

Vestry Retreat 2-4-2023

Attending: Teresa Guzman, Marck Morman, Kevin Lee, Cecilia Midzi, Valerie Curry, Ted Ruchalski, Erica Harris, Marlaina Woodward, Jennifer Khaleel, Martha Cuenca, and Bernadette Matthews. Also attending were Fr Fabio Sotelo, Canon John Thompson-Quartey, Nicole Harrison, Mary Lu Rogers.

Absent: Brenda Tamba-Dahn.

Opened by Canon John at 9:22 am with an introduction to Bible study as “Dwelling in the Word.” The scripture chosen was from Acts 2. On first reading, note what captures your imagination. On second reading, note what you would want to ask the author. On third reading, ask what the Holy Spirit is nudging you to do or change. The group divided in pairs to discuss these questions, with each reporting his/her partner’s answers to the group, making this also an exercise in listening.

What stood out in the reports was interest in the first recorded Christian community, what that experience was like with signs and wonders, and with their generosity among the community. Many wanted to know more about the signs and wonders, and many wanted to know how the holding of everything in common worked and how much time they spent together.

Introductions followed around the table. The group was then divided into small groups as prayer partners. The groups were asked to pick a bird name (assignment during lunch) and to pray for each other every day. Each group is asked to add Fr Fabio and Mother Karen to their prayers also.

Group 1: Jennifer, Valerie, Kevin, Nicole (Cardinals)

Group 2: Cecilia, Marck, Marlaina (Sparrows)

Group 3: Martha, Erica, Ted (Sandpipers)

Group 4: Teresa, Brenda, Mary Lu, Bernadette

These groups are also useful to break into for discussion of topics that will require a vote effecting the whole church.

The canons say of vestry members that they are agents and legal representatives, ensure standard business practices, are the ecclesiastical authority in absence of rector, and identify and nominating leaders for holy orders. (The diocese is looking for 50 deacons.) So the role of the vestry member is ongoing discernment and formation, setting the vision for the church, identifying new leadership, and managing the resources and finances of the congregation. Identifying new leadership includes settled vestry nomination and election processes and identifying and referring candidates for ordination. The stewardship of the church resources includes fiduciary responsibilities, growing financial resources, and issues of liability.

The best way for the vestry to work is to establish norms for your team. Norms are the rules we agree to live by in a community. These include respect, sharing, listening, good communication, representing the community, starting and ending on

time, confidentiality, and speaking with one voice. Get small groups to compile lists of what is needed in a "Rule of Life" and let the clerk compile the lists and return it to the vestry for consideration. The practices of discipleship include attending worship weekly, regular prayer (including individual needs shared with prayer group), study, and service, maintaining a financial commitment to the parish and the practice of generosity in time, talent, and treasure.

What are the core values that identify St. Edward's? Stories of faith were shared with partners who then told each other's stories to the group. This is evangelism, sharing the presence of God in our lives. What defines St. Edward's here are inclusivity, diversity, a community of faith, joyful, a loving and warm community, a family, lots of food and feeding of people. These are the things that make our hearts sing. According to Frederick Buechner, vocation is: "The place where God calls you is where your deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger."

Prayer followed by lunch break.

Mission is your why, what your congregation is called to do. Our mission statement reads "In our rich Episcopal tradition, embracing diversity of cultures and languages, we empower discipleship to Christ through worship, formation, and service."

Everything we do as a church comes from this. Aligning with Family Promise was a bold move. Opening Promise Haven was a good step into that intersection of gladness and hunger.

As to our Strategic Plan, we are working on it monthly. Tools include what we have already written and the information available from Mapdash with help from Sally Ulrey at the Diocese.

Here ended the retreat presentation by Canon John.

Submitted by Mary Lu Rogers, Clerk, on 2-4-2023