



# The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

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## St. John & St. Mark's, Albany- CDI Enhances Lay Leadership

Training through the Church Development Institute (CDI) paved the way for a smooth transition of clergy leadership at St. John and St. Mark's, Albany. As a previous graduate of CDI, the Rev. Bill Stewart knew well the benefits of the training. When Bishop Benhase brought the program to the Diocese of Georgia, Stewart gathered a team from his Albany congregation to participate. The group consisted of himself and three other parishioners for the 2-year course.

Elaine Theirse is one of the graduates from the first group at St. John and St. Mark's. Elaine recalls, "Attending CDI made me more aware of other churches in our Diocese." She adds that she learned from the examples of other congregation in combination with discussions and brainstorming sessions with lay leaders from other churches.

CDI enabled St. John and St Mark's to branch outside of the church building to connect to its community. The new activities, such as block parties hosted for their neighbors, began as a CDI project. The result was a shift to stronger lay leadership in the church and enhanced engagement with the surrounding community.

After Stewart retired, the church took the unusual step of calling Lay Pastoral Leader Johnny Tuttle, a recent seminary graduate who was 18 months away from ordination to the priesthood. The shift to stronger lay leadership proved an immediate positive. Since his ordination as a deacon, Tuttle looks back on the church at the time he was called, "I think that during the time that the church had between clergy-they were able to put into action some of the CDI leadership roles." He adds, "We have people that have gone through CDI training and many active participants in Cursillo, both serving as a spiritually maturing process for the lay folks. I think that I've been spoiled coming here, because I've come in and there are so many people here that are willing to jump on a task and help with outreach ministry." (Pictured above are Deacon Jonathan and Nicki Tuttle with their son Elijah at St. John and St. Mark's.)

This shift allowed Tuttle to take on the roles of preacher, teacher, and pastor without the church placing all their hopes on him as the single agent of change. He noted, "They seem to recognize that I am clergy and I'm here to do things, but that I'm also human and I have a family and I can't do everything. This congregation is so willing to jump on community service projects. It's encouraging to see that happen on a regular basis -- to the point that I'm usually showing up and trying to find the best ways to keep things moving rather than barking orders from the front."

Elaine emphasizes, "Most of the ministries are member driven-we actually come up with the ideas ourselves and it not only helps the community but helps our church grow as well."

Tuttle concludes, "There's a tendency for parishes to be very clergy dependent. I think that's something that CDI challenges and moves beyond. I don't expect that I won't have to suggest changes or recruit new leaders, but I have no doubt that there are always going to be people in this congregation that are willing to step into leadership roles."

*The Church Development Institute is one element of the leadership training brought to the Diocese of Georgia through the Campaign for Congregational Development. CDI's aim is to equip leaders to facilitate a process of transformation, and to build up the capacities and skills of leaders through self awareness of one's personal impact on others and the organization. CDI provides an increased knowledge of theories, methods and processes as a way to assess and understand the behavior and development of the congregation; and to give a safe learning environment where one can practice skills in facilitation, feedback, listening and presenting.*

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