

# The Epistle



## ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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775-358-4474  
[www.StPaulsSparks.org](http://www.StPaulsSparks.org)

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

## September 2014

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### WHO ARE WE?

We, as St. Paul's, are a theologically diverse community who seeks to embrace our diversity in order to live through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be a place of belonging for all people.

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

### Anxiety and Sabbatical Boundaries



Some of you have voiced some anxiety about me being gone on Sabbatical for three months. Let me ease that a bit. I assure you that I am not leaving St. Paul's. Tricia and I

love it here. This is our home and we have no intentions of leaving.

You are in good hands...each others. Over the last few months, the sabbatical planning team has taken the necessary steps to eliminate as many possible issues before they arise.

### Business

Our Vestry and office staff are made up of some great leaders. They can handle whatever comes their way. If you have concerns that pertain to the business side of the church, contact Robin in the **Parish Office** [775-358-4474](tel:775-358-4474) and she will have our Sr. Warden, Margaret Bouzek, call you.

### Worship

You will have the same wonderful clergy, preaching team, and worship ministries. If you have worship concerns, visit with Rev. Chip on a Sunday or contact the parish office and Robin will have Rev. Chip call you.

### Pastoral Care

We have a great pastoral care team with both clergy and laity. If a need for pastoral care arises, please call Robin in the office first. If she does not answer call our **Emergency Pastoral Care number, [775-453-0552](tel:775-453-0552)**. This will reach the on-call clergy person. If they don't answer, leave a message and they will call you as soon as they can. If you can't remember the number, it is on the church answering machine. Don't hesitate to call.

The pastoral team members are excellent and have already been doing much of our pastoral care for months.

### Communications

Donna Margerum is in charge of our newsletter, *The Epistle*. If you have something that needs to be in it, please email her what you would like. The deadline is the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. Please note that for a variety of reasons, Donna may need to edit your submission. If she does, the necessary information will remain. The deadline of the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month is important, so plan ahead (even months ahead if you can). Donna's email is [djmargerum@gmail.com](mailto:djmargerum@gmail.com). If you need to speak to her on the phone, let Robin know and she will have Donna call you. If you don't get an email notice that the newsletter is ready to view, go to [StPaulsSparks.org](http://StPaulsSparks.org) and you will find the newsletter link under the heading of "News" in the top menu bar. Click on the month you wish to read.

Robin will handle the e-news blasts. If you need something emailed out as soon as possible, call the parish office and let Robin know.

### Sabbatical Boundaries

The intent of the sabbatical has two parts; one for you and one for me. Your part is to rely on each other, grow, and find confidence in doing ministry. You have my blessing. You can do it. My part is to be removed from St. Paul's in the most complete way as possible. This means I won't be coming to church, or even to the building. I won't be calling you to check on things. This will be hard for me, but it is necessary. This means that you can't call me or email me. This will be hard for some of you...not even a short note that lets me know you are praying for me. I know you are and I am thankful.

If you see me at the grocery store and I don't see you, just avoid me if you can. If we run into each other and I do see you, just say hello, but please don't try to engage in conversation with me. I won't think you are being rude. I'll just know you are respecting my wishes and the sabbatical boundaries. The same applies if you see Tricia. We expect Cooper to continue to attend Youth Group. Just ignore him...he's 13 and won't notice anyway.

If you have an emergency and you know it is something I'd want to know, don't call me. Please call Robin or the emergency pastoral care number. They will take care of you and I will check on you when I return.

My sabbatical is a gift from you and is like medicine for my soul. I am blessed and could not be more grateful. See you on Sunday, November 24<sup>th</sup> and have a blessed fall in the beautiful high desert of Nevada.

*Kirk*

## Senior Warden's Report

### September 2014



Hi everyone,

Fr. Kirk is officially on his sabbatical now. Fr. Chip will be handling the pastoral duties ably assisted by our other clergy members. Do not

hesitate to contact the church office with your concerns. I will be handling many of the "business" decisions along with the Vestry. Please contact me or any Vestry member. The church office will maintain its usual office hours.

St. Paul's is a healthy, active parish. The parish is not on sabbatical and all parish activities will continue. Fr. Kirk is coming back

for Advent. We pray that Kirk, Tricia, Cooper and Lucy have a time of peace and refreshment.

September means that school is in full swing. Our church education programs are back on their full schedule. Many thanks to the teachers who volunteer their time in this ministry. The nursery moved to a room across from the Sunday School rooms. The new nursery room has access to toilet facilities without leaving the room. This is much more convenient for our Nursery Supervisor, Hema. The last potluck of the summer has come and gone. I was only in town for one of them. Thanks to Eileen Caspersen for making the sign-up sheets. Thanks to all who brought food and helped clean up.

This month the Food Pantry has its main fund raiser on the 24th. Please look for articles about participating in the event. The Food Pantry has come a long way since we first began our mission of feeding the hungry in our community. This ministry could always use extra hands particularly with picking up the food deliveries. Please contact Barbara Monroy if you can help.

We are also looking forward to the Diocesan Convention that will be held in Ely, NV from Oct. 9th to Oct. 11th. Our delegates to the convention are: Susan Palwick, Bob Stoddard, Julia Stoddard, Dan Bouzek and Pat Entwistle. Ed Stevens and I, as the wardens, also attend as well as our parish clergy: Chip, Mike, Linda and Sherryl.

Peace, Margaret Bouzek

## New Organist

Ben Gallagher was born and raised in rural Suffolk in the east of England. After relentlessly and tunelessly hitting the keys on the piano, Ben started piano lessons at the age of 4. He

continued learning throughout school until he passed his Grade 8 exam from the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music - the highest student musical achievement. In addition to this, Ben has earned his Grade 5 in flute, acted as the musical director for a local amateur dramatics society, played as rehearsal pianist for the Royal Holloway Light Opera Society, and accompanied numerous musicians and singers for their exams.

Ben grew up with the Church of England - his mom is an ordained local minister, and his dad is a church warden. After occasionally taking lessons from the local church organist, Ben started playing as a substitute organist from the age of 16. After graduating from the University of London with a Bachelor's in Psychology, Ben played more regularly as an organist for three parishes: 15th century churches with 19th century organs. After two years living in Cambridge, Ben and his American wife, Heather, moved to Sparks. Heather is a professional violinist and Youth Orchestra Manager for the Reno Philharmonic and also plays for the Reno Chamber Orchestra and the String Beings, while he is employed as a Web Developer for the University of Nevada, Reno. Additionally, Ben was the rehearsal pianist for the Nevada Opera Youth Chorus, which is where he met Aren.

Ben and Heather have one daughter, Emiliana - an enthusiastic three year-old. Emmy is currently repeating history by relentlessly and tunelessly hitting keys on the piano.

Ben is excited to be joining you as church organist, if a little daunted at the prospect of following on from Aren's incredible musical talents. He looks forward to be musically and spiritually part of your church family.

## **New Choirmaster**

Serwind Netzler has offered to serve as Interim Choirmaster. In addition to his work as a film director, web master, and foster parent, Serwind has been a professional church musician (soloist, choirmaster) since his undergraduate days.

He's the husband of The Rev. Sherryl Netzler, who serves as an Assistant Priest for Pastoral Care here at St Paul's. Sherryl's also an Associate Priest at St. Catherine's of Sienna in South Reno. Many of you know Serwind from his volunteer work with our Food Pantry.

Serwind first became involved in the Episcopal church while studying for his Bachelor's Degree in Music. For a number of years, he was bass soloist at Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. In addition to singing, Serwind directed church choirs in Michigan and New Zealand. He was also active in the creation of the Meadow Brook Music Festival with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the saving of Detroit's historic Orchestra Hall. He enthusiastically looks forward to working with our group of talented singers and invites anyone with an interest in singing to join our choir.

## **Join the Choir**

Our new choirmaster, Serwind Netzler, invites anyone with an interest and a voice to join our choir which sings at the 11:00 a.m. service. Rehearsals are on Wednesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., beginning September 3rd. This invitation to sing is open to students who may already be in school choirs.

## The Daughters of the King

Are you not quite sure who The Daughters of the King are and what it is they do? Contact Margaret Bouzek at

[Margaret.Bouzek@va.gov](mailto:Margaret.Bouzek@va.gov)  
or by phone at (775) 424-3767.



## Outreach Report

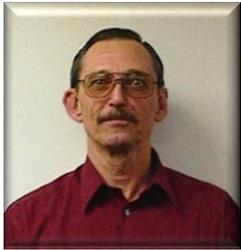


Many thanks to Bob and Peg Bibby for hosting the annual BibbyQ fundraiser on July 27. The food was delicious and the event was a great success. A total of \$1,467.00 will be used toward the

purchase of new projection equipment. The Food Pantry received donations of \$1,528.42 and Empty Bowls received \$1,000.00. Other donations for the month include \$150.00 to Daughters of the King, \$170.00 for school supplies, and \$50.00 to the Clergy Discretionary Fund.

Patti Stine, Outreach Committee

## Monthly Receipt Summary



### St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Sparks Funding the Mission August 2014

For the 2014 year, we expect to receive \$237,863 from our pledge, challenge pledge, and plate income and should average \$19,822 per month from those sources. The table below helps us keep track of where we are as the year proceeds.

27-Jul	\$4,909.00	3-Aug	\$4,194.00
10-Aug	\$3,435.00	17-Aug	\$3,587.00
24-Aug	\$2,936.00	Online	\$3,360.00
<b>Monthly Total</b>			<b>\$22,421.00</b>

For the five Sundays in this report, we are \$449.00 below our projection for the period.

The monthly Financial Statement of Mission 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](mailto:dick@stpaulssparks.org))

***AN IMPORTANT NOTE:*** By all your gifts, we are blessed. For all your gifts we are grateful.

## School Supplies

Daughters of the King wish to thank everyone who made donations of supplies and cash to the School Supply drive. The items were divided equally between Robert Mitchell and Kate Smith Elementary Schools. Thank you cards from the schools are posted on the bulletin board.

## Craft Fair News

Several of the members of the parish hoped to have a Craft Fair at the church this fall. Unfortunately, we have been unable to accomplish that task. We found that a successful event needs 6-8 people on the committee. (I don't know how Linda Devon did it all by herself!!!) There will be organizational meetings after the first of the year to make this event happen in 2015. Please consider participating when we re-organize.

## Need Baked Goods for a Special Party? Meeting? Birthday?



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 or Hayley 626-8519. Visit the website for a pricelist and pictures of their past works. Check out Sally Sue's Bakery at [www.sarahlightfoot.blogspot.com](http://www.sarahlightfoot.blogspot.com)

## September in the Food Pantry

*"We are on a roll"*



Toilet Paper and toiletries are the campaign for September. Tooth paste, tooth brushes, shampoo, soaps, baby wipes etc.

The Community Food Pantry in partnership with Immunize Nevada and Walgreens will be offering FLU SHOTS again this year on Wednesday September 24, 9-12am and Saturday October 25, 9-11am.

## Empty Bowls Fundraiser

The last day to paint bowls for Empty Bowls is September 15. Bowls can be painted for \$10, at The Playful Potter 1351 E. Prater Way Sparks. The bowls are then auctioned at the 5th Annual Empty Bowls event on Wednesday September 24, 2014 at The Grove, 95 Foothill Road Reno. This is the food pantry's major fund raiser each year. A Simple Soup Supper, Raffle, and Silent Auction. Tickets are \$30 and can be purchased at [www.emptybowlsrenosparks.com](http://www.emptybowlsrenosparks.com). Linda Devon and Barb Monroy also have tickets.

## Crop Walk

Save the Date Sunday October 19, 2014 – CROP WALK –. This is year we will be

forming our own team to walk. This is 2.6 mile walk at Idelwild Park. The food pantry shares the proceeds from this event with other organizations in the community. From last year's event we received \$671 dollars. Please see Barbara Monroy or contact her at [bmonroy0216@gmail.com](mailto:bmonroy0216@gmail.com) if you would like to be part of our team.

## 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.



**Prayer Requests**

Jack, Gina, Forrest, Russ, Pat, Barbara, Ronny, Larry, Rev. Karen, Anne, Barb, Sofia, Keith & family, Mickey, Philip, Nancy, Nanette, Ellie, Katie, Wes, Erin, Preston, Jameson Walker, Pattie, Julie, Shelby, Casey, Kathy, Richard, Karen, Sven, Gracie, Ralphie, Greg, Jason's family, Jackie, Shelly, Sharon, Stacey, Jaemie, Renee, Vanessa, Jennifer, Gene, Ed, Koressa, Rev. Bill, Virginia, Paul, Mari Lee, Mariesa, Tom, Arlene, Vernice, Marilyn, Morgan, Fiona, Ruth, Dan & family, Sian & family, Tishelle, Linda, Robert, Michael, Lisa, Alysandra, Kay, Erma, Cherie and Buck.

Military: Andrew, Ryan, Jeffrey, Tyler, Sierra, Owen, Brian, Lt. Col Bruce, Jordan, Evanne and Carl.

## Epistle Ecology Shorts

It is not too early to start working on making your home more energy efficient for the coming winter. Here are some ideas: Caulk the small gaps around fixed joints of window and door frames to reduce air leaks and moisture. Install weather stripping over or in moveable joints of windows and doors to reduce air leaks and moisture. Caulk any leak in a heating or cooling duct. Donna Margerum

## Youth Group: EYC



EYC is an Episcopal Youth Community where all youth (and their friends) grades 6-12 are invited to come and 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 other, and our growth in serving Christ in the world. Not sure about the EYC thing? Come give it a try!

Jon and Tia Mittelstadt will be leading EYC while Fr. Kirk and Tricia are on sabbatical. Jon and Tia have worked with St. Paul's EYC for the past year and have led youth group programs in their previous churches for over 20 years.

Welcome to the new 6th graders! EYC will meet in the youth room from 10:30 AM until 12:30 PM unless listed differently in the schedule. Please join us for the following activities in September:

*September 7:* EYC Kickoff Meeting. Come for lunch, get to know you games and fun! Also, bring ideas for EYC activities for the year.

*September 14:* Painting bowls for Empty Bowls fundraiser. Meet at 10:30 and head to Legends area for an early lunch. We will then go to Playful Potter at noon and paint bowls for the Empty Bowls fundraiser. Please bring money for lunch and \$10 for painting your bowl. If you need financial assistance, please let Tia or Jon know. We want everyone to attend! Youth will call parents when we are finished.

*September 21:* Park Day. We will meet at 10:30 and then head to Pah Rah Mountain

Park. There we will have lunch and play some fun games.

*September 28:* Growing with God. We will meet in the youth room to eat lunch, watch a "TED" talk and discuss.

If you are new to St. Paul's we welcome you to join us. If you are interested, please get in touch with Tia or Jon and give them your contact information. They can be reached at 775-722-3469 or by email at tia.mittel@gmail.com or jon.mittel@gmail.com . We invite you to come join us for food, fellowship and fun!

## 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

## We Are Thankful

*No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

Watch this space in the Epistle each month for St. Paul's stories of gratitude and belonging. If you are ready to share, please contact Jon Mittelstadt (jon.mittel@gmail.com) or any member of Vestry. We will thank you for your help! This month we are very thankful that Alex Crank, who is very active in St. Paul's Episcopal Youth Community (EYC), has shared her answers to the following questions.



1. How long have you attended St. Paul's?

I have been going to St. Paul's for about two years now. The first time I ever went to St. Paul's I was about 6. I remember all the pews were

facing 90 degrees to the right.

2. What about St. Paul's makes it a church home for you?

St. Paul's is my home church because no matter who you are, you are always welcome. It's also home to me because it's where I got baptized.

3. What is one thing about St. Paul's you are most thankful for?

I am thankful for a lot that St. Paul's has done for me. I am thankful for them allowing me to become an acolyte a year ago. Also a few

months ago I became crucifer. I am also grateful for the bishop baptizing me in St. Paul's. Last but not least, I am very thankful for everyone sending me to EYE in Philadelphia. They sent me to the most amazing, best week of my life.

4. Please share a favorite story about your time at St. Paul's and/ or tell a little about one of your favorite church activities.

My favorite activities at church are EYC; I love being able to be around a bunch of kids my age who don't judge. Also I love being an acolyte; it's a privilege to be able to work with the priests and deacons. My other favorite activity is being able to sing in the praise team, I just LOVE singing.

Thanks for sharing with us Alex!

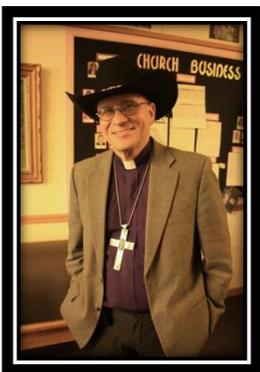
### Recovery Groups at St. Paul's

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.

## Bishop Dan's 6th EPISTLE TO THE NEVADANS



### *Is The Episcopal Church Possible Today?*

The Conga Line. I will tell you what I mean by "the Episcopal Church" and why it is a real question as to whether we have any place in the 21st Century. But first we need to consider why our existence matters. This story may not say it all, but it suggests a lot to those who can set aside the assumptions about religion grounded in how we adapted Anglicanism to suit the tastes of Boomers and Gen-Exers over these past 40 years.

Around 1990 (give or take), an Episcopal congregation in San Francisco began bold new innovations to their ritual. Some were grounded in practices of the Early Church, but others suited the tastes of young people a quarter century ago. One such innovation was the conga line. The people danced their way out of the liturgy of the word into the liturgy of the table. As happens in our culture, especially in our church, the bold new innovation either disappears and is forgotten or it

meets another curious fate: it becomes fashionable. I pass no judgment on the use of the conga line then. My point is what happens when it becomes fashionable.

In one diocese this year, a diocese we might think of as rather conservative, the bishop and youth minister decided to make the diocesan convention more engaging to the youth. Their plan: a conga line at Communion. They were giddy with the excitement of how cool the youth would find this, how delighted the youth would be with their boldness in doing what had been going on in San Francisco for 25 years now. But that was before EYE (Episcopal Youth Event) 2014.

That diocese sent a strong youth delegation to the Episcopal Youth Event in Philadelphia. The mission-focused event was a huge success. The worship had a few unfortunate snags from my standpoint – like passing the plate for the offering during the final half of the Eucharistic prayer on one occasion – but on the whole it was high energy, moving, powerful, engaging worship – and, after all, the glitches were probably grating to only this 64 year old curmudgeon from a seminary notoriously picky when it comes to ritual. But, to the point: the adult planners of EYE were of a mind with the conservative diocese – cool worship for cool young people needs a conga line so a conga line we had.

Near the end of the week, the diocesan youth minister asked her teens what had been the best part of EYE and what was the worst. There were almost as many contenders for the best thing as there were teens. But they all agreed on what was worst: the conga line. At the moment when they had wanted to meditatively and reflectively prepare to meet God, their prayer was interrupted by a self-conscious poser attempt at coolness. The conga line may have rocked the world of Gen-X in 1990 – but not teens in 2014.

The Episcopal Church. We are an oddity in the Christian world by the very way we define ourselves – not by different answers from other denominations, but by different questions. Since the 2nd Century A.D. Anglican Christianity had a distinctive style of worship and spiritual practice. It was never set over in opposition to the rest of Christianity. It was just our way, our part of the Body of Christ.

In the 16th Century, Western Christianity splintered into multiple factions, each defining itself over against the others by fine points of doctrine. The Lutherans had the Augsburg Confession (350 pages); the Calvinists, the Westminster Confession (550 pages); etc. Roman Catholicism had previously entertained a variety of doctrines but in response to the Reformation, began to tie down the party line at the Council of Trent so they too could be defined by their doctrines.

Anglicanism waffled briefly but after the Elizabethan Settlement simply declined to define ourselves very tightly by doctrines. We later came up with 39 Articles (2 pages) so we could talk with our ecumenical friends, but even those Articles failed to grab our imagination or hold our allegiance. We said instead, “This is how we pray” and “praying shapes believing.” “Come pray with us, in the old ways, the Apostolic ways, and over time your beliefs will grow and deepen and become more refined.” Two people praying in the same pew may hold very different doctrinal opinions, but they can still pray together, each interpreting the prayer in her own way. They can talk through their differences of belief in a class or just keep their opinions to themselves. We are a people of diverse opinions united by Common Prayer.

Common Prayer held us together while we differed over all manner of things – evolution versus creation; racial issues; support for versus opposition to controversial wars; etc. etc. People who disagreed passionately about politics and even religion knelt together, confessed their sins together, were absolved together, and blessed each other with “the peace of the Lord.”

In addition to Common Prayer, there was also a secondary trait that defined us: the way we made our decisions. It was a question of authority – who got to make the decisions. The struggle for authority reared its head in Western Christianity early and often. Look at the Epistles of Paul, Clement of Rome, and Ignatius of Antioch. Christians have always been a bit headstrong. It came to a crisis as a fight between clergy authority and lay authority in “the Investiture Controversy” of the 11th Century. In a dramatic showdown between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor, the clergy won and ran the culture for 500 years – but never without rumbling from the lay authorities (kings, princes, lords). The fight between Archbishop Thomas Beckett and King Henry II is a classic example. The melodrama around Henry VIII’s divorce from Katherine of Aragon was not about sex as it seems in the movies. It was about the limits of clergy authority and the autonomy of national churches.

The English Reformation was about authority more than anything else. The resolution was a notion that has come up again this year as the Episcopal Church undertakes restructuring – “Shared Governance.” Some authority was vested in clerical authority; other authority was reserved to lay authority; and a lot of things require the concurrence of both clergy and laity. Take for example the election of a bishop. In order to elect a bishop at a diocesan convention, the same candidate must receive over 50% of the votes of the Order of the Clergy and the Order of the Laity on the same ballot. The authority of clergy and the authority of the laity do two things: 1. Obviously, they check and balance each other so that one order does not impose its will overmuch on the other; but also 2. (less obviously but just as importantly), they inform each other, teach each other, refine each other, keep a lively conversation going.

The authority of clergy and laity are organized this way at each level – rector & vestry in the parish; bishop & Standing Committee/ Convention in the diocese; House of Bishops & House of Deputies at General Convention. (The laity are reinforced by priests and deacons at the diocesan and Gen Con levels to keep a special eye on bishops – whom we don’t want to inflate with too much power lest they run amok.) This dialectic, this conversation, of laity and clergy is not as apparent on a Sunday morning as our Common Prayer, but it is also intrinsic to our character and it is distinctive among Christian denominations.

Romantic Individualism And Common Prayer. Over against Common Prayer and Shared Governance, there is a prevailing force in our culture. That is to say it has been prevailing for the past half century and it has roots going back to the early 19th Century. It is the elevation of the autonomous individual over all other sources of truth or judgment of right. Particularly in the domain of religion, where things cannot be proven by our one universally accepted authority – the scientific experiment – our culture values radical subjectivity. “I believe in the God of my creation and worship that God in the way that expresses my feelings. My religion is how I express my subjective beliefs, which are of my choosing.”

This poses an obvious problem for Prayer Book Spirituality, i.e., the practice of Common Prayer. Priests take ordination vows to be loyal to the “worship of the Episcopal Church.” But that is hard to

do in an era whose theme song could be “I did it my way.” If the priest does not adhere to the Church’s practice of Common Prayer, then either the priest leads the congregation into his or her own subjectivity or tailors the worship to suit the subjectivity of the most influential members. It becomes a problematic power dynamic.

The Book of Common Prayer does not tie down every detail of worship. It leaves options and room for innovation and addition, but it does have a basic structure. It is like a tennis court with bounds and a net. That is what sets us apart from the “Free Church” traditions in which worship has no prescribed form. If one goes to a particular UCC (Congregationalist) Church for example, worship may follow a completely different form and style from another UCC Church. In the Free Church tradition, each congregation goes its own way like the divorcing members of Fleetwood Mack.

I do not mean to criticize the Free Church tradition. Most Christian denominations are of that form. The question I am asking is this: if the Episcopal Church gives up the spirituality that defines us, is there any reason for us to exist as part of the Body of Christ? If we are not defined as a denomination by our fidelity to Common Prayer, then that raises the pressure considerably for us to find a new way to define ourselves – that is, by some common opinion.

But here’s where the situation goes from troubling to deeply disturbing. It is highly unlikely in our era of Romantic Individualism that we can come to a common theological opinion. People today, even in doctrinally defined churches, do not personally identify with their theological beliefs. They identify instead with their political ideologies. In fact, we live in a society that is increasingly unable to address the issues that confront us – environmental issues; immigration policy; income inequality; the influence of money in elections and the consequences for government, etc. – because we are so identified with our political opinions that we cannot reason with each other or reach compromises without fear of losing our souls, which we have come to think of as fused with our politics.

The hope for holding together a society so politically divided is people coming together in prayer to be shaped together, formed together, challenged together and so transformed. In a world where people only gather for worship with those who share their political and social beliefs, there is no opportunity for transformation. But where we do come together, prayer that does not express what we already feel, but rather Common Prayer, the liturgy and those who are faithful to it can change us. Do we dare to be changed?

A story: Shortly after the Civil War in Virginia, a Black man showed up at an Episcopal Church. That was not new. But this time he did not sit in the balcony. When the invitation to receive Communion was extended, he went up to the altar rail and received. The white 1866 Virginia congregation did not know what to do. But from the back of the Church, the grey bearded senior warden walked up the aisle, knelt at the rail, and received the sacrament. Perhaps because the Senior Warden was Robert E. Lee, the rest of the congregation received the sacrament as well. The liturgy did not express what they believed. It challenged what they believed and changed them. It built a bridge they had not imagined. Do we dare to be changed? Do we dare to build bridges to people with whom we do not agree? If you want to consider this issue presented far more compellingly than I can, especially here in print, I urge you to watch Bishop Michael Curry’s explanation of the unifying power of the Eucharist in this short video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USOMZpGheBc>

This ancient ritual we have inherited as our spiritual legacy is not an arbitrary construct. It contains truths that cannot be conveyed directly. It touches us at levels we cannot understand. Sometimes we feel moved emotionally as in Evangelical or Pentecostal worship. But other times the movement is at a level deeper than emotions, as in Buddhist meditation. Common Prayer does not express what we already feel or recite opinions we already hold. It calls us into truths that are new to us as individuals but older by far than humanity.

Romantic Individualism And Shared Governance. Romantic individualism is at a minimum suspicious of, usually downright opposed to, any authority other than the subjective will of the individual constrained only by the duty not to interfere with the subjective will of another individual. That works quite well for dancing depending on what kind of dancing is being done on the particular dance floor. It might not work so well if folks are square dancing, line dancing, or waltzing. It also would not work so well for a football team. Some things can be accomplished only by people working together and that necessitates the group exercising some sort of authority.

Our system is unusually democratic. Clergy have authority over a very limited set of decisions. That is based on their training, which qualifies them to make those decisions wisely and in keeping with the tradition and teachings of the Church. Most of what happens in Church is governed by democratically elected lay people. Authority in the Episcopal Church is exercised collaboratively because working together is how we learn and grow.

But again Romantic Individualism poses a problem. During the course of setting out a path to restructuring the Episcopal Church, Bishop Katharine and the President of the House of Bishops both spoke of a plan for “Shared Governance.” They were rather surprised to hear responses objecting to “governance” at all, shared or not, regardless of who did it.

A story: This year I made an appointment that is in my canonical authority to make. But I did not just haul off and do it. The vestry asked me to do it by an overwhelming majority vote. Still I invited the congregation to offer their guidance. Again the overwhelming majority of the congregation joined the vestry in asking me to do the same thing. But some members of the congregation still objected to my making the appointment. It was an oppressive exercise of power.

Romantic Individualism makes it impossible to function as a group even when the group has high level of consensus, perhaps especially when the group has a high level of consensus. The Romantic Individualist wants his way regardless of any authority structures, even the authority of the majority of the group even on a decision about the course of the group.

So here is the question: are we willing to be part of a community if that means bending our will so we can accomplish things together? Does bending our will diminish us, make us less – or are we something larger than our will, so that giving up our will might be a way to grow. Might submission to the God’s Church, the Body of Christ, be an exercise in submitting to God? And might submitting to God be how we most genuinely pray, “Thy kingdom come”?

I am not sure the Episcopal Church is possible in an era of Romantic Individualism. But it may well be that Romantic Individualism makes the Episcopal Church necessary. Romantic Individualism may be the disease for which the Church is the cure. Christianity along with Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and most of the name brand world religions, regards our ego, our self-will, as the problem to be overcome

through religious practice. "I have become a great problem to myself," St. Augustine said, explaining his decision to embrace Christianity. To choose Christ was to give himself away. Paul said, "Have the same mind in you that was in Christ Jesus, who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . . Do nothing from ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." (Philippians) "Be filled with the Spirit . . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5: 18-21)

If Christian spirituality is right that the path to joy lies through surrender of the ego-will (often called "the flesh" by Paul), then submitting to the reasonable and moral decisions of people authorized to make those decisions is an essential spiritual practice. If we approach our faith that way, then we do not go to Church to get our way. Quite the opposite. Such a spirituality would even give money to the congregation trusting the vestry to spend it rightly rather than designating gifts so as to hang on to the power.

Do you see that the issue is the same in governance and prayer? It is the choice between the assertion of self and the surrender of self. So is the Episcopal Church, with its Common Payer and Shared Governance, possible in our time?

Conclusion: Tom Wolfe dubbed people my age "the Me Generation" because we were so unabashedly self-involved. I am not sure those just a bit younger are much less self-involved. For us, Romantic Individualism is an implicit assumption about what makes for a good life. To us, the Episcopal Church is naturally a hard sell, but it may be a necessary one. Just as we have had a particular need for 12-step programs to free our souls from the chemical addictions we acquired while expressing ourselves, we need help getting free from addiction to self-will. Is the Episcopal Church possible for us? Gabriel told Mary, "With God all things are possible."

But the Millennial Generation is a whole new ball game. They are looking for mission, hungry for community, and in many cases lean toward a contemplative mystical ritual such as the Book of Common Prayer as opposed to the more exuberantly expressive worship of the renewal movement so loved by my generation. I am thinking of those young people who did not like the conga line to the altar rail one little bit. It may just be that this generation, which is so commonly said to have left the Church, is the very generation for whom the Episcopal Church, Common Prayer, and Shared Governance is a perfect fit.

My concern is whether the Episcopal Church, as we know it will be here for them. I am not concerned that we will close our doors. I am concerned that we will abandon Common Prayer and Shared Governance caving to Romantic Individualism. My hope is that we will not. My hope is that we will keep the porch light on for today's young people who will be looking for us tomorrow night.

Blessing Always,

Bishop Dan

## Coming Events



### September 2014

Monday	Sept. 1, 2014	<i>Labor Day (office closed)</i>	
Monday	Sept. 1, 2014	<i>Pinterest Group Cancelled due to holiday</i>	
Saturday	Sept. 6, 2014	Daughters of the King	10:00 am
Sunday	Sept. 7, 2014	E.Y.C. (Starts back up again)	10:30 am
Monday	Sept. 8, 2014	Church School Teacher's Meeting	5:30 pm
Monday	Sept. 8, 2014	Vestry Meeting	6:00 pm
Saturday	Sept. 13, 2014	Prayers & Squares	9:00 am
Saturday	Sept. 20, 2014	Daughters of the King	10:00 am
Wednesday	Sept. 24, 2014	Empty Bowls Event <i>Held @ The Grove</i>	6:00 pm
Thursday	Sept. 25, 2014	Epistle Deadline	12:00 am
Thursday	Sept. 25, 2014	St. Paul's Clergy Meeting	3:30 pm

### Recurring Events

EYC meets every Sunday @ 10:30 a.m. in the Youth Room.

**Rector is on Sabbatical through November, 2014**

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

Choir Practice 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays or (Check with your Choir Director)

Praise Team 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays or (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 Parish Hall

**Lectio Divina – Bible Study meets Thursday mornings at 11:00 a.m.**

**Healing Service with Holy Eucharist Thursdays at 6:00 p.m.**

**Men's Bible Study Thursday evenings @ 7:00 p.m.**

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

### **Regular Sunday Worship Times: Sept 7th**

Our regular Sunday worship times begin on September 7th.

9:00 a.m. Praise Service,

11:00 a.m. Traditional Service

5:00 p.m. Traditional Service no music.

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**  
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Place Label Here

*St. Paul's  
Episcopal Church*



*Walking Together in Faith*

*Regular Holy Eucharist Worship Schedule (Beginning Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>)*

*Sun., 9:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship with Praise Team*

*Sun., 9:05 a.m. Children's Sunday School*

*Sun., 11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship with Choir and Organ*

*Sun., 5:00 p.m. Traditional Worship No Music*

*Thur., 6:00 p.m. Healing Service with Holy Communion*