



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL NEWS

July 2015

St. John's Episcopal Church is a diverse, welcoming Christian family. We are committed to using our God-given talents to continually grow and improve in our desire to worship, spread God's love, and minister throughout our communities.

Services

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist / Morning Prayer
9:15 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist (with music)
5:45 p.m. Holy Eucharist
(Alternating Wednesdays)



FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

I want to share an article with you on the future of the Church. It was written by Matt Marino, and posted recently in his blog, thegospelside.com.

The Future of the Episcopal Church: Being "poised for growth" is not growth

Old joke: "What do you call a leader with no followers?" Punchline: "Someone taking a walk."

With General Convention just around the corner there is much talk in Episcopal clergy circles of internal restructuring schemes for our national church office. Interestingly, no one outside our tribe has ever asked me about our "structure issue." When I speak with other clergy they ask about another issue: "What are you guys doing about your leadership issue?" They see us as having a pressing problem that most of us do not seem to be able to see: *A significant number of our "leaders" don't have many followers.*

The numerical decline of the American mainline has left the offices of the historic denominations in a state of continual "restructuring" (a.k.a. "downsizing"). These efforts cost piles of money, take years to enact, and generally leave us with more of the ineffective same. There is a reality instinctively understood by independent churches: churches are neither planted nor grown from *national* headquarters but by *local* leaders and their *local* followers. Church planters know the leadership equation:

Talent + Preparation + Opportunity + Expectations + Effort = Results

Or as Scott Haas the planter of Substance, a Minneapolis church exploding with millennial generation parishioners says, "The right person, at the right time, in the right location, with the right methods, with the right inner circle of leaders, equals success."

Our results stare us in the face: In numeric decline for thirty years, we are now in numeric freefall. Episcopal churches have lost *a quarter of our Sunday attendance over the past decade*: from 823,000 per week in 2003, to 623,000 per week in 2013.* And, lest you believe the rhetoric our decline has bottomed out,** in 2013, the last year we have statistics for, the decline was 2.6%, an increase over the 10 year average of 2.4%. Conclusion, we have shrunk, are shrinking, and the rate of our decline is accelerating. To make matters worse, this summer our General Convention will contemplate new rounds of canonical and prayer book revisions that threaten to marginalize whole

(Continued on Page 2)

Rector

Fr. Doug Lasiter
dnlasiter@comcast.net
832-444-8153

Vestry

Mary Katherine
Blackburn
(Senior Warden)

Mike Strausser
(Junior Warden)

David Cassard
(Cemetery Warden)

Tucker Handley
(Clerk)

Jessica Guidry
Mickey Guillory
Sue Herpel
Gloria Hunter
Fred Sollars

Parish Treasurer

Sue Herpel

ECW President

Betty Duplantis

Organist

LaDonna Alexander

Secretary

Chris Robichaux

stjohnoffice@bellsouth.net
985-447-2910

(Continued from Page 1)

groups of parishioners, threatening yet another slow trickle from our churches. And, as if we have not had enough bad news, we are about to enter what church statistician Lovett Weems calls “the tsunami of death” as our builder generation attendance core become, paraphrasing St. Paul, “absent in the body to be at home with the Lord” over the next decade.

So, if our results do not “equal success,” where in the equation are we falling short? Is it the right people? The right location? The right methods? Or the right inner circle? Because our leaders have been telling us for a decade that the Episcopal Church is “poised for growth.”

And, although the first half of this post might seem to indicate otherwise, I actually believe them. I do believe that with our inner-city locations, historic buildings, broadly creedal ancient-future faith, communities shaped in daily immersion in the scriptures and weekly sacramental worship, our willingness to form communities that help one another strive for personal holiness with grace toward others, of agreeing to pray together rather than agreeing to sign the same doctrinal statements, that **we really are poised for growth.**

You should know, however, that I myself was once poised. I was a freshman in high school. It was in the swimming unit of second hour Physical Ed. I was poised on the end of the high dive. Every sinew of my skinny body twitched in readiness to propel myself off that board. However, fear won out over the desire to impress the girls below. Fear and the awareness that I did not know how to dive – I lacked diving talent and preparation. So I turned around and slunk down the steps of the board to the jeers of my pre-sensitivity era friends. The point: Being “poised” to do something doesn’t get it done. One still needs talent + preparation + expectations + effort in order to go get the results that *opportunity* leaves us “poised” to achieve.

Will we Seize Our Episcopal Moment?

Will we turn it around? As “The seed that grows on its own” parable (Mark 4:26-29) taught us this past Sunday, the kingdom *will* keep growing. Last year, for instance, the Sunday attendance of 10 American churches grew by 2000 people or more. But we will only reap the harvest into *our* churches if we cast the seeds of the Word of God and wield the sickle to bring in the harvest. We will have to overcome our hesitation at using the God-given tools of evangelism and discipleship if we are to bring in the harvest God has prepared. The kingdom is growing. God sees to that. But I see a potential pitfall in our (much needed) restructuring efforts: That of staying in the shed “sharpening” the tools to create what has been referred to as a “leaner, meaner, more responsive instrument.” But then never using it.

Will we seize our Episcopal moment and join God’s harvest? Or will we leave it to others?

Pastoral and Communion Visits to Parishioners

We began regular pastoral visits to homebound members of St. John’s in April. Please contact the office at stjohnoffice@bellsouth.net or 985-447-2910 to give Fr. Doug contact information to schedule a visit. We are also beginning Communion visits on Sundays. All visits can be scheduled through the office Tuesday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to noon, or you can leave a message on the phone if you call outside of office hours. The email and telephone messages are checked daily. Please note: In the event of pastoral emergencies, and you need a priest while Fr. Doug is on vacation (July 12-25, 2015), Senior Warden Mary Katherine Blackburn can be contacted directly. You can call the office during office hours and we will be glad to help.

Is the sign of the cross “too Roman Catholic” for Protestants?

In Joel J. Miller's blog, *"Theology That Sticks"*, he reflects on the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, for an answer to this question.

Reading *Letters and Papers from Prison*, I was surprised to discover Dietrich Bonhoeffer used the sign of the cross in his daily prayers. "I've found that following Luther's instruction to 'make the sign of the cross' at our morning and evening prayers is . . . most useful," he said in one letter. "There is something objective about it. . . ."

Growing up evangelical, I always understood signing oneself to be empty superstition. It was something Catholics did, not Protestants. And yet here's a famous Protestant pastor and theologian comforting himself with the sign while imprisoned. Not to mention Martin Luther instructing every Lutheran since his own day to "bless yourself with the holy cross," as he says in his Small Catechism. Owing to my ignorance, this was also a surprise. But in fact the German Reformer directed the sign's use not only for morning and evening prayer, but also for baptisms and ordinations.

Adding to my curiosity, in the same letter Bonhoeffer cautioned, "[D]on't suppose we go in very much for symbolism here!" And also said this: "[M]y fear and distrust of religiosity have become greater than ever here." According to my upbringing, the sign of the cross was *nothing but* symbolism and religiosity. Yet Bonhoeffer signs himself. Why?

Spirituality is physical

To begin with, signing oneself is more than mere symbolism. It is, as Bonhoeffer said, "objective." There is something tangible and actual about tracing the points of the cross over one's body. It goes back to something covered in C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*. Christians, the senior demon informs the junior, "can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers, for they constantly forget . . . that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls."

What we do physically affects us spiritually. Whether it's lowering our gaze, raising our hands, bending our knee, or crossing ourselves, physical actions have a qualitative, spiritual effect.

Next, signing oneself is more than mere religiosity. It's communion with God. At bottom, the act of faithfully signing the cross is an act of prayer, one that is physical, a remembrance, a benediction, a collect that gathers every trial, worry, and fear and consigns it to the care of Christ. It can also be used to express gratitude at a meal, joy at a blessed occurrence, repentance in a moment of sin, resistance in a moment of temptation, and faith when undertaking any task (with emphasis on *any*).

It's always been this way in the church. "At every forward step and movement," Tertullian wrote in the year 204, "at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign [of the cross]."

Declaring our true identity

This is not some superstitious innovation of the Middle Ages or the empty religiosity Bonhoeffer opposed. It's a foundational aspect of Christian identity. Making the sign of the cross says to yourself (and anyone watching) that you belong to Jesus, that you belong to God. When faced with temptation, wrestling with a bad attitude, or feeling grateful for the mercies of God, is there anything better?

Identifying as Christian by using the sign of the cross is a physical and demonstrative way to communicate our reliance on God and our identity in Christ.

Today I make the sign of the cross when I pray, when I'm tempted, when I drive, when I walk, when I'm thankful, when I face something horrible or difficult. It didn't come naturally at first. I felt very self-aware and hesitant. But the more I did it, the more I came to cherish—even need—to cross myself. For any believer, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, such a confession is the furthest thing from superstition. It's a helpful step toward serious devotion.

Christ bore the cross for every needful thing in our lives, and we demonstrably acknowledge as much in its sign. Bonhoeffer said the sign of the cross was objective, "and that is what is particularly badly needed here."

And here, too.

<http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/joeljmiller/bonhoeffer-sign-of-the-cross/>, June 2015.

St. John's Calendar

Call or email the office
to schedule activities at the church or parish hall.
985-447-2910 or stjohndoffice@bellsouth.net

July 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
June 28 8a Eucharist 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Eucharist 11:30 Hospitality	29 6p AA subgroup 7p CODA	30 6:30p Bible Study 7p AA	July 1 5:45p Evening Service 6:30p Choir Practice	2 7p AA	3	4 Independence Day 5p GRACE LUTHERAN
5 8a Eucharist 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Eucharist 11:30 Hospitality	6 6p AA subgroup 7p CODA	7 6:30p Bible Study 7p AA	8 6:30p Choir Practice	9 7p AA	10	11 5p GRACE LUTHERAN
12 8a Eucharist 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Eucharist 11:30 Hospitality 11:30: ECW Mtg VESTRY AGENDA DUE	13 6p AA subgroup 7p CODA	14 6:30p Bible Study 7p AA	15 5:45p Evening Service 6:30p Choir Practice	16 6p VESTRY MTG 7p AA	17	18 5p GRACE LUTHERAN
19 8a Eucharist 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Eucharist 11:30 Hospitality	20 6p AA subgroup 7p CODA	21 6:30p Bible Study 7p AA	22 6:30p Choir Practice	23 7p AA	24	25 Horgan Hall Reserved (private party) 5p GRACE LUTHERAN
26 8a Eucharist 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Eucharist 11:30 Hospitality	27 6p AA subgroup 7p CODA	28 6:30p Bible Study 7p AA	29 5:45p Evening Service 6:30p Choir Practice	30 7p AA	31	August 1 5p GRACE LUTHERAN

Fr. Doug's Thibodaux Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 9am to 4pm.
Church Office Hours: Tuesday through Thursday, from 9am to noon.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Bobby Marcello (7/8)
Lesley Marcello (7/17)
Chelsea Rivero (7/17)
Elijah Mejia (7/20)
Peggy Baumann (7/28)
Bennie Bourgeois (7/31)



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Clyde & Karen Foust (7/3)
Robert & Gabby Blackburn (7/16)

Weekly Meetings

Choir

Join us for choir practice on Wednesdays at 6:30 pm.
 Contact LaDonna Alexander at
 ladonna_alexande@bellsouth.net, or
 tel. 985-803-0652, for more information.

Bible Study

All are welcome to join Bible Study on Tuesdays at
 6:30pm. Contact Alice Strausser
 for details and location.

AA Infinity Group

Alcoholics Anonymous meets in the parish hall
 Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 7:00pm.

CODA

Co-Dependents Anonymous meetings are on
 Monday evenings at 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the parish
 hall. For more information, call 985-447-8159
 or 985-526-8565 or visit www.coda.org.

Wednesday services

Wednesday evening Holy Eucharist services began in May, and alternate between Trinity and St. John's. The schedule for services during the month of July is listed here, and is included in the weekly bulletin and on the calendar at our website.

Wednesday Service schedule

July 1	St. John's	5:45 pm
July 8	Trinity	6:00 pm
July 15	St. John's	5:45 pm
July 22	Trinity	6:00 pm
July 29	St. John's	5:45 pm

Pastoral Care While Fr. Doug is Away

Fr. Doug will be on vacation from July 12 through July 25, 2015.

In the event of a pastoral emergency, and you are in need of a priest while Fr. Doug is out of town, please call the office (985-447-2910) or Senior Warden Mary Katherine Blackburn.

**Paula D'Arcy- Listening to Your Life
October 16-18, 2015
Solomon Episcopal Conference Center**

**Paula D'Arcy - Listening To Your Life
Learning to listen and see with the eyes of the heart how the thread of Divine love
moves in everything, summoning us to live with a new intention.**

When: October 16-18, 2015

**Where: Solomon Episcopal Conference Center
Loranger, LA**

Cost: Single Occupancy Room: \$300; two nights / six meals

Double Occupancy Room: \$250; two nights / six meals

Saturday Only: \$80; lunch only

Registration Opens: Friday October 16th, 2015 from 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Dinner : 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

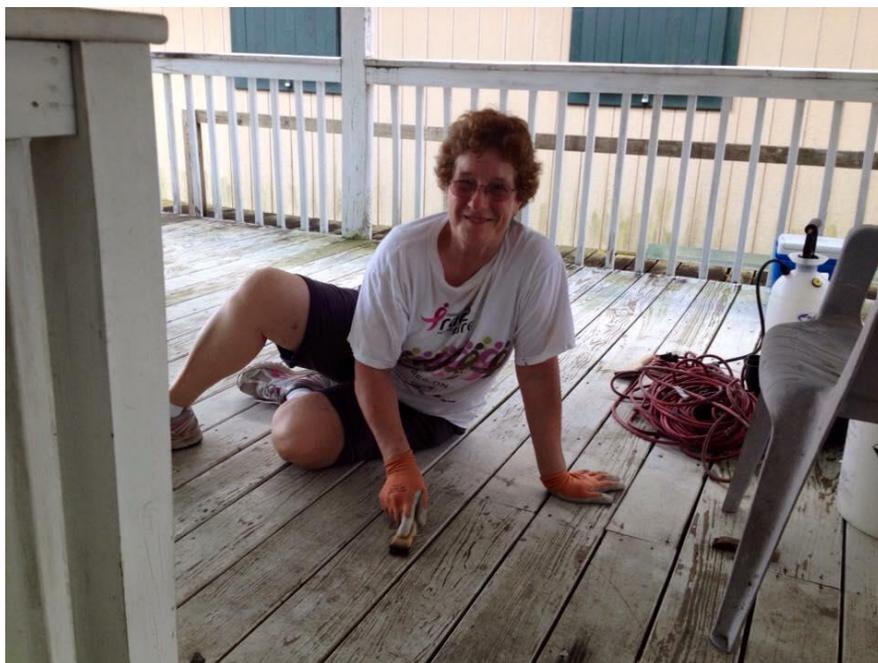
Paula's 1st Presentation: Will begin shortly after dinner

Questions: Contact The Rev. Canon John Kellogg

jkellogg@edola.org

(504) 895-6634

Alice Strausser
scraping the porch,
in preparation for
painting it, on the
recent mission trip
to Dulac. It was hot
and rainy, but a
great time was had
by all, and much
was accomplished!





Fr. Doug is lending a helping hand during the mission trip to Dulac in June. St. John's and Trinity Episcopal Church in Morgan City joined with Ascension Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas, for a mission trip to Dulac, LA. Fr. Doug and members of all three churches spent four days in Dulac painting, installing floors, ceilings, and cabinets in a home under construction, as well as helping out at the Community Center.



Thibodaux's Fourth of July Festivities
Saturday, July 4, 2015 at Peltier Park

8:00 AM Breakfast for Veterans, First Responders, Police Officers, Acadian Ambulance Employees, and Emergency Room Personnel

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM: Music by Soul Survivors

5:00 PM - 5:30 PM: Opening Ceremony

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM: Annual Auction

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM: Music by Soul Survivors

9:00 PM Fireworks!

Ice chests and BBQ pits are welcome in Peltier Park. Food and drink will be available for purchase, and there will be gifts for kids!

See the City of Thibodaux's website for more information:

<http://www.ci.thibodaux.la.us/>

St. John's Episcopal Church

718 Jackson Street
Thibodaux, LA 70301
Phone: (985) 447-2910, FAX: (985) 447-5192
www.stjohnsthibodaux.org
Follow us on Facebook.