



nova notes

NOVA Catholic Community

April 2010

Chair Notes.....

“We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song!” St. Augustine’s words ring as true in the halls of Nova today as they did in the early years of the Church so long ago. We have been through a long, cold Lenten season this year and the urge to break out the colors, bring forth the flowers, light the candles and sound the bells is strong. So many Nova people are involved in the planning of Holy Week that it truly feels like a grand reunion of spirit and purpose. Let the lasagnas be baked, let the musicians rehearse, let the candles be made ready – it is time to celebrate our faith and “Alleluia” is our song!

Despite getting off to a snow-bound start, the Lenten liturgies have been rich and deep and meditative. The planners enjoined us week after week to “wake up and listen” as the “The Word is always near you . . . the Word is in your heart.” With angel cards delivering a personal message each Sunday, periods of silent and spoken reflection, and the rich homilies of our beloved Padre Cadre, we have prepared ourselves well to celebrate the good news of Easter. Many thanks go out to the Lenten Planning Team who made it all possible: Jeanne and Tom, Tim and Eric, Joe and Rosemarie, Marlene and John, Kopp and Cece, Cathy S, Jack and Linda, Barbara and Joe. Your work has been a blessing to us.

Special efforts have also been made to bring the justice and equity message home on behalf of those who are struggling so hard now. For two weeks, the community has been adding rice and beans and **heavy** “real food” to our weekly cereal contributions for the AFAC food distribution. Our efforts will be matched a dollar per pound of food

by a donor in an attempt to provide more for ever increasing numbers of people asking for assistance. Under the leadership of V.O.I.C.E. and Teddi Ahrens, 12 community members joined the big March for Immigration Reform on March 21st on the mall. Thanks, Teddi, for spear-heading this as well as the effort to support Eve Birch’s care for the homeless.

You will find the summary minutes of the March 13 General Meeting on pp. 7-8 in this newsletter. We have been tackling complicated and sometimes contentious issues in the community this year, and I am impressed with how much we have managed to accomplish so far. We have made several significant decisions and will tackle the rest in upcoming meetings. We are grateful for the large number of people who have cared enough to weigh in on these important issues, to patiently listen to all who want to speak and have proven once again, that we will form and evolve this community together - whatever it takes.

During April we will be preparing for the Calling Forth meeting (May 8) in prayer and reflection. All are asked to submit one or two names to the current Chairs of those they would like to see serve as Co-Chair with Tom Clarkson in the coming year. If you will not be at liturgy or you miss the cards to fill out, please email Tom or me with your recommendations and why you are suggesting them.

Happy Easter, everyone. **This is OUR SEASON!**
† Gloria Mog

April Birthdays

NOVA Message Line	(703) 852-7907
Chairpersons	Tom Clarkson Gloria Mog
Treasurer	Joe Formoso
Coordinator, Community Life	Cece Michelotti
Liturgy Coordinator	Jeanne Clarkson
Padre Cadre Coordinator	John Mooney
Music Coordinator	Victoria Robinson
Peace & Justice Coordinators	Dianne Carroll & Marie Keefe
Christ House Coordinator	Kopp Michelotti
Facilities	Glenn Passin
Newsletter Editor	Judy Christofferson

- 2 Chris Egbulum
- 3 John Marron
- 5 David Meyer
Steve Michelotti
- 7 Archer Heinzen
- 10 Victoria Robinson
- 12 Meg Tuccillo
- 13 Maureen Flood
Tom Hayes
- 14 Chris Massey
Timothy Showalter
- 18 Jim Weber
- 25 Kopp Michelotti
- 27 Jason Powell
- 28 Emilia Formoso

The NOVA Catholic Community invites you to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy with us every Sunday in Arlington, Virginia.

Note: Our Liturgy is usually celebrated at Kenmore Middle School, Arlington Blvd. and Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington, VA. Beginning Memorial Day weekend up to our Fall Retreat weekend in September, we celebrate at Lacey Woods Park, George Mason Drive near Washington Blvd., unless otherwise noted.

Liturgies at Kenmore begin at 10:15 a.m.
Gather at 10:00 a.m.
Liturgies at Lacey Woods begin at 9:30 a.m.
Gather at 9:15 am

Call the Message Line (above) or check the NOVA website for the latest information.

**May Newsletter Deadline:
April 25**

Please send Judy Christofferson your birthday if you would like it to appear here (month/day only).

NOVA is praying for...

Sonja Donahue, who appreciates a card, a call or a visit.

Jody Furlong, who would also appreciate a phone call or note.

Peggy Meyer, who is recovering at home and would welcome a visit, call, or note. (Please call ahead before visiting.)

Meg Tuccillo, who is recovering from a serious fall

John McGregor, brother-in-law of Anna Reich, who recently passed away.

Remember these and any other NOVA members and their friends and family who need our prayers.

Liturgies: Cycle C

Inclusive Readings and Music Selections are available in the new NOVA Yahoo Group Files.
Please give all music selections to the Music Liaison the Sunday before your liturgy and print 65 copies of the liturgy program. Liturgies at Kenmore begin at 10:15 a.m.

April Music Liaison Tom Clarkson

April 3 - Easter Vigil

Quinn Connors, O.Carm. - Helen Michie
Genesis 1:1-2:2, *or* 1:1, 26-31
Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35 (30)
or Psalm 33: 4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20-22
Genesis 22:1-18 *or* 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18
Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11
Exodus 14:15- 15:1; Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18
Isaiah 54:5-14; Psalm 30:2-6, 11-13
Isaiah 55:1-11; Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6
Baruch 3:9-15, 32- 4: 4; Psalm 19:8-11
Ezekiel 36:16-17, 18-28
Psalm 42: 3, 5, 43: 3, 4 *or* Isaiah 12:2-6
Romans 6:3-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Luke 24:1-12

April 11 - Second Sunday of Easter

Joe Kenna - Catherine Schmidt
Acts of the Apostles 5: 12-16
Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24
Revelation 1:9-11, 12-13, 17-19
Victimae Paschali Laudes
John 20:19-31

April 18 - Third Sunday of Easter

Bill Callahan - Clyde and Judy Christofferson
Acts of the Apostles 5:27-32, 40-41
Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11
Revelations 5:11-14;
John 21:1-19 *or* 21:1-14

April 25 - Fourth Sunday of Easter

Quinn Connors, O. Carm. - Cackley Family
Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43-52
Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 4
Revelations 7:9, 14-17
John 10:27-30

May Music Liaison Tim White

May 2 - Fifth Sunday of Easter

TBA – Cathy and Larry Goldschmidt
Acts of the Apostles 14:21-27
Psalm 145:8-13
Revelations 21:1-5
John 13:31-35

May 9 - Sixth Sunday of Easter

Joe Kenna - Linda Rosenberg and Kathy Scheimer
Acts of the Apostles 15:1-2, 22-29
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23
John 14:23-29

May 16 - Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts of the Apostles 15:1-2, 22-29
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Revelations 21:10-14, 22-23
John 14:23-29

May 23 - Solemnity of Pentecost

Quinn Connors, O. Carm. - Walter Landry
Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11
Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34
1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13 *or* Romans 8:8-17
John 20:19-23 *or* 14:15-16, 23-26

May 30 - Solemnity of the Holy Trinity

Bill Callahan - Victoria Robinson
Proverbs 8:22-31
Psalm 8:4-9
Romans 5:1-5
John 16:12-15
Note: This liturgy begins our summer liturgies in Lacey Woods Park. The liturgy starts at 9:30 a.m.

Liturgy Tip: Please review the planning guide for liturgies found in the directory provided by Ken Chaison. We all live very busy lives so it is very important that we contact our presiders a few weeks in advance of our liturgy to schedule planning.

Volunteer Opportunities

Gunston Volunteers Needed

Nova volunteers distribute bags of non-perishable food, cereal provided by Nova, and perishable items such as eggs, milk, and meat that are picked up at the Arlington Food Assistance Center warehouse on the night of distribution. Produce items are picked up every other week by Eric Carroll at the produce markets downtown (and funded by the Nova Peace and Justice budget). The distribution takes place at the Gunston Middle School Recreation Center in Arlington. Many volunteers have been active in this project for a lot of years. All love their work and would be glad to teach new Nova volunteers how it's done.

April Schedule (blanks indicate volunteer needed):

April 1: (Holy Thursday) Syd will help two AFAC volunteers

April 8: Tim, Jerry, Ann

April 15: Eric, _____

April 22: Ann/Don, Cathy G

April 29: Glen, Syd, _____

Christ House

On Monday, April 19, NOVA will prepare and serve meatloaf and scalloped potatoes to the hungry clients at Christ House. Please mark your calendars to remember to bring your meatloaves and potatoes to liturgy on Sunday, April 18. Alternatively, you may drop them off at the Michelotti's anytime on Sunday or until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, the 19th.

Support for TANF

John Horesji, SALT Coordinator, asks that we urge Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner to vote for the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) extension as part of the Small Business Tax Act when it comes up in the Senate after Spring recess. Mark Warner's email is Senator_arnier@warner.senate.gov. Jim Webb can be reached at www.webb.senate.gov.

VOICE Volunteers Needed

You say you want to learn more about Nova's peace and social justice projects! Here's your chance. We need at least two NOVA members to attend the VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) interactive introductory session on Saturday, May 1, from 9 a.m. to noon at Springfield United Methodist Church, 7047 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield VA 22150. A few members have already participated in an earlier introductory session, but we need more members to become familiar with VOICE and its methods of getting results in the three focus areas of access to dental/medical care for those who would otherwise go without, affordable housing, and immigration reform. For additional information about VOICE or this introductory session, please call Nancy or John Veldhuis.

Annual Yard Sale

April is the time to spring clean and when you find those "gently used" items you no longer need, donate them to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation's annual GIANT YARD SALE on May 1. Donation drop-offs are Wednesday, April 28 and Thursday, April 29, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., at 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, VA (our Easter Vigil location). Social justice groups that share in work and yard sale profits include Mosaic Harmony, Our Daily Bread, Partner Church, and the Shepherd's Center of Vienna. **Volunteers are needed** for set-up days and on Saturday, 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. for the yard sale. Whether you are in "downsizing" mode, looking for good quality items for kids in college or apartments, or interested in purchasing something for recipients of Nova's social justice outreach, DONATE and if possible, COME to the sale on May 1! – Victoria Robinson





Volunteers Needed for Short-term work in El Salvador and Guatemala in 2010

Ilobasco, El Salvador: Co-lead a workshop for adolescents that will cover the full range of topics of interest to this group, communication, leadership, self-esteem, gender, career choice, and sexuality, July 29-August 8.

Participants in this program will be low-income, rural youth associated with *La Nueva Esperanza*, a women's community development association in Ilobasco, El Salvador. Volunteers should have high-level Spanish and facilitation experience. Volunteers will travel to El Salvador for two days of country orientation and then teach for a week.

Chichicastenango, Guatemala: Teach English to high school students or basic machine sewing to women, Wednesday, November 1-Friday, November 13 or 20

This program is in collaboration with the Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario (ASDECO). Volunteers will stay in a guesthouse in Chichicastenango. Sewing classes will be taught at ASDECO's center in Chichi, but English classes will be taught in rural communities located approximately a 30 minute drive from Chichi. An orientation and materials for teaching English will be provided in Alexandria, VA or in Guatemala.

Why teach English in Central America?

English is required for high school graduation, but instruction is very weak, especially in rural schools, so classes help students academically. Tourism is an important part of Central American countries' GNP. Chichicastenango, in particular, is a major tourist destination and for youth to enter the field of tourism they need to be able to speak English. In addition, goods produced in the US and goods produced in Guatemala for sale in the US are marked in English and workers need to be able to understand these markings.

Volunteers pay their own expenses

Volunteers pay their own expenses except for some lunches that may be provided if food is offered to program participants. Daily expenses are approximately \$35 per day, single occupancy for simple accommodations. Local transportation ranges from \$60 to \$200, depending upon whether volunteers are able to coordinate their arrival. Airline tickets this year are in the range of \$650-700, making the total cost of the experience in the range of \$1,000-1,200.

You'd like to volunteer, but you don't speak Spanish or your Spanish is rusty?

Guatemala has many wonderful language schools. We have used APPE—Academia de Profesores Privados de Español located in Antigua, Guatemala, www.appeschool.com which provides 30 hours of individual instruction for \$150/week. Our experience is that for an individual with rusty high school Spanish, a week-long refresher course is sufficient for participation in our English instruction programs. Participants without any previous Spanish need two or three weeks of classes.

Please contact: Archer Heinzen, heinzen@verizon.net or 703-548-6713 or (cell) 703-447-4281

Co-partners of Campesinas is a US based, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that supports *La Nueva Esperanza* (*New Hope*) and other associations working for women's education and empowerment in developing countries in Central America. *New Hope* is an organization of sixty rural girls and women from four impoverished communities near Ilobasco, El Salvador, who meet weekly to learn income-producing skills and advance the education of members and their children. Co-partners also supports the *Asociación para el Desarrollo Indígena de El K'iche* (ADIK) and the *Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario* (ASDECO), indigenous organizations located outside of Chichicastenango, Guatemala with goals similar to those of *New Hope*.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Nova Meetings: Save the Dates

Sunday, April 18: 7:00-9:00 p.m. – Nova Nite

Location: The Barrett's Party Room

We'll do some brief brainstorming about our Fall Retreat and the rest of the meeting will be led by Dianne and Marie Keefe on Peace and Social Justice issues first identified at last January's meeting. Bring snacks to share.

Saturday, May 8, 5:30-9:30 p.m. – Annual Calling Forth Meeting

Location: Home of Rosemarie & Joe Annunziata

The meeting will begin with a pot-luck dinner. We will use the new Calling Forth process we are trying out this year to select the next Community Co-Chair. Additionally, all are encouraged to think about where they would like to see the Community put its efforts in the coming year as well as any specific ways they might be able to contribute.

Sunday, June 6, 6:30-9:00 p.m. – General Meeting

Location: The Barrett's Party Room

We will complete the decision-making process from the March General Meeting Agenda. There are two more items concerning the possible use of alternative Catholic ministers at community led liturgies and whether we should continue our policy of only using canonically approved priests for regular Eucharistic liturgies. The second half of the meeting will be led by Mike Timpane and others, who will explore how Nova might attract families and younger people to worship with us. Bring finger foods and drinks to share.

SALT RICHMOND WRAP-UP

SALT (*Social Action Linking Together*)

announces that its annual forum to learn what happened during the Virginia General Assembly Session in Richmond is being held on Saturday, April 17, 2010 from 9:00-11:15 a.m. at The American Legion Auxiliary Post 180, 330 Center

Street North, Vienna, Virginia. Legislators from Northern Virginia will discuss how well the General Assembly responded to social justice and human services needs facing Virginia and will answer questions posed by participants. This is an excellent opportunity to learn first-hand what transpired in Richmond. There is no charge for the program. All are welcome. For more information, contact SALT Coordinator, John Horejsi at jhorejsi@cox.net or visit the SALT web site at www.S-A-L-T.org.

Mosaic Harmony Concert



Unifying the world... one song at a time

17TH ANNUAL SPRING CONCERT

"ONE HUMANKIND"

David K. North, Director

Saturday, May 1, 2010 7:00pm
Sunday, May 2, 2010 5:00pm

Bishop Ireton High School Whaley Auditorium
201 Cambridge Road
Alexandria, VA 22314

Advance Tickets \$20* - Kids under 12 free**

**\$25 at the door - **Ticket required*

www.mosaicharmony.org

See the Annunziatas or Victoria Robinson about purchasing tickets for this concert.

March General Meeting Summary

Many of you who did not attend the General Meeting on March 13th have been asking, so what happened? What was decided? I plan to write more about the meeting in the Chair Notes for April newsletter, but meantime, here are the highlights:

There were 29 people in attendance. Tom and Gloria led the meeting and Cece took notes. We reviewed the decisions that the Community has already made in this past year:

- When we do not have a canonically approved priest for Sunday Mass, we will have a community-led liturgy in its stead.
- We will not use Catholic women priests as presiders at Sunday liturgies mainly because of the strong cautions we received from our Padre Cadre against doing that at this time. It is also our understanding that most of the women priests would want to say Mass and not do a community-led liturgy.
- The Community accepted the format for a community-led liturgy last fall. The format has now been duplicated and placed in plastic sleeves and will be kept in the closet/summer tub to be used as needed. If a scheduled priest does not show up at the last minute, there is a Leader Guide that accompanies the duplicated format and it will be possible to proceed immediately with the community led liturgy. The community was reminded that we are using a "Bread Breaking Prayer" and have conceptualized it as a Rite of Remembrance of the Last Supper and our unity with one another as well as Christians throughout the world. We are not stating that it is the Eucharist or Communion. It was also clarified that the community wishes to use only the approved format for such a liturgy at this time.

A new process was introduced to the community as an aid to help the community move toward consensus-based decision-making. Ken Himes offered this idea to us as it is used by the Franciscans when they are dealing with large-group decision-making. Everyone receives three cards: red, yellow and green. After an issue has been introduced and discussed and understood by all, the general feeling of the group is taken by asking all to take a moment of silent reflection and prayer to determine whether they are in favor of a proposal (green), not sure/have some reservations (yellow), or definitively opposed to it (red). If anyone holds up a red card, he/she must tell the group the reasons for the opposition. Discussion goes on considering the objection(s) of red card holders and whether it is a misunderstanding or modifications are needed. Additionally, if there are a significant number of people showing a yellow card, more discussion is definitely needed. If the issue cannot be resolved at that time, a small group is formed to meet with those opposing to see if agreement can be reached and the issue will be brought back to the community at a later time. We used the process to tackle three difficult issues for the rest of the meeting and many felt it was very helpful in moving the discussion along as well as giving everyone a voice.

The following three issues were discussed at length and consensus was reached. Many other ideas surfaced during the discussion which we have placed in a "Parking Lot" to be discussed at future meetings. The decisions reached were:

1. Nova will schedule two-four community led liturgies throughout the year for those Sundays when it is particularly difficult to get a priest. This will allow the planners time to prepare and consider whether they wish to invite a guest homilist, use an alternative reading, etc. The group was clear that it did not want to schedule more than four such liturgies in a year.
2. When a Community Led Liturgy is scheduled, the planners may invite other Christian ministers to take a role in the liturgy for that day. *(continued on page 8)*

March General Meeting Summary (continued)

3. Nova will try out a new Calling Forth process this year in an effort to have more community participation and to give more time for potential leaders to consider a "call." During the month of April, all will be asked to pray about who might best lead the community in the coming year and what each of us is being called to do with and for the community at this time. Cards will be available at each liturgy and all are invited to write the name(s) of one or two community members they believe would make a good Co-Chair for the coming year and why they think so. The Chairs will collect this information all month and then meet with a group consisting of the Chairs from the past three years. This group will review all of the names and reasons given and will identify all those who have good community support. Members of the group will then meet individually with those named and will tell them why they are being asked to consider being a Chair. They will then have several days to consider the call if they need it. The Chair group will then bring to the Calling Forth meeting the names of all those who have agreed to consider a call, and the decision will be made at the meeting. This process might free up more time at that meeting to consider where the Community wants to focus its efforts for the following year as well as what each individual would like to offer the community for his/her service.

There were two other issues on the agenda for the March 13th meeting but there was insufficient time to discuss them. The following two items are tabled for a future meeting:

1. When Nova plans a Community Led Liturgy, is the community open to having laicized, married or suspended Catholic priests take a role in the liturgy at the invitation of the planners for that day?
2. Should Nova continue to schedule only canonically approved priests for the regular Eucharistic Liturgy/Mass?

— Submitted by Gloria for the Chairs

Nova Yahoo Group Message Guidelines

(originally published March 16, 2009)

- Stop, breathe and **think before hitting "reply all" or automatically forwarding emails** you receive from various individuals or organizations. Ask yourself if the majority of the community needs to receive this information; if it might be more appropriate to respond just to an individual sender; or if your personal response to a situation/issue may be "too much information" as the young folks say.
- Try to be **diplomatic and calm** when replying to emails – particularly those that upset you. Criticism always feels harsher when written and misunderstanding can spread quickly. It may be better to communicate one on one with that person.
- If someone has written to you privately, **do not forward** his/her email message unless you have permission from the author. What was originally written may not have been intended for wider distribution.
- If you have an **idea for a new NOVA project or response, send it to the Chairs** or the appropriate committee chairperson so it can be considered in light of what else is going on in the community before being debated via the email list.

Social Justice Meeting Notes/Recent Community Photos

January Peace and Social Justice Meeting

In January, NOVA gathered for our annual Peace and Social Justice meeting to set the direction for our activities and projects for this year. We met in small groups, first to review our projects and the work we've done on Immigration, Care of the Earth, Domestic Poverty, International Economic Development, and Peace and then mapping out these relationships in a graphic form. After sharing their observations with the whole group, the groups returned to build on their observations and brainstorm priorities for year.

There was an impressive array of suggestions. Areas of common interest were partnering with others as we do social justice activities and increasing the information about projects so more folks understand them better and become involved. Others brought up possibilities of finding ways to make an impact in a different form, perhaps through fundraising, a major focus area, or a single effort for a year. There wasn't sufficient time to pursue these ideas or to decide on funding old or new projects. .

You turned over to the Committee the responsibility of figuring out how to proceed with this wealth of ideas and suggestions. And then it snowed and rained and sleeted, but spring is here and we'll gather on April 18 (See NOVA Nite meeting, p. 6.) to push forward with the work you began. — Marie Keefe



Taking Communion to the Sick



Some of Nova's Oral Rehydration Project Volunteers



Altar, 2nd Sunday of Easter



Nova Musicians and Singers

Remembering Grace Birch



Mother

*Mother, in the background
Always there
Like the air
Like water
Like soil
Like soul*

*In the background – like an exquisite sunset filling us naturally, subtly, to the brim.
Mother in the background,
In the background--like Earth herself.
Giving, accepting our gifts of every color, shape and...state
Effortlessly doing ten impossible things before breakfast.*

*You glow with a humble brilliance like the moon—your being—with all of us at once.
Like mid-morning sun, you burn off lonely nighttime tears with your easy, casual beam.
Your busy heart long forgot the nights your sleepless hands soothed our fevers.*

*Over and over--how many tears did you drink with a kiss?
How did they go so quickly?
And where have yours gone?
Is that why the oceans are so deep?*

*It's time for diligent hands, feet, body and soul to rest, to return; refreshed renewed.
You must confine yourself today in soft sheets with flowers and food,
and drink in our praise, our coos, our cuddles
Because we need you again tomorrow.*

*And we know you live to give, because you give so joyously, generously, contentedly.
And so wisely--you must really know who you are!
So give us this day our daily joy, so we may learn this gift from you.*

*A Mother's poem to her daughter and we say it now to you:
What was it chased away the gloom? Mother walked into the room.
You Love us: therefore we are.*

*--©creative commons Daisy Birch 2008
Written for Grace Birch and Anise Tonkaboni—our Angel-Mothers*

METAMORPHOSIS

By Grace Birch

*Night comes and I go to bed and sleep the metamorphosis of dreams. I wrap myself in my cocoon, my blanket,
and dream.
I dream of flowers and sunshine and most of all of flight. Of soaring and bowing low to catch the scent of a
rose.
Oh hurry morning, I eagerly await the light that will open the wings of my transformation! Here comes the
dawn!
Oh dear! I'm still a caterpillar!*

Thank You Letters

Letter dated March 8, 2010 to the NOVA Community:

On behalf of Escuela Bolivia, thank you once again for your continued support and donation of \$200.00. These funds will support our valuable work empowering Latino families through education and will make a positive difference in the lives of the many Latino children, youth, and parents we serve.

We have good news! We just hired our new Executive Director, Eneida Alcalde. Eneida Alcalde, a first-generation immigrant from Chile with roots in Puerto Rico, is a former Peace Corps volunteer that served in the departments of Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, Bolivia. . . .

Additionally, we are working on preparing for our 2010 Event to be held on March 25th at the NRECA Conference Center in Arlington. This event will be focused on raising funds for our programs. Once again thank you for your donation. It is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Vanessa O. B. Guerrero
Development Coordinator
Escuela Bolivia

From Social Action Linking Together (SALT):

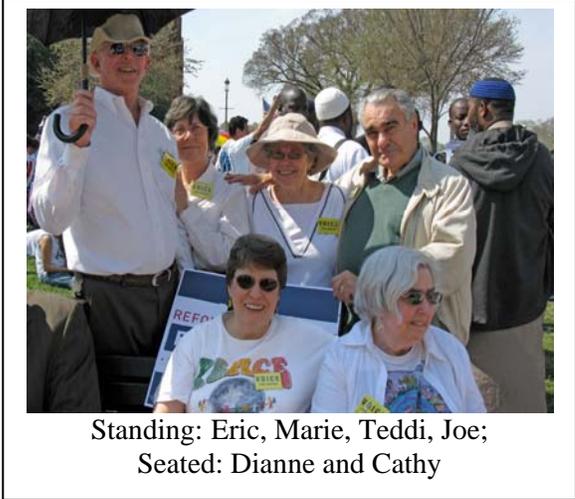
Thanks to all for contacting their state delegates and senators to urge them to restore funding for homeless programs. You made a difference! In these times of extreme need, homeless shelter programs were being cut 41% and the Homeless Intervention Program (HIP) that prevents homelessness before it begins by keeping families in their own homes and out of shelters was being eliminated. 51,315 Virginians were turned away last year. You urged your Delegate & Senator to support restoration of funding and those funds have been restored. Join SALT in thanking them. For information on how to contact your legislators, visit www.S-A-L-T.org and click on "Contact Your Legislator." Questions? Contact John Horejsi at jhorejsi@cox.net.

To St. Clement's Shelter Volunteers:

Many thanks to Nova members who volunteered this winter to be hosts for the overflow emergency hypothermia shelter at St. Clement's Episcopal Church in Alexandria: David Mog, Michael and Joe Kane, Ted Miller, Jerry Barrett, Clyde Christofferson, Marie Pinho, Eric Carroll, Jason Powell, Anna Reich, and Tim White. — **Dianne**

Immigration Rally on March 21

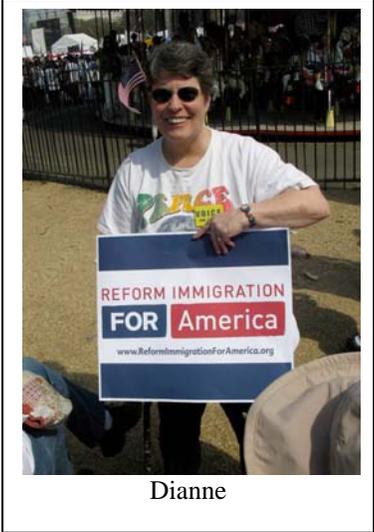
On Sunday, March 21, twelve NOVA members joined VOICE and thousands of other peaceful demonstrators who gathered in sight of the U.S Capitol, filling up seven blocks of the Mall and beyond to call on the President and Congress to reform our immigration laws. Smiling faces of every color and every age came from all over the country to show unity and to remind our leaders that this is an issue of justice which has been neglected for too long. – Teddi Ahrens
Some pictures taken at the rally . . .



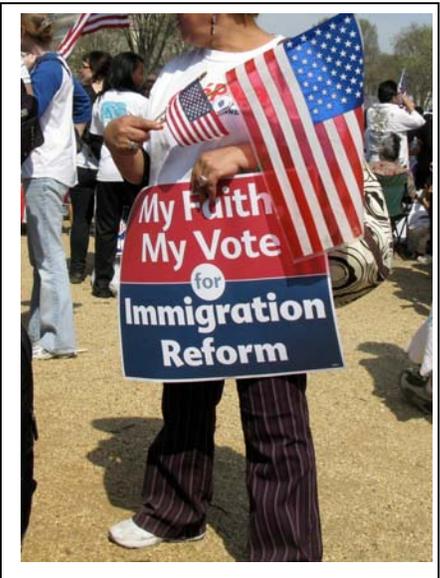
Standing: Eric, Marie, Teddi, Joe;
Seated: Dianne and Cathy



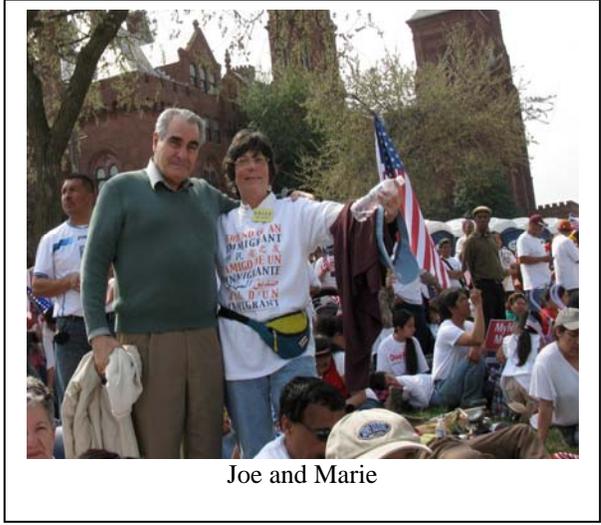
Cathy



Dianne



Teddi



Joe and Marie

Photos From 2010 Lenten Liturgies



Banner by Joe Kenna



Jim Hug, 2nd Sunday of Lent



Meg Returns on March 21st



Phyllis, Presenting Theme Statement



Eric, Reading the Word



Blessing of Palms



Palm Sunday Procession

Theology for a Small Planet

A collection of essays by Clyde Christofferson © 2009-2010

Part 2: From Kindness to Social Justice **Easter Interlude: Good News, Bad News**

According to St. Augustine there is only one miracle, that of creation, with its corollary of re-creation through the Resurrection of Christ. Creation continues to unfold and inspire awe within us. As of late, the size and scope of God's creation is very far beyond what Augustine might have imagined.

If we were searching for reasons to be humble, modern cosmology has satisfied our search. What place do we have in the universe? The full scope of our smallness, our insignificance in light of the physics of the cosmos, is astounding. It suggests we look at our place in a different way.

The "different way" is provided by Jesus Christ. Christ is our comfort. It is not a cold and lifeless cosmos that we are small within. The reality is much more interesting. We simply have not had the conceptual tools to see how interesting it is.

The bedrock of our comfort is what we see of Christ in others. There is a symmetry here. The small kindnesses of everyday life are the waters of a bath whose warmth engulfs what might otherwise be a cold and lifeless cosmos. As small as we are, we are connected by these small kindnesses.

Do we know who we are? We are children of a loving God. Why do we exist? To love one another. But what is our reason for being? Why does anything exist? Love is sharing itself with independent beings who image that Love by loving one another. The scope of that Love is in some sense incidental, because knowing who we are means loving one another concretely, notwithstanding our limitations and the limitations of our vision. There is no magic, just love.

We care beyond ourselves, and grieve that the world is not a better place. Some small ache within us calls us to do more but gently accepts what little we do and just as gently persists in calling for more.

The small kindnesses given and received keep this ache alive. Somehow we fathom that we are one.

We often speak of the Christ event as God breaking into the world. But is not Christ also Jesus the human being breaking out of this world? There is a symmetry here. Christ's Rising is real. It is

palpable, and we experience it again at every Eucharist. It demonstrates that reality in its fullness is one. We are waking to that reality. Death is but a transitional phase as we continue to share in Love's existence. God is not a being having attributes of power and might. These are attributes of human construction, reflecting our understanding of how life in our less than perfect society works. More simply put, Love is. The "I" in the "I am" is Love. Love need not be adorned with the baubles and bangles of our understanding. It is good that we retain a sense of mystery about God and about Christ.

Then, to the bad news. The Earth has but a few billion years left. Our sun will burn out and consume us in its final collapse. The cosmos will continue, apparently for at least another hundred billion years. And there are a hundred billion other galaxies in this vast cosmos. There is nothing special about the physics in our small corner of the cosmos. Life is aborning in every corner of God's creation. If the reason for the cosmos is that a loving God is sharing existence, then there are other sentient civilizations elsewhere in the cosmos -- probably numbering in the tens or hundreds of billions -- and these will come and go in similar fashion over the next hundred billion years. Some will probably go before they see the meaning and the possibility of social justice. Some -- perhaps us -- will go before they are able to accomplish social justice.

Change -- sometimes violent change -- is the engine of evolution toward independent beings able to love one another. The asteroid impact of sixty-five million years ago appears to have been definitional for our own existence, for it created a void in the ecosystem where the dinosaurs had ruled, allowing mammals to flourish and primates to develop.

And then there was some accident, some defective muscle gene that had the fortunate side effect of allowing our primate brains to expand. This discovery was made by a researcher looking for a genetic understanding of muscular dystrophy. He found that other primates did not have this defective gene, which affected muscles operating

the jaw. But these muscles in apes are very strong and tie to the back of the head. Apparently, these muscles develop quickly in apes after birth, preventing further expansion of the skull.

So, could our vaunted intelligence be some sort of accident? Our ancestors acquired a defective gene controlling jaw muscles, which had the practical effect of allowing the cranial bones to continue growing after birth, thereby accommodating additional evolutionary changes that gave us bigger and more complex brains. And with bigger and more complex brains we found ourselves able to learn from generation to generation, to build from one generation to the next upon what had been learned before.

We take this collective learning for granted today, but this is the mechanism that has placed our own evolution on a new path, branching off from the biological track. The biological track made adaptation a very slow process. With collective learning we find ourselves able to adapt more rapidly, and the pace of our adaptation is accelerating.

But will we be able to adapt to the next cataclysmic event? It is not the several billion years left to earth that sets our time frame, although that window will indeed close eventually? Nor do we have the luxury of a time window measured by the next asteroid impact, which could be tens of millions of years off.

Shorter term cataclysms are predictable. Two are of particular interest, one from the Earth itself and another from the cosmos. The Earth is its own heat engine. We have a molten iron core whose currents are ultimately responsible for earthquakes and volcanoes. We experience earthquakes and volcanoes with some regularity. They are unpleasant realities, Haiti being one of the most recent.

The good news within the bad news of Haiti ought not to be overlooked. We see ourselves rising to meet this tragedy. This is not surprising, if we assume that the reason for creation in the first place is that a loving God is sharing existence with beings who are independent and able to image God by loving one another. Cosmic evolution has proceeded through a succession of adaptations, first those of physics, then those of biology, and now those of collective learning. The good that we are doing in Haiti may be viewed as an extension to our

larger collective lives, of the small kindnesses that grace our individual lives. It is not a perfect adaptation, by any means, but our collective helping of others – an aspect of social justice – seems to fit within a larger creation story.

But the earthquake in Haiti is only the most recent example of a changing Earth that may sorely test our capacity to adapt. The geophysics of this cauldron upon whose relatively cool surface we live has more to tell us. We are familiar with volcanoes, which are fissures in the Earth's crust through which molten rock from the interior escapes. But the picture is more complex. There are a dozen or so places around the globe where the fissures do not come to the surface but instead build up a large pool of molten material relatively near the surface, like an aneurism. Periodically, the aneurism breaks. This break is called a supervolcano. The last supervolcano occurred about seventy-five thousand years ago. The crater from this event is now Lake Toba in Indonesia. This lake is a hundred kilometers long and forty kilometers wide. It dwarfs the crater of Krakatoa or any other ordinary volcano.

The volcanic ash from this explosion covered a quarter of the planet. A blanket of sulfuric acid entered the Earth's atmosphere, blocking out the sun and suddenly cooling the atmosphere, causing mass extinctions of plants and animals. There were dramatic consequences in Africa, where our human ancestors suffered a defining survival event that narrowed the human gene pool and reduced the number of *homo sapiens* to about ten thousand of breeding age, concentrated in coastal areas supported by fishing. Within about ten thousand years after this adaptive survival, our ancestors left Africa and expanded around the world.

Of the dozen or so known supervolcano sites, several are in the United States. One sits under Yellowstone Park and is the source of the geysers and bubbling mud pots that contribute to the sights and sounds of the park. This supervolcano erupted 2.1 million years ago, 1.3 million years ago, and most recently 600 thousand years ago. The caldera from these eruptions covered the western two thirds of what is now the United States.

Not to worry, however. Geologists tell us that we are likely to receive warnings of hundreds if not thousands of years before the next supervolcanic explosion of Yellowstone. But it will be a

catastrophe the likes of which human society as we know it has not witnessed. Will we be ready? Will our adaptive capabilities rise to meet this challenge? Will our society become sufficiently aware of this challenge that the impending future will serve to prompt us to an adequate adaptation? Will an adequate adaptation depend upon an improved capacity for public discourse, a capacity not evident in the recent debate over health care reform?

But a supervolcano is not the only possible cataclysm in our future. About thirteen thousand years ago a large comet struck the earth. The cosmos is a violent place. The comet was large enough to have a severe impact upon the ecology of the Earth, causing a sudden and dramatic drop in temperature that killed much plant life and, as a consequence, wiped out many very large animals (the woolly mammoth, the saber tooth tiger, the giant sloth) who were then at the top of the food chain.

By that time *homo sapiens* was the sole survivor of the genus *homo*. But the further extinction of larger animals caused by the comet left a hole in the ecosystem into which humans could expand. Perhaps we would have expanded anyway, super predators that we were capable of being, but the struggle may have taken much longer and left a harsher mark upon our soul. As it was, with other large competitors eliminated, within a few thousand years humankind had begun on a course of domestication of plants and animals leading to agriculture, cities, and eventually civilization as we know it.

How likely is another comet? Is it more or less likely than an asteroid? Neither is as predictable as a supervolcano, but any of these cataclysms will test our capacity to adapt to change.

These prospects place in perspective the more obvious challenges of human existence. As individuals, we die. Earthquakes and volcanoes periodically wreck havoc not only upon the landscape but upon entire cities. Pompeii was entombed in volcanic debris in 79 AD. The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 killed tens of thousands of people and prompted Voltaire to write *Candide*.

Why such destruction? Why was death visited upon these particular people? Will you and I face some similar accident of nature? Where is God in all this? Rousseau argued that Lisbon was simply reaping the fruits of the vice of city life, providing a

lesson in favor of a simpler existence closer to nature. Voltaire's faith in God was forever shaken.

The solace of the Risen Christ is not in God's attention to the arrows that fly by day. The early Church found it necessary to explain the Crucifixion in grand terms, as an atonement. Perhaps a simpler understanding of our salvation is that Jesus, our brother and example, is Risen notwithstanding the arrows that fly by day. There is hope for us regardless of what arrows come our way. For life eternal we need only be concerned about living as Christ lived, pouring ourselves out for one another.

Our spiritual life is subject to adaptive pressures similar to -- though on a much shorter time scale than -- the forces of change that crafted our biological evolution. Christ said "love one another." In this, he repeated what we know from the small kindnesses of everyday life. We have a larger life than is encompassed by our span on Earth, as Christ's Resurrection reminds us.

It is not whether Pompeii happens to us. It is how our kindness flowers when Pompeii happens. Our time here may be short, but the joyful prospect of continuing kindness is given to us by the Resurrection. Truly, we are saved from our own spiritual sloth by the continuing unfolding of the mystery that is the Resurrection.

We often fight change. Yet the unfolding story of the cosmos suggests that we are here because of change. If God's creation is an example to us, perhaps we are better advised to embrace the rhythm of this unfolding. And there is a rhythm to it. It is not simply "change," but a pattern of adaptation coupled to periods of stability, followed by change that is novel and unexpected.

The Resurrection is itself a novelty of this kind, and the rituals of the Easter season are a stable comfort for souls made weary by the stresses of a none too stable existence. Across the country and across the world we are not of the same mind about the mixed blessings of change.

But the rhythm of the cosmos is both inexorable and pregnant with the joy of the Resurrection.

Are we ready for our next novelty?

TO BE CONTINUED

Editor's Note: Photos in this issue provided courtesy of Dianne Carroll and Ken Chaison.