

## TENDING THE VINE: Mission Priorities for 2015-2018



Courtesy photo from All Saints', Wolfeboro, of Youth Sunday Service

As reflected in the 2016 budget, the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire has four mission priorities. The budget will be voted on at the 213th Annual Diocesan Convention on November 7, 2015.

- Congregational and Mission Vitality -- developing the ability of congregations to grow, prosper and extend their ministries.
- Investing in Leadership -- making investments in the development of both lay and ordained leadership.
- Support of Ministry to Children, Youth, Families and Young Adults -- supporting the children of our parishes, communities and state.
- Advocacy for Upholding the Dignity of Every Human Being and Care for the Creation -- acting as advocates and teaching others to lend their voices to this work.

### Congregational and Mission Vitality

A vital congregation is a place of joy, exploration, experimentation, and discovery of what God is doing in the world. A vital congregation is a place where apostolic ministry germinates and thrives; that is, where our people are formed as disciples and then are sent out to join God's mission of healing, joy and hope-bearing, peace-making, and justice proclaiming.

### Investing in Leadership

The Nicene Creed contains the words: "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church." The recent history of our parishes (during the past 50-60 years) has led us

to equate evangelism with our capacity to attract new members. Clearly, what has gotten us here will not get us to the place where God is now calling us. We now need to be sent out, to walk the boundary lines of our geography, comfort, and mission, to see where God is in our communities and to discern where we can join in.

Today's clergy are moving from being chaplains to established members and systems, to being and forming apostles to the wider community. Our leaders, clerical and lay, need support as they take on this new way of being and leading. Cultivating leadership means developing new practices and competencies for mission in our communities.

### Support of Ministry to Children, Youth, Families and Young Adults

Addressing the widening gaps among our youth in accessing economic and social opportunity is a priority for the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire. The widening chasms between those who have access to "social capital" and those who do not is both a matter of justice and a threat to the stability of our society. This means we will be taking on projects not just to support our kids in the pews and Sunday school classes, but all Our Kids--the youth in the communities where the Church and her members are present. We have an opportunity to serve in new and effective ways.

### Advocacy for Upholding the Dignity of Every Human Being and Care for the Creation

The Vine as a symbol of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire is one of mutuality and interwovenness in Christ, among parishes, with one another and between our Church and a wounded society. At the root of the word advocacy is vocare: to call, or speak. We are calling out the challenges, and we are speaking on behalf of those who have no voice. The Bishop has determined the following priorities to speak to and witness to Christ in the public sphere: Homelessness; Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation; Creation Care; Gun Violence; and the Repeal of the Death Penalty. The Church of New Hampshire has enjoyed influence in the policy discussions in these and other areas and we are called to be good stewards of our public voice. We will invest in advocacy training and support for congregational leaders, so we may all lift our voices for the Gospel.

*To read more about specific tactics, the budget implications for these Mission Priorities and to learn how you can be a part of this work, visit our website: [www.nhepiscopal.org/convention](http://www.nhepiscopal.org/convention).*



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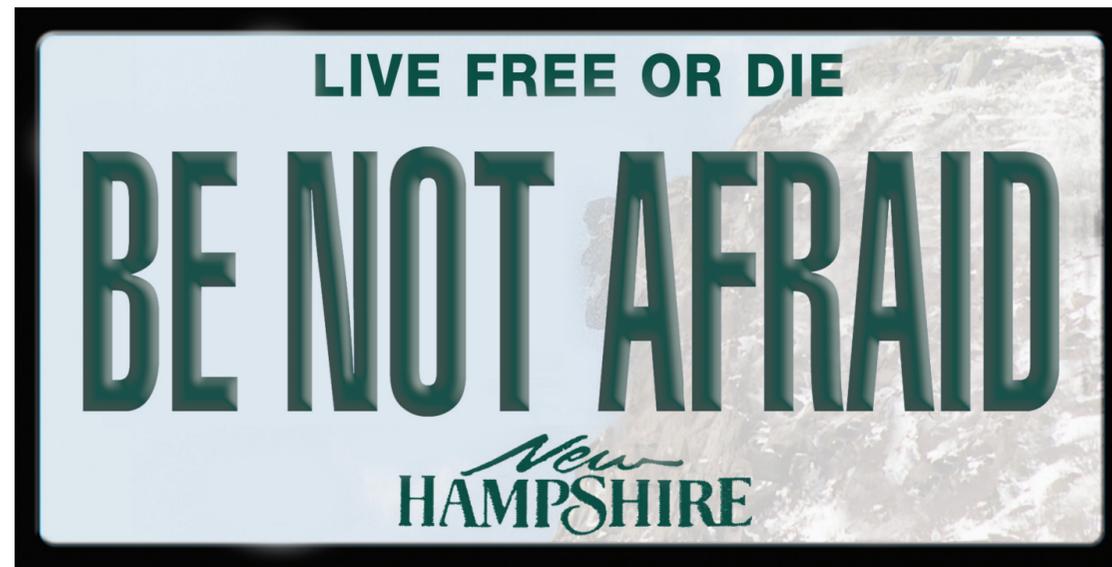
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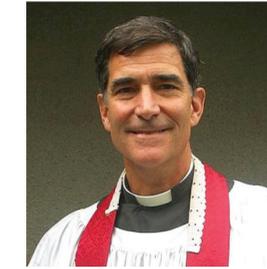
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## News From The Vine

A Publication From The Episcopal Church of NH



## Letter From Bishop Rob



*"Live without fear. Your Creator has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you with a power and presence that is stronger than death."*

Having been in the Granite State for three years, much of it driving behind many license plates, I've had some time to meditate on the meaning of "Live Free or Die." The motto has been attributed to New Hampshire's Revolutionary War General John Stark who offered "Live free or die: Death is not the worst of evils" as a toast in 1809 on the occasion of an anniversary celebration of the Battle of Bennington. Further research reveals that revolutionaries in France, Spain, Portugal, Armenia, Greece, Haiti, and Scotland have employed the phrase in various languages.

As far as I can see, the imperative expresses our desire to be independent from control or oppression from tyranny. Freedom represents the absence of constraint that limits an individual or a community from acting in one's own best interests. General Stark and his compatriots undoubtedly had in mind the British economic and political stranglehold on the American colonies as the most obvious threat to freedom. "Live free or die" expresses the belief that death is preferable to living under oppression, and that citizens ought to be willing to sacrifice their own lives rather than allow tyranny to reign.

Tyranny and oppression did not end once the Revolutionary War officially ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. No doubt, we can all name some entity, some party, some movement, some practice, some law or policy that would replace the British Crown as the biggest threat to our freedoms. A favorite strategy of politicians of both parties in this primary season is to remind us how our freedoms are under constant threat of foes both domestic and foreign. And the natural, instinctive human response to being threatened is fear.

"Fear," wrote novelist and essayist Marilynne Robinson, "is not a Christian habit of mind." The scriptural counsels against fear are almost too many to count. Go ahead and Google "do not fear," or "be not afraid" or similar phrases and see what appears. One of the most compelling is in Matthew's Gospel:

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid...(Matthew 10:26-30)

Pope Francis said during his recent visit to our country, "We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners. I say this to you as the son of immigrants, knowing that so many of you are also descended from immigrants."

Why is fear not a Christian habit of mind? It's because if we place our heart in the trust that God has already beaten down death in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have really nothing to be afraid of. By our baptism (can I ever tire of saying this?), we have already been crucified with Christ--and alleluia--we are already joined to Jesus in his resurrection. At the heart of Paul's teaching is this: we are made free from all fear and from all sin because we have already died and been raised in Christ. One of my favorite hymns, usually sung at baptisms, paraphrases Paul's words in Romans 6 this way:

(cont. inside)

## Death-Destroying Love for Roseburg, Oregon

The following is a statement from Bishop Hirschfeld following the October 1, 2015 mass shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon:

“In the wake of what has now become an endemic part of American life—a mass shooting in a peaceful community of personal growth and learning—I hope the members of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire are not lulled into a spiritual torpor. In our prayers may the Holy Spirit pierce our numbness with sharp empathy for those who mourn the dead and for those who are wounded in Roseburg, Oregon. In our actions, may God lead us to the courage of Jesus who faced down the powers of dominating violence, not with more violence, but with the death-

destroying love shown on the Cross.

Baptized members of the risen Body of Christ are called to resist the temptation of allowing the heinous actions of a distorted soul to make us more violent. Christians who advocate to take up more weapons in reaction to these acts of evil betray the meaning of our having already triumphed over death in our baptism. Fear is not a Christian virtue or habit of being, and yet, tragically, we continually cower in the face of those who equate unlimited accessibility to guns with the way of Jesus. May God lead us through the wounds of these horrible events to a place of deeper trust in God and not the proliferation of deadly weapons.”

# November 7

## Annual Diocesan Convention: “God’s Mission - Our Kids”

“God’s Mission - Our Kids” is the theme of our 213th Annual Diocesan Convention to be held on November 7, 2015 at the Grappone Center in Concord, NH. This year’s Convention will begin with a half-day of presentations about the opportunity gap facing youth in NH, including guest speaker The Rev. Ben Campbell from All Our Children, a national, innovative nonprofit promoting church-public school partnerships. Worship will be led by middle school and high school aged church youth.

To read the Pre-Convention Journal, the proposed budget and budget narrative, summaries of annual reports from committees and to learn about elections, visit [www.nhepiscopal.org/convention](http://www.nhepiscopal.org/convention).

*(Bishop Rob’s Letter, cont.)*

*We know that Christ is raised and dies no more. Embraced by death he broke its fearful hold And our despair he turned to blazing joy. Alleluia!*

*We share by water in his saving death. Reborn we share with him an Easter life as living members of a living Christ. Alleluia! (Hymn 296, The Hymnal 1982)*

Soon it will be the season of ghosts and goblins, ghouls, and zombies. In its origin, Halloween is the Feast of All Saints’ which is, at its core, a celebration of the power of life over death in Jesus. We put these ugly costumes on ourselves not to celebrate death, corruption of the body, or the grisly violence of this world, but to remind ourselves that in Christ, we are all made alive. Death con-

tinues to be under divine assault. Love and communion with each other are God’s weapons to make us free. More than anything, the saints we celebrate were liberated from fear and served God with a kind of selfless abandon that sometimes put them at some risk.

So instead of “Live Free or Die” as a kind of libertarian battle cry, we New Hampshire Episcopalians could carry this slogan in our hearts, “I have already died in Christ and am now alive and free to love and serve without fear.” Well, ok, so that won’t fit on a license plate. But this favorite phrase of Jesus would: “Be not afraid.”

Yours in the Risen Christ,  
+Rob

## Christmas Comes to Children of Incarcerated Parents—With Your Help

*By Margaret Mackie-Ciancio*

Children of incarcerated parents celebrate Christmas every year with the help of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire sponsors who donate gifts and funds to make it happen. Both the families and the incarcerated parents themselves are deeply grateful for the opportunity that the Children of Incarcerated Parents (ChIPs) program offers. The prisons count the number of gifts needed for each age and gender group. Volunteers collect your gift donations, and use your monetary donations to supplement the gifts provided. Once the presents are sorted, they’re brought to the prisons, and the inmates get the chance to choose one gift for each child on their list. Usually the inmate is a parent, grandparent, or sibling.

Children of prison inmates can live lonely lives. It’s easy to believe that a parent you never see just doesn’t care. Inmates also find themselves feeling isolated and abandoned, unable to provide for or to be a part of their families. Being able to offer their children a gift at the Christmas visit gives the inmates an opportunity for connection, for a sliver of normalcy in their family relations.

Studies have shown that parolees are significantly more likely to integrate back into society if they are able to maintain relationships with their families. The ChIPs program creates positive experiences on which to build a foundation for those relationships.

At the Men’s Prison in Concord, once the gift is chosen, volunteers wrap it. The prison then throws a party! The family visits, and the inmates are able to give presents to their children. The ChIPs program also includes an age-appropriate book to go with each gift, helping to promote literacy within this underserved population.

There are many ways you; can help, including the following:

- You can purchase a gift directly or contribute \$20. If you decide to make a monetary donation, please make out your check to the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire with “ChIPs” written on the memo line of the check.
- You can volunteer to collect gifts and serve as your parish’s contact.
- You can help sort the gifts at St. Paul’s School.
- You can help with wrapping of the gifts at the New Hampshire State Prison for Men in Concord. (The date for wrapping has not yet been set.)
- You may drop off gifts or monetary donations at your church. The delegates to the Diocesan Convention will bring your gifts to the Convention on November 7th where they will be transported to the Blass Clubhouse at St. Paul’s School for sorting. The dates for sorting are tentatively set for mid-November. (Call 432-7679 after November 1st for more information).

### Gift Guidelines

- We group gifts according the following age groups: birth to 1; ages 2 to 4; ages 5 to 7; ages 8-11; and ages 12-15
- Gifts should not exceed \$20 (original retail value).
- One \$20 gift is preferable to four \$5 gifts as it is difficult to group items together to equal a \$20 gift.
- If you don’t want to purchase a \$20 gift, any monetary donation will be gladly accepted.
- Books are a separate category and our goal is to provide each child with a gift and a book (both hard cover and paperback books are appropriate)
- If you purchase a gift that requires batteries, please purchase those as well and attach them to the gift. It’s so discouraging to receive a gift with no batteries.
- Consider buying a gift that would be appropriate for both boys and girls such as balls or board games.
- Don’t forget the older children. It is often easier to buy gifts for younger children. There is always a shortage of gifts for older children.
- No used items, homemade items, or gift cards can be accepted.
- The following items are NOT acceptable: jewelry, balloons, crayons, play dough, glue, bubbles, make up, long sticks, knitting needles, crochet hooks, or paint brushes, glass items, clothing, sharp tools or toy weapons of any kind.

*For more information, or to volunteer, please contact Margaret Mackie-Ciancio at [maggie.ciancio@gmail.com](mailto:maggie.ciancio@gmail.com).*



*St. James, Keene’s Youth Group at Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage to Alabama, August 2015.*

## Discovering What God Has in Mind for Claremont, NH: A Joint Episcopal-Lutheran Ministry Emerges

The Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Claremont, N.H., like many New England churches of all denominations, has seen worship attendance declining. After much prayer and deliberation, the Council received the congregation’s approval to list their church building for sale, and to explore other avenues for ministry in the Claremont area. The Council also asked their pastor, Patricia Harris, to begin discussions with a local congregation, nearby Trinity Episcopal, concerning the possibilities for a joint ministry.

Discussions between the two pastors, along with the New England Synod and the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, indicated that there was a willingness and enthusiasm about a joint ministry in the Claremont area. Over the summer, Prince of Peace members began joining Trinity for worship in the Trinity building once or twice per month, led by Trinity’s Interim Rector Janet Lombardo. The services alternated between an Episcopal liturgy, based on the Book of Common Prayer, and a Lutheran liturgy. Those two liturgies are now merged, with the help of a joint Worship Committee, which has crafted a service integrating both faith traditions. New bulletins are guiding all through this shared liturgy and the musical selections drawing from both hymnals.

The two congregations developed an agreement, with each congregation maintaining its legal and administrative identity. Since September 20, both congregations have worshiped together each week in the Trinity building, and share outreach and fellowship. Both congregations will be under the pastoral leadership of The Rev. Lombardo, while Rev. Harris will return to the retirement that she left, when she accepted the call to Prince of Peace last fall. The Prince of Peace church administrator will join the staff of the new joint ministry at Trinity. The Prince of Peace building has been sold to another Christian congregation.

“People are really excited to see what God has in mind as we are joined together. We are all eager to be a part of the many ministry opportunities in Claremont, working as one congregation, from Trinity’s downtown location,” said The Rev. Janet Lombardo.

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