the members of the Security Council, that they may be imbued with God's care and love for our world. Prayer is a dimension of peace-making in which we can all engage. Prayer unites us to God and works in us the mind of Christ. Prayer is an invitation from God to open ourselves to God's larger desires for us and for humanity and all creation. Prayer can liberate us from our biases and fixed points of view and lead us into a new space where God's perspective is able to transform and enlarges our own. God's care surrounds both our men and women in the military, now in Southwest Asia, and the people of Iraq as they face ominous possibilities. I therefore invite all members of our church to observe the worldwide candlelight vigil on Sunday, March 16 at 7 p.m. in their local communities and to consider similar observances at all liturgies during these difficult days. I know that President Bush is a person of prayer. And I pray for him every day. Today, I have made a request to him that he meet with me and other Christian leaders at this crucial time. As fellow members of Christ's body, we very much want to share our perspectives with him and to join with him in prayer that we may be faithful to the ways in which God is inviting this great nation of ours to be a blessing to the nations of the world.

**The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold,
Presiding Bishop and Primate
March 13, 2003**

MECA Seeks Nominees for Officers and Board

All MEA members are invited to submit nominees for the election of officers and Board. You may nominate your colleagues or yourself. Please submit your names to co-presidents, Peter Chase and Ann Franklin by April 10.

Peace Actions

Contact the diocesan website www.diomass.org for more resources.



Will You Wear The Name of an Iraqi Child Next to Your Heart?

Bishop Steven Charleston, President and Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) in Cambridge,

Massachusetts announced the school's call to conscience action in response to the growing crisis between the United States and Iraq. EDS has created a series of peace pins on which the name of an Iraqi child and a dove is printed. These pins are designed as a visible reminder of the human cost of armed conflict.

To request a pin, please contact Episcopal Divinity School at 617-868-3450, extension 377 or, via email at peacepins@episdivschool.edu. Please include your name and mailing address. The pins are free, although donations to help cover production and mailing costs are welcome and may be sent to Peace Pins, Episcopal Divinity School, 99 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Contact your local officials to express your views on the war.

Peace Demonstration if/when War starts

Government Center, Boston

Vigil will be held the same day at 5 pm if attacks begin *before* noon E.S.T. If attacks begin *after* noon E.S.T. vigil will be the next day at 5 p.m.

For more information contact the diocesan website.

Drop Food, Not Bombs

There is a Boulder Colorado Mennonite Church that is organizing a mail protest to President Bush. It is important that as many people participate as possible and that they do this immediately. If you have a moment and can participate, here are the simple directions.

Put half a cup of rice in a sandwich bag. Squeeze out the air as you are sealing it. Put it in a standard business envelope with a note that says,

"IF YOUR ENEMIES ARE HUNGRY, FEED THEM."
— ROMANS 12:20

Please send this rice to the people of Iraq. Do not attack them.

Mail it to: President George Bush
White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

Reflections on Confirmation

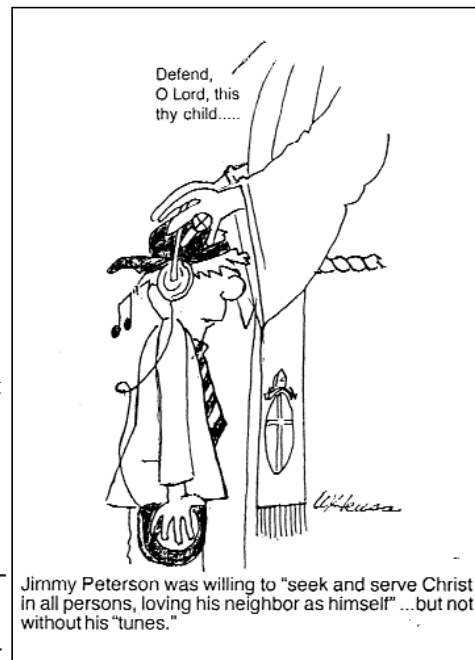
A fourteen year old gets up on Sunday morning at noon to an empty house. His parents are still at church and when they return home the son asks, "Why didn't you wake me up for church?" The parents are confused and say, "Well, you told us there was no God and that church was a hoax." "Yeah" says the son "But I thought you felt that

going to church was important enough to wake me up in the morning."

At the Fall Clergy Day we talked about confirmation and heard about a confirmand who told the bishop that the only reason he was getting confirmed was because his par-

ents had insisted on it. That did not surprise me. There have been days our children would not have been in school without our insistence. There have been times our children's diet would have consisted of bubble gum slurpies, and hydrogenated cheese puffs, had we not insisted otherwise. The one thing that I remember about my confirmation was that my parents, the bishop and the clergy were all insistent on something I was not sure of. Since then even this group have come to question the purpose of confirmation. "Why have confirmation in the first place?"

My brief encounter with anthropology 101 in college suggested that adolescent rites of passage are not so much about personal decision making as they are about corporate belonging. In our culture decisionism takes precedence. We appear to be stuck with the importance of the autonomous self making an adult decision in confirmation. This is an unusual expectation to make of an age group that wears tee shirts and shorts when it is 10 degrees below zero.



A few years ago a young person was confirmed at Saint Mary's. This person told me that reaffirming what was said at baptism was not as important as knowing there is a community that cares enough about him to insist on his belonging. For many adolescents one of the most important things in life is a sense of group identity. If the church can instill a sense of belonging where teenagers can feel at home, then it has accomplished an important mission. For many of our youth, the church has become a place like home which cares enough to insist on certain things. I think of this analogy as we approach the holidays, when the family gathers around the table—we want every member to be there. If Confirmation is the reaffirmation of our baptism it is because it insists on the importance of our belonging. That like it or not, there is a place where we belong and where each one of us is to be accepted as a sacred being of worth. If the only thing Confirmation provides is the sense that we are part of something larger than ourselves (and that our children are important enough to feel our encouragement) then it has accomplished something.

— Peter Chase

POSITION OPENING

Liturgical Coordinator and Cantor for the Celtic Holy Eucharist Saturdays at 4 pm at All Saints Parish, Brookline. Six hours per week. Please send application to: Rector, All Saints Parish, 1773 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02445 or email: rector@allsaintsbrookline.org or fax: 617-738-7501

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

An Egyptian woman is seeking employment with the hope that she could be sponsored while applying for permanent residency. Her husband is teaching at a local university as a part-time lecturer, and will be able to stay for another three years. The family has four children; three of them were born in the United States while the father was working for his Ph.D. at a local university.

She has a BS degree and has knowledge of computers and word processing. She likes office work very much. Currently she is working as a security guard.

The family loves the United States and they especially feel that there is a future for their children here. The oldest daughter is making high honors at the local high school.

Please contact Anne Overbeck at 781-749-6639 for further information.

PARISH SEARCH & CALL REPORT:

Go to www.diomass.org for more detailed information

CHURCHES INITIATING PROCESS

MEDFIELD, Advent
 MIDDLEBOROUGH, Our Saviour
 SCITUATE, St. Luke's
 SOMERVILLE, Christ Church
 SOMERSET, Our Saviour
 SWANSEA, Christ Church
 WEST ROXBURY, Emmanuel
 WRENTHAM, Trinity

CHURCHES IN SELF-STUDY:

*BARNSTABLE, St. Mary's Church
 *CAMBRIDGE, St. Peter's Church
 CHARLESTOWN, St. John's
 METHUEN, St. Andrew's Church
 *NEWTONVILLE, St. John's
 WEYMOUTH, Trinity Church
 WOLLASTON, St. Chrysostom's Church

(*Parishes about to begin receiving names – check website)

CHURCHES RECEIVING NAMES:

BOSTON, Church of St. Augustine and St. Martin: Rector
 MARLBOROUGH, Holy Trinity Church: Rector
 SHIRLEY, Trinity Chapel: Rector
 TOPSFIELD, Trinity Church: Rector (deadline 4/1/03)
 WHITMAN, All Saints' Church: Rector

ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT OPENINGS:

BOSTON, Trinity Church. Associate Rector for Adult Education. This is a full time clergy position with responsibility for all aspects of Adult Education and the full range of pastoral, liturgical and eucharistic duties. Send resumes to: The Rev. Pam Foster, 206 Clarendon Street, Boston, MA 02116.

NANTUCKET, St. Paul's Church. Assistant to the Rector. This is a full-time clergy position that includes responsibility for general parish and youth ministry. Send resumes to: The Rev. Joel Ives, P.O. Box 278, Nantucket, MA 02554.

WINCHESTER, Parish of the Epiphany. Assistant to the Rector. This is a full-time clergy position that includes responsibility for junior and senior high youth ministry as well as general pastoral duties. Send resumes to: The Rev. Rob O'Neill, 70 Church Street, Winchester, MA 01890.

The MECA Newsletter

Published five-six times each year, the Newsletter is sent to all clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts by the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association.

Membership dues for calendar year January 1-December 31, 2003 are being received now. Dues are \$100; \$70 for retired and part-time clergy. MECA members who pay the above dues receive ten issues of *LEAVEN*, the newsletter of the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations (NNECA). Membership dues (without *LEAVEN*) are \$40. No fee for clergy on disability retirement. Members are entitled to discounts at MECA-sponsored events; your dues promote communication among clergy through this newsletter and enable MECA to be a voice for clergy in the diocese and in the larger church.

Please put your check (payable to MECA) in the enclosed envelope and send to: The Rev. Claude A. Smith, MECA Membership Secretary, 160 River Street, Norwell, MA 02061. If you have any questions about membership, please call Claude at 781-659-7806.

The MECA Newsletter thanks Ann Hanson of Group One Graphics in Sudbury for design, the Diocesan Center for mailing labels, Minuteman Press for printing, and Handiwork Services in Chelsea for mailing. Address changes should be sent to the Diocesan Center, 138 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111-1319.

Articles and letters are welcome and subject to editing. Permission is given to copy this newsletter; please give appropriate credit.

MECA officers for 2002-2003 are:

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Treasurer:	Heidi Fieldston
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Alden Flanders	Priscilla Wood
Elizabeth Grundy	Clare Yarborough

THE NEXT ISSUE

The May/June 2003 issue will include "Clergy Respond to the War in Iraq" and further discussion of "Mission" and "Confirmation." Your articles are welcome on these topics and on other issues of your choosing. The deadline for the next issue is April 10.

Please send your typed manuscript to the Editor or send your article by email to:
rector@allsaintsbrookline.org with a copy to Ann Hanson at grouponegraphics@attbi.com.

MECA Newsletter

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