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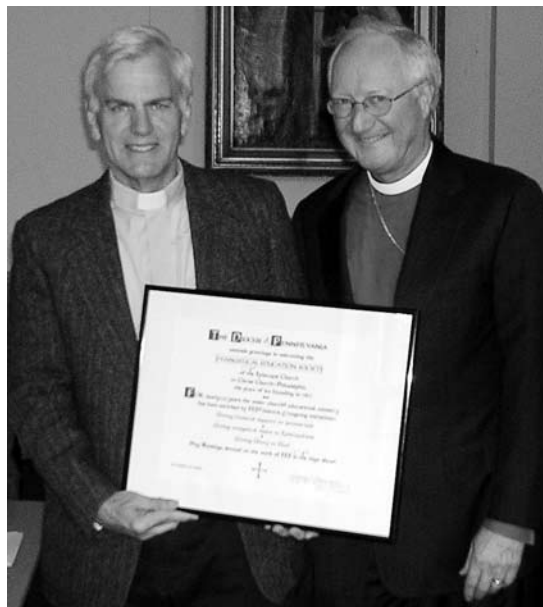
Meeting God at the Crossroads: A Seminarian's Summer

*by Stephen Shaver, senior at General Theological Seminary, summer intern,
Church of the Ascension, Dallas*

Thanks to a ministry grant from the Evangelical Education Society of the Episcopal Church, I had the privilege of learning about multicultural life in the Body of Christ during an internship this summer at the Church of the Ascension, a remarkable, diverse parish community in Dallas.

If you visit the 8 a.m. or 10:15 a.m. Sunday morning service at Ascension, you'll see a congregation that is about one-third Nigerian. The rest are mostly Anglo, with a sprinkling of faces from Hispanic, black American, and other backgrounds. The Nigerian community at Ascension began forming in the mid-1980s and has been growing and thriving ever since.

If you stick around a bit longer, you'll soon meet a stream of Sudanese Episcopalians coming for the Dinka-language service at noon. Many of these parishioners were members of the so-called "Lost Boys." As children in the 1980s and 1990s, they fled the civil war in southern Sudan and wandered through Ethiopia and Sudan until they finally arrived at a refugee camp in Kenya. Five years ago, a U.N. resettlement program brought them to the U.S.

Continued on page 3

The Annual Meeting of the Board of EES took place this fall at Christ Church in Philadelphia, PA, where the Society was founded in 1862. The Rt. Rev. Charles E. Bennison, Jr., Bishop of Pennsylvania, presented a citation lauding the Society to the Chair of the Board, the Rev. Dr. E. F. Michael Morgan.

From the Executive Director

We had many visitors at the EES booth at General Convention last summer. For some it was an introduction to EES, for others it was an education to see how the Society had evolved since their seminary days, and for over thirty visitors it was a reunion, complete with updates of where their ministries have taken them since they received an *Evangelism for the 21st Century* grant. It was heartening, indeed, to confirm that EES is making a difference.

In several other encounters – both in person and in cyberspace – we have learned of ways our grants have impacted the lives of recipients. When Valerie Dixon was a student at Episcopal Divinity School in 2002 she received a grant to establish an Episcopal presence at York Correctional Institution in CT, to develop a “bridge ministry” linking those inside the prison with members of a local parish. Now, almost five years later, Valerie writes “every time I stand up to speak and every time I sit down to write I think of EES. It was writing your grant application that forced me to put words on my heart’s desire. . . This ministry has completely changed my life – and you got me started. I will be forever grateful.” Marion Rechtenwald, who graduated from the School of Theology at Sewanee, received a grant to work with the Lakota people in South Dakota in 2002. She is now Vicar of the Cheyenne River Episcopal Mission in Dupree, SD. She said, “Bishop Robertson knew me because of the time I spent here in 2002, and one thing led to another, and here I am.” Sarah Midzalkowski, a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, spent a summer in East Africa with our support – an experience she considers to “be my most life-changing.”

The Very Rev. Robert Willis, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, was in the US recently. While here he met with students whom EES sponsored for their participation in the Seminarians’ Course held at the Cathedral each summer. Kate Bryant, who attended when a student at Berkeley Divinity School, summed it up beautifully, “Canterbury was a transformative experience for me. It was a wonderfully rich opportunity to learn first-hand what life is really like in the Anglican Communion today.”

In the early fall I was able to join student leaders from ten of the Episcopal seminaries at their annual meeting which is supported by EES. Hosted by the Epis-

copal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX, they had already spent two days together when I arrived, and it was very heartening to share in the community they had forged. Representing a wide range



The Rev. Stephanie Spellers, who received the Directors’ Award in 2005, Penny Saffer, and Cynthia Cannon, Executive Director of the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (l-r), share a light moment at General Convention.

of the Episcopal Church, they established friendships that will continue throughout their ministries. More recently I was able to meet with the seminarians who participated, again with EES support, in the “Going Forward Together: Third Millennium Christianity” conference at St. Stephen’s Church in Richmond, VA.

At our Board meetings in October, The Rev. Ann S. Coburn, Alumni Director for the Church Divinity of the Pacific, was elected to the EES Board. She replaces the Rev. Winnie S. Varghese who has rotated off after a six year term during which she ably served as a member of the Grants Committee and as Chair of the Nominating Committee. We bid Winnie a fond farewell as we welcome Ann.

The recent months have also been a bittersweet time for me as I prepare to retire from EES in just a few weeks. It has been a most wonderful eight year association, during seven of which I have served as Executive Director. Although a “part-time” job, it has been all-consuming and very fulfilling.

I shall always treasure my time with EES. It has been a privilege to help shape evangelists who are spreading the good news of God’s love in many and varied ways. My interest will continue as I watch from a distance as the Society approaches the second half of its second century.

With every good wish,

Penny Saffer

Meeting God at the Crossroads

Continued from page 1

With such a variegated parish community, things are always interesting, joyful — and sometimes confusing! Different cultural expectations crop up with regularity. Yet there's a firm sense at Ascension that this is one parish family and that our deep, underlying oneness in Christ means differences are things to celebrate rather than squelch.

African Night, a six-year-old Ascension tradition, was one of my most moving experiences. More than 300 people packed the church for a service that included an Igbo liturgy; Arabic, Dinka, English, and Ga prayers and lections; a 15-minute offertory procession, in which the entire congregation danced their offerings up to the altar; and a huge African dinner in the parish hall. For me, the whole evening was a glimpse of the heavenly banquet as Christians "from every family, language, people, and nation" came together to praise God.

"Conversations at the Crossroads" was another transforming event for me. During this six-week program, which I led, sixteen parishioners came together each Wednesday night to share stories about their faith journeys. We were indeed a diverse group with Nigerian, Sudanese, Mexican-American, and Anglo-American backgrounds. We were diverse theologically as well. Some who had come to Christ through amazing healings saw miracles as a key element of the Christian life. Others who had found refuge in Anglicanism from a rigid anti-science background were wary of

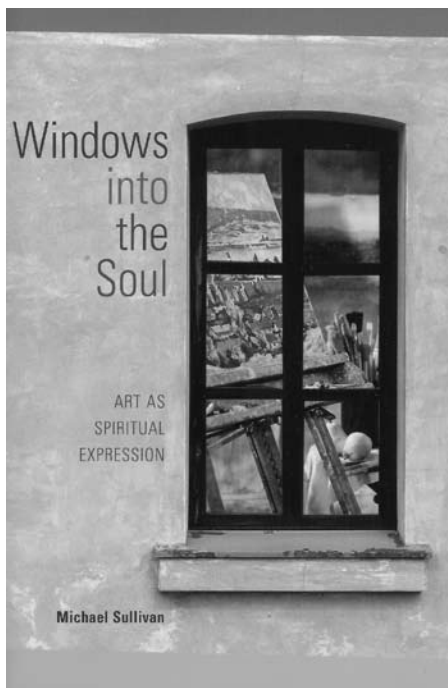
stories about direct divine intervention. Some were reticent to talk about God in public: they longed for ways to speak authentically about their faith but were afraid of coming across as pushy. Others were used to discussing faith matters with enthusiasm and couldn't figure out why these individuals were so shy.

As we shared meals, read Scripture, and prayed together, our goal was not to change one another but to understand and love one another more. Yet, as we spent time together listening to each other's stories, we found ourselves changed after all. Each week, as we saw fresh perspectives on God through one another's eyes, we found our own relationships with God enriched.

When the six weeks were over, we shared our experience with the entire Ascension community at a "Conversations at the Crossroads"

lunch. Then, as a way of taking our unity-in-diversity out into the world, we worked with Dallas Community Lighthouse to staff a community dinner for the residents of the nearby Foxmoor apartments. We hope to continue the "Conversations" process at Ascension throughout the year.

As I returned to New York to begin my final year at seminary, I took with me new friendships with fellow Christians of many different skin colors, languages, and faith styles — and the knowledge that no single way of worshiping or talking about God does justice to the incredible richness of God's glory. I will never forget my time at this vibrant Dallas parish community where I have seen how much we need one another so as truly to be the Body of Christ. Thanks be to God!



The Rev. Michael Sullivan received an Evangelism for the 21st Century grant in 2000 to write a curriculum to use the arts to explore the meaning of Scripture for unchurched adolescents and others.

Fast forward to General Convention where he was found signing his recent book, Windows into the Soul, which was a direct outgrowth of the work he started with EES support.

Many Thanks

We extend grateful appreciation to those listed below who have made gifts to the Evangelical Education Society in the past year. All funds received go directly to the grants program, *Evangelism for the 21st Century*, and enable the Board to award additional grants each year.

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The Rev. William J. Haas
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The Rev. Randolph Crump Miller
The Rev. Henry Mitchell
The Rev. L. L. Moty
The Rev. Robert Wainwright

*Ashes, AKA Joe Hensley
a student at Virginia
Theological Seminary
who received a grant to
study sacred clowning,
visited Street Church
sponsored by Epiphany
Church in Washington,
DC, this summer.*





The Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, a member of the EES Board, with the Most Rev. Frank Griswold who visited the Annual Meeting of the Board when it met at Christ Church, Philadelphia, PA, in October.



The Rev. Samuel Sudhe, a student at Virginia Theological Seminary from Kenya, received an Evangelism for the 21st Century grant to build evangelists of the children of the Diocese of Bondo ACK last summer.



Leigh Preston and her husband, Andrew Thompson, students at Berkeley Divinity School, received an Evangelism for the 21st Century grant last spring for ministry in El Salvador this past summer. While there, they met with Amy Denney-Zuniga, a graduate of Berkeley who received an Evangelism for the 21st Century grant in the spring of 2005 to spend a year in El Salvador. Amy and her husband, Vince, who received a Fulbright fellowship, have renewed their commitment to El Salvador for another year of ministry there.

(Shown l-r: Vince Zuniga, Amy Denney-Zuniga, Leigh Preston, and Andrew Thompson)



Karen Ward, the Abbess of The Church of the Apostles in Seattle, WA, was an opening plenary speaker at the Going Forward Together: Third Millennium Christianity conference at St. Stephen's Church in Richmond in November. Karen received an Evangelism for the 21st Century grant for a "peer to peer" exchange for young Episcopal seminarians and church planters.



Steve Rhoades from the School of Theology, Sewanee, Holly Davis from Virginia Theological Seminary, Bill Starke from Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, Jeff Baker from Bexley Hall, Ken Malcolm (conference coordinator) from Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, April Alford from Episcopal Divinity School, and Robin Biffle from Sewanee (l-r) take a break at the Seminary Leadership Conference at the Seminary of the Southwest in September which was supported by EES.



Peace On Earth



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REMINDER!

**Applications for
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to be e-mailed, and
postmarked, no later
than February 2, 2007!**

Two Honored with Directors' Awards

Several years ago the Board established the Director's Award to recognize recipients of *Evangelism for the 21st Century* grants whose work most closely matches the goals of the program. Dr. Michael Reid, a senior at Church Divinity School of the Pacific, and the Rev. Laurel Johnston, a recent graduate of CDSP, were each given the Directors' Award at the Annual Meeting of the Board. Michael's project, to provide young students of color with support and affirmation for their vision and discernment of ministry, is functioning through a website, www.newvoices.us. Laurel received a grant to conduct a survey and study to document fears and inhibitions about inviting friends to church. Her full report can be found on the EES website, at www.ees1862.org.

Previous recipients are Jeanne Finan, a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, for her work in reactivating a historic parish in North Carolina, Stephanie Spellers, a graduate of Episcopal Divinity School, for her "Radical Welcome" Project. Last year's recipient, Debbie Royals, a graduate of Church Divinity School of the Pacific was honored for her work on behalf of Native American Ministries.

Making a Difference

Gifts to the Evangelical Education Society enable us to make additional grants each year. We want to continue to increase and extend our program, and with your help this can happen.

We also ask that you consider joining **The 1862 Fellowship Circle** by including the Evangelical Education Society in your will or estate plans and thus make a difference for future generations.

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