

# THE STORY OF THE ST. LUKE'S MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Written in November 2008 & updated February 2016

A two and one-half year old girl and a former senior warden are at the heart of the establishment of the Ministry Development Team (MDT) at St. Luke's. The little girl's mother, Kelly Shields, was a lector/chalice bearer on a Sunday in February of 2005. Olivia decided she didn't want to sit with her brother any more and cried to join her mother, so she made her way to the altar to see her mother and where the Rev. Willa Goodfellow was celebrating the Eucharist. Once there Olivia behaved very nicely and occupied herself by stacking hymnals and prayer books around the altar step. We'll see a bit later how this story relates to the MDT.

The MDT story began in earnest in January 2005 at the Annual Parish Meeting. We knew Willa would be leaving at the end of the year, so the congregation needed to decide how it was going to proceed after Willa was gone. Three choices were given to those at the meeting and after discussion they were voted on. Those choices were:

- A. Close the church
- B. Continue to operate the church with supply priests and lay readers
- C. Establish a Ministry Development Team

When the votes were counted there was a one vote margin in favor of option B, continue to operate the church with supply priests and lay readers.

Now back to the Olivia story. The Vestry was scheduled to meet after church on the same February Sunday that Olivia came to the altar and the former senior warden, James Kannenberg, came to the meeting and asked if he talk with them and they said "sure." He said he thought the congregation had made the wrong decision at the Annual Meeting and believed that a MDT was the only hope of saving a church where what happened with Olivia at the altar that morning could take place. He also indicated he would be willing to serve on the team. Other members, too, thought perhaps the congregation had made the wrong decision in January. At this meeting the Vestry decided to put the matter of establishing a MDT before the congregation once more.

At church on May 1, 2005, the creation of the MDT was again discussed and a vote was taken which was favorable to the establishment of the team. After this, ballots listing all the names of eligible church members, were given to each member of the congregation so that they could commend members for the positions of priest, deacon or parish administrator. The ballots were subsequently collected and sent uncounted to the Bishop Scarfe (31 ballots) who tallied them and then telephoned the persons the congregation had "called" to serve in the various positions, to see if they were willing to serve. We understand that the six persons most desired by the congregation all said "yes" and you see three of us here today. Three were called to be priests (Lyle Brown, Barbara Easley & James Kannenberg), two deacons (Shelley Dowling & Marilyn Wentzien) and one a parish administrator (Alyce Lair). You may ask who the other two people with us are; well, they are the two members of our second MDT (Bonnie Wilkerson and Kelly Shields).

The six members of the original team were commissioned on September 11, 2005. and held their first meeting and began the process of studying to fulfill the requirements to assume the positions to which they had been called. It is understood that although a team member may have been called by the congregation to a particular role, such as a priest, he or she might not fulfill that role—that final decision is to be made later on in our journey, in consultation with the Bishop.

After the team was commissioned I think we all had some mixed feelings. We were moved and excited about the challenges and the learning that lay before us, but at the same time we wondered a little about what we had gotten ourselves into.

The next step, of course, was to start on the lessons/sessions outlined in the curriculum. The first session was held on October 2, 2005, under the guidance of our able coaches, the Rev's. Willa Goodfellow and Bruce Blois, rector at Keokuk, who has since retired and died. We are very thankful for their help and guidance—we wouldn't have made it to the end of the curriculum without them. To date, about three years later, the original team has completed all the sessions of the curriculum. We have been advanced to postulancy and most recently have passed our psychological and physical exams. Rather than talk about the curriculum I want to tell you a little bit about how we feel about each other and what we have done to keep St. Luke's continuing to tell the message of Jesus Christ to one and all.

- As a team we have come to know each other better, not on a super-intimate basis, but on a level where we can communicate with each other with a sense of genuineness.
- We've become comfortable enough with each other to be able to freely express our opinions, even if we don't exactly agree on something. We're very open in our communication.
- We've become a team that cares about each and that also cares about the congregation and the future of St. Luke's—we are working hard to minister to our parishioners, each in our own way with our own talents.
- Some of the ministries we have taken on, include:
  - We plan the church services and prepare the worship bulletins
  - We put out the monthly newsletter
  - We have done two funerals and burials
  - Some of us have made hospital and nursing home visits
  - Two of our members taught the confirmation class for 5 young people
  - Several of our members write sermons and preach—others are lead the liturgy (Morning Prayer) and are working up to preaching.
  - We participate in Parish Partners, a group of five mainstream churches nearby that do some activities together, such as youth ministry, Unity Sunday--a joint service on World Wide Communion Sunday, a picnic in the park with contemporary religious music, etc.
  - We work to minister to the youth in the church by talking with them informally on Sundays and by raising money to send them to camp in the summer. The youth in the church are often from either single parent families.

I also want to emphasize that we work in close cooperation and harmony with the Vestry—currently one member of the team meets with the Vestry, but that number varies—we're a small group as you know, so everyone gets to fulfill lots of functions.

The team is working on its spiritual growth through Bible study and self introspection and some of the original team members are going through the curriculum again with the two members of our second MDT. Growth is a process and we're working hard to improve our grasp on the subjects presented in the curriculum.

The team probably deals better with the sessions that are substantive, intellectual and practical, as opposed to those that are more spiritual, self-assessing or emotion provoking. (My fellow team members may want to address this further.) This is probably because the team is concerned with keeping St. Luke's functioning from one Sunday to the next and the materials that are practical and intellectual seem to help us most with that task. We realize the other subjects and tasks are very important, but it's just that they seem harder to comprehend or work with.

In conclusion the teams are working to become:

- more spiritual and more knowledgeable about scripture itself;
- more cognizant of what our strengths and weaknesses are;
- more aware of how to set boundaries in our interpersonal relationships; and
- more aware of the history, traditions and uniqueness of the Episcopal/Anglican church.

Ultimately, we want to know and understand God's love for us and the church so that we can share that love with the rest of mankind—be they Christian or non-Christian.

Epilogue:

- On October 25, 2009, Lyle Brown, Barbara Easley and James Kannenberg were ordained to the Transitional Diaconate by Bishop Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa.
- On May 10, 2010 (Mother's Day), Lyle Brown, Barbara Easley and James Kannenberg were ordained to the Priesthood; Shelley Dowling and Marilyn Wentzien were ordained to the Vocational Diaconate; and Alyce Lair was commissioned as the Parish Administrator by Bishop Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa..
- On July 6, 2013, Bonnie Wilkerson, a member of the second MDT was ordained to the Transitional Diaconate by Bishop Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa.
- On Feb 1, 2014, Bonnie Wilkerson was ordained to the Priesthood and Kelly Shields was ordained to the Vocational Diaconate by Bishop Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa. .

Compiled by Lyle L. Brown

MDT Story Revised v2 02-15-2016.doc