



# DIOCESAN DIGEST

## for Central Pennsylvania

May 23, 2011

### FROM THE DESK OF.....

#### BISHOP NATHAN BAXTER

Dear Sisters & Brothers;

In this edition I wish to address some of the concerns and inquires related to remarriage. First, I would request that all clergy, wardens and other church leaders re-read the appropriate sections related to remarriage in the Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Church (Title I Canon 19). It is a very brief and clear section. This section of the canons references situations when a member of the Church seeks to be remarried and there is a living previous spouse. In every case it requires the permission of the bishop with the endorsement of the clergy persons. The diocesan web-site has a standard application form.

The canonical instruction assumes that at least one of the couple should be members of the Church (this is to discourage requests based upon the promise of membership or as a lure to attract persons to membership). It also expects that: 1) there be thorough instruction—particularly regarding the theological gravity of marriage vows and necessary recognition of failure; 2) that there is appropriate assessment of healing for the petitioner from the last relationship and reconciliation relationally and emotional (such counseling or assessment may require assistance beyond the time or skill of a local pastor); 3) that there is accountability for the well-being of the former spouse and dependent children (legal expectations, and/or reasonable material and emotional needs as maybe pastorally assessed); 4) that there is proof positive of legal dissolving of a previous marriage; 5) the pastor has spiritually discerned with the couple about the past and their present experience. The latter matter is rather intuitive and is somewhat subjective; but it is critical, because it comes only from having a real pastoral relationship (not simply an acquaintance) with the couple—to include prayer and discernment on the pastor's part. The role of a clergyperson in a marriage ceremony is not just as an agent of the state, a theologian and canonical minister of the Church, but she/he is also a discerning pastor seeking a sense of the spirit of the couple and what the Holy Spirit may be saying.

All of the above matters are to be thoroughly considered before a clergyperson decides to endorse a couple's application to the bishop or not. In this diocese, I am reluctant to favorably consider an application which requests a 3<sup>rd</sup> marriage or more. While there can be unique combinations of widowhood or abusive relationships or abandonments which clearly should merit consideration, "serial monogamy" in general is not consistent with the teachings and spirit of the Christian Church regarding vows of life long commitment. In my experience as a minister many good, well-intended persons find themselves in patterns of unexamined desire for successful marriage. But few look at the social, emotional, and/or personality dynamics which influence their continued choices of spouses. In fact, many resist any substantial pre-marital preparation (and our busy schedules as pastors often tempt us to accommodate). Sometimes couples have no real sense of what has caused previous

### UPCOMING EVENTS...May – July

- May 26** 11am Clergy Assoc. meeting at St. Andrew's, Lewisburg
- May 29** Bishop visits Trinity, Renovo
- May 30** Diocesan Office closed for Memorial Day
- Jun 5** Ascension Day - Suggested UTO Ingathering
- Jun 5** Bishop visits St. Paul's, Columbia
- Jun 10-11** Diocesan Convention, Bucknell University, Lewisburg
- Jun 11** 9am-1pm Diocesan Children & Youth Day, Bucknell University, Lewisburg
- Jun 13** Diocesan Office closed post Convention
- Jun 13** Bishop's Open Golf Tournament, The Links at Gettysburg (see p. 2 for more details)
- Jun 16** 10am Council of Trustees meeting at the Diocesan Cntr
- Jun 19** Bishop visits St. James, Lancaster
- Jun 19-24** Summer Youth Conference, Camp Mt. Luther
- Jun 21** Bishop visits Summer Youth Conference
- Jun 22** Standing Committee Retreat at Camp Mt. Luther
- Jun 26** Bishop visits All Saints, Selinsgrove
- Jun 27-Jul 1** Bishop at UBE Annual Conference
- Jul 9** Commission on Ministry Retreat (location to be confirmed)
- Jul 10** Bishop visits St. James, Mansfield
- Jul 12-13** Bishop at Diocese of Buffalo
- Jul 17** Bishop visits St. James, Bedford
- Jul 21** Bishop preaching at Lykens Valley Camp Meeting
- Jul 24** Bishop visits St. Paul's, Bloomsburg
- Jul 31** Bishop visits St. John in the Wilderness, Eaglesmere

*If you have an event of interest to the Diocese that you would like to have listed on the Diocesan website calendar, please contact the Diocese at [officemailbox@diocesecpa.org](mailto:officemailbox@diocesecpa.org) or 888-236-5959*

### OPERATION UNDERSTANDING

*Thank you to all who picked up Operation Understanding envelopes at Convocation meetings.*

*If you haven't already, please choose a Sunday for the Operation Understanding ingathering.*

failures, or understand what it means to make solemn promises to God, who wishes to be a partner in sustaining a marriage or healing the pain of necessary separation.

Pastoral discernment for remarriage is a very important a ministry to a couple and to the Church. Guarding the Faith is a ministry in tension: it means lifting up the solemn sacramental nature of making vows before God; and doing so in the tension of affirming the truth of God's forgiveness and promise of new beginnings.

Peace & Grace,

+Nathan

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## REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS...

The Ven. Cn. Andy France sends the following message: "On May 19th, we received word from Hawaii of the positive forensic identification of our son Tim. Our 12 week vigil is ended. We extend our deepest and heartfelt thanks to so many of you who held Tim and us in your prayers & thoughts. Your cards, notes, emails, telephone calls and personal contacts gave us the strength that carried us through these months. Eventually, Tim's ash remains will be interred in the Chapel of the Resurrection in Trinity Church, Williamsport. Andy & Dottie France"

**The Rev. John Gale**, retired priest, is severely ill with liver cancer and is entering a nursing home.

**The Rev. Barbara Hary, Deacon** continues under doctors' care for heart-related issues.

**Thomas Kerr**, father of The Rev. Lauri Kerr, has been diagnosed with advanced lung cancer.

**Sandi Imboden**, continues cancer treatments.

**The Rev. Tom Gregg**, father of The Rev. Rowena Gibbons is in the late stages of brain cancer.

**Maddie Letsche**, Acolyte at St. Luke's, Altoona, who continues treatment and physical therapy for Image Negative Transverse Myelitis.

**Bob Rose** continues his cancer battle.

## Skype or not to Skype?

~ A Friendly Reminder from Bill Graffius ~

Skype is an audio as well as visual communications program that you can access from your home or parish office. It gives you the ability to attend diocesan committees, join meetings or simply connect with peers, family and friends without the expense of time and money to call or drive.

At this point, we have 40 Skype addresses registered on our Diocesan Skype account. We know more of you wish to join and share in the time and costs savings benefits of being a Skype member. It is so very easy to join. Attached with this Digest is a letter explaining how you can become "Skype ready" and have your name added to the Diocesan account, as well as some other tips.

If you have any questions, you may contact Bill Graffius or John Hoy, at the Diocese (888-236-5959) on Monday, Wednesday or Friday mornings 8:30-11:30 a.m.

## UNITED THANK INGATHERING

The *suggested* date for the spring UTO Ingathering is *Ascension Day, June 5th*. As always, you may determine the best date for your parish. Be on the look out for a letter from Bonnie Chambers, the Diocesan UTO Coordinator, with suggestions for UTO activities and a list of contributions from your parish in 2009 and 2010.

UTO and ECW will again have a booth at the diocesan convention. We will have more activity suggestions and a thank you gift for stopping by! If you have any questions, contact Bonnie at 717 838-4416 or [bchambers242@comcast.net](mailto:bchambers242@comcast.net).

## SACRED STITCHES Pocket Prayer Shawls for Soldiers

Sacred Stitches would like to encourage anyone who knits or crochets to help to make Pocket Prayer Shawls for our service men and women overseas. Pocket Prayer Shawls are small knit or crocheted "squares" that are made and blessed with prayer and then can be carried by soldiers in their pocket. They are sent with the message:



*May this pocket-sized prayer shawl, made with love and infused with prayers, be a sign of God's sustaining presence. May it refresh your weariness and provide comfort in your anxiety. May it make available to you healing for your pain and consolation for your loneliness. May it bring joy, gladness & brightest blessings.*

Go to the diocesan website, [www.diocesepca.org](http://www.diocesepca.org) to read an explanation of the Pocket Prayer Shawls and to find simple patterns that even a beginning knitter could make. You can send any Pocket Prayer Shawls you knit to the Diocese, as we plan to have some blessed at Convention and sent to Ft. Hood, Texas in time for upcoming deployments. We then hope to continue to send more as they are made. Stay tuned for more information.

The **summer Sacred Stitches gathering** will be hosted by Bangor Church in lovely Churchtown (2099 Main St., Narvon) on **Saturday, June 18th, 10am to 2pm**. As usual, bring a bag lunch. There is a wonderful yarn shop (Old Peddler Wools) a few miles from the church, if anyone's interested in checking it out afterwards. We are hoping to see lots of knitters and sharing some new ideas. If you have any questions, please contact Jeannie Zeller at [jeanniez@comcast.net](mailto:jeanniez@comcast.net).



## DIOCESAN CHILDREN & YOUTH DAY

**SATURDAY JUNE 11th 8:45am—1:00pm**

Bucknell University, Lewisburg

### Workshops

**Eucharist** (written and led by the youth)  
**We will end the day with a "Picnic-To-Go"**

For more details see [www.diocesepca.org](http://www.diocesepca.org)

Our Programs / Children & Youth

or contact Cn. Robyn Szoke

888-236-5959 or [rszoke@diocesepca.org](mailto:rszoke@diocesepca.org)

**Pass the word along ~ We hope to see you there!**

## BISHOP'S OPEN

**JUNE 3RD is the deadline** to sign up for the annual Bishop's Open on **Monday, June 13th** at The Links at Gettysburg. Registration Form and Sponsor Sheet are posted on our website.



Don't forget the opportunity to sponsor a hole at \$25, \$50, \$75, or \$100. Entries and sponsorships should be mailed **by June 3rd** to Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, Attn: John M. Stevenson, 20 West High Street, PO Box 3005, Gettysburg, PA 17325. Make checks payable to Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, with "Bishop's Open" noted in the memo line.