

# Newsletter

Spring 02

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*Looking ahead  
to Fall.....*

## Commissioning

"Awake My Soul" has a really simple liturgy, with accompanying rubrics, for commissioning teachers in the fall. Of course, the youth and children do the commissioning, which makes all of the sense in the world. It is based on the baptismal covenant, and has the children and congregation come forward to place their hands on the heads of the teachers for their blessing. It concludes with the Peace. "Awake My Soul" is available from Episcopal Parish Services for \$5 at 800-903-5544. It is also rumored to be available on line at [www.ecusa.anglican.org/myp](http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/myp)

Submitted by Heidi Clark

# Stress to Recovery

*“a spirit of power of love and of self-discipline” – (II Timothy 1:3-7)*

**Grace and peace to you, the faithful sisters and brothers in Christ who are Church Educators:**

Does your backache, your head pound, are your shoulders knotted? Does your stomach hurt; is your digestion out of whack? How's your blood pressure, your cholesterol, your heart rate? Do you get colds often, catch every little “bug” that's going around? Do you find yourself irritated, depressed and irritable more often than you would care to admit?

If any of this fits – or if you just get one of these areas under control and another one pops up-then, in the spirit of Christian concern, let me invite you to consider the possibility that you may be over-stressed and/or burned out!

***But don't stop her. Read on!***

A definition or two: over-stressed is the result of too much change or too much to do; burned out is the result of too much doing/giving. They feel pretty much the same – crummy.

What would cause such a situation in a person called by God to work in official capacity in the church? And, what in the world could be done about dealing with the over-stress/burnout?

Well – glad you asked – that's a real good sign, and the very first step to getting squared away.

***Let's start with the what-would-cause-it department:***

Church Educators are Human Beings who function in the world, a very tempting place. Being called by God is not any kind of immunization against the pressures of the world. Oh, it's true that your place of work is likely to be smoke-free and alcohol/drug-free but:

- ?? How many hours a week do you work? Is the work...ever done?
- ?? Who's in charge – you, the senior pastor, the Staff Parish Chair, the “Joneses”?
- ?? Who really cares about your work – your family? The church board? The staff? The parents? The children? The youth? Denominational leaders?
- ?? How's the pay? Comparable to those in your community who have similar years of experience and education and responsibility? Comparable to other ministry professionals on staff?
- ?? Is the benefit “package” non-existent? Inadequate? Comparable to the other ministry professionals?

***And then, what is your own personal work ethic?***

- ?? Be perfect, competent at all times, and, never share what's really happening in/for you?
- ?? Work until everything is in order; take a day off when nothing will stack up on your desk? Take a vacation if one happens to materialize?
- ?? Be almost all things to all people-they'll like you better. Be sure to do everything for everybody else...after all they're pretty busy, and, what have they hired a Christian Educator for any way?
- ?? Exercise when you can find time? Eat on the run? Schedule everything, lest anything be omitted? Work now, relax later?

Church Educators are human, and they work in the world. Any one of the above-mentioned

human/world flaws is probably not fatal; but certainly any combination of these and others like these is likely to lead you into serious difficulty because, you are human, you have human limitations, you cannot "save the world" all by yourself or even just the church school and anyway, over-stress produces over-stress chemistry in your system which, if produced long enough and not dealt with will create physical problems; serious difficulty, UNLESS...you begin to deal with the over-stress. (*Romans 12:2*)

***There we are at HOW?!***

First of all, take a look at your life, your call, and how you are living all that out. If the over-stressed, burned out descriptions sound a little too familiar, resolve to take charge of you life. (*See Matthew 22:37-40*)

1. No matter what, eat-sleep-play-work right. Count the calories, count the hours, incorporate a triage approach to your "to do" list, develop a stick-to-it-iveness about R & R, exercise, and time off for you. If you need guidance in this area, seek it through a denominational counseling center or your local medical/counseling clinic. If you need support, seek it through the proper channels, which are likely to include the Pastor and the Personnel Committee. (This implies knowing "the system" and that's important!)
2. No matter what, learn to identify and deal with your feelings of anger and frustration. Sometimes just knowing that "this too shall pass" will do it. In any case, develop appropriate outlets; learn to communicate clearly and openly with the appropriate folks; seek professional assistance, and be patient with yourself! (And maybe others, if they are affected by a change – no matter how healthy – in you.)
3. No matter what, even if your Myers-Briggs points to extreme Introversion, no matter what, seek out a support network of folks YOU can depend on. You might find them in the community, or beyond it; you might find them in the region, and/or church educators fellowship. You might develop that support network at the local YWCA/YMCA or among the folks you do aerobics, golf, tennis, volleyball, etc. with...No matter what, get your support network in place and nurture it.
4. Last and most important, no matter what, stay in touch with God, however YOU do that: pray, meditate, listen, dance, discern, share, journal, garden, do Yoga, The Upper Room, read anything by Flora Wuellner or Bishop Rueben Job or

Georgia Harkness, go to “the wilderness” on a regular basis, study the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the Mystics...or any faith figure who speaks to YOU, but no matter what, commune with God.

**So, YOU be in charge-**

1. Understand that you are human and work with inherent human limitations and that’s okay! (*John 15:12-17*)
2. Take good care of yourself, including getting help if you need it. (*Mark 7:24-30*)
3. Become an expert with emotions. (*John 8:32*)
4. Identify, connect with, maintain a support group (*Hebrews 12:1-3*)
5. Walk with God. (*Micah 6:8*)

I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. Choose life. (*Deuteronomy 30:15, 19b NRSV*) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of god, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. (*II Corinthians 13:13*)

Submitted by **Heidi Clark**

# Advocating for Your Program Ideas

*Kathleen Capcara*

Christian Education Professionals regularly conceive of, advocate for, and implement program ideas. We are all aware of the steps we need to take toward making a program idea a reality in our congregation or diocese. Often when an idea fails to be approved, we realize too late that we neglected to take the necessary precautions in shepherding our idea through the hierarchy. Here’s a review of ways to insure your program ideas are taken seriously.

## **Do your homework**

If you think your idea will be perceived as “controversial,” test the idea to see if it is sound. There is nothing new under the sun. Other educators have probably used a comparable idea in some context. Talk with education professionals in your area. Check recent articles to see if the idea has been used successfully in other congregations. Don’t forget to be in touch with educators in other dioceses or denominations who may have used the idea. Keep a record of what you learn.

## **Put the proposal for your program idea into writing**

Even if you are not in a situation where a formal presentation will be needed, design a brief document, with bullet points explaining your program idea. The act of writing down your program idea will help you better articulate your plan when you talk with others

about it. When you put your idea in writing, mention the place or places that have successfully used a similar idea in the past. Be sure to include a list of resources needed to implement your idea. Write down a time line, the number of volunteers or staff required, and the estimated cost of your plan. Include a sentence or two about the benefits of implementing your idea.

### **Line up your allies**

Talk informally to the leaders you work with most in the congregation or diocese. This is best done one-on-one and face-to-face. Your enthusiasm and preparation will be best perceived in person. Use the telephone or e-mail only if the people with whom you are communicating know you well. Talk with vestry members and those who have actively supported your Christian Ed programs in the past. Present your idea and ask for their feedback. They may have refinements on your idea that will make it even better. Tell them your idea is in the beginning stages and may not be implemented, but ask for their support. Would they (or their families) participate in your program?

### **Pay attention to the squeaky wheel, be politically correct**

Once your idea has been refined and has grassroots support, use the proper chain of command to present your program idea to the powers that be. Each congregation and situation will be different. Whether it is the Rector, the Christian Formation Committee, the Vestry, or all three, present your program idea to the right people in the right order. Many ideas have been squelched by neglecting to inform the most sensitive person first.

### **Remember learning preferences**

Everyone has a preferred approach to taking in new information and to making sense of the information once they have received it. Use the written proposal you prepared if you think it will help. Individuals with a “concrete/ sequential” learning style and visual learners will respond well to a written document. People who are “abstract / random” and auditory learners may like it better if you explain your ideas to them.

If the “personal chemistry” is not right between you and a person key to the approval of your idea, consider asking someone you trust to present the idea to that key person.

### **Be open to changes. Have a “plan B”**

If you appear to be too attached to your idea in all its details, some people may resist it. Congressional bills often end up with amendments tacked on to gain full approval of the Senate and House. Be willing to let your program idea evolve. The more people who feel they have contributed to your program idea, the more likely it is to be a success. But don't give in on details of your program idea that you feel are essential.

### **You are not your idea**

Jesus said a prophet is often without recognition in his own country. Try not to take it personally if your program idea is not approved. Perhaps the time was not right. Or maybe your idea will work wonderfully for you when you are working in another setting.

If you still feel your idea would do great things for your congregation or diocese, you might consider sharing it with another professional as something to try in her setting. If it is successful there, you will have additional validation the next time you present the idea where you work.

**Kathleen Capcara** is full-time Coordinator of Christian Education at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Baltimore. She has been presenting program ideas to congregations in the Diocese of Maryland for 15 years.

## Forming Young Christians, Not Just Educating Them

by Sharon Ely Pearson (as published in “Vestry Papers, April/May 2002 issue)

I am a cradle Episcopalian. Sunday School was the place for children and we worshiped apart from the adults. My memories include coloring pictures, singing, “Jesus Loves Me” and “Onward, Christian Soldiers.” I received Holy Communion for the first time when I was confirmed at twelve years old in 1967. We wore white gloves and “head doilies,” along with our paten-leather shoes. We memorized the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed and “My Bounden Duty.” My “instruction” was complete, and many adults would consider my experience a model to follow in 2002.

However, of the 25 sixth graders who were confirmed with me, I remember seeing only two of them after confirmation. There was no connection between what we were taught and who we were as Christians. Today I see some of this history being replayed in many congregations. Churches are worried about having the right curriculum to teach in their Sunday Schools – for if the curriculum is right, the children will come, and church will have a future.

But education is the answer. It was not for me, it was not for my children, and it is not for our children. I was not only educated in Sunday School – I was *formed* by my experiences in Christian community. Having relationships with adults outside my family, participating in the worshiping community, and sharing my gifts with others were what formed me as a Christian.

*Christian Formation.* These words are being used more and more in place of Christian education. And it is the future of our Church. Healthiest and most energized of all are those parishes that view ministries with children as formational – not just educational. The Christian community promises to support the newly baptized in their new life in Christ. How?

### ***Participation and practice***

Christian formation involves participation and practice. First and foremost, children need to participate in the communal rites of the church. To see a child’s tiny hand reach out for the bread of the Eucharist while being fed alongside an elder shows children they belong to a community, not just a family.

Second, all that we see, touch, taste, smell and hear as well as the arrangement of space in which we gather influences us. We shape our space, and it shapes us. Whatever rooms or spaces children gather in for worship, fellowship, or study, the space (and what is put into it) encourages or discourages particular actions and interactions. Our environment helps form us.

Third, the organization of our communal life forms us. By participating in service opportunities within the parish and in the greater community, children are able to live out the Gospel, making a connection between the words of Jesus and our own actions in the world. Life in (and outside) the congregation should be a sign to the world of what life in God's reign looks like.

We learn to pray by the practice of prayer; we learn to care for others by the practice of caring. We learn to respect the dignity of every person by the way we talk and listen. As Maria Harris states in *Fashion Me a People*, "the church does not have an educational program; it *is* an educational program."

### ***Formation over a lifetime***

The Christian education of our children cannot take place in a 45-minute Sunday School lesson. It is learned, experienced, and lived in a Christian community that views itself as a whole formative process-taking place over a lifetime. It is continuous. It is integrated. The message Jesus Christ and God's love and forgiveness will live in the child who experiences the meaning of living out the breaking of bread in a broken world.

Yes, I was educated in the Episcopal Church. But I was also formed, and continue to be so – through the power of the Holy Spirit in arenas of education, worship and living out the Gospel – all of them the bedrock for Christian formation.

*A former vestry member, Sharon Ely Pearson is the consultant for Christian Education for the Diocese of Connecticut. She is a certified Godly Play teacher, EFM mentor, and a Master's degree candidate in Christian Education at Virginia Theological Seminary. She also represents the diocese of Province One on the Episcopal Council for Christian Education and serves on the board of the National Association of Episcopal Christian Education Directors.*

# Calling...

## Church School Teachers:

Indicate a need for teachers in the Prayers of the People, making the Call come from the

Liturgy. What are the gifts needed? The collect for guidance (BCP, p 832) or this prayer (adapted from BCP, p. 230) might be appropriate: Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion. Keep our hearts and minds open to discern the gifts that you have given all of your people, so that we may find those who are called to teach and learn with the youngest members of our community. Send us those who have a love for Your Word and children, that they can support us in our ministry as teachers and learners; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

A clear, published position description (of the church school teacher) will allow parents, other teachers, vestry, and the rest of the congregation know what the needs are and why this is so important for your parish. This might be inserted into your Sunday bulletin or monthly newsletter with a note asking people to prayerfully consider whom they might know within the congregation or community who has the gifts needed.

*"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers . . . "Following in the spirit of I Corinthians 12:27-28, ----- Parish is discerning who amongst us and our community is being called to teach. Please hold our teaching ministry in your prayers. We have been blessed with \_\_\_\_\_ (#) of children, ages \_\_ to \_\_, in our Christian Education (or Church School) program and ask the whole parish to rise to the occasion of calling teachers for the fall. We provide training and ongoing support. If you would like us to consider calling you or someone else you recommend for this ministry, please contact \_\_\_\_\_.*

# Job Description

Here is an example of a "Church School teacher" job description:

## **POSITION DESCRIPTION: CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER**

**Purpose:** To assist in the nurture, care and spiritual feeding of children in a Church School class setting. To share one's faith with others and share God's story as related to us in the Old & New Testaments and The Book of Common Prayer.

### **Responsibilities:**

- ?? to nurture and show concern for each child in your class
- ?? to follow curriculum for grade taught, using activities, etc. of your own choosing
- ?? to attend teacher meetings during semester taught
- ?? to attend a Diocesan required training workshop regarding Child Abuse & Neglect
- ?? to spend time preparing a lesson each week (at least 1 hour)
- ?? to arrive at class early to welcome students
- ?? to attend worship regularly
- ?? to perform "extras" such as setting up classroom, weekly clean-up

- ?? to assist with special formation events
- ?? to find a substitute in advance if you know of an upcoming absence

**What our Church offers you:**

- ?? A Director of Christian Education available to consult, problem solve, and supply resources
- ?? Curriculum materials that make teaching fun and lead to your spiritual & intellectual growth
- ?? Teacher training at teachers' meetings and individually if needed
- ?? A well-stocked supply cabinet
- ?? A clean, age appropriate classroom space
- ?? The prayerful support of clergy, staff, vestry and church members
- ?? A calendar for the school year
- ?? A teacher's handbook made especially for (name of Church)
- ?? Opportunities for friendship and problem solving with other teachers at teachers' meetings and social occasions

**Time commitment: (adapt to your situation)**

**Benefits:**

- ?? The joy of learning from and being with children
- ?? Meeting new people
- ?? Growing in faith
- ?? The chance to perhaps make a difference in a young person's life!

Sharon Ely Pearson  
 Consultant for Christian Education  
 Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut

# Sample

This is a sample of what parishes can give their Church School teachers (it helps in the recruitment if EVERYTHING is spelled out for them)

Church School Teachers' Handbook  
 Table of Contents  
 A Children's Charter for the Church . . . . .  
 Church's Mission Statement . . . . .  
 Church School Calendar . . . . .  
 Church School Teachers Church map  
 Position Descriptions . . . . .  
     Church School Teacher  
     Assistant for Christian Education

Curriculum and Lesson Planning . . . . .	
Sunday morning schedule	
Episcopal Children's' Curriculum (ECC)	
Episcopal Curriculum for Youth (ECY)	
Journey to Adulthood	
Godly Play	
Lesson Planning	
Take home materials	
Learning Goals and Faith Development . . . . .	
Church School Goals	
Appropriate Content & Characteristics for Age Levels	
Knowing Your Audience	
Bible Study Method for Children.	
Church Policies and Procedures . . . . .	
Child Abuse Awareness	Classroom Management
First Aid	
How To and Where To . . . . .	
Taking attendance	Dismissal
Registration/Newcomers	Communications
Using Audio-Visuals	Use of Copier
Finding a substitute	Where to find resources
Where to find supplies	Purchases and reimbursement
Classroom supplies	Sharing of classroom space
Supply list	

Submitted by: Sharon Ely Pearson  
 Consultant for Christian Education, Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut

# Sabbatical Policy

## at Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis

by, **The Very Rev. Robert Giannini, March 2002**

The word “sabbatical” derives from the Hebrew word that is normally translated “sabbath.” Therefore, a sabbatical leave should be considered a extended sabbath, offered to ministers of the church, to enable them to allow sabbath grace to in-form their ministries.

Christ Church Cathedral has made it possible for members of its program staff to take such a leave every five years for three months. Furthermore, the Cathedral strongly urges its program staff to take advantage of this opportunity. It is essential to effective ministry.

The terms of a sabbatical leave are the same as those of the sabbath itself. Based on the relevant portions of both Exodus and Deuteronomy these are:

**Refrain:** One is called upon to refrain from those activities that normally define one's work. These will include, but not be limited to, refraining from tight scheduling, yielding to external pressures, wearing of uniforms, and thinking about the normal day-to-day necessities of one's work.

**Rest:** It is possible to refrain from work and not rest. The sabbath enjoins rest upon the faithful servants of God. This may include sleeping late, naps, reading novels, listening to music, walking, swimming, and other recreational activities as may seem desirable.

**Remember:** A sabbatical is a time to remember the basics and bases of one's self, one's relationships, one's community, and one's work. One's life can be remembered in terms of its biblical, theological, and spiritual undergirding.

**Reflect:** One can reflect on the who, what, when, where, why and how of God's call, and begin to see anew one's person and one's vocation in the perspective of God's love, grace, mercy, and challenge.

**Rejoice:** As one lives into the depths of one's own being as a child of God, experiencing one's self as having immeasurable worth no matter what one does or achieves, or even believes, one is empowered to rejoice in one's own being, one's loveliness, one's beauty, and one's gracious acceptance by God.

**Return:** The whole purpose of the exercise of sabbathing is to be able to return to one's own milieu refreshed and reinvigorated—a new person, restored to one's true inner self, with most if not all of the superfluous and debilitating accretions of five years either removed or healed.

Submitted by **Kathy Stout**, Associate for Parish Ministries,  
Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, IN

# Resources

## Some Favorite Daily Devotionals

I don't know if you have more time for your spiritual life than I do, but I increasingly find very little time for this very important activity. I would love to spend hours in bible study but that isn't the reality at this point in time. Instead, I take a few moments in the morning for prayer and reading out of a daily devotion text.

When I last checked my bookshelf, I found four books that I have rotated through for the past several years. I'm always on the lookout for new ones, but these are my favorites. Number one on the list is *Listening to Your Life ~ Daily Meditations with*

*Fredrick Buechner*. Each day of the year there is a selection of text taken from one of Buechner's books. These brief snippets are food for thought for the day ahead. This is a wonderful introduction to some great books.

Second is *Awakening ~ Conversations with the Master* by Anthony de Mello. From the back of the book: "The Master in these tales is not one single person. He is a Hindu guru, a Zen roshi, a Taoist sage, a Jewish rabbi, a Christian monk, a Sufi mystic. He is Lao Tzu, Buddha and Jesus, Zarathustra and Mohammad. You may find the Master's language baffling, exasperating, even downright meaningless. This is not an easy book! It was written not to instruct, but to awaken." Through the course of the year the master has many great thought provoking things to say.

Third on the list is *Glimpses of Grace ~ Daily Thoughts and Reflections* by Madeleine L'Engle. Each day has some selection from one of her many writings. This can serve as a good introduction to her writings or as a refresher course.

The fourth devotional on my shelf is *The Daily Book of Common Prayer ~ Readings and Prayers Through the Year* compiled by Owen Collins. This book uses the material in the 1662 Prayer Book to provide a page of readings for every day of the year. It is fascinating, especially if one did not grow up in the Episcopal Church or with the 1928 Prayer Book.

Two other books that enter the rotation at times are *Gifts From the Sea* by Anne Morrow Lindburgh. This wonderful book might turn everyone into a beach person. *C. S. Lewis ~ Readings for Meditation and Reflection* edited by Walter Hooper is a short collection of selections taken from many of Lewis' writings. There are not enough selections for a whole year unless you take more than one day per reading, which would be easy to do given the depth of his writing.

These are a few tried and true devotionals that I have found to be helpful through the years. The selections don't take hours to read, but they can provoke hours of reflection at various times during the day. So, take a few moments (if you can't find more time than that) to feed your spirit.

Submitted by Laurie Bailey  
Christian Education Director  
Christ Church Cathedral  
New Orleans

# Book Review

"Strength for the Journey:  
A Pilgrimage of Faith in Community"  
by Diana Butler Bass

**“The Church cannot depend on the past for its future.”**

“At a time when many mainline churches were losing members, Diana Butler Bass chose to stay and discover the vibrancy at the very heart of her faith. She was not alone. There has been a quiet resurrection in the mainline tradition, energized by a new generation of churchgoers and a host of new members. The reemerging Protestant mainline churches possess an unexpected and underestimated vitality. And in recent decades, mainline churchgoing has been anything but dull, as congregations have struggled to understand their identity and vocation in a changed world.

In *Strength for the Journey*, Diana Butler Bass illustrates the dynamic strength and persistence of mainline Protestantism. While many baby boomers left the church, only to come back later in life, Bass was a “stayer” who witnessed the struggles and changes and found much there that was meaningful. Offering thought-provoking portraits of eight parishes she attended over two decades, she explores the major issues that have confronted mainline denominations, congregations, and parishioners during those years—from debates over women clergy to conflicts about diversity and community to scrimmages between tradition and innovation.

Diana Butler Bass’s story reveals the church’s history among us. She uses her life as the focal point to tell the larger story of contemporary mainline church life, with all of its ups and downs. During the last two decades, she says, “the church was being quietly transformed by the experiences of stayers like myself who demanded different visions and practices of churchgoing than the institution had traditionally offered.” And out of the turbulence, a new kind of mainline congregation has been emerging, and a new period of American Protestantism is being born.”

The above is ‘verbatim’ from the book cover for Diana Butler Bass’ book “*Strength for the Journey*.” I used this in place of my own words, feeling that it described the book better than I could. However, I do wish to express some of my own opinions. Ms. Bass is an extremely engaging writer, throughout her story she writes about church history and I actually found it interesting. I was engaged on so many levels with this book. I have a healthy respect for books and would never “highlight” a copy (unless it was in paperback) but I felt myself wanting to do that and found to my astonishment that I would have “highlighted” most or all of her thoughts and insights. During the course of reading this book I made a very long list of the many people I thought would enjoy it and who would benefit from it. Do take the time to pick up a copy, sit back, relax and enjoy!

Submitted by Kathy Stout,  
Associate for Parish Ministries  
Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis

