

For the Newsletter...

This marks the first column as Interim Deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations. As many of you probably know, the position of Associate Deputy, which I held from 2001-2009, was eliminated at General Convention 2009, along with over thirty other staff positions at the Episcopal Church Center. We have been blessed to have had Bishop Christopher Epting serve as Deputy since 2001, but effective December 31 he retired to take up the position as interim Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Davenport, Iowa. The Presiding Bishop asked me to serve as Interim Deputy for the time being, which I have agreed to do. It is the Presiding Bishop's hope to appoint a Deputy some time later this year.

We are living into a new organizational structure at the Church Center. Rather than the four mission areas we had from 2008-2009, we are now organized into a single mission center, with different "teams". In reality, this will not effect a lot of the ministry that we do: our church is still committed the search for Christian unity and for great understanding between religions. We will, however, be doing some of this work differently, with a renewed emphasis on partnership and collaboration. With the current reorganization Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations is partnered again with Anglican and Global Relations and our Global Mission work. For the next couple of months, we will be living into these arrangements and learning to work with new colleagues, along with figuring out how to continue to engage God's mission in the world with the reality of fewer dollars and fewer staff positions.

As part of that reorganization, we will be looking at news ways to work with partners throughout the church to continue to bring a message of reconciliation among the divided members of Christ's body to a world which sorely needs it. We also have a new website: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/110055_ENG_HTM.htm. It is very much under construction and in process, but we're hoping it can provide information that is current, timely, and helpful.

Epiphanytide blessings to you all. I ask for your prayers, and your patience, during this period of transition.

The Rev'd Dr Tom Ferguson
Interim Deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations