

MECA

The Newsletter of the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association

Mission to Nigeria

By The Rev. Deborah Woodward with Ms. Beatrice Nri-Nwolisa

Thank you to Dee Woodward and Beatrice Nri-Nwolisa for these "Reflections on Power and Hope in Nigeria." Please continue this discussion by email by contacting Dee at dmwoodward@mvfintry.com — Editor

If the church really does what it is supposed to do, there is going to be a big revival coming to the church globally. I am believing it. We are at the end time. The way the Lord is visiting this country, Nigeria will lead. Our primate is so evangelical and so vibrant. The Lord is using this man. The church came with power. The church will go out with power." The Rev. Canon Lemuel Ojih, Vicar of Emmanuel Parish, Enugu.

"Church makes us happy and gives us hope." This is why we come to church." Mrs. Christy Ukeagbu, of Abakpa Nike, a

suburb of Enugu, whose relatives attend Trinity Church in Randolph.

I and my co-missioner Beatrice Nri-Nwolisa have just returned from Nigeria. For 10 days in October, we are the guests of Emmanuel Church, Enugu Diocese, in Enugu State, 300 miles east of Lagos, where Igbo is spoken and the Biafra cause was lost but not abandoned. It is a congested land, hot and impoverished – yet a place of welcome and the home of a passionate church. We went to experience, in conversation and in worship, one parish church, in one place in the Anglican Communion. We went to discover what might be the source of that church's power, passion and purpose – why 3,000 people come to worship every Sunday morning? And now I wonder, "How shall I even begin this reflection?"

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— All photos and identifying descriptions by Dee Woodward.



"This is the newly constructed Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in the Diocese of Enugu, the Rt. Rev. Emmanuel Chukwuma, Bishop. It is designed in the round, Big Top Style, to accommodate evangelical worship and dancing and parades. It is quite nice, if unfinished, as is much of Nigeria. Also on the grounds is a grade school and parish hall. This is the norm for large parishes, to have residences, schools, and worship centers, water and, if possible, generators, within a gated, guarded compound."



The children from 'I Will Excel International School', Onitsha, Nigeria. "These children welcomed us with drums, an honor guard and a parade, as if the Queen had come to visit. The headmistress is Mrs. Uju Ifeome Nwaokike, the niece of co-missioner Beatrice Nri-Nwolisa. The city lies south of Enugu. Their school yard is an eroded red clay enclosure, behind barbed walls, in the midst of decay."

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

Mission to Nigeria

Continued from page 1



“These are the teachers at ‘I Will Excel’. The headmistress is to my right. Next to her is Beatrice.”

Shall I begin with the extraordinary hospitality? “You are welcome, you are welcome.” The Igbo word for “welcome” is a short one, “nno.” The generosity was endless, as was the kindness and courtesy of our welcome, by family, clergy, teachers, and by those who did not know us at all. Shall I describe the gifts we were given — the flowers, the dresses of gold lace and green silken damask, the meals we shared? Or perhaps the children at the primary school, standing at attention on their tiny parade ground, with drums playing to welcome us. Or the elderly gentleman at the crowded and confusing church service who gestured to the upholstered lay reader’s chair and said, smiling, “Sit here so you can see.”

Shall I begin with the burden of poverty? The crumbling infrastructure? The impassable roads? Unemployment, the despair of the youth, the long lines waiting for questionable fuel? Enugu State is one of the most densely populated in Nigeria, its 3 million people living in urban congestion, almost 1,000 per square mile. Despite plentiful natural resources, this is one of the most impoverished states in Nigeria, with 80% of households live below the poverty line of \$1 per day. This impoverishment results from rampant national political corruption. In Enugu, this oppression is compounded by post Biafran sectarianism and systematic marginalization by those in power. This is an oppressive poverty that is deepening, not lessening.¹

Or perhaps I should mention the subtext of fear, the barbed wire compounds — “be home before dark,” the checkpoints and the guns.

Or shall I tell you about parish? Describe to you the church compound? The compound, of course, has steel gates and high walls, enclosing the church buildings, worship space, secondary school, parish hall, the residences for the clergy, surrounding the interior gathering courtyard of baked red earth. The compound is always full of people, the daily meetings of women and men, the training programs for evangelists, afternoon and evening gatherings for the youth, and on Sunday, the

huge worship space, filled three times with passionate prayer, ecstatic music, and the promise of the eschaton.

The banner over the chancel reads “**Crossing the Jordan – to possess your possession.**”

I have the data. I have the stories. But what does this mean? I believe there are two words that drive the conversation, create the theology, fill the churches. The words are *power* and *hope*, neither of which the people have, not in this world, but only beyond Jordan.

Power and The Civil Order. Nigerian governance, such as it is, holds all power at the top, within the cartel of corrupt leadership. To break ranks is to be impeached or worse. No one breaks in, no one breaks out. The people are politically powerless and have abandoned hope. In fact, the country itself appears abandoned, with multiple unfinished buildings, collapsed bridges, mud and debris — the “land of unfinished business.” I think about the future and I ask the superintendent of the parish secondary school, Sir Frederick Ofoezi, “What is your mission?” He said that he wished to form young people who would walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and who would understand that “We have no powers of our own.” He was quite specific that their ability to add and to subtract was secondary to their understanding of whose they were. And no matter how specifically I asked the question, there seemed to be little concept that these young people might grow up to change anything.



“On a city block in the better part of Enugu, this is the residence of the Bishop, a chapel, meeting spaces, supplies of water, fuel, and a guard house.”

Yes, there is extraordinary concern for the youth. How will they survive, jobless, poor, besieged by cults, tempted by wealth, seduced by power? Yet most of the attention is given to the protection of their moral character, saving their souls, with seldom a word spoken about saving the world in which they live.

Power and Scripture. I am not as certain about the authority of Scripture. It was Bishop Chukwuma who told me to tell my bishop that Scripture alone is the foundation of faith. “We read the Bible differently,” I have been told by my parishioners. Yet it seems to me that it may not be how

Scripture is read, for instance, the use of proof texts, but rather what Scriptures are read, that is telling. There appears to be a selectivity that leaps from Old Testament law and prophets, from justice and judgment, directly into the eschaton of Revelation. The hope that is offered, becomes, therefore, the reward of eternal life which belongs to the righteous, those who have abided by the law and claimed the promise. "Crossing the Jordan – to possess your possession."

Power and Church. This church so reflects both context and culture that church and state might be, in some alien way, twins. This is a context where it is suicidal to be counter-cultural and so fire is being fought with fire. Law against law. Power against power. All authority and power belongs to God and then by appropriation, the episcopacy. My Lord Bishop lives in a palace, "The Lord's Palace." The new Cathedral is impressive, designed in the round, like an amphitheater, created for the dancing processions and powerful songs of evangelical worship. The roof leaks because the corrupt contractors supplied a weaker gauge of steel, but the vision is strong.

I look at the locus of power and I become concerned about the abandonment of all authority to God and, by devolution, to the person at the powerful top. I too believe in grace. And I believe that we have been given a mandate to care for this world, for the dominion here as well as the kingdom come – and I begin to wonder about theological balance and the capacity to hold this world in tension with the next.

Church and State. Although we did not witness this, we are told that corrupt politicians are allowed into churches to campaign for themselves and their parties, submitting the pulpit to politicians.

Hope in the Church. And so, people go to church to possess their possession. The ecclesia is the one place where they can, in community, safely, in some distant way, touch power. It is

the place that offers hope. In the midst of hopeless corruption, a theology of the eschaton emerges, manifested in the laws of righteousness, prophecy, and promise, calling for perfection, demanding evangelism, experienced as ecstasy — all of this leads across Jordan, while all the unfinished business of this life remains behind. Yet Sunday worship is joyous, full of welcome, dancing, song and delight — a gathering of happiness and garnering of hope.

And now these reflections come home to challenge me. I speculate, "It must be true that no church is 'context free'." Has there ever been a church that is not the child of its place and time, born of the needs of the people? And therefore, what would I be saying about the church in Massachusetts? Which part of scripture are we reading? Where is the power here? In whom, in what, do we place our hope? And I am frightened to think that anyone might think they have the full answer and have it all right. I come to believe that communion is dependent first on humility, and almost never on getting it right. I wonder, might it be that it is the process by which we order the church and do our theology, rather than the actual conclusions we draw, which pose the greatest challenge to the communion of reconciliation?

And so I ask, "My Lord Bishop Chukwuma, what comes next?"

And this was the last thing he said, "Everything comes next!" And I think he may believe apocalypse now. And when I look around his abandoned country, I can understand, better, what is driving this church.

— *Deborah Woodward*
is Rector of Trinity Church in Randolph.

¹ Estimates taken from *Transparency International: Nigeria, Improving Transparency... in Enugu State of Nigeria*, Dr. H. Assisi Asobie and Dr. G. A. M. Ikekeonwu, under the auspices of the Department for International Development, UK and Transparency International, 2003-2005.

Guide to Planning Mission Trips to the Gulf Coast

MECA is happy to share the following general guidelines for planning mission trips to the Gulf Coast developed by Katrina Relief Task Force Coordinators Barbara Stowe and Carol Kingston. Barbara and Carol provide these guidelines in the hope that the parties sponsoring a mission trip can make most of the arrangements. As the Diocesan Coordinators, they are happy to give guidance but will not be providing administrative support on a regular basis. You can reach them at 617-482-4826 x 354, or by email at bstowe@diomass.org. Please see the December 2005/January 2006 and April/May 2006 MECA Newsletters (which can be accessed on the MECA website www.mecaclergy.org) for reports on previous mission trips to Louisiana.

FIRST STEPS

Items I-VIII address information that the leaders will need to know before they recruit volunteers.

1. Identify a Group Coordinator(s)

— This person will organize the trip.

- Make contact with the Gulf Coast,
- Arrange flight reservations
- Recruit volunteers
- Maintain paperwork, and more.

2. Determine Type of Mission Group, e.g., Adult, Youth, or Family.

3. Determine the Approximate Number of Participants

4. Determine Dates Desired For The Trip

5. Contact Disaster Relief Coordinators On The Gulf Coast

• Coordinators in MS, at Camp Biloxi

Judy Bultman — LDR site coordinator and/or
Dorothy Fox, volunteer coordinator, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, 228-267-39531,
bethalkat@gmail.com

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Mission Guide

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• Coordinator in LA

Holly Heine, Volunteer Coordinator, Office of Disaster Response Diocese of Louisiana, 225-387-5141 X224, hheine@stjamesbr.org

6. Find Out about the Work to be Done

- Determine what skills will be needed for the time of your trip.
- Request an orientation packet if one is available.
- Inquire about accommodations available for volunteers including specifics such as: sleeping accommodations, meal provision, bathroom and shower facilities and safety considerations. It is **critical** that volunteers know what the living conditions will be.
- Ask about special requirements, such as the need for updated tetanus shots and other medical requirements.
- Ask if there physical requirements, ability to lift, etc.
- Ask how the daily work schedule and duties are organized and by whom. **This is important information for the coordinator to determine.**
- Ask if it is expected that groups coming will organize themselves into small work groups with designated group leaders. How much supervision the host camp will provide? **Obtain as many specifics about this as possible so that you can go prepared.**
- Ask if work tools and equipment will be provided.
- Ask if your group is expected to provide its own ground travel to work sites.
- Ask what the individual or group accommodation cost will be.

7. Find Out Travel Details

- We recommend that you work with a travel agent
- Airfare – Ask about group rates and the particulars of purchasing for a group such as the cancellation policy for individuals, if names can be substituted and substitution dead lines.
- Determine method of travel to and from the airport.
- If your group is expected to provide its own transportation to work sites determine how many vans will be needed and the cost per van.

8. Cost considerations

- Determine the cost per person, which will include airfare, ground travel, and accommodations.
- Determine how the cost will be covered. Possibilities include: by the individual participants, fund raising, a combination of the two, or other.

NEXT STEPS

Steps I-III address recruiting and forming a team.

1. Recruiting Volunteers For The Mission Trips



Daniel Nichols

- **Advertise** your mission trip opportunity. The method will vary depending on the sponsoring group. Parish trips may be promoted and advertised locally by way of parish newsletters, Sunday bulletins, and service announcement times. **Be creative.**
- Broader advertisement may include FYI, the Diocesan Web site, contacting former mission trip participants, some of whom have expressed wanting to go back. (Katrina Task Force Coordinators Barbara Stowe and Carol Kingston can provide contact information for these individuals. Barbara and Carol can be reached at bstowe@diomass.org, 671-483-5800, X354.)
- When advertising, **include basic trip information**, such as:
 - The type of trip being planned (adult, youth or family)
 - Trip destination (MS or LA)
 - Dates
 - Skills needed by participants. People will want to know what will be expected of them.
 - Cost per participant
 - Accurate and clear information concerning the accommodations
 - Provide contact information for the trip coordinator so that interested individuals can obtain more details and/or register for the trip.
 - You might want to create an application form or a database to gather participant information such as name, address, phone numbers, email address and any other information you deem necessary.
 - Medical volunteer participants on mission trips are responsible for obtaining a temporary professional license to practice their specialty in either

Louisiana or Mississippi. Information for obtaining these licenses will be provided.

Registering Participants

- Determine how you will select participants. Considerations include:
 - Does the person have the **work skills** identified as needed for this particular trip? (Home Depot offers building skills workshops free of charge.) Participants do not have to be highly skilled, but they must have some ability in the required skill area, aptitude and willingness to learn. You really need to trust what the participant tells you about this. Camp Biloxi suggests that every non-skilled worker should have a skilled worker mentor. This is important planning information to have. It may not work out ideally but this is a good goal. Participants will want to feel needed and helpful.
 - Is it the overall impression that this person is flexible and would work well as part of a team?
 - Does the person meet the specified physical requirements?
 - References may be appropriate if the applicant is not well known.
 - Mail any information provided by the host camp to each participant and request completion of any forms, e.g., medical releases requested by the Gulf Coast organization. (Camp Biloxi provides an Orientation Packet, which contains forms that must be completed and returned to them prior to the trip. These include medical forms and completed skill sheets letting them know what skills people will be bringing.)

3. Holding an Information Meeting

About Two Weeks Before The Trip Hold an Information Meeting. (plan for two hours)

- Provide a spiritual context.
- Provide icebreaker activities. People will begin to become a “Group” at this meeting.
- Tell people as much as possible about what to expect.
- Ask former mission trip participants to attend your meeting if possible.
- Show CDs provided by the Gulf Coast and photos taken on previous trips. You can get these from the Diocesan Coordinators
- Serve refreshments.
- Collect required completed forms.
- Collect required payments if not collected before this point.
- Go over information about meeting at the airport. Introduce the person who has been identified as the group leader, who will.....
 - Greet and check people off as they arrive at the airport.

- Serve as the “go to” person throughout the trip
- Carry and deliver medical forms to the volunteer host camp
- Hold copies of the medical forms marked “confidential” and copies of the completed skill sheets that were sent to the host camp on the Gulf Coast.
- Be sure that all members of the group have their flight confirmation numbers when they go to the airport so that check in will go quickly smoothly.

ON THE TRIP

Provide For Worship Opportunities A former mission trip participant emphasized how important it was for him and for the group he was with to be able to meet together at the end of each day to share experiences, pray and worship. The following suggestions are from Bill Theisen, R.N., a member of St. Paul’s in Malden.

- Have a designated chaplain. “A clergy person is an essential member of every team.”
- Schedule time every evening for sharing, prayer, and worship.
- Make up worship booklets with the order of evening prayer and/or compline, psalms and some hymns.

This is a very detailed outline. Please take from it what works for you and adapt as necessary. Katrina Task Force Coordinators Deacon Barbara Stowe and Carol Kingston are available at the diocese to support you as you plan your trip. They can be reached at 617-482-5800, X354 or bstowe@diomass.org.

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS!**



*MECA
wishes all
a holy Advent,
a joyous Christmas,
and a happy
New Year.*

PARISH SEARCH & CALL REPORT:

Go to www.diomass.org for more information.

CHURCHES INITIATING PROCESS:

HARWICH PORT, Christ Church
CAMBRIDGE, St. James
DANVERS, Calvary
NANTUCKET, St. Paul's

CHURCHES IN SELF-STUDY:

COHASSET, St. Stephen's
FALL RIVER, Ascension
FALL RIVER, St. John's & St. Stephen's
NORTH ANDOVER, St. Paul's
WAKEFIELD, Emmanuel

CHURCHES COMPLETING PROFILE:

CHURCHES RECEIVING NAMES:

ARLINGTON, Our Saviour
DOVER, St. Dunstan's

CHURCHES NO LONGER RECEIVING NAMES:

DUXBURY, St. John the Evangelist
FRAMINGHAM, St. Andrew's
NEWBURYPORT, St. Paul's
PROVINCETOWN, St. Mary's

OTHER POSITIONS:

Curate/Assistant Rector/Associate Rector

The Church of the Redeemer, a program-size parish in Chestnut Hill, is looking for a priest to assist the Rector in all aspects of parish life, with particular emphasis on pastoral care, youth, family ministry development, and outreach. This is a part-time position.

The Redeemer is noted for its Cathedral-style liturgy and music, thriving church school and partnership with inner-city ministries. We are looking for a person with a big heart, lively intellect, and a deep commitment to Christ who is excited about helping us grow.

For more information, please contact the Rector, the Rev. Dorsey McConnell, at 617-566-7679 or dorsey@redeemerchestnuthill.org.

Communication regarding deployment and parish transitions should be directed to the staff officers responsible for deployment, the Rev. Gregory Jacobs (gjacobs@diomass.org or 617-482-4826, ext. 404) or the Rev. Cynthia Hubbard (chubbard@diomass.org or 617-482-4826, ext. 400).

Letter from the MECA Co-Presidents

Dear Clergy Colleagues,

On behalf of the MECA Board of Directors, we'd like to thank you for the support you've given us and all your other colleagues who are working to equip you for ministry.

In the past year, through your dues, prayers, and active collaboration, you have made possible

- a significant communications upgrade among Massachusetts clergy through the roll-out of MECA's online newsletter
- improved networking between veteran clergy and newcomers to the diocese
- advocacy to put your concerns — especially those dealing with compensation and health benefits — on the agenda of our diocese and the Church Pension Group
- continuing education through workshops such as Dr. Charles Foster's marriage counseling programs and Maria Trozzi's seminar on pastoral approaches to children who are dealing with death and grief

Your MECA Board is now in the process of organizing our March 2007 workshop on recent advances in systems theory you can apply to your work in your parishes. More on that as we get into the New Year.

We're also looking at getting other practical, clergy-specific skills into your "toolbox," like

- *Managing Parish Conflict*
- *Getting the Most Out of Vestry Meetings*
- On-going Mini-*"College of Preachers"* Workshops
- *Problem-Solving Skills*
- *Strategic Planning for Parish Clergy*
- *CDO Process for Dummies: Demystifying Your Profile*
- *Surviving the Deployment Minefield*

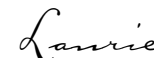
We're sure you have other suggestions and responses to these. Pass them on to us, including any other issues you believe we should be working on.

And may God continue to bless you with challenges, the energy to meet them, and heightened expectation this Advent season.

Faithfully,



The Rev. John R. Clarke
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781.324.9544



The Rev. Laurie Rofinot
LARofinot@aol.com
617.776.5604

Thank You! MECA MEMBERS 2006

We thank the MECA members listed below for their support throughout the year -- which makes possible this newsletter, our participation in the life of the Church nationally through NNECA, educational workshops and conferences, and advocacy on behalf of clergy. MECA provides an independent voice for the clergy of the diocese. If you paid your dues in 2006 and are not listed below, please notify the Rev. Craig Loya, MECA Membership Secretary, St. Martin's Church, P.O. Box 40148, New Bedford, MA 02744, 508-994-8972, craigloya@gmail.com, and your name will be printed in the next newsletter. Many thanks to Craig for serving as Membership Secretary the past two years. Blessings and Godspeed to Craig as he moves in the new year to take the position of Campus Missioner in the diocese of Kansas.

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The MECA Newsletter

Published four times a year, the MECA Newsletter is sent to all clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts. The newsletter can also be accessed through our website: www.mecaclergy.org

Membership dues for calendar year January 1-December 31, 2007 are being received now. Please send your check (payable to MECA) to the Rev. Craig Loya, MECA Membership Secretary, St. Martin's Church, P.O. Box 40148, New Bedford, MA 02744. If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Craig at craigloya@aya.yale.edu. 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. There is no fee for clergy on disability retirement. Members are entitled to discounts at MECA-sponsored events; your dues promote communication among clergy through the website, newsletter, and continuing education events and enable MECA to be a voice for clergy in the diocese and larger church.

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

Address changes: please send to James Reamer, Diocesan Center, 138 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108 or jreamer@diomass.org or 617-482-4826, ext 339.

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NEW MECA WEBSITE: WWW.MECACLERGY.ORG

Please visit our website for news of upcoming events, information about the Board, and to access the *MECA Newsletter*. The January/February 2007 newsletter will report on efforts to preserve unity in the Anglican Communion. The editor invites articles, reflections, and letters on this and other issues affecting clergy. Please send your articles to the editor at: rectord@allsaintsbrookline.org.

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