

Koinonia

Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia

Summer 2013



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Throughout the Diocese of West Virginia kids are back in school.

Teachers arrived back in their classes sometime this past August, and the children settled into the desks not long after. The sun continues to beat down, and the heat is sometimes overwhelming...but the business of learning has taken place. The Summer has unofficially ended, and life is back in something of a routine.

For me, this past summer has been a time of reflection and reconnection. It has been a time to remember what it is that makes me smile in the morning, and smile throughout the day. My early ministry was about the 'kids.' It was about bringing joy to them, and bringing them to Christ. Education and formation have always been at the center of my heart and my ministry.

Over the summer it has been brought back to me over and over again — I am happy when I am around the youth of the parishes and the Diocese.

For the second Summer, through the hard work of the Rev Canon Donald Vinson, this Diocese has opened Reading Camps throughout much of the Diocese. Scores of kids were invited to our Churches to improve and enhance their reading skills. Numerous children had their reading levels improved tremendously.

The volunteers gave of their time, and the kids learned in an atmosphere of joy and celebration.

When we reach out in small ways, we transform lives!

Our children are a valuable asset to us as individuals, as families, and as the Body of Christ. I call upon each of us to reach out our hands in love toward the children in our neighborhoods, towns, cities and communities and welcome them to us.

The coming year will be spent finding our youth and inviting them to walk alongside of each of us as we walk the path of faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.

May we welcome them, nourish them and form them into the Faithful Witnesses that God wants them to be.

In Christ,

The Rt. Rev. W. Michie Klusmeyer
Bishop

News from Around the Diocese



Mt. Zion, Hedgesville, had the groundbreaking ceremony for their new addition on July 5, 2013. It will house their much needed Fellowship Hall and Sunday School space.

(L-R, back row) Shelli Roberts, Lay Pastoral Associate Brian Shoda, Tom Wheelock, Megan Melkus, Sarah Fairchild, and Mike Roberts

(Front row) Autumn Tusing, Victoria Barrett Wheelock (with shovel), and Morgan Tusing

The children of **St. James, Lewisburg**, gathered with their teachers for a photo at their Vacation Bible School's Fun Fair on August 5. The children had a wonderful time and are looking forward to next summer's VBS!



On July 21, **St. Thomas a Becket, Morgantown**, kicked off the sale of their 2013 cookbook *Steeple People's Recipes*. The cookbook, which is full of great recipes and helpful hints, turned out spectacularly well. Parishioners sampled 40 of the recipes at *A Taste of Becket Brunch*. Kudos to Carol Spears, Chair, and members of the Church Cookbook Committee for doing such a fantastic job!

The last issue of *Koinonia* told of a mural being done for **The Lawrence Parish, Wheeling**, by artist Monica Zoet of Ikaros Art in Pittsburg. It is now completed, and the Sunday School hosted a reception and dedication August 11. The mural was painted on two facing walls. The effect, for anyone walking down the corridor, is of passing between two parted waves.



New River Episcopal Ministries (NREM) announced the opening of Oxford House-Bledsoe in June. Located in Beckley, the house is dedicated to helping individuals in southern West Virginia who are in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. Since the completion of fundraising projects two years ago, NREM has collected furniture and household items, helped with furniture moving, and recruited possible residents for the house. Oxford-Bledsoe is the first of at least three houses planned for southern West Virginia, with one of the future houses designated for women. Oxford House is a national organization that establishes self-supporting houses for people in recovery. There are over 1,200 Oxford Houses in operation worldwide. Visit their website at www.oxfordhouse.org.

THE READING CAMP EXPERIENCE

By Canon Donald Vinson



At this writing, I've experienced, first hand, at least some of three Reading Camp weeks. I look forward to a camp in Beckley next week, then Hinton, then HEP after that, then split between Parkersburg and Weirton after that...it's a full summer of enjoying the spectacle of adults, teens, and primary school children experiencing the joy of reading together.

I'm not exactly a seasoned veteran yet, but already, I'm putting together some knowledge and observations to dispel some expectations we reading-adept, relatively prosperous, academically successful adults may have about children who are having

trouble learning to read--along with their parents, other family members, teachers, and schools. I think we on the helping end of Reading Camps (myself included) can easily get "notions" about why the children we want to help need help, and how we might get through to them. What I observe is that the situation is far more complex than we may imagine.



'What kind of instruction do the children get?' we wonder. 'Is it up to snuff with programs in our own children's schools?' 'What is family life like for these kids?' 'Do they have books in their homes?' 'Do they get adequate adult supervision?' 'Do they get read to by adults?' 'Are their parents able to read competently?' 'Do their parents help them with school work, spend time with them, care about them?' 'Does anyone encourage them to read, and help create an environment of enjoyment for reading?'

Lordy, we need to cool our jets on the blame games we play. It isn't the kids' fault they can't read up to grade level. It isn't their parents' fault. It isn't their teachers' or their schools' fault. It isn't anybody's fault. They all just need more help, that's all.

Fill in the blank with your favorite hypothesis right here:_____. That is likely to be one of the reasons Johnny and Janie have trouble with reading. But it is far from being the only one. Even in our little groupings of children in Reading Camps, West Virginia, we see that our campers run the gamut, whether the problem is primarily just developmental (they'll soon grow out of it), or any one of the multitude of learning disabilities, social maladjustments, perceptual difficulties, personality conditions, vision and hearing problems, and medical conditions we know about or even can't yet imagine.



Continued on next page...

The Reading Camp Experience continued....



Here's what I have learned:

- Our Reading Camp kids are not slow. They have problems with reading, and they may learn in ways that our culture does not value or readily relate to, but they do learn, with help.
- Reading Camp kids are not underprivileged. Children from all social strata can have difficulty learning to read.
- There is no "one size fits all" solution to any educational dilemma. We are all individuals, and we learn best in our own ways. We all appreciate encouragement, however!
- They want to read! Some of these children have been frustrated by reading and do not seek additional frustration, but they want desperately to be readers, and they will work at it to get that job done.

• Our campers come from loving families. I've been totally impressed by the caring relationships we see between campers and parents and grandparents. (I suppose the truly neglected children don't get sent to camp.)

- These kids are not discipline problems. They are cooperative as can be, and very prone to thank the teachers and counselors for everything. They participate with enthusiasm, they have fun, and they know how to wallow in joy (as God intended)!
- They give more love than they get. Being with them is a blessing and a joy, and seeing adults relate to them, and vice versa, is inspiring and renewing.



Hanging around Reading Camp is a great way to spend a summer. Many gifts are shared, some of which are things like books, most of which are intangibles, like affection and gratitude. And hope, lots of hope. One of the greatest, which is a gift I've seen given over and over again at WV Reading Camps, is the gift of welcome and inclusion-- into one of the greatest social fraternities /



sororities in the world, the fellowship of literacy. Children who have lurked about on the borders, always feeling left out, like kids outside the ball park fence with no ticket, are now invited in as permanent members. Now, the defenses are down; it's cool to like books. They *have* some books. Perhaps they've met someone who writes them, and who gave them one they'd signed. They are pleased with what they've learned, and can't wait to learn more.

They share one question, on every camper's lips: "Can I come again next year?" My hope is that we may always be able to say, "Yes!"