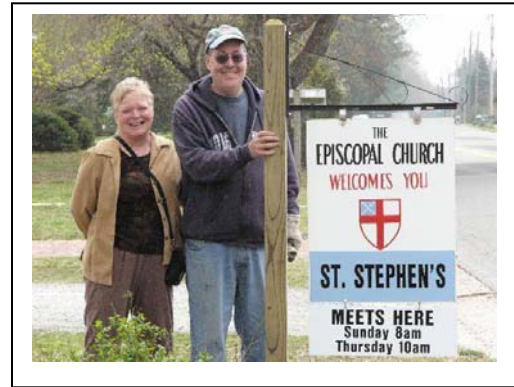


# Profiles of Vitality

Diocese of Virginia

Nowhere in the Diocese of Virginia are signs of growth and vitality more abundant than in the four congregations that, in the nine months since being turned out of their home parishes, have rebuilt themselves as continuing Episcopal congregations. After a majority of members in fifteen congregations voted to leave The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Virginia, loyal members of St. Stephen's in Heathsville, St. Margaret's in Woodbridge, The Falls Church, and Church of the Epiphany in Herndon remained, reorganized, and are reconstituting their congregations. They called parish meetings and elected new Vestry members and new delegates to Diocesan Council. They have returned to weekly Episcopal worship, albeit away from their church properties, and they have returned to mission and ministry in their communities. At the "Abundance of God's Love" retreat, held at Shrine Mont October 7-8, over 110 Episcopalians from these continuing congregations gathered for sharing, fellowship and to foster further their sense of hope for the future. They shared similar stories of being turned away from their home parishes after the congregation vote; of working with the Diocese and fellow Episcopalians to rebuild their congregations, finding a worship space and priest, and fostering a spirit of mission.



Wardens Sandra Kilpatrick and Bill Kirby marking their temporary worship home at Heathsville United Methodist Church.

Elsewhere in the Diocese, churches are also focusing on mission at the local level. Thanks to \$237,369 worth of Mustard Seed Grants—small grants to nurture big ideas—15 churches were awarded funds to support their day-to-day good works in 2007. In addition to reconstruction and repair projects for existing church facilities, Mustard Seed Grants are funding a community assistance program for families in need through Calvary Church, Front Royal; an affordable housing initiative project in northern Virginia through St. Luke's, Alexandria; a feeding program for impoverished children in Haiti through St. Paul's, King George; and the construction of a housing facility for hurricane relief volunteers in Mississippi through St. Paul's, Ivy.

And that's not all. In 2007 alone, thanks to grants from the Diocesan Commission on World Mission, 22 parishes were able to send scores of parishioners on short-term mission trips to Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, New Orleans, New York, South Carolina, Virginia, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Panama. A total of 96 mission trips were made by 56 churches and schools in 2007. Twenty seven of these were youth mission trips, some funded in part by youth mission vouchers presented by Bishop Lee to the newly confirmed in the Diocese. The Diocese of Virginia remains strong and healthy.

Emily Cherry  
Assistant For Print Communications  
Diocese of Virginia

# Profiles of Vitality

Diocese of Atlanta

“A church without walls,” St. Benedict's is the newest parish in formation in the Diocese of Atlanta. Launched less than a year ago with strong backing from the Diocesan Alleluia Fund and local congregations, this vibrant community of people gathered in the name of Christ has built a strong foundation of mission, outreach, and fellowship with and among the culturally and racially diverse area of South Central Cobb County in Metropolitan Atlanta. Vibrant youth, children's, and men's and women's groups already flourish, as well as strong partnerships with area community service organizations that serve the poor and marginalized of the community. This mission focus has been central to the founding of this new parish, which from the start has sought to make “growing in faith” about seeking both the conversion of the heart and the transformation of the community.



Members of the local high school football team join with folks from St. Benedict's at an area community festival to help decorate bags for a local community lunch program.

In the words of the mission developer and vicar, the Rev. Lang Lowrey, “St. Benedict urges spiritual discipline so that...as we advance in the religious life and faith, we shall run the way of God's commandments with expanded hearts and unspeakable sweetness of love.” In these words from St. Benedict there is for us—contemporary residents of metro Atlanta—an invitation to a life of intentional prayer and mission in the midst of an unsteady and sometimes confusing



The children's group met to paint pumpkins as gifts to patients at a metro Children's hospital—the “gorilla evangelist” is the Vicar's son.

culture. The words of St. Benedict (our patron saint) announce the promise of contemporary realities embraced and transformed by prayer and the support of a faith community. Out of this hope emerges St. Benedict's Episcopal Church: A community to nurture a relationship with God. A community that prays as Jesus taught his disciples to pray. A community that endeavors to follow the example of Jesus and invite everyone in.” This “church without walls” will soon move into worship space at a local school and begin public worship on the feast of the Baptism of Christ in January 2008.

The Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner  
Canon for Congregational Development  
Diocese of Atlanta

# Profiles of Vitality

Diocese of Indianapolis

The Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis is on an exciting journey to daily make real its Vision Statement, “Deepening Our Faith, Widening Our Embrace.”

The diocese continues a unique, vibrant three-way companion mission relationship with the Diocese of Bor in Sudan and the Diocese of Brasilia. Bishop Catherine Waynick’s mission challenge to the diocese in 2007-2008 includes developing and sustaining educational projects in these companion dioceses. The challenge also includes nurturing a pioneering partnership with Camp Coast Care in Mississippi to construct a home for a single mother and her three children who must soon vacate their FEMA trailer. And, it includes a renewed commitment to the diocesan Episcopal Fund for Human Need. The fund exists to provide emergency human needs ministries throughout the diocese via small and often parish-based programs and agencies.



Volunteers preparing lunch at Shalom House

A major emphasis in the diocese also continues to be the U.N. Millennium Development Goals. This summer, the diocese welcomed our Presiding Bishop to a conference called “One Voice, One Hope”. The conference has resulted in a number of initiatives designed to strengthen global partnerships and help our parishes and individuals more effectively address the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).



Making a difference!

As the 170<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of Indianapolis prepared to convene this week, delegates were set to consider a request for mission status for a very enthusiastic new congregation in formation in southwestern Indiana.

Kathy Copas is Director of Communications for the Diocese of Indianapolis

# Profiles of Vitality

Diocese of Colorado

St. Martha's in Westminster has been in what we call a redevelopment process for a couple of years. The congregation was barely surviving with fewer than forty in attendance on Sundays and unpaid bills piling up. But now, God is leading them through the wilderness of their decline to new and revitalized ministry. It began with The Rev. Steve Wengrovius praying, reading, and asking a few consultants for some help. The miracles began almost immediately. God sent key leaders to the congregation with special gifts for revitalization.



The redevelopment team explored all of the options, praying, discerning, and listening for God's direction. They took months inviting people from churches that had closed, moved, redeveloped, and built. They listened to representatives from the City of Westminster on how they were redeveloping that end of town. They held many congregational meetings for feedback and sharing. They looked at their history and recognized what needed to change and what they were called to do. They began to covenant together to make the necessary changes.

Greg, a lay leader in the congregation, was overcome in a couple of those meetings with God impressing on him the call to go out into the neighborhood. He shared what he heard and began to obey the voice. At first, his attempts seemed to fail. Then the congregation decided to really go out in faith. At our Redevelopment Vestry Day, the treasurer told the story of how they barely had the money to pay all the bills, but they decided to trust what they were hearing about moving out into the neighborhood and to start doing community dinners. God blessed these meals. At first there were only nine or ten people in attendance, but after a few weeks they were up to 63! People not only came to the dinners, but also began to join the congregation.



Greg has been transformed by the experience. He is called to evangelize in the neighborhood, but also to share the story with other churches. As a talented artist he has created crosses with the fruit of the Spirit to share with other congregations as a symbol of this revitalization that has taken place in his own congregation.

The Rev. Canon Lou Blanchard  
Canon to Mission  
Diocese of Colorado

# Profiles of vitality

Diocese of Kansas

St. James Episcopal Church in Wichita, Kan., puts those words on signs, banners and parish publications. It's the congregation's slogan, but it's much more than that — it's a description of parish life that draws new people in and has brought new vibrancy to members who have been there for decades. The Very Rev. Kate Moorehead has been rector since 2003. She said the slogan really describes the heart of the parish. "We at St. James believe there is a potency and a mystery present in the Holy Eucharist," she said. "This mystery cannot be defined in words, but it changes lives. We combine that with traditional and cutting-edge Christian education that encourages people to think for themselves." We welcome questions, doubts and disagreements." Outreach is a major focus, too, when the desire to "make a difference" led the parish to start an after-school program for inner-city elementary school students. Children come to the church every school-day afternoon for specialized music instruction, arts and crafts, homework help and healthy snacks. Money from the parish endowment fund and outside grants pays the bills so students can attend for free.



Students in the parish after-school program work on homework in the parish's Guild Hall. Grants pay for the program, so students can attend for free.

All this leads to a flourishing spirit in the parish that is born out by numbers. Membership has more than doubled since 1999—it now nears 1,000—and giving has skyrocketed, too. The congregation has begun a \$2.4 million plan for renovations. That's part of the "come inside" of their slogan: to create a worship environment that draws people in and serves their needs.



Worship plays a key role at St. James, Wichita, anchoring its spiritual life so it can reach out into the community.

Since its founding in 1920, the parish has provided leaders for the Diocese of Kansas and the wider church. Today one parish member sits on Executive Council, and Moorehead is author of two books, *Between Two Worlds* and *Organic God*, published by Cowley Press, that reach out to spiritual seekers Bishop Dean Wolfe says this parish does exactly what it takes for a parish to grow. "People join a church because it is a vibrant and affirming resource in their lives," he said. "That is what St. James offers. That is what St. James is."

Melodie Woerman  
Director of Communications  
Diocese of Kansas

# Profiles of vitality

Diocese of Arizona

In the fall of 2005, the Rev. John Maher and a core group of lay leaders began working faithfully to establish from the ground up a church plant in the northwest part of the Phoenix Valley. Now, the Prince of Peace Episcopal Church plant is meeting regularly at West Wing Elementary School in North Peoria. Check out their website for information about their confirmation classes, dream workshops, exciting worship, and community involvement. Later that winter, working with the Diocese and the Episcopal Church Foundation, All Saints of the Desert Church in Sun City completed a very successful capital campaign, raising over \$800,000 for capital needs, receiving planned gifts, as well as giving 10% of the campaign proceeds to the Alleluia Fund through the C.A.P. partnership program. At this time, two more large parishes have signed on with the C.A.P. program, and are beginning their capital campaigns, with a similar goal of raising money for their own work as well as tithing a portion to the Alleluia Fund.



Members of St. Paul's Sudanese Episcopal Church celebrate their new facility in style!

In spring of 2006, the Rev. Jorge Sotelo began exciting work as church planter for San Andreas Hispanic Church plant in Tucson, working in conjunction with St. Andrew's Church. And in the fall of 2006, the Rev. Susan Snook began work as church planter for the Desert Ridge/Northeast Valley. Church of the Nativity quickly took on new members and now meets regularly and has a full slate of activities and events. A member of Nativity recently donated a facility for use for the next few years, as they continue to grow and build their membership. At Diocesan Convention this fall, Nativity, Prince of Peace, and St. Paul's were received as official missions of the Diocese.



Members of Prince of Peace Episcopal Church during a special outdoor service.

Now, Bishop Kirk Smith and a team of clergy and lay leaders throughout the Diocese are exploring the "emergent church" model and considering whether the next church plant follows such a model. They are also in conversations with the ELCA regional synod to consider a joint church plant. Less than

four years ago, the Bishop shared his vision of "10 in 10," ten new churches in ten years. Thanks to a grace, generosity, energy, and hard work, it looks like this vision is well underway.

Nanette Towsley is the Director of Communications  
For All Saints Episcopal Church in Phoenix