



LOGOS

The Newsletter for St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington

"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" John 1:5

November 2013

2013 Parish Goals Assessment

At the end of 2012, St. John's went through a process of determining clear, understandable, and measurable goals for the parish direction. The following is an assessment of our progress on meeting those goals during this year prepared by the vestry and rector.

Goal A Family Programs: Enhance family programs to support our children and youth and to draw in new families.

1. In the next 6 months, expand the involvement of our members in family programs.

Assessment: There was a small expansion over this year in the number of parishioners participating directly in Family Programs. Two became involved as mentors for Confirmation; two more joined the 10 who had worked before with Vacation Bible School (VBS). Also to be noted: A neighborhood mother has helped with Children's Chapel and another neighborhood couple with VBS.

2. Attract at least three new families to take part in family programs over the next year.

Assessment: Thanks to Beth's efforts, three neighborhood families send their children to and participate in Family Programs (including Sunday School and Vacation Bible School); however, it is not yet on a regular basis. The McCartneys have returned from Hawaii and their two boys are now participating. In addition, the Hubbards have joined as members and have had their twins baptized here.

3. Recognize community families participating in St. John's activities through a program of formal thanks and welcoming.

Assessment: Beth and Ann thank (and welcome) those participating by word, notes and/or e-mail, but there has been nothing that could be called a formal program. The children and youth are acknowledged during worship services.

Goal B **Outreach:** Provide focus for and expand outreach activity.

1. Commit to and undertake a new or expanded outreach activity in 2013.

Assessment: The new program of bagging produce and dry goods at AFAC has attracted 12 regular and 10 occasional participants, including one participant from the neighborhood. Two members who do not attend worship regularly have participated in AFAC bagging.

2. Continue current outreach activities, such as donating to AFAC and lunches for the Bailey's Crossroads Homeless Shelter.

Assessment: Our current outreach activities continued, primarily thanks to the youth.

3. Review past successful community social activities to determine if they could be revived and provide outreach to the surrounding communities.

Assessment: The only activity undertaken here was the Friendship Sunday, reinterpreted as Friends and Family Sunday. It drew in adults and children, members and non-members, in an enjoyable celebration that a number of those attending said they would like to see repeated. One non-member from the neighborhood signed up to work at AFAC in response to the literature available.

This objective might have been more accurately placed elsewhere, perhaps under Parish Growth, since the rest of Goal B deals with serving the needy, quite different from social outreach to the community.

Goal C **Worship:** Further enliven worship to uplift our spiritual lives.

1. Explore worship approaches and music that produce greater congregational participation and more enthusiastic singing.

Assessment: Wonder, Love and Praise and Lift Every Voice and Sing are generally used at every service now and efforts continue to find music that encourages faster paced singing. More use of the piano is also picking up the pace a bit. Ann is looking into using alternatives such as the *New Zealand Book of Common Prayer* for some of our services. The "yardstick" for this goal is vague and it is difficult to measure progress.

Goal D **Parish Growth:** Attract new members and reach out to inactive, prior, and homebound members.

1. Contact all inactive and prior members to invite them to participate again.

Assessment: Members who were contacted were primarily those living in the area who are still listed as members but participate infrequently or not at all—probably about 10 people in total. Those contacted generally expressed pleasure at hearing from St. John's again, but none has increased his or her participation.

2. Request each parishioner invite one other person to share in our worship or a parish activity.

Assessment: The only organized activity undertaken here was the Friends and Family Sunday. Each parishioner was encouraged to invite at least one other person to

participate. It drew in adults and children, members and non-members, with a number of those attending saying they would like to see it repeated.

3. Increase average Sunday attendance by 10 percent in 2013.

Assessment: By mid-October our average Sunday attendance had increased by about 5 percent over 2012's year-end total. Average Sunday attendance was helped in particular by the return of the McCartneys and the addition of the Hubbards and Sandy Winger. We also had attendance bumps provided by Friends and Family Sunday and the Hubbard baptism.

4. Assure that elderly and shut-in parishioners are provided the opportunity to be visited at least on a biweekly basis.

Assessment: Ann on her own meets this goal for the community. Monica, Faye, and EFM provide extra in caring for Betty.

Goal E Communications: Improve parish communications.

1. Implement a communications strategy in the first 3 months of 2013 that will better inform both prospective and current members about the parish and its activities. This strategy would include the Web site, Logos, weekly e-mails, press releases, and advertising.

Assessment: The efforts in support of the communications goals have focused on improving the presentation and content of our communications through all of the channels used to reach current and prospective members.

The new website was launched in mid-December 2012 with limited content. During 2013, we have expanded and enhanced the site through additional material, photos of events and graphics to provide a compelling description of St. John's and its programs and activities. This has attracted prospective members as well as provided current members information on what is happening.

In support of the Friends and Family Sunday, we developed a brochure for prospective members, which included descriptions of our programs and photos.

We updated the LOGOS both in layout and organization to increase the emphasis on the people and programs of St. John's.

We began using a new service for St. John's Weekly Email Updates to resolve email delivery issues and to allow for better presentation of the content, both on computer and mobile devices. We also are structuring the content in those emails to aid the reader.

We are continuing the use of press releases in the Arlington media as well as limited advertising in three local community newsletters. In the latter, we are focusing more on attracting prospective members to specific activities and events. We are also continuing the use of signage at St. John's for upcoming events.

We have updated our internal events calendar to incorporate the various communications channels which will be used for each event to assist in ensuring all know what needs to be done well in advance.

Shrine Mont Weekend Retreat

We came in all ages to our retreat weekend – from those in their 60s and 70s to teenagers and one 10-year-old – and we even came from three separate Episcopal churches. But from October 4 through 6 all fourteen of us were tied together in one community at Shrine Mont.



Making Crosses

From St. John's there were Lynn Robinson, Linda Trochim, Kay Wells, Sandy Winger, Bill and Faye Pritchard, our rector Ann Barker, and Diane Henderson and her teenaged daughter Galen (who brought her friend Kayla as well). Sandy had carpooled with Richard Henry from St. Paul's. Barbara Wien, who attends St. Stephen and the Incarnation in DC, but joins us from time to time at services or for special occasions, joined us again for this retreat weekend and brought her teenaged son Vladi and her 10-year-old daughter Nora.

We prayed together, sang together, ate plentiful country food together, shared conversations, and built a campfire and made s'mores together. Many of us, including all of the younger generation, joined in a workshop where we built crosses from seeds, sticks, and other natural objects found at Shrine Mont and then shared the meanings those crosses held for us.



Dancing the night away!

On Saturday evening our community expanded as many of us joined members of Grace and Holy Trinity from Richmond and their college-aged youth group

(from Virginia Commonwealth University/VCU) in what was advertised as a "square dance;" however, it included not just square dancing but everything from the hokey pokey and the bunny hop to the electric slide and whatever it is the college kids are dancing today. That same evening several members of Grace and Holy Trinity and some of the VCU youth joined in conversation and s'mores around our campfire.

On Sunday morning we joined Grace and Holy Trinity again, this time in celebration of the Eucharist at the outdoor Shrine. Ann celebrated, the Rev. Michael Caderet from Grace and Holy Trinity gave the sermon, and several of their guitarists led the singing.

We took time to do our own things, too, separately and in small groups—sitting in a rocking chair reading; walking the labyrinth; browsing the bookstore; tackling one of those impossible many-pieced puzzles in groups of two and three; playing a bean-bag game set up by Shrine Mont staff; hiking; taking a side-trip into Mt. Jackson; or singing along to Galen's guitar.

Unfortunately, the stink bugs decided to join us, too. They invaded Galen and Kayla's room and the girls decided to move to another room. Stink bugs invaded Nora and Barbara's room, too, although in fewer numbers. They decided they could stay put. No one seems to be permanently fazed.

See you next year!



The Eucharist service at the Shrine

From the Rector: Seeing in the Dark

The last time it rained hard, I had to go check the drain in front of my basement door. Though I have covered it with a basket to prevent large leaves from blocking it, the small ones get in the holes and eventually cover it up. I was already dressed for bed when the rain started coming down, so I put on my winter coat and my water shoes, got a flashlight and crept down the back porch stairs to see what was happening. With the flashlight I could see just far enough ahead of me to take a single step. Fortunately, the drain was working fine and I crept back up the stairs to bed.

I took that same flashlight to Shrine Mont, where I had to go into a dark kitchen in a dark corner to make my bedtime snack. Once again, the light provided just enough illumination for me to handle one small task at a time. It took me a while, but I finally got the snack made and was able to take it back to my room to eat.

November is the month that we go back on Eastern Standard Time. It is still dark in the morning, but it gets dark much earlier at night. I find myself in the dark more often when I get home, especially because I have not remembered to turn the porch light on and do not have a light that comes on in my car when I open my door. (I have to get that fixed.) Fortunately, I have gotten used to making the trek to my door and finding my house key in the dark.

The dark is difficult for all of us to cope with. We like to know what is coming in front of us and what is going on around us.

The Christian journey is taken in the dark too. Brother Geoffrey Tristram of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) says that one of the most difficult things he finds as a Christian is that he can't see very far ahead. "Walking by faith is a bit like walking around the house at night with just a candle. At first it is quite fun – but it soon gets frustrating. The candle only lights up a small area

around it – just enough to go forward – but most of the room is still in darkness."

I find Brother Geoffrey's comments to be quite true. The Christian journey is one that cannot be hurried, but must be taken at a slow pace – the pace God wants us to go. God wants us to trust God, not just to have head faith, but to have heart faith. We can't know where the road will lead, but we know God is walking it with us and we can trust that candle's direction.

One of the reasons God wants us to move forward at a very slow pace is so we can experience the "now" of God's presence in the journey. God does not want us to run forward, looking frantically for God, when God is present with us now. Brother Curtis Almquist (SSJE) says that getting ahead of ourselves in life is like cutting in line. "We need the present to prepare us for the prospect of the future. We actually need now. If we don't find life now, life will always elude us."

One of the ways to find life (and therefore God) now is to look around and see who God has placed us among in this part of our journey. God is in them speaking to us in love. We are called by our baptismal vows to treat them with love and kindness. We are also called by those same vows to serve those less fortunate than we are as we find them around us. If we are running into the future, we cannot see the needs in front of us, illumined by the candlelight.

It is all right for us to be mainly in the dark about our journey. In that flickering candle flame, we can look inside ourselves and find the God that waits for us, the Holy Spirit that helps us discern the next step to take, our loving Lord who abides with us forever and our Creator God that has plans to give us a future and a hope as we walk along the road toward union with the One who loves us more than words can say.

Ann †

Words on Hymns

On November 24 we will be singing for the recessional one of the most compelling hymns in our hymnals: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”. While perhaps not entirely up-to-date with current theological thinking with its references to “our ancient foe” and “the prince of darkness grim”, the images are powerful and the message is one of a firm knowledge in God’s protection and salvation. Coupled with this text is Martin Luther’s melody



Luther in 1533 by Lucas Cranach the Elder. “Music is the art of the prophets, the only art that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.”

greatest man of the greatest period of German history”. It has been translated into English from the original German at least seventy times, as well as into other languages.

and J.S. Bach’s majestic harmonization.

Luther wrote the melody and the text sometime between 1527 and 1529. It has been called the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation" for the effect it had in increasing the support for the Reformers' cause, and “the greatest hymn of the

Tradition states that the third Protestant King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, had it played as his forces went to battle in the Thirty Years' War. In the late 19th century the song also became an anthem of the early Swedish socialist movement. The most popular English version and the one in our 1982 Hymnal, is “A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing,” and was translated by Frederick H. Hedge in 1853.

As well as translating the Bible into German, Luther was a prolific hymn-writer. There are at least 37 extant hymns that Luther authored, either the text or the text and the melody. Unlike some other hymns which come down to us from hundreds of years, Luther’s melodies are not borrowed from drinking songs or love songs (as was the tune for “O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded”). Among Luther’s hymns which are still part of our repertoire is the Easter hymn “Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands”.

Luther wrote extensively about the importance of music and art in worship. He is responsible for restoring the practice of congregational singing, which flourished in the Lutheran church under German composers such as Bach, Handel, Buxtehude and Pachelbel. We owe Martin Luther and his Lutheran followers a debt of gratitude for their contributions to our church’s musical life today.

Carol Dunlap

Coming Up

- Adult Education will be finishing its discussions of the Holy Spirit in November. In December, we will do either an Advent study or a study of unnamed heroes and heroines in the Bible. Other topics under consideration are books called *Saving Salvation* by Stephen Smith and *Forgiven and Forgiving* by William Countryman.
- The Book Club will meet on November 5 to discuss *The Shoemaker's Wife* by Adrianna Trigiani. On December 2 the Book Club hold its December meeting to discuss *Still Life* by Louise Penny.

Thank you, AFAC Workers!

Our thanks go to the over twenty members of St. John's and neighborhood residents who have pitched in to bag produce and staples (like oatmeal and black beans) at the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) for persons in need. Thank you, all of you.

Our roster of volunteers is never full. If you are interested in joining in please sign up at church or let Faye Pritchard know of your interest.

We have a regularly scheduled packaging session on the second Friday of each even-numbered month. We would like to have a large-enough team signed up to guarantee we have at least ten volunteers each time. We also schedule

one-time sessions to accommodate volunteers who may not be able to make the regularly scheduled session. So sign up – we definitely will be able to use your help.

We thank those who have already helped or signed up for future sessions: The Reverend Ann Barker, Debbie Carter and son Rob, Lynn Christopher and Bill Schenck, Carolyn Corlett, Carol and Dave Dunlap, Carole and Del Hunt, Billie Jean Keith, Kelly Krug, Monica Lozano, Roger Ludwig, Barbara and Pete Olivere, Stacy, Ray, and Caitlin O'Connor, Bill and Faye Pritchard. Lynn Robinson, Kay Wells and Sandy Winger.

Please Add Your Name and Join Us!

Parish News

We thank all who have their time and energy to St. John's this month, especially:

- Kay Wells, for all her hard work in preparing the *LOGOS* mailings each month and her work on the Annual Giving Brochure mailing
- Lenore Schmidt for cleaning up and painting the far wall of the undercroft, which had suffered some water damage
- Beth Cavey, Lenore Schmidt, Carrie Harbin and all the others who helped with apple picking and making the yummy apple treats for our Oct. 20 Family Sunday
- Debbie Carter, who served as the chairperson for our annual giving campaign
- Debbie Carter, John Restall, Dave Dunlap, John Petrich, Eileen Tallent and Kaipo McCartney who spoke about what St. John's means to them during our annual giving moments at announcements
- All the people of St. John's who pledged their treasure to our ministries to help change and save lives

October 2013 Vestry Highlights

The vestry is considering how St. John's could look further into strengthening and growing the parish in 2014 – including a look at the demographics and needs of the surrounding communities, exploring opportunities for cooperative activities with other churches, and assessing St. John's assets and resources to see how they might be used to strengthen the parish financially and to meet community needs. The

vestry may develop a recommendation for the annual meeting.

The vestry declined to use last year's goal-setting process to set goals for 2014.

The vestry advised the Finance Committee to use the amount pledged in 2013 in drawing up the draft budget for 2014. The vestry has also indicated that preference should be given to Family Programs wherever additional funding might become available.

St. John's Holds Animal Blessing

Rector Ann Barker hurried home from Shrinemont on October 6 for St. John's annual blessing of the animals. This service usually is held on the Sunday after St. Francis Day on October 4 because St. Francis was said to be so gentle with animals that they were unafraid of him.

We had a good turnout this year. Ann blessed seven cats and several dogs. We prayed for health and long lives and obedience and good companionship. The dogs had a good time playing with each other – which meant the cats were blessed from afar using pictures!



The whole Robertson family likes their dog.



These collies were *very* well behaved.



St. John's members at the Shrinemont retreat.