

The Ministry of the Baptized (Alban Institute Issue 297, 5 April, 2010)

by **Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook , Fredrica Harris Thompsett**

"This is something I have found to be true without exception: that when we, any of us, focus on things in our lives that are passing away, we get scared, we get anxious, we get depressed, we lose hope; and when we focus on things that are being birthed and are coming newly into creation, we get excited, we get imaginative, we get optimistic, we feel drawn closer to one another, we feel as if we have meaning and purpose in this life, and we have joy. . . . we are given change as an ingredient in life. We can be frightened and anxious and resistant to it or we can embrace it as a tool to transform us." —Jim Kelsey (1952–2007)

When the late Bishop Jim Kelsey spoke these words in 2007, he was commenting on institutional change and its impact on congregations and judicatories. Many places throughout the Christian church are faced with hard realities such as declining membership and financial shortages. "The way we have always done it before" was never realistic for those locations challenged by geography, poverty, and low population, and it is becoming increasingly unrealistic for other, more prosperous and populous regions. The need for systemic change throughout mainline denominations has been verified through a number of studies as well as the experience of congregational members themselves. Jim Kelsey believed that the task at hand is "a matter of letting go of the familiar and being opened to new life—new surprise—new birth which God does have in store for us."

Many congregations and judicatories have faithfully embraced change and experienced transformation through what is called "baptismal ministry." These changes do not

necessarily eradicate all the challenges to be faced, but individuals and communities are transformed by the journey, and through clarity of purpose and mutual responsibility new life is found. The congregations and judicatories transformed through baptismal ministry development look beyond survival to embrace the future with a sense of hope and abundance.

End of newsletter article: For full article ask a warden or go to <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9010>

PLAN AHEAD

Summer will soon be here and people will be away on vacation. Dates from church leaders for group or committee meetings and special events taking place in the fall are needed in the church office by Sunday, August 15 to prepare the calendar for the newsletter.

The Fall parish newsletter articles are due in the office by Friday, August 20