

February 15, 2012

Greeting from the Community of Celebration!

We are writing to you, to see what's happening in your life and to catch you up on our lives here in Aliquippa. In these busy times of daily living, it's easy to forget to keep in touch with each other. We want you to know that you are very important to us and we would like to know more about how you are in general and how the Holy Spirit is working in your lives.

Hopefully, this letter finds everyone well. We will attempt to bring you current on our lives. A little bit about May and Steven. May still struggles some with her chronic pancreatitis, and is undergoing a procedure to cut the bile and pancreatic ducts, and insert stents. Hopefully, this will relieve some, or all of her pain and discomfort. May continues to work in the office maintaining our mail list and donations, and occasionally answering the phone when Joe is unavailable. She endeavors to exercise regularly at the 'Curves' Fitness Club. May and Steven have recently begun to attend a Scottish Country Dance class in Pittsburgh. They both find that to be really vigorous and lively. May and Steven manage to fit in visits to Canada to visit Stephanie, Brad and three grandchildren who are all growing up fast. Fiona is nine and a half, Gwyneth is eight and William is three and a half. All of them are busy with work, school and sports, and enjoying life.

Steven continues to be chaplain to the city, police and fire departments of Aliquippa, and to the FBI in Pittsburgh. Steven continues to carry on the duties of being Celebration's priest. He is still responsible for the part-time care of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Steubenville, Ohio. This entails being there for Sunday services and visiting shut-ins on Tuesdays. He also conducts weddings, funerals and Confirmation classes and any other special liturgy as needed. Steven still very much enjoys his chaplaincy and church work, and the various committees and ministeriums that he is involved with.

James' health is good, although he is recovering from a broken ankle after falling on a wet floor on New Year's Day...and we are all finding out first hand all that James does. We are trying to pick up the slack for him. After having a temporary cast, he is now wearing a boot and is just now starting to put some weight on it. It is unusual to see James so sedentary and I'm sure he feels the same way. As you can imagine, he is always busy, and now that he is confined more or less to being at home, he is finding time to work on writing his beautiful icons. He is also catching up on reading that he has promised himself he would one day get to.

Joe continues to work in the office, as receptionist. Besides general office work, he handles reproducing and selling our songbooks and CD's, as well as Betty's new book, "This is my Story, This is my Song". Betty is a great story teller and the book is a great read. It is getting great reviews. The copies that Celebration sells contain a free CD of a variety of Betty's compositions. You can order a copy of her book on our website.

Joe is recovering well from his bout with cancer, and continues to work at losing weight and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Joe also continues to be a part of the music worship team and helping out wherever he can. He is eternally grateful to all of those who prayed for him during his time with cancer and knows first hand, the healing power of Jesus.

Bill continues to be our Primary Guardian and liaison between the community and the outside world. He is very much involved with serving on several local boards concerned with the renewal of Aliquippa and the ongoing ministry of Uncommon Grounds Café. Bill continues to be the Pittsburgh Diocesan representative for Jubilee Ministries and serves on the Social Justice and Outreach Committee of the Diocese.

Bill is also the convener of the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC), a body of residential and non-residential Christian Communities recognized by the Episcopal Church. NAECC gathers yearly to encourage one another and to see how the various ministries might impact the life of their respective local communities. They also try to find ways that these communities might work together, and work with traditional Religious Orders. In March, Bill will attend a meeting of the House of Bishops Committee on Religious Life to explore ways to enhance communication and to support the life and mission of Christian Communities and Religious Orders.

Mimi, who also has many roles in the Celebration Community is quite busy overseeing the Guest Ministry, rental properties and is Liturgist as well as musician for Celebration's worship schedule. She is also working with Bill and Dennis (our long-time Companion and Accountant) on bookkeeping duties. Dennis, due to his progressing Parkinson's, is passing on valuable information to Mimi as he looks at total retirement. Mimi is still active in composing music for psalms and preparing for monthly Taizé services. She occasionally serves as a supply musician for local church services.

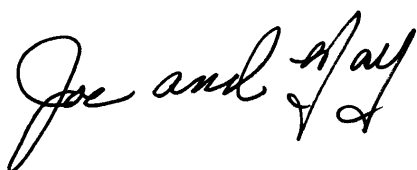
Bill and Mimi recently spent a week with their family in St. Louis; Graham, Jen and three grandchildren, Owen, Margaret and Carmen. When we see how our children and grandchildren have grown, we wonder where the time has gone. After a beautiful wedding in the summer, Michelle and her new husband, Chris are living right here in Aliquippa, so we all get to see them often. Bill, Mimi, Michelle and Chris are planning a trip in May to England and Scotland. This will be a time of re-connection with old friends for Michelle and a way for Chris to connect with Michelle's early years.

Over the years, our ministry has ebbed and flowed depending on the people here and the need we find around us. Unlike the early days of traveling around to different churches, we find that people are coming to us here in Aliquippa, so we concentrate more now in offering hospitality and a place for prayer, renewal and reflection. We are able to host small conferences and workshops. We have done that for various groups in the diocese and further afield.

Once again we will offer our Annual Conference this June 15th – 17th. It will be led by our Bishop Visitor, the Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting and his wife, the Rev. Susanne Watson Epting and is entitled, "Living the Covenant: Equipping the Saints". We anticipate that this will be a lively and informative conference and we encourage as many of you as are able to come and join us.

We would also like to hear from you. Please write and let us know all your news and anything you would particularly like us to hold in prayer.

Yours with much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe and May". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe and May