

The Epistle



ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Rt. Rev. Dan Edwards, Bishop

The Rev. Kirk A. Woodliff, Rector

The Rev. Chip Arnold,
Associate Priest

The Rev. Sherryl Netzler,
Assistant Priest for Pastoral Care

The Rev. Mike Margerum, Deacon

The Rev. Linda Smith, Deacon

January 2014

Contents

Annual Parish Meeting.....	1
From the Pile on Fr. Kirk's Desk.....	2
Jr. Warden's Report	2
Outreach Report	3
Monthly Receipt Summary	3
January in the Food Pantry.....	3
Prayers of the People	3
Epistle Ecology Shorts.....	4
Lectio Divina Bible Study	4
St. Paul's Prayers & Squares.....	4
Youth Group: EYC.....	5
Next Baptismal Days	5
Annual Parish Meeting.....	5
The Bishop's Corner	10
Worship Leader Schedule	14

Regular Sunday Worship Times

January 12th and 19th

9:00 a.m. Contemporary Praise

11:00 a.m. Traditional Rite II, with Organ

5:00 p.m. Traditional Rite II, no music

Annual Parish Meeting

January 26th 10:00 a.m.

On Sunday, January 26th we will have our annual parish meeting during a combined 10:00 a.m. worship service. Since every member is **HIGHLY** encouraged and/or expected to attend this meeting there will not be a 5:00 p.m. service on this Sunday.

We Can't Use Your Plastic Bags

The food pantry can no longer accept used grocery bags. Please recycle them at the store.

From the Pile on Fr. Kirk's Desk...



Our Annual Meeting will be on January 26th and will be during our 10:00 a.m. worship service. This is an important meeting for the whole community.

This is a day in which we celebrate where we have been and a time we look down the road to where we are going.

We will be electing three new Vestry members during our Annual Meeting. As of today, we have three people who wish to serve on the Vestry. They are Dan Bouzek, Jon Mittelstadt, and Ed Stevens. Please take the time to read the information they have provided on their nomination forms which are located at the end of newsletter.

We have much to celebrate as we look back at 2013 and we certainly have some challenges as we look into 2014. Challenges aren't a bad things...they will just be what they will be. No matter what 2014 brings, we will walk through it together bringing Christ to life.

Peace, *Kirk⁺*

Change in Worship Times

Here are a couple of changes in our worship times for January.

January 5th Epiphany Celebration. Combined 10:00 a.m. worship with **Epiphany Play**. There will **NOT** be a 5:00 p.m. service on this day.

January 26th On Sunday, January 26th we will have our **Annual Parish Meeting** during a combined 10:00 a.m. worship service. Since every member is HIGHLY encouraged and/or expected to attend this meeting there will **NOT** be a 5:00 p.m. service on this Sunday.

The Bishop's Corner

by the Rt. Rev. Dan Edwards can be found on page 10 of this newsletter. You can also read other perspectives on God's creation and our life within it by reading his blog which can be found at

<http://bishopdansblog.blogspot.com/>

Jr. Warden's Report



No major issues with the building this month.

We did have a problem with the phone and fire alarm system on the 23rd, but thanks to Fr. Kirk (Mr. Fix-it) everything was resolved.

Be very careful while walking around the outside of the church. As of this writing, we still have some icy patches to watch out for. We have put ice-melt in the major problem areas, but we still need to be VERY careful.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Ken Stine
Jr. Warden

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT BIBLE GATEWAY



10-01-2012

THE WISE MEN, BEING WISE, GOT ALL OF THEIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE WEEKS BEFORE THE RUSH

Outreach Report



December was a fairly busy month for outreach. Food Pantry donations totaled \$1,022.00. This includes \$50.00 from pictures with Santa and \$100.00 for Empty Bowls. The Prayers and

Squares quilt ministry and Daughters of the King each received \$50.00. Other outreach for the month included \$149.00 to Casa da Vida for the quilt raffle, \$801.00 for special music programs, \$464.36 to UTO (United Thank Offering), and \$2421.00 for the Community Garden project. The Christmas Offering and Youth Ministries wreath sales will be reported on next month.

Patti Stine
Outreach Committee

Monthly Receipt Summary

December 2013



For the 2013 year, we expect to receive \$210,688 from our pledge and plate income and should average \$17,557 per month from those sources. The following

table shows the weekly receipts from pledge and plate offerings for this period:

01-Dec	\$3,067.00	08-Dec	\$1,555.00
15-Dec	\$2,263.00	22-Dec	\$3,786.00
24-Dec	\$1,625.00	29-Dec	\$2,811.00
		Online	\$2,710.00
Monthly Total			\$17,817.00

We also received substantial pledge income designated for 2014 pledges, and it will be reflected in the January report.

The monthly treasurer's report contains detail on all our financial activity, and is posted in the narthex. You can direct questions to any Vestry member, Dick Stufflebeam, or Patti Stine. (Email:dick@stpaulssparks.org)

AN IMPORTANT NOTE:

By all your gifts, we are blessed. For all your gifts we are grateful.

Pinterest Interest Group

Come join us in the parish hall on Monday, January 6th at 6 p.m.



For questions call Tricia Woodliff at 200-6677 or email her at triciawoodliff@hotmail.com

Stewardship Pledge Drive

The final 2014 budget will be approved on January 13th. If you have not yet submitted your pledge card, please mail it to the church, or put it in the regular offering plate. Need a card? There are some in the back of the church. Thank you again.

January in the Food Pantry

"It's A Fresh Start"



FOOD

This month the pantry is collecting Shampoo, Soap, toothpaste, and other personal hygiene items.

PANTRY

Thank you for helping feed and meet the needs of those within our area.

Prayers of the People

Please help us keep our Prayer Chain List up to date. Let someone in the Prayer Chain Group or Robin in the office know each month if we are to continue to pray for your special people. Thank you.

Johne, Jack, Gina, Art, Erin, Russell, Forrest, Preston, Kim, Kathy, Russ, Pat, Keith, Casey, Sherre, Barbara, Cole, Ronny, Phyllis, Larry,

Cathy, Debby, Rev. Karen, Jameson Walker, John, Maureen, Susan, Harriet, Angela, Eric, Carol, Victoria, Andrew, Pamela, Robert, Sadie, Harry, Anne, Joe, Marlene, Sue, Barb, Bette's family, Sofia, Dennis, Melva's family, Charlie's family, Wanda, Keith's family, Corrine's family, Margie, Alexis, Bud, Brooke, Damon, Mickey, Shirley, Debbie, Philip, Nancy, Nanette, Rosemarie, Betty, Tom, Rev. Ann, Ellie, Katie, Wes, Mike, Doris, Glady, Dody, Bill, Jana, Dorothy Ann & family, Jeff, Karen-Marie, Susan Lee, Pam, Penny, Christopher, Buck, Kelly and all those affected by the many tragic incidents around the world.

Military: Andrew, Ryan, Jeffrey, Tyler, Sierra, Owen, Larry, Brian and Lt. Col Bruce.

Worship Attendance

Worship Attendance Last Month					
Week Of:	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	5:00 PM	Thursdays	
Dec. 1	94	30	9	9	05-Dec
Dec. 8	84	54	9	7	12-Dec
Dec. 15	105	36	12	7	19-Dec
Dec. 22	103	39	12		
Dec. 29	80		11		
Xmas Eve	5:30pm 102	10:30pm 91			
Xmas Day	10:00am 15				
Total	466	159	53	23	

December Average Sunday Attendance = 136

Epistle Ecology Shorts



Energy: As much as half of the energy used in your home goes towards heating and cooling. Start saving money and energy immediately by adjusting your thermostat. In winter, be sure to lower the thermostat by at least 10 degrees when you are not at home or are sleeping (vice-versa for summer). Use 7-day programmable thermostats that adjust the temperature automatically according to the time settings you program into it.

Recovery Groups at St. Paul's

Mondays: AA Meeting @ 5:30 p.m.

Wednesdays: Women's AA @ 6:30 p.m.

Thursdays: Gama-Non Meeting @ 6:30 p.m. and Ala-Non Meeting @ 6:00 p.m.

Lectio Divina Bible Study

Come and join us in the parish hall for this Holy Spirit guided study of scripture. (no homework required ☺)

Combined Men's and Women's Group

Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Men's Group

Thursdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Contact The Rev. Mike Margerum for more information. mgoodmarge@gmail.com or 775-229-2695

St. Paul's Prayers & Squares

The "Prayers and Squares" ministry is a special "outreach" tool to share the love of Christ. The quilts bring a tangible example of the love we all share with those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. You do not have to know how to sew, or like to sew, but can also just join us for the fellowship we all share.



We meet on the second Saturday of each month in the Parish Hall from 9 A.M. to noon.

We gladly receive donations of materials, thread, etc. and cash to purchase necessary supplies.

If you would like to join us, or if you would like to request a quilt for someone, please contact Victoria Sidener 322-2375.

Youth Group: EYC



10:30 to 12:30 Sundays in the Youth Room
(Meets each week unless otherwise noted)

What is EYC? EYC is an Episcopal



Youth Community where all youth (and their friends) grades 6-12 are invited to come to participate. The focus will be different each week, but you can count on whatever the EYC is doing it will stimulate our growth with God, our growth with each, and our growth in serving Christ in the world.

Not sure about the EYC thing?
We invite you to come and see.

EYC December Schedule

EYC January 5th: No EYC today. Just the Epiphany Celebration after the play/worship.

EYC January 12th: Fun day of Ice Skating at the Rink on the River

EYC January 19th: Growing with God day. Our focus will be "learning about our Lord"

EYC Saturday January 25th: Volunteering in the Food Pantry 8:30 a.m.

NO EYC January 26th

Next Baptismal Days

The next scheduled days for baptisms will be our Easter services, Saturday April 19th and 20th. If you or someone you know is seeking baptism, please contact the parish office to arrange proper instruction. 775-358-4474

Office@StPaulsSparks.org

Need Baked Good
for a Special Party?
Meeting? Birthday?



Check out Sally Sue's Bakery
at www.sarahlightfoot.blogspot.com

Sally Sue's Bakery is run by our very own Sarah and Hayley Lightfoot. ALL proceeds go to St. Paul's Church. For orders and questions call Sarah 830-8964 or Hayley 813-1955. Visit the website for a pricelist and pictures of their past works.

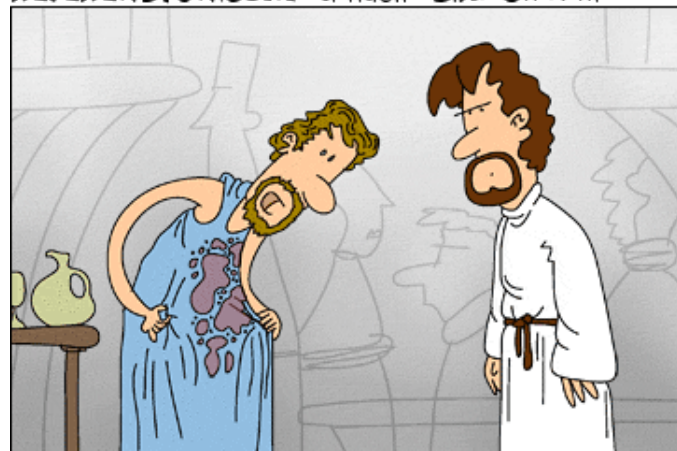
Got Shoes?

Deacon Mike is collecting new and gently used **men's shoes** to donate to the Restitution Center. The Restitution Center helps inmates transition from being incarcerated into finding jobs upon release. There is a barrel in the narthex for you to put the shoes. Thank you.

Annual Parish Meeting

On Sunday, January 26th we will have our annual parish meeting during a combined 10:00 a.m. worship service. Since every member is **HIGHLY** encouraged and/or expected to attend this meeting there will not be a 5:00 p.m. service on this Sunday.

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT **BIBLE GATEWAY**



(See John 2:1-11)

10-05-2012

IS THERE ANY CHANCE YOU COULD TURN JUST
A LITTLE BIT OF THAT WINE BACK INTO
WATER?

Vestry Nomination Form

Name: Daniel J. Bouzek

What is your current level of participation in the life of St. Paul's and what ministries are you currently involved in, both at St. Paul's and out in the world?

Usher , Healing Minister, Eucharistic Minister, Catechist and Administrator.

Community Pantry picks up and volunteer distributor.

Kiwanis of Downtown Sparks Vice President, Board member-Past President -Head of committee for Books for Kids, Training for Lt. Governor for Region 23 for Cal-Neva-Hi district. Kiwanis Key Club advisor for Excel Christian High School

Have you ever served on a parish Vestry or similar church board? If so, did you serve in a particular capacity?

Yes at both St. Pauls' and Emmanuel Episcopal (Rapid City, SD.), Thunderhead Episcopal Church Camp Board(SD).

Served as Superintendent of Emmanuel Sunday School Program.

Why do you want to serve on St. Paul's Vestry?

Would like to help the church and its ministries to grow not only in numbers but strength in ministry fields.

The Vestry needs both "visionaries" and "doers". Where would you fit into this mix and what do you perceive as your gifts for ministry?

A Doer, Very few lay ministries and haven't at least tried. The West was won by Pioneers and Settlers. I have never been one to be much of a Settler. Have a good relationship with the Lord anything is possible. Would like to see the expansion of the Pastoral Care.

How do you currently see St. Paul's living into the mission of Christ?

Is see an expanding role with Pastoral Care, Programs to Feed those less fortunate within the immediate community. This is getting the ministries out of St. Paul's and into the world.

Where do you see St. Paul's in three years?

A source of Spiritual strength.

Vestry Nomination Form

Name: Jon Mittelstadt

What is your current level of participation in the life of St. Paul's and what ministries are you currently involved in, both at St. Paul's and out in the world?

I attend Sunday worship regularly and enjoy many of St. Paul's special events and Rector's Book Studies. I help lead St. Paul's youth group (EYC). Over the past summer I attended Thursday evening Men's Lectio Divina meetings and went on the Men's Escape to Camp Galilee. My current ministries are helping lead EYC and raising two boys.

Have you ever served on a parish Vestry or similar church board? If so, did you serve in a particular capacity?

In the mid 1990s, I chaired "Family Council" at a United Methodist church in SLC and in that role was a member of the church board. In the 2000s at a Presbyterian (PCUSA) church, I was chair of Christian Education for 3 years and Adult Education for 6 years and in those roles was a member of the "Session" which is equivalent to a parish Vestry. For 2 years I was a representative to the "Presbytery" which is equivalent to a Diocese. I also chaired a Presbytery committee that was tasked to research and make recommendations concerning a national proposal to revise PCUSA policies for LGBT ordination and same-sex marriage.

Why do you want to serve on St. Paul's Vestry?

St. Paul's is my spiritual home and church family and I feel a calling to support it. I recognize the importance of the leadership, mission and worship experience of St. Paul's to our community, country and world. I would also enjoy the increased opportunity to work with and get to know better the wonderful people in our congregation.

The Vestry needs both "visionaries" and "doers". Where would you fit into this mix and what do you perceive as your gifts for ministry?

I always enjoy "visioning", brainstorming and discerning God's will within a small group. I don't have a strong personality for building enthusiasm, though I'm willing to do my best. In any group, I'm not comfortable unless I'm doing my share of the work and I'm gifted at recognizing what needs to be done. I'm neither a master visionary nor a super talented doer, but I would bring a mix of both along with enthusiasm and dedication to the Vestry.

How do you currently see St. Paul's living into the mission of Christ?

I see a congregation that cares for one another and takes seriously our call to be the body of Christ. Our worship points to Christ and is welcoming to all people. While helping with EYC this year, it's been fantastic to see the youth connected with each other and growing in their faith. Our sermons, newsletter, and adult classes help me learn more about living the Christian way. Offerings for natural disasters, RAIN, the Angel Tree, Empty Bowls, etc. show the love St. Paul's has for those in need in our community and world. The Food Pantry is clearly following Jesus' command to feed the hungry. Since moving here two years ago, I've met many of the members of St. Paul's who are beautifully dedicated to the church and its mission.

Where do you see St. Paul's in three years?

Like many "mainline" churches, St. Paul's faces the challenge of attracting new members in a society where church participation seems to be less common. I see St. Paul's embarking on a capital campaign to make the outward and visible look of the church (from the outside) just as inviting as the loving people in the church. I see us coupling these physical improvements with a renewed effort to share the Gospel and bring new disciples into the life of the church.

Vestry Nomination Form

Name: Edward Stevens

What is your current level of participation in the life of St. Paul's and what ministries are you currently involved in, both at St. Paul's and out in the world?

Although I have been a member of the St. Paul's for almost 10 year my level of participation over the past few years has not been as great as in years past do to a heavy involvement with the Shriners and the Shriners hospital for children which is now winding down.

Have you ever served on a parish Vestry or similar church board? If so, did you serve in a particular capacity?

Yes, I was Senior Warden at St. Peter's church in Clarksboro, NJ before moving to Nevada.

Why do you want to serve on St. Paul's Vestry?

I feel it will help deepen my faith and allow me to participate more in my church community. I also feel that I have skills which can be used to help the church with its mission.

The Vestry needs both "visionaries" and "doers". Where would you fit into this mix and what do you perceive as your gifts for ministry?

I have very good organizational skills. I served on the Board of Governors of the Shriners Hospital for Children in Sacramento and was Potentate of (CEO) of the Shriners of Northern Nevada. I have an engineering background and good problem solving skills.

How do you currently see St. Paul's living into the mission of Christ?

I have never been a member of a church that has been more active in doing Gods work in both the church community and the community outside the church walls. I do not always agree with everything, but that is why we have a vestry to decide which is the best for the church and Gods work.

Where do you see St. Paul's in three years?

I see St. Paul's growing at a time when many churches are declining. I see that growth increasing because we offer something that seem to be lost in much of the world today. Faith in God and a willingness to help our fellow man.

January Coming Events



Saturday	Jan. 4, 2014	No Food Pantry	
Saturday	Jan. 4, 2014	Daughters of the King	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 5, 2014	Epiphany Play with Holy Eucharist	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 5, 2014	No EYC	
Sunday	Jan. 5, 2014	No 5 o'clock service	
Monday	Jan. 6, 2014	Pinterest Interest Group	6:00 pm
Wednesday	Jan. 8, 2014	Calendar Planning Meeting	6:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 9, 2014	Lectio Divina – Bible Study	11:00 am
Thursday	Jan. 9, 2014	Healing Service with Holy Eucharist	6:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 9, 2014	Men's Bible Study Group	7:00 pm
Saturday	Jan. 11, 2014	Prayers & Squares	9:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 12, 2014	EYC: Ice Skating	10:30 am
Sunday	Jan. 12, 2014	Rector's Book Study	3:00 pm
Monday	Jan. 13, 2014	Vestry Meeting	6:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 16, 2014	Lectio Divina – Bible Study	11:00 am
Thursday	Jan. 16, 2014	Healing Service with Holy Eucharist	6:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 16, 2014	Men's Bible Study Group	7:00 pm
Saturday	Jan. 18, 2014	Daughters of the King	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 19, 2014	Blood Drive	9:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 19, 2014	EYC	10:30 am
Sunday	Jan. 19, 2014	Prayer Team Meeting	12:15 pm
Sunday	Jan. 19, 2014	Rector's Book Study	3:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 23, 2014	Lectio Divina – Bible Study	11:00 am
Thursday	Jan. 23, 2014	Healing Service with Holy Eucharist	6:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 23, 2014	Men's Bible Study Group	7:00 pm
Saturday	Jan. 25, 2014	Epistle Deadline	12:00 pm
Saturday	Jan. 25, 2014	EYC: Volunteering in the Food Pantry	8:30 am
Sunday	Jan. 26, 2014	Annual Parish Meeting/Worship	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 26, 2014	NO EYC	
Thursday	Jan. 30, 2014	Lectio Divina – Bible Study	11:00 am
Thursday	Jan. 30, 2014	Healing Service with Holy Eucharist	6:00 pm
Thursday	Jan. 30, 2014	Men's Bible Study Group	7:00 pm

Recurring Events

Rector's Sabbath is every Tuesday

AA meets every Monday at 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the Choir Room

Choir Practice (Check with your Choir Director)

Praise Team (Check with your Team Leader)

AA (Women's group) meets Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in Parish Hall

Alanon meets every Thursday at 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in Classroom 40

Food Pantry is open every Wed. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. & Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Gam-anon meets every Thursday 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Choir Room

The Bishop's Corner

by the Rt. Rev. Dan Edwards



Despite the popularity of Reza Aslan's current book (soon to be a major motion picture), Jesus wasn't a Zealot. (Zealots were the insurrectionist movement that instigated the failed armed uprising against Rome in 66 CE). That idea has been trotted out ever so often since it was first espoused by the German Deist Hermann Samuel Reimarus in 1774, The last serious argument for it was S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus And The Zealots* (1967) It is always drubbed into the dust by credible New Testament scholars. For a partial recap of the history of this half-baked idea, see

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2013/08/25/jesus-the-zealot-retreading-ground-already-buried/>.

A rebel yes. A revolutionary. Yes, albeit a radically different kind of "revolutionary" than what we usually mean by that word. But a 1st Century nationalistic insurrectionist-- no. I won't make the case here other than to note that there is almost no evidence either in the New Testament or other 1st Century writings to support the Reimarus/Brandon/Aslan hypothesis, virtually every word of the New Testament repudiates it, and respectable New Testament scholars along the continuum from conservative (Wright) to moderate (Wink/ Vermes) to liberal (Borg) all portray a very different Jesus.

I wouldn't be kicking this dead horse that will probably have the good grace to lie back down before the movie goes on Netflix. But here's the thing: It actually matters. It matters because Jesus' mission of ushering in the Kingdom of God is about both the process and the outcome. There is no way to God's Peaceable Kingdom except through God's Peaceable Process. Methodist scholar Walter Wink's seminal trilogy on non-violence in the Gospels (*The Powers That Be*, *Unmasking The Powers*, *Engaging The Powers*) and our own Episcopal lawyer-theologian William Stringfellow (*Conscience and Obedience*) expounded the process Jesus taught and saints like Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela implemented in modern times. Jesus' way was far more revolutionary than the violence of any first century jihadist. His way was what we need now and is quite the opposite of pitting the violence of dominating power against the counter violence of someone else's dominating power.

Today, in the United States, the necessity of a different process to produce a different social structure is more critical than ever before. The reason is simple: the kind of change we desperately need cannot be forced through the usual model of power. It takes a totally different kind of power to accomplish what we must accomplish for the sake of God and all God's people.

Let's start by examining (albeit briefly) our context. One of the best summaries is by the late University of Chicago political philosopher, Jean Bethke Elshtain in *Democracy On Trial* (1995). She wrote that a democratic society depends on laws, constitutions, and institutions, but also on "democratic dispositions":

These include a preparedness to work with those different from oneself toward shared ends; a combination of strong convictions with a readiness to compromise ; and a sense of

individuality and commitment to civic goods that are not the possession of one person or one small group alone. But what do we see . . . ? We see deepening cynicism, a corrosive isolation, boredom, and despair; the weakening . . . of that world known as democratic civil society, a world of groups, associations and ties that bind.

A few years ago, we all learned the African adage, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Well, it takes a village to accomplish much of anything. People using that adage were proposing getting our villages engaged in various worthy projects. But our basic problem is the disintegration of our villages themselves. There ain’t no village. Robert Putnam, in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), demonstrated with devastatingly hard numbers the decline of participation in civic organizations in recent decades. All kinds of voluntary associations for a shared goal – ranging from bowling to collective bargaining to breaking down racial barriers to teaching kids agricultural skills – have declined dramatically. The Church is in good company. Parker Palmer, in *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage To Create A Politics Worthy Of The Human Spirit* (2011), draws the inevitable conclusion that we are not learning the “democratic dispositions” (Christians would call them “virtues” – perhaps “civic virtues”) that are essential to our functioning as a democratic society. In the absence of those civic organizations, we are not forming the social capital (trust and camaraderie) without which neither business nor government can function smoothly. We are desperately low on oil in our social crankcase.

Sociologists, since the conservative theorist, Robert Nisbet, in the 1960s, have called these voluntary civic associations (churches, book clubs, Shriners, labor unions, etc.) “intermediate institutions” because they occupy a social space between the small social unit of the family and the large units of the state and the market. Functionally, they support families in two ways: 1. They buffer the family from pressures coming from the state and the market (like advertising directed at children); and 2. They reinforce the values and norms that sustain family life. During the decades in which the state and the market have grown, intermediate institutions have withered. So it is not surprising that the first victim of the decline of civil society is the family. We do not need to recite the sociological data on the decline of family stability. It has increased markedly over the past two decades since Elshstain noted the dangers posed to children who do not have the protection of a stable family.

The strongest predictors of domestic situations in which children are likely to be physically abused are stressed out single-parent households with a teenaged mother, often of several children, and households consisting of a biological mother and her children living with a man who is not related to those children or who does not accept legal responsibility for their well being.

70% of juveniles in reform institutions came from families with a severe parental deficit. 79% of children whose parents were unmarried did not finish high school. On the other side of the equation, where the parents were married, had finished high school, and did not have children before the age of 20, such children had only an 8% chance of ending up in poverty. Numbers like these led Elshstain to conclude:

(S)temming the tide of family collapse is the best protection we can offer a child against becoming either the victim or the perpetrator of violence – or, as it turns out, of poverty.

But, since Elshtain wrote those words, we have not stemmed that tide – not yet. Quite the opposite.

In this context, the Church sets out to overturn the world's ways with God's ways, to open the door to the Peaceable Kingdom. That takes the assertion of a lot of power – but not the power of political force. We can't form civil society by force. We can't instill democratic dispositions by the imposition of undemocratic force. The Zealot response to a broken world doesn't heal it. History has proved that all too well. The French Revolution overturned the bumbling old monarchy only to replace it with the Reign of Terror. The Russian Revolution overthrew the totalitarian Tsar only to replace him with the totalitarian Bolsheviks and then Stalin. The Apostles taught "Do not confront evil with evil." 1 Peter 3: 9; Roman 12: 17. Their actual words were a military metaphor: the tactic of one army matching the strategy of the other with mirror formations. Jesus said, "Don't do that. It doesn't work. Don't use thuggery to replace one gang of thugs with another." (paraphrase)

Religious efforts to use political force to reshape the culture along religious lines either have turned out horrifically oppressive as in Iran or utterly ineffectual as in the United States. Think of the failed efforts of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition who have succeeded mostly in alienating a whole generation from faith. In *To Change The World: The Irony, Possibility And Tragedy of Christianity In The Late Modern World* (2011), James Davison Hunter parses out why, as a matter of sociology and political science, the efforts of the Christian right and the Christian left are equally ineffectual because cultural change cannot be forced. The Zealots engage in an exercise in futility.

The important changes, the deep changes, happen through relationships, through personal engagement. If you strip the word of its connotations of sentimentality, you might call it "love." The Church cannot change the world through force, bluster, or intimidation. We don't have enough tanks or missiles. Besides tanks and missiles don't overthrow the world's ways with God's ways. It takes kindness, compassion, truth telling, and mutual support to do that.

Ironically, it does not take "moral stances" and "prophetic voices" shouting at the culture from either stage left or stage right to "shape up or ship out." It takes what Hunter calls "faithful engagement," participating in the culture while remaining distinctively and explicitly Christian – not insisting that others be Christian but refusing to be anything other or less than Christian ourselves. Many voices in the Church today propose adapting to recent social trends by replacing congregations with de-institutionalized casual gatherings of the spiritual but not religious for interested but not committed relationships. That would be conceding the battle. It would be the Church taking on the world's ways rather than presenting a hopeful alternative to "corrosive isolation, boredom, and despair."

But the first step in our efforts "to change the world" must be "to change ourselves." The first step is to take the plank out of our own eye. Matthew 7: 5. The Church doesn't have its act together in such a way that we can say to secular society, "look at us and do what we do." Our capacity for civility is, if anything, worse than that of secular institutions, worse even than government, almost as bad as business. The big controversies of past decades, though unavoidable if we were to move forward, have not presented us to the world as models of diversity living together in appreciation and curiosity. We have been as Fox News vs. MSNBC as anyone. We have been as apt to say "my way or the highway" as the political parties. But those big controversies are not half so destructive to our mission

as our inability to negotiate smaller differences in day-to-day Church life. In Gilbert Rendle's Behavioral Covenants In Congregations (1999), he traces the modern history of how congregations have lost the capacity for civil discourse. He says this disintegration is part of a recurring cycle in history and that it will be turning eventually. Our job is to be on the cutting edge of that change, not dragging along behind, if Christianity is to have any credibility whatsoever in the eyes of the next generation.

So, what was and is Jesus' project and what does that tell us about our mission and how to go about it? Jesus was overturning the ways of the world with the ways of God. Oppression and insurrection are both ways of the world. He showed us something quite different – something of grace and wonder, something of healing and reconciliation, something of mercy and compassion. He showed us how to conquer death by going through it into life, how to conquer sin by forgiving it. Jesus' way was and is paradoxical, full of serendipity and surprise. It is far more subversive than reflexively resorting to violence to combat violence, "fighting for peace."

Jesus' way is much bigger than social utility. The Kingdom is much bigger than a civil society that makes democracy possible. It's cosmic. But it breaks into our 21st Century post Cold War context just as Jesus began his mission the 1st Century Roman Empire context. He meets us where we are, in the mix and muddle of our present situation, which for us is the socially disintegrated era of cynical division and isolation. Being cosmic and eternal doesn't make the Kingdom Mission irrelevant to life here and now. Quite the opposite. The challenges of life today cannot be addressed by force or coercion. They call for grace mediated through gracious people. That makes it urgently incumbent on Christians to grow in grace so that we may become gracious to each other and the suffering world.
Yours in Christ,

Dan Edwards
10th Bishop of Nevada

Worship Leader Schedule

WORSHIP LEADER SCHEDULE January 1st thru January 31st *** rev. 1/31/14														
Day	Date	Time	Service	Lectors				Eucharistic Ministers		Healing Ministers	Ushers	Protector	Altar Guild	Church School Teachers
				OI	Psalms	NT	Intercessor	EM1	EM2					
Su	1/5/14	10:00 a.m.	2nd	youth		youth	youth	youth	youth	Pattie R	Dick S/Steve S	Mel	Pam & Sarah L	Family Service
	Epiphany Play		after											
		5:00 p.m.	Christmas											
Su	1/12/14	9:00 a.m.	1st	Don S		Margaret B	Margaret B	Chelsea S	Fran D	Marge P	Jeff D/Janice W	John	Patti S/Lynne S	Jeannine F &
		11:00 a.m.	after	Holly S	Holly S	Victoria S	Victoria S	Barb S	Deb S	Dan B	Jack S/Walt C		Eileen C	Erin & Keith A
		5:00 p.m.	Epiphany	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer			Volunteer			
Su	1/19/14	9:00 a.m.	2nd	Linda K		Deb S	Deb S	Tracee R	Eileen C	Brenda S	Bob B/Dave S	Peggy	Dianne M/Margaret B	Sheri M &
		11:00 a.m.	after	Millie M	Millie M	Sue O	Sue O	David G	Susan G	Connie P	Mike E/Dave F			Heather B
		5:00 p.m.	Epiphany	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer			Volunteer			
Su	1/26/14	10:00 a.m.	3rd	Pat E		Mike E	Mike E	Patti S	Victoria S	Marge P	Dick S/Gene C	Jody	Pam & Sarah L	Nancy L &
	Annual Parish Meeting		after											Ellen H
		5:00 p.m.	Epiphany											