

The Epistle



ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Rev. Mike Margerum, Deacon

The Rev. Linda Smith, Deacon

February 2015

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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.

2015 Rector's Report



Annual Parish Meeting

January 25, 2015

As the Rector, it is my duty at the annual meeting to report on the spiritual health of the parish. For me this is a difficult task because it requires me to not only look at what happens within these walls, but it would require me to know what is in each of your hearts. Because humanity is so good at putting on masks and presenting a false or altered reality to the world, there is no way to know what truly resides in someone's heart. And if your heart is anything like mine, it seems to be in constant flux from where it really is, to where I really wish it would be. Such is the human heart and such is our spiritual health and relationship with Jesus.

None of us are perfect and I'm a strong believer that God does not expect perfection either. Because of this, we can only turn to our intent and our effort to begin to know our spiritual health. In my last parish I had a large group of people who felt like Sunday worship at church was their time; their personal time with God. As funny as it might sound, that group of people were not all that spiritually healthy. They weren't because they didn't understand the difference between a personal connection with God and a community (corporate) relationship with God. They were the ones who complained about children in church because the kids might make a noise and disturb their weekly connection of spiritual holiness.

When I sat down and talked with members of this group, what I found is that they had no spiritual practices during the week...they did not worship God on a daily basis. Their only connection, or attempt to connect with God,

was reserved to one hour on Sundays. This is not a healthy relationship with Jesus beyond these walls, and it contributes to an unhealthy relationship with God inside these walls too.

During the three months of my sabbatical I intentionally did not go to church on Sundays. I was in such a dire need to shed my priest stole and purge over 13 years' worth of holy stress that I did not go to church at all. My job during sabbatical was to stop thinking about St. Paul's, which meant I was to do my best to not think about its membership. This was hard...outside of my family my life revolves entirely around you. I knew if I went to worship somewhere I would begin to critique the worship service because it's really hard for me not to. So, if I went to worship somewhere it would draw my mind to community worship, and back to you and my role as your priest and Rector.

As I look back, there was a side effect that I did not expect. It caught me off guard and it's something I say to you almost every Sunday. Each Sunday I greet the congregation saying how thankful I am that you are here in worship because we are blessed when we choose to come together and share in fellowship with one another and share in the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments of the body and blood of Christ; that holy food and drink that nourishes us in a way like nothing else can and gives us the strength to make it through the coming week.

I needed to purge, but I was not here in my community being fed. Because I was not being fed by the sacredness of Sundays, my intentional daily connections began to slip away. This happened subtly and turned into a dark time in my relationship with the Divine. In the long run it gave me a personal and holy perspective of the importance of being together. I always knew it was vital, but I now

can preach it from my own experience, moving from the Light into the shadows and back into the Light.

Spiritual health requires a daily connection with God. This connection should be more than saying grace over meals, though it is always good to acknowledge before God our gratefulness for all the gifts in our lives, including food. The daily connection I'm talking about is something deeper. The liturgical theologians who put together The Book of Common Prayer expected each of us to say the daily office. If you don't know what that is, look in the Prayer Book you have at home. If you don't have one, come and see me and I'll check one out to you. The daily office does not make a connection with everyone, though I encourage everyone to give it a try.

There are many different ways to have an intentional daily connection with God, be it a book study, bible study, one of the many types of prayer and spiritual meditation, or acts of service to those in need. It is only after we have a healthy daily connection with God that we can then experience Sundays in the way they were intended; as community worship, not personal worship... As a time of holy diversity, not individual solitude.

When we have both a daily personal connection with God and a weekly communal relationship with God, things change. The way we experience God changes and the way we experience each other changes. The road to spiritual wellness is a journey and it's never too late to begin.

If you want help with your daily journey, we are here for you.

One of our leadership came to me the other day with a question of concern. I was asked why I thought our 2015 deficit was so high and

yet our attendance is up. This is a great question.

They wanted to know if people were dissatisfied with St. Paul's and if people were holding back their financial support. If the answer was yes, then this would certainly be a sign of being spiritually unhealthy. I have not seen any evidence of this, though there have been a few over the years who left St. Paul's seeking something different. But these were not unhealthy reactions, but prayerful decisions.

If there is unhappiness in me or the leadership of St. Paul's I am not hearing about it. I hope if there is a problem that you would have faith enough to come to me and talk about it. My office is a safe place. If coming to me is not an option, visit with the Sr. Warden or one of the other Vestry members. We need your input to help us know what is in your heart in order to bring reconciliation to whatever shadows may be lurking.

In a little bit we will hear our 2014 treasurer's report and be presented with the 2015 budget that the Vestry approved a couple of week ago. Though I can account for a portion of where the deficit comes from, I am baffled as to the relationship between the projected income and our average Sunday attendance.

Our average Sunday attendance is the highest it has been since 2005. This is exciting and without a doubt is a sign of a spiritually healthy congregation. The baffling part is that when attendance is the highest it has been in 9 years, our deficit is the highest it has ever been. Though I can't say having such a large deficit budget is at all healthy, what I can say is that the Vestry approved it in a healthy manner. There was much prayer, discernment, discussion, and more prayer. They did not react out of fear, but hope...and hope is healthy.

Over the last year and a half or so, we have been focused on living into being a church community where everyone not only feels that they belong, but that they know they belong.

Maybe this is why our attendance is growing.

Without forgetting that everyone belongs here, we are now shifting focus on three areas: Invite, Welcome, and Connect.

We as Christians, have to learn to invite people to come and experience what it is that we experience in Jesus, and share what it is that keeps us coming to St. Paul's. If your experience and relationship with God is growing, let's share that with others and invite people to join us on this journey. After we invite, we have to welcome. I think out of Invite, Welcome, and Connect, we do Welcome the best, but we have to learn new ways to welcome those who God sends us. After we Invite and Welcome, we have to Connect. After my sabbatical, I know firsthand the importance of connecting with a spiritual community and getting involved in an active life of faith. Connection is where the growth happens.

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to follow him and he will teach us how to fish for people. If we open our hearts to following Jesus we will not walk through our financial struggles in fear...we will walk together in unity, bound by hope and grace. Jesus is calling the individual disciples to join his community and we are called to do the same...to journey together with Jesus.

Without being able to see within your hearts, what I see is a healthy community. What I see within these walls is an active growing seven-day-a-week church; a building that is used every day of the week by either a ministry of St. Paul's, study groups, or by outside groups. I see new faces, young and old. I

experience meaningful worship that I believe is drawing us closer to God. And I experience a place of belonging.

I experience a sense of healthy imperfection that can only help us in the years to come as we stretch our diverse understandings of God through our calling to Invite, Welcome, and Connect. As we continue our walk in the life of Christ, may our hearts ever grow stronger.

The Rev. Kirk A. Woodliff



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
or by phone at (775) 424-3767.



Calling New Worship Ministers

Would you like to help our worship continue to be meaningful and holy? Come and join one or more of the following ministry teams:

Lectors: Read the Scriptures

Eucharistic Ministers: Help the clergy distribute Holy Communion during worship.

Ushers: Do a variety of things, including but not limited to providing a warm greeting, passing out bulletins, passing around the offering plates, and keeps the crowds moving.

Acolytes: Both adults and youth who assist the clergy during worship.

Contact Fr. Kirk at Kirk@StPaulsSparks.org or 358-4474 to arrange training.

IDM African Dinner

Save the date Saturday, March 28th.

More come to... (See Deb Stiver for details.)

Monthly Receipt Summary

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Sparks *Funding the Mission* January 2015



Those of you that were able to attend the Annual Meeting are aware that we had a successful year in 2014. Our receipts exceeded our expectations, and while expenses were modestly over budget, the growth there was less than our revenue increase. Plate and miscellaneous income were both up substantially. We did not achieve a balanced operating budget from our pledge and plate income, but were closer than we predicted.

The budget has been prepared and approved for 2015. We have much work to do in the coming year to make things work. We increased our number of pledges from 96 to 104, gained 16 new pledges, and had 27 increases, but the total pledge amount decreased leaving us with a large operating deficit. Much work to do. And I submit, we will with God's help.

Both the budget and the Annual Treasurer's report are available if you request one. Pick one up, or request a copy by email.

We will return to our regular format next month when we have results to 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)

Outreach Report



As you know, the Christmas Offering is being split between Shriner's Hospital for Children and our General Fund. A total of \$1,516.00 was collected with each receiving \$758.00. Other outreach includes \$500.00 to the Clergy Discretionary Fund, \$50.00 to the Prayers and Squares quilt ministry, \$100.00 to Youth Ministries for the Youth Blessing Bag project, \$401.31 to the Community Food Pantry, \$10.00 to LEAN, and Memorial Fund contributions for Barb Smith (\$120.00) and Jack Sweeney (\$100.00).

Patti Stine, Outreach Committee


"Hill Gang" Meeting

The "Hill Gang" is an informally structured men's fellowship group open to all male members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The "Hill Gang" holds "once-in-a-while" quarterly meetings.

The next meeting of the "Hill Gang" will be Wednesday evening, February 11th, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at Boulevard Pizza, 1076 North Rock Boulevard in Sparks. The meeting agenda is to have fellowship, eat, drink, lie and brag for about an hour and a half and then skittle on over to the Sparks Cinema Theater to view a thrilling, class "B" movie. You know, something along the lines of an action/adventure film that your wife, girlfriend, or significant other would rather not see.

For more information, please contact Steve Smith at 626-3307.

Pinterest Interest Group

Come join us in the parish hall on the first Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. for food, fellowship, and fun crafts! 

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

February in the Food Pantry



We welcome whatever items you are able to bring in. For example: canned goods; boxes of cereal, or personal care items.

Prayers of the People



Prayer Requests 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.

Jack, Forrest, Diane, Russ, Pat, Barbara, Larry, Rev. Karen, Anne, Sofia, Mickey, Shirley, Philip, Nancy, Nanette, Preston, Pattie, Julie, Jameson Walker, Richard, Karen, Sven, Gracie, Ralphie, Sharon, Jaemie, Mike E., Rev. Bill, Virginia, Ed, Vernice, Marilyn, Fiona, Robert, Kay, Brenda, Alex, Trudy, Lorrie, Dick, Harry, Maegan, Sam, Nicole, Dave, Stephany, Brett, George, Ashley, Lucy, Ella, Vic, Kerry, Peadear, Tara, Al, Jared, Michael, Dale, Clare's family, Jerry, Lynne, Guy, Jerie, Sherry, Gil, June, Daniel, Becky, Shelly, Margee, Sarah, Skip, Barbie, Robin and Chris.

Military: Andrew, Ryan, Jeffrey, Sierra, Owen, Brian, Lt. Col Bruce, Jordan, Evanne, Carl, Will, Alex & Suzanne.

Epistle Ecology Shorts

Last year's Walking the Way Stewardship said that "God's image is everywhere. We owe to God our thanks for the earth's abundance." Part of our stewardship is to connect with nature daily; to "be in relationship" with nature, not supermarkets! To be so connected with "man-made" instead of "God-made" is like heading in the wrong direction. How you can connect with the earth's abundance.

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 and with each other, and our growth in serving Christ in the world. Not sure about the EYC thing? Come give it a try! We invite you to come join us for food, fellowship and fun!

If you are new to St. Paul's we welcome you to join us. If you have any questions, please contact Tricia Woodliff at triciawoodliff@hotmail.com or Tia or Jon Mittelstadt at 775-722-3469 or by email at tia.mittel@gmail.com.

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 February:

February 1: Super Bowl Party at Tia and Jon's house at 3:30 PM Join us in cheering on

the Seahawks or the Patriots in the big game. Our address is 7405 Little Easy Court, Sparks (Wingfield Springs area). Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share. We will provide drinks and other goodies to munch on. Parents are welcome too!

February 8: Blessing Bag Delivery Day We will meet at the regular time and then carpool to downtown Reno to hand out the Blessing Bags that we put together. Afterwards, we will eat lunch at the church.

February 15: President's Day Weekend- No meeting. Enjoy time with your family!

Tuesday, February 17: Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner Youth Fundraiser This dinner is a fundraiser for the youth group so we need everyone to help! The dinner will be from 5:30 to 7:00 PM. Last year we served close to 100 people. Help is needed before, during and after the dinner. Youth and parents will be asked to help. We will have two shifts and will be contacting you soon!

February 22: Growing with God The group will be watching and discussing videos from the "Re: Form" series. These videos are like a combination of Monty Python and School House Rock as they teach us about the Bible in a fun way. Lunch will be served and games to follow.

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...

Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)



Watch this space in the Epistle each month for stories of gratitude and belonging. If you are ready to share, please contact Jon Mittelstadt (jon.mittel@gmail.com) or any member of the Vestry. We will thank you for your help! This month we are thankful Mary English shared some of the reasons she is so thankful for St. Paul's. Thanks Mary!

I have been a member of St. Paul's since my husband, two young sons and I moved to Sparks in Advent 1972. Being a lifelong Episcopalian, I went to a service at St. Paul's mainly to learn about the church school program. I smile when I look back on that. St. Paul's, under the direction of Kathleen Sweeney and support of the rector and entire congregation, had one of the best church schools I'd encountered. My husband had recently retired from the Marine Corps, and in the past we had attended several parishes where there had always been a "breaking in" period. That wasn't the case here. I don't remember feeling "new" and never not welcome. From the beginning our family was taken into the parish family. We were at home. I am ever grateful that our sons grew up at St. Paul's, participating in church school, choir, youth programs and all the family activities.

I am not a teacher, but within a couple years of our arriving, I was informed by Kathleen that I would be teaching church history to 5th graders. That was when I learned one did not say no to Kathleen, and I began preparing to teach. This opened a new vista for me which I still value. St. Paul's has always offered book

studies and classes and encouraged learning. I don't do well working in gardens or preparing food. Rather than being faulted for that, I was accepted as a learner and teacher. Sharing a theater background with Kathleen, she decided St. Paul's should do sanctuary drama. I spent many enriching years selecting and directing plays – fulfilling my love of theater.

One of the most remarkable things about St. Paul's is affording people an opportunity to do what they love and do best. We honor and affirm each other and celebrate diverse talents. I think that's one of the reasons people feel welcome.

Among the many things for which I'm thankful for St. Paul's are the solemn, respectful and joyous approach to worship, the awareness of the critical need to serve the community outside the parish, the encouragement and opportunity to use our talents and exercise our enthusiasms. And the people, who, of course, are the church. I think we are all grateful for being in the atmosphere of caring and concern that is St. Paul's.

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.

Civil Discourse in America: Finding Common Ground for the Greater Good

On Saturday, February 14 at 8:30 a.m., St. Catherine's, St. Paul's and Trinity Episcopal parishes will sponsor the showing of a groundbreaking forum on an important topic in our society: Civil Discourse in America: Finding Common Ground for the Greater Good. Civil discourse is defined on Wikipedia as engagement in conversation intended to enhance understanding. This forum will focus on the conversations we have with one another

in differing parts of our society today. Options and practices for having respectful, productive dialog, even when we differ with one another, will be discussed. Speakers include: Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Katharine Jefferts Schori; David Boardman, Dean of the School of Media and Communication at Temple University; Dr. John J. DeGioia, President of Georgetown University, Washington; Rabbi Steve Gutow, President and CEO of the Jewish Council on Public Affairs; Hugh Forrest, Director of the South by Southwest Interactive Festival; Dr. Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer, Executive Director of the National Institute on Civil Discourse; Dr. Elizabeth McCloskey, President and CEO of The Faith & Politics Institute; Bishop Prince Singh of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester. The presentation will be held at St. Pauls Episcopal Church, 1135 12th Street, Sparks, NV. The seminar begins at 8:30 am, with refreshments and registration. The forum will finish at 11:30 am. There is no charge for the seminar. All are welcome.

Sunday Lenten Book Study

Begins February 15th, 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

"Twelve and One-Half Keys to the Gates of Paradise" by Edward Hays. We will begin Feb 15th, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday in the Youth Room. This book is out of print. Fr. Kirk has 3 "Very Good" used copies for \$8.25 and 3 "Good" used copies for \$5.25 that are available to purchase on a first come first serve basis.

Taking Down the Banners: Feb 15th

The banners in the church will be taken down at 12:15 p.m. following the 11:00 service on Sunday, February 15th. If you would like to help out, please come. We are always looking to teach more people how it is done.

Funeral: Clare Engeseth

Saturday, February 21st at 1:00 p.m.

Do you have last years Palm Frond?

Did you take home a blessed palm frond from last years Palm Sunday service? If so, bring them to the church between now and Sunday, February 15th and they will be burned and used for the ashes on Ash Wednesday, February 18th.

Ash Wednesday Worship

February 18th, 12:10 p.m. & 5:30 p.m.

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Are You an Official Episcopalian?

If your answer is no... Do you feel connected and experience a sense of belonging here at St. Paul's Episcopal Church? If you have never been baptized or never officially become an Episcopalian, then I invite you to attend the Adult Journey Class and be officially welcomed into the Episcopal tradition of the Christian faith.

Adult Journey Class

Begins Sunday, Feb 22nd

This is 6 week class meets from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the Sunday's during Lent.

In the Adult Journey Class, you will explore what it means to be Confirmed, Received, or Baptized into this exciting and spiritual Christian tradition.

Confirmation: Confirmation is the affirmation of one's baptismal vows. It is a sacramental rite in which baptized persons make a mature commitment to Christ and receive strength through the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop. Confirmation is not required to become full members of Christ's Body; baptism takes care of that. But for those who were baptized at an early age they are expected, when mature and ready, to make a public affirmation of their faith.

Reception: Persons presented for Reception are those who have been baptized with water

in the name of the Trinity, have previously made an adult public affirmation of faith in any other Christian Tradition (either at their adult Baptism or on a separate occasion) and now desire to live their faith within the fellowship of the Episcopal Church.

Adult Baptism: Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God. The outward and visible sign in Baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God's family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit.

Already an Episcopalian?

Reaffirmation is the right path for you. Reaffirmation is suitable in a variety of situations for persons who have previously been Confirmed or Received. Have you returned to church after a period of being gone? Have you recently experienced some transition in your spiritual or church life that has changed your perspective of your faith in Christ? Was your Confirmation so long ago that it is time to reaffirm it? Were you so young that you don't feel you were mature at your Confirmation? I invite you to join the Adult Journey Class and Reaffirm your mature commitment to your faith in Christ.

Wednesday Lenten Soup and Study

Begins February 25th... eat at 5:30 p.m.

Mark your calendars to participate in the Wednesday Soup and Study during Lent. We eat at 5:30 p.m. and begin our study at 6:00 p.m. When we get a little closer there will be a sign up in the narthex (entry hall) for those who want to bring soups, bread, or a dessert.

Bishop Dan's 12th EPISTLE TO THE NEVADANS



THE 1ST NOBLE TRUTH MEETS THE 1ST MARK OF MISSION

I like Buddhism because it starts with the obvious. The 1st Noble Truth is Suffering. It doesn't say "life is suffering" or suffering is the foundation of anything. It just says there is suffering. We don't have to look far to find it. If we check our own lives, we are apt to find some unhappiness. If we look at our friends and families, we will find some unhappiness. If we look around the world at the poverty, the sickness, the war, the crime, the prejudice, the injustice - the list goes on - we see suffering.

There is a Buddhist story about a woman whose little boy had died, so she rushed in desperation to the guru to ask him to resurrect her son. He said, "Yes, I can do this. You need to do only one thing. Bring me a cup of rice from a home that has not been touched by sorrow." She rushed back to her village and went door to door. Everyone she met was ready and willing to give a cup of rice to save her son, but there was no home that had not been touched by sorrow. So she returned to the guru and told him she had learned the lesson he had meant to teach her. Suffering touches all of us.

I love Christianity because it has something helpful to say in response to Buddhism's 1st Noble Truth - the gospel - the good news, the excellent news, the tears of joy news of God's healing, liberating, transforming love signed, sealed, and delivered in the person of Jesus. An old gospel song says it straight out:

When nothing else could help

Love lifted me.

Sharing that good news with suffering people is The First Mark of Mission. To be clear, it is **The First Mark Of Mission**. To put a point on it, evangelism, sharing the good news of God's love is the Episcopal Church's **Number One Reason To Exist**. We get around to offering social services to the poor, advocating for justice, and saving the environment after that. First, **first, we proclaim the gospel**.

Yet, I often hear our people say they want no part of evangelism. They are in fact against it. And I believe them. The fact that our Church achieved a growth rate of zero (0) during a time when the population of our state doubled evidences how sincere we are about repudiating the First Mark Of Mission. One of our critics from another diocese compared our remarkable no-growth statistic to having "walked through a hurricane without getting wet."

So that we can actually discuss the issue: let's burn the straw man. No one is talking about offensive, arm-twisting sales pitches. No one is talking about manipulation and coercion. That is sales at its worst. It is not evangelism of any kind. We are talking about three simple steps:

Invitation --- Welcome --- Inclusion

Invitation is saying right out loud in an honest and attractive way: "we are here for you." There are a lot of ways to do that. Here are a few key steps:

Engagement with the Community - that could be through service like Communities in Schools, advocacy like Nevadans for the Common Good, having a float in a parade, or participating in a community cleanup project. To be inviting, a congregation must be in the game of civic life. What we do says who we are. What we fail to do says we are irrelevant.

Secular Events at Church - the people who need Jesus most are the ones who aren't going to come to Sunday worship. So host a concert, a poetry reading, a lecture, a square dance. Have something at the church that people who don't come to church will attend. It's your chance to make contact. Grace in the Desert has had great success with this. It isn't as helpful to advertise the not-so-surprising news that we worship on Sunday as it is to advertise a special event that will attract the secular minded. The event just happens to be in our church because we are the kind of church that appreciates what they appreciate. Connection.

Offer Programs that Help People - we do a decent job with the homeless and the imprisoned. But there are a lot of other folks out there who need help. Take the divorced. The recently divorced are one of the most likely groups to start attending church. But, to my knowledge, not one of our churches offers a divorce recovery group. People entering recovery from addictions are also likely to begin attending church. Fortunately several of our churches host 12 step groups, though we sometimes keep them at arms length. Offering your community what it needs starts with asking your community what it needs. St. Catherine's did that and formed a strong mentoring and supportive relationship with a local school and a low-income apartment complex. Asking what a community needs is different from offering what we feel like giving. It's about them. That's gospel.

Advertise - Is that a bad word? Think about Mother Joan's ads for St. Mark's, Tonopah. Go to our web site welcome page , click the audio clips, and have a 2-minute listen. Have you seen the billboard in Ely with a picture of Fr. Red and a young family? We don't advertise to get a pledge unit. We aren't selling anything. We advertise to share some gospel with people who need some gospel. It's a matter of spending a few dollars to show people who we are and that ought to be the Body of Christ in Nevada. It isn't that they see or hear an ad and post haste rush to church next Sunday. The ad just tells them that we're here so that if and when the time is right, they'll remember us as an option.

Websites and Social Media - If we intend to share a message with anyone under 60, this is where we do it. A congregation that is not actively using web sites and social media -- not for internal communications, but to say to outsiders "We Are Here For You" -- is effectively excluding young and even middle age adults. If you don't have anyone in the congregation who knows how to do these things - that is the case for several of our congregations - call the diocesan office. We will get you the help you need.

Welcome is making people feel at home after they respond to the invitation. This is the most crucial step in evangelism. Even if we don't invite people, the sheer force of suffering will drive some to our

door. What will we do with them? We are not doing nearly as well as we think. This is the main weakness responsible for our zero-growth record. So what goes into welcome? Again, a lot goes into it. These are a few biggies:

Be an attractive community. When visitors see us, they need to see Jesus. They need to feel God's love. Often they don't because the congregation is either fragmented by conflict or fused in a clique. These are two opposite ways to achieve the same result - exclusion. Our fighting congregations know they are fighting. They may not be aware that innocent visitors are being spiritually wounded in the crossfire. Our fused congregations call themselves friendly "caring families." Statistically, congregations that call themselves "caring families" are the least likely to grow and the most likely to decline. Those who visit caring family churches are often shut out and ignored. Neither a fragmented nor a fused congregation is capable of our number 1 mission. The most important step in evangelism is attending to the relationship patterns of the existing congregation. One way to do that is with a behavioral covenant. Canon Catherine led her Utah congregation in that process with great success. The outline for how to do it is in [Behavioral Covenants In Congregations](#) by Gilbert Rendle, but having someone from the outside facilitate the process helps a lot.

Greeters, Aids, & Lurkers - Having greeters, not just ushers handing out service bulletins, but someone trained to genuinely welcome people (not just visitors - welcome everyone "Good morning. Good to see you. I'm glad you're here.") is a game changer. St. John's, Glenbrook took steps to become an attractive congregation, put together a welcome pamphlet, and assigned greeters. Today, St. John's is a new place, a much happier place to walk into. Aids help new folks find their way through the liturgy. We can be hard to keep up with for folks who are not familiar with our liturgy. I have seen Harvard educated smart people walk out in frustration. The Greeter connects the Visitor with an Aid to help them find their way. A Lurker hangs out with the priest in the receiving line. If there is a Visitor, the Lurker gets their contact info so the priest and a layperson can follow up.

Follow up. The week after someone visits, they should receive a follow up. Ideally it should be a gift of some kind. My last congregation hand delivered homemade bread (we grew at the rate of 10% a year in a town that was declining in population and we were a decidedly minority denomination - but we grew 10% per year). Cookies would work. There ought to be at a minimum a phone call. The priest and a layperson both need to communicate that we were glad the person came, express the hope that they will come again, and offer to help if there is anything the person needs.

Focus on the visitor. This does not mean sell the visitor on how great we are. It does not mean tell the visitor all about ourselves. It absolutely does not mean recruit the visitor into anything. I have heard from new folks that people tried to put them on the altar guild their first Sunday visit!! "Focus on the visitor" means asking them about themselves, showing some interest in them, expressing hope for their well-being whether they join us or not. We need to show them that we are interested in them - not as marks but as people and that we wish them well. The heart of welcome is the spiritual practice of looking people in the eye, smiling, and of wishing them well.

Inclusion is making the new person a part of the group, easing their way from outside in. This takes time and may actually be subtler than Invitation and Welcome, but there are only two general steps.

Orientation Class. This is not the more substantial formation I hope we offer before Confirmation. It is a simple 30-minute intro to the Episcopal Church. We are different and people will not stick around to figure us out unless we give them a hint about who we are. In a small church, this may be a one on one with the priest. But in a larger congregation, it should be offered at least quarterly for newcomers. If only one or two come, that would be one or two. We fish. The angels count. Matthew 13: 47-50

Focus on the Newcomer. This does not mean recruiting the newcomer into one of the jobs none of us wants to do. It means getting to know them, helping them find their own place in their own time. It takes longer for some than for others. Instead of cramming them into some pre-existing job, figure out what they are good at and pin a badge on them to authorize them to do it.

But why do any of this?

One answer is: there are hurting people out there who will get to know Jesus through this soft form evangelism. I'll be a witness. That's how I met Jesus at St. Michael's, Boise way back in the 80s.

But what's in it for us?

There seems to be a natural human tendency to close doors. I rarely see our church doors completely open. We usually keep them half-closed, which is telling. Something in us wants to keep our group to ourselves, our church building to ourselves, our pew to ourselves. But here's the problem. None of that will ease our suffering. None of it will change our lives, give us a reason to get up in the morning, make us say, "YES" to the universe. Our friends and our church habits that we hoard are nice but they aren't rocking our world. The love of Jesus will. It will rock our world like nothing else. The catch is: we can't receive the love of Jesus without passing it on. *We don't get it until we share it.* If we aren't sharing the love of Jesus with the folks who need it, we can't experience it ourselves. What's in the First Mark Of Mission for us? Our happiness; our healing; our transformation; the meaning and value of our lives.

Less dramatically, but no less real, there's another thing. For a few decades now, I have been welcoming into the Church people who need some gospel. Here's the surprise. They always, always, without exception, bring some gospel with them - gospel I needed to hear or gospel other people in the congregation needed to hear. There are wanderers out there who will bless us more than we can bless them. All it takes is invitation, welcome, and inclusion to make our world a more interesting and gracious home.

Blessing Always,

Bishop Dan

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Tuesday, February 17

5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church



Menu

Pancakes

Bacon

Sausage

Eggs

Orange Juice and Coffee

Suggested donation of \$5 per person

Or \$15 per family

Proceeds will go towards EYC activities and programs.

Coming Events



February 2015

Sunday	Feb. 1, 2015	EYC Super Bowl Party (look on page 6 for details)	
Monday	Feb. 2, 2015	Pinterest Interest Group	6:00 pm
Saturday	Feb. 7, 2015	Daughters of the King	10:00 am
Monday	Feb. 9, 2015	Vestry Meeting	6:00 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 11, 2015	“Hill Gang” Meeting (Held @ Blvd. Pizza)	6:00 pm
Saturday	Feb. 14, 2015	Civil Discourse in America:	8:30 am
		Finding Common Ground for the Greater Good	
Saturday	Feb. 14, 2015	Prayers & Squares	9:00 am
Sunday	Feb 15, 2015	Taking Down the Church Banners	12:15 pm
Sunday	Feb 15, 2015	Sunday Lenten Book Study Begins	3:00 pm
Thursday	Feb. 17, 2015	Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	5:30 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 18, 2015	Ash Wednesday Service	12:05 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 18, 2015	Ash Wednesday Service	5:30 pm
Thursday	Feb. 19, 2015	Stations of the Cross	5:30 pm
Saturday	Feb. 21, 2015	Daughters of the King	10:00 am
Saturday	Feb. 21, 2015	Funeral: Clare Engeseth	1:00 pm
Sunday	Feb 22, 2015	Adult Journey Class	12:30 pm
Sunday	Feb 22, 2015	Sunday Lenten Book Study	3:00 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 25, 2015	Epistle Deadline	12:00 pm
Wednesday	Feb. 25, 2015	Lenten Soup & Study	Eat at 5:30 pm study at 6:00 pm
Thursday	Feb. 26, 2015	Stations of the Cross	5:30 pm

Recurring Events

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

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 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 Thursday Evening 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

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Place Label Here

St. Paul's
Episcopal Church



Walking Together in Faith

- Sun., 9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Contemporary*
Sun., 9:05 a.m. Children's Sunday School
Sun., 11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Traditional
Sun., 5:00 p.m. Traditional Holy Eucharistic, No Music
Thur., 6:00 p.m. Healing Service with Holy Communion