

The

Net

Summer 2014

Worker



THE BEST LAID PLANS ...

By MaryEllen Love

"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord, and I will change your lot." Jeremiah 29:10-14

We all have plans, and for some of us, maybe for most of us, too many plans! The busyness of our days begin to take the wheel and drive us, pushing us over to take the passenger seat in our own lives. All too often, this way becomes routine, and this routine becomes our life. Stopping to smell the roses is not on our list of priorities. The problem is, if we don't stop, then we can't get out and let the sun shine on our faces and warm our hearts. It is not easy to stop the ride we are used to taking, even when we feel our routine is not serving us well. Maybe the thought of change or the unknown is way too scary. Maybe the way we operate is the only way we know how to be, and for that reason and that reason alone, we are sticking to it. Or just maybe, we have absolutely no idea how to change even though we feel the calling or that tug within us to do so. If any of this resonates with you, read on!

To get back into the driver's seat, we must come to a complete stop and take an honest look at who we are, what has taken over, what we fear and doubt, and what keeps us stuck. In order to stand in the truth and honestly answer those questions, we must start in our hearts. All it takes is a willingness to begin to allow change within. It all begins with trust

in God and praying with all our hearts.

The road inward is not an easy one, I can speak from experience. I worked as a corporate paralegal for 17 years and juggled all the things that I believed I had to do. Deep inside I knew there was something more, however I didn't know where to start. So I continued on the path that I was on. Then I was struck nearly dead in my tracks with viral meningitis. Talk about a blessing in

To get back into the driver's seat, we must come to a complete stop and take an honest look at who we are, what has taken over, what we fear and doubt, and what keeps us stuck.

disguise! During my months of recovery, what seemed like quiet rest on the outside was the protective shell allowing for interior toil. When the interior excavation was complete, I saw with new eyes, with the eyes of my heart. In total surrender I was led. Through prayer from the depths of my heart, I was nourished with all that I needed to be led. My lot changed in a way that I could have never planned. Never in my wildest dreams

could I have imagined that I would earn a Master's Degree in Pastoral Counseling from Fordham University's School of Religion and Religious Education at the age of 47, and within weeks of graduation, be teaching Religion to nearly 200 high school students a few miles from my door!

Jeremiah, called the "weeping prophet", lived during a time where men turned away from God, a time a lot like our own – a time where immediate self-satisfaction and worldly expectations trump aligning oneself with God and his plan for

**THE NET
WORKER**

The Newsletter of
St. Peter
the Apostle Parish,
River Edge,
New Jersey

EDITOR
Pam Lobley

**DESIGN &
LAYOUT**
Ana DiBisceglie

**CONTACT
INFORMATION:**
pam-
bill22@verizon.net

each of us. We forget that we are the creations, not the Creator. Let's heed the Lord's words spoken through Jeremiah. Let's plan to make time each day to get out of our heads and move into our hearts. It is there in prayer that we meet God. It is there that we drink of the water of eternal life and are renewed and filled with hope. It is there that we raise the white flag and surrender ourselves and our plans, to God and his plans. Then the most amazing thing happens: our white flag of surrender becomes the strongest of sails and propels us to go where we have never gone before, to places that we could have never imagined, let alone have planned for. That is the gift of surrender. So pray with all your heart, that is where you start.



What Is A Lay Ecclesial Minister?

By Mary Bertani

Most Catholics have never heard the term "lay ecclesial minister," but it is simply the official title for lay people who prepare for and commit to professional ministry in the Church. There have been several of us here at St. Peter's since 1995.

Lay ecclesial ministry is a relatively new concept in the life and work of the Church. Vatican II taught us to understand that all baptized Catholics are called to service or ministry to help build up God's kingdom. *For most* of us that means helping to transform the world; *for many*, it is also to become actively involved in the diverse ministries of a parish such as ours. For a *few*, but steadily growing number of laity, mostly *lay women*, that call is to professional ministry within the church - actively sharing pastoral leadership and care with the pastor, the priests, and deacons.



One such parishioner, **Chris Black**, whose pastoral responsibilities now encompass Adult Faith Formation - Women's and Men's Cornerstone, RCIA, liturgical preparation and coordination of liturgical ministers, Children's Liturgy of the Word, and bereavement work with young widows, was hired in 1997 by Msgr. Slipe to be a *temporary* part-time Parish Catechetical Leader for middle-school children and Confirmation candidates. Eleven years later (!) Chris moved into Adult Ministry. Both she and Mary Pat Leon (another parishioner who began at the same time) divided responsibility for the Religious Education Program for a few years; Mary Pat has since gone on to Paramus Catholic's religion faculty.

When Msgr. Slipe and Father Michael Saporito began the search for a Youth Minister, parishioner **Donna Cirino** responded. She had started out with husband Steve as the "cooking couple" for a youth retreat - she loved camping; she was also a coach and an accompanist for the children's choir. Hearing about the search, Donna wondered if *this* was God's call to her, and hesitatingly put in her resume. Now after 16 years, she is planning to begin a Young Adult Ministry.

Lay ecclesial ministers can have many different titles. Just read our bulletin cover: Chris Black is Pastoral Associate for Adult Formation; Joyce Bowen is Pastoral Associate; Eileen Hanrahan is Pastoral Minister for Catechesis; Sheila Ebbels is Director of Music Ministry; Nick and Elizabeth Belfiore are Youth Ministers (as was Donna Cirino who is about to begin a Young Adult Ministry). A layperson may become responsible for Liturgy, Outreach, Justice and Peace, or Spiritual Direction.



These lay women (I use "women" because that's almost exclusively the case in this parish - in fact, nationwide, lay women, with a declining number of religious sisters, comprise over 70% of all parish staffs) find themselves called to

professional ministry from a wide variety of backgrounds and careers. *What is common to all, however, is a strong sense that one is being called by God "to something more."* That call is tested and confirmed *usually* by a pastor, who may invite and then "hire" a parishioner whose dedication to ministry and to the parish he has already witnessed, or he may look for someone already in professional ministry elsewhere who has spiritual maturity, a love for people, and the skill sets that fill a particular parish need.

Sheila Ebbels, from Ridgewood by way of Canada, began playing music at Mass while still in elementary school. In college she studied music performance but switched to finance and economics. With marriage and three small children, she more or less stopped playing, until a Moms Group in Mt. Carmel Ridgewood reconnected her with the church. One thing led to another - Liturgy of the Word with Children, CCD, playing the piano as needed. Subbing brought her here while our parish searched for a new Director of Music. Everyone liked her skill, her way with people, her clear sense of how deeply music enhances the liturgy. "It's how I pray," she has said. "Why don't you apply?" she was asked. A sense of call, prayerful discernment and confirmation by the Search Committee led to 14 years of commitment. Now she's preparing to retire.



Like Sheila, **Eileen Hanrahan** was a young mother - of four - a lifelong parishioner, and a Wall Street trader with a growing sense that she

was not where she was meant to be. Because of her daughter Bridget's chronic lung disease, she had stopped working and soon found her way to the Moms Group, then into Baptismal Ministry, then, seeing a need, began the PreSchool Religious Education program. When an opening arose in 2004, Msgr. Slipe invited her to become the Director of Faith Formation. With each year, she grew increasingly convinced that families needed to do catechesis together, and with Fr. Mike's blessing, yet another pastoral need was filled. The Faith Formation Office now ministers to and with 412 families, with 750 kids taught by 75 catechists!

Even as a child, Joyce Bowen felt called to some form of ministry, without knowing what that might be. Moved by "bringing pagan babies" to God, she became an early childhood teacher in both public and Catholic schools. She and husband (Deacon) Ed had as a couple also discerned that they were to serve in ministry; a "random" flyer from Fordham University on "Inspiring Women in the Church" helped her explore a call to study Religious Education. She assisted Sr. Helen Blenderman here at St. Peter's; served as DRE at parishes in Bloomfield, Jersey City, and Paramus where she worked for Father Mike Sheehan. She now runs the Ministry to the Sick and Homebound and trains parishioners to make pastoral visits and bring Eucharist to 30 or more homebound people at any given time. Joyce also works with children in RCIA and, collaborating with Chris, is expanding the RCIA teams.

Professional ministry involves extensive ongoing training and formation. Some come into parish ministry with such training from college or graduate school. Others are hired with the understanding that they will begin whatever is appropriate to their particular area of ministry. Chris completed both a bachelor's and a master's degree (!) while working in religious education and adult formation, going to college along with her children. She now is also an adjunct faculty member at Felician College. Donna received a National Certificate in Youth Ministry from Seton Hall, Eileen is completing an MA from Fordham's Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education. Joyce completed the same program, specializing in Family and Community Ministry. Sheila, already a trained musician, continues to hone her knowledge of liturgical music through extensive reading and attending conferences for Pastoral Musicians, and searching for just the right music for choirs and for special liturgies.

These lay ecclesial ministers are

committed to growing their own knowledge of spirituality, theology, liturgy, pastoral care, community building, and to empowering all the members of this faith community. Each speaks movingly of the deep joy of pastoral work.

Chris describes herself as "humbled and grateful to be a witness to the loving compassion of God in the lives of those I minister with as they minister to each other, and then to the greater parish community." Joyce also speaks of empowering others to complete their own call from God, as well as encouraging women to recognize the power they already do have in the Church. Sheila's great joy is having so intimate a role in the cycle of life - from baptisms to funerals, and of knowing how much music and the choirs she's built enhance liturgy and build community.

Donna is awed to be an "instrument" through whom hurting teens realize in an Aha! moment that God is actually there and loves them. Eileen and her staff find their greatest joy in ministering to families in crisis or in need, whom they meet at all stages of the cycle of life. All are about bringing people, children and adults into personal relationship with Jesus Christ and then to outreach with one another.

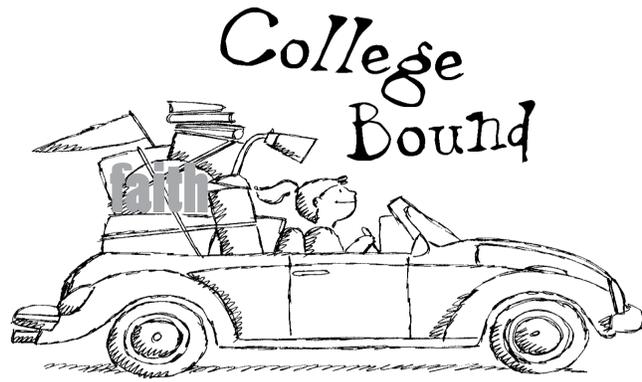
For our parish, this all began in 1995, when Msgr. Slipe hired St. Peter's first "lay ecclesial minister," - me. I too had studied at Fordham and gone on work for the Archdiocese in the Family Life Office (where Fr. Matt is now Director). I then worked in the Synod, an office charged with developing a 10-year pastoral plan for the entire Archdiocese - its priority turned out to be "to develop lay leadership in the church." That, along with developing adult spirituality, became my dream also. I began making "cold calls" to pastors in Bergen County, and Father Slipe was my second call. New to St. Peter's, he explained his vision - building up the adult community. "Do you know anything about Cornerstone?" he said. I did. Then came the Moms Group, the Library, Journey, Bible Study, reshaping the Pastoral Council and some other things. It's been a joy seeing the seeds planted bear fruit into several generations. No longer on staff, but with Father Mike's blessing, I now try to help us all become more aware of the Church's social teachings and our responsibility to advocate for justice.

Through our lay ecclesial ministers, God's Spirit, always active and alive, continues to be so here in St. Peter's.



Off to College?
Don't forget to
unpack your faith
when you
get there...

By Maria Brockmeier



It is such an exciting and nerve wracking time—leaving home to inhabit a place for four years that you may have visited only once or twice before in your life. Exciting and daunting. What will keep you from being completely overwhelmed? How about your faith?

Check out your Catholic Newman Center or Catholic Campus Ministry on campus. One article suggests doing it right away before everything else gets in the way and your plate gets filled. Perhaps introduce yourself to the priest, staff and any new faces you meet there, or grab last week's bulletin and make note of Mass and Confession times. As soon as you can, try to find a friend (or a group!) that you can go to Mass with on Sunday. It beats going alone.

There is also a new Catholic college organization (founded 1998) called FOCUS which is on 83 campuses. You can check the website to see if your college is on their list at: <http://www.focus.org> The site has great blog articles, and a FOCUS Digital campus designed for those who don't have an actual FOCUS on their campus. You can have a mentor work online with you as well as with a bible study group.

If there are retreats offered—go on them! You will not only meet new people at your college and make new friends but you will also get to know them on a much deeper level than at a late night party on campus. If there is a bible study group-- try it.

One article states "A Bible study is an amazing opportunity to meet new people who share your values and desires for following Christ during college. These people you meet will likely become your lifelong friends. If you get invited to multiple Bible studies early on, commit to the one that you really connect with. It's not selfish to say no. But after that, don't be flakey—COMMIT. You won't regret it."

Another piece of advice from an article is: "Go to mass every Sunday, no matter what. First, as Catholics, we are required to go. So, please go. Second, we should want to go! I know it's hard sometimes when you are tired and you were out late and you just don't feel like getting up and going. As Christians, there is nothing more **important** than the mass. It is the highest form of prayer we can do. We actually receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ himself. Nowhere else can we experience this unique, special encounter with Jesus Christ as we do in the Eucharist. There is no better way to 'be fed.' You will always be glad you went and it's the most powerful way to experience and receive God's grace."

AND the benefits of going to Mass in college rather than at home—they usually have a LATE Sunday Mass for those who MUST sleep in on Sunday mornings. You can see who the late risers are on campus at your late Mass and form your own special interest group.

Oh yeah, and don't forget to call your mom!

Graduation Prayer

Father,
we thank you for our
time here together
for all the friends
we have made
for all the days of
laughter and fun
and for all the times
of great discovery
and learning.

We thank You for all
who have given of their
energy and skill
so that we can
graduate today:
our teachers
and mentors
our family
and loved ones.
We thank You for them
and give them all
to You in prayer.

As this chapter on our
lives closes,
a new one begins.
We present ourselves
like an open book
before You.
Come and inscribe
Your words of life into
our lives.
Fill our minds
with Your thoughts,
fill our bodies
with Your strength,
fill our hearts
with Your dreams,
that we might love
and serve You
this day and every day.

We ask all this in the
glorious name of Jesus,
who lives and reigns
with You and
the Holy Spirit,
world without end.
Amen.

~ from Lord's
Prayer Words.
[http://www.lords-
prayer-words.com/
times/
graduation_prayer.h
tml#ixzz2zWo0xjBE](http://www.lords-prayer-words.com/times/graduation_prayer.html)

