

PHILADELPHIA CATHEDRAL DEAN'S REPORT TO CONVENTION

2009 ANNUAL REPORT

It has been a full and exciting year as we continue to experience and celebrate the growing vibrant presence and witness of our Cathedral within our Diocese, the City of Philadelphia and beyond. We share with all of the institutions of our diocese, the devastating impact of the world's financial crisis on our own already limited resources. Nevertheless we strive to achieve the cathedral's truly multi-faceted mission. That mission, first of all, is to draw the heart of anyone who steps inside nearer to the love and glory of God through the pull of the cathedral's interior beauty and by way of inspiring, yet relevant worship and continual prayer.

Week by week from last Advent to the present, the seasons of the liturgical year have been celebrated and observed with great solemnity and liturgical creativity, blending the Church's traditions from the most ancient to the most contemporary, and with diverse cultural expression. This year on Epiphany Last, the Mardi Gras Carnival tradition was introduced as an explosive, very colorful--and final--festive liturgy prior to the beginning of the somber barrenness of Lent. There were costumes and masks and the cathedral walls reverberated with the sounds of *Missa Luba*, a mass in Congolese style for choir and percussion. New this year at Holy Week were services of Taize Prayer and *Tenebrae*, as well as an expanded Triduum, including a change in the time of the Easter Vigil, at which an Initiation Class of 11 young people and adults made their baptismal commitments, with Bishop Michel presiding.

During the final six Sundays after Pentecost the cathedral has been observing a liturgical "Season of Creation," celebrating the fifteen billion year history of God's breathing and speaking the Universe into being and the emergence of our planet Earth and all of its creatures. The intention is for the worshipers to experience the inextricable link we share with each other, and to commit ourselves to loving and healing "this planet Earth, our island home." Each Sunday highlights a particular theme such as the peril of climate change, abuse of creation, dividing walls between peoples, warring nations, etc. The series concludes on the Reign of Christ Sunday. The liturgies have been enhanced by special music, guest speakers from Anglican, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant traditions, biblical and contemporary readings. Exceptional artistic expression and creative use of our worship space were provided by Ardie Brown from the Church of St. Andrew and Monica and Bill Roth from the Earthbourne Institute of Science, Spirituality and Culture. Discussion with each of the speakers follows the liturgy. The speakers include Derrick Pitts, Chief Astronomer of Franklin Institute; Malcolm Harris, Environmental Consultant; Professor Tom Connally, (Emeritus) UPenn, and Trainer in Centering Prayer; Renee McKenzie-Hayward, of Calvary St-Augustine's parish and the Cathedral Dean.

In addition to such Sunday celebrations as these, the tradition continues of Sunday Lauds preceding the Sunday liturgy, now led on a rotational basis by lay persons. The doors remain open daily for rest and prayer thanks to Cathedral Partners, volunteers from parishes in our

diocese who act as hosts and help prepare for the noon day Eucharist, celebrated by diocesan as well as cathedral clergy.

At the core of Philadelphia Cathedral's life is a small but vibrant congregation. The highlight of this year has been the involvement of members of our congregation in outreach ministries including a ministry with St. Barnabas Mission that was recently featured on Channel 10. We continue to see a gentle increase in new members who join the core congregation and become active members of our liturgical teams.

Highlights of our support of the gifts of artistry was evident as we hosted several exhibits by our own Artists in Residence – Zoe Cohen and Ava Blitz, plus local artists Doug Witmer and Marisha Simons. Dr. Lourin Plant of Rowan University shared his vocal gifts in several concerts, and our space was graced with special musical events including in A Four Hands – Four Feet Organ Concert, the 4th Annual Summer Organ Noonday Concert Series, and several Evensong services. Under the leadership of Dr. Riyehong, our own Cathedral Singers shared their gifts in music ranging from Rheinberger's "*Stabat Mater*" to the recent Festival of Hymns where we celebrated the rich heritage of sacred hymns passed down through the centuries.

As the home to the Bishop and all the members of the Diocese, we hosted several interfaith conversations and events, and celebrated the ordination of candidates to Holy Orders, baptism, confirmation, and reception in our Rites of Initiation services. In the Spring, we were blessed to host the meetings that our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, had with the laity and clergy of our Diocese and to welcome Bishop Rodney Michel as our Assisting Bishop.

Two profound events at the Cathedral were the traditional Absalom Jones service and a viewing of Katrina Browne's documentary, "Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North" in which she told the story of her forefathers who were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history.

For the first time this spring, we held a retreat for members of the Chapter and representatives of the congregation. From this important experience, we have begun the process of developing a Cathedral profile which will be central to our being able to call a new Dean in 2010.

None of this could be possible without the support and hard work of our staff, our congregation teams, volunteer clergy support, our Seminarian, Chapter members, Diocesan Partners and volunteers from all over the diocese. A warm thank you to them all.