

Notes from April 8, 2010 Deanery Meeting

AS= Chapel of All Saints; GS= Church of the Good Shepherd; CC= Christ Church; SM= St. Mark's

I. Meal

Thanks to St. Mark's for providing a wonderful meal!

II. Dwelling in the Word.

Rev. Karen Campbell led a discussion of II Corinthians 4:1-12

Themes:

- Listening to God – God knows what to do
- Stay grounded in Jesus
- Message is not about ourselves
- Confusing: God lets us know what he is doing, but we don't know later in passage
- Not about ourselves, but Christ
- Don't walk off the job because of hard times
- Work together to go forward can't go backwards – Trust in Christ
- We have been terrorized but we didn't break because Christ was there

III. What has happened in the past year?

Archdeacon Bill Coyne led a discussion that started with a story about wine (the "Gospel") being preserved in wineskins and the 3 options:

- a) Wait to replace the wineskin until it is too late and the wineskin ruptures and the wine is lost
- b) Throw out the old wineskin when it is too early. If we discard the wineskin before we have a new one in place, the wine will be lost.
- c) Develop the new wineskin while the old wineskin is still working, so that the wine may be transferred before the old wineskins burst.

Keep these outcomes in mind while the discussion continues...

Bill then led a discussion among the parishes as to what have been the most important things that have happened for each parish since this process started.

A. Chapel of All Saints

- Willingness on part of congregation to explore new options
- Realization by the congregation that AS is in trouble

- Plans to meet with new neighbors and invite them to worship
- Joined with our neighboring churches on a regular basis – got to know each other and share plans for growth
- Moving around to celebrate with the other parishes
- God does have a plan and AS is open to it
- There is a definite alternative to worshipping as we always have

B. Good Shepherd

- Left the building and worshipped together with other parishes and got to meet one another. We are one in God's world.
- Expanded horizons and accepted the situation and the need for change
- Increasing honesty and acceptance of change
- Important to continue to do more things together
- Went to other churches (maybe for the first time) and we are one big family

C. Christ Church

- It's a new day
- Same old, same old, doesn't work
- Breaking down walls between churches
- Community openness
- Working together is fun and we can learn from one another
- Embracing change and respecting all ideas and skills
- COMMUNICATION!
- Youth group demanded to go on a mission trip in 2010
- Sharing with other parishes (stock pot from GS; peer review of grant by Fr. Craig)
- Prayer team collaborated with St. Mark's prayer team (overlapping ministries)

D. St. Mark's

- Introduction to new faces and new ideas
- Proactively addressed deficit budget
- Healing Ministry for military
- Welcomed new members into vestry and the many functions
- Additional eucharist on Wednesday nights
- Lenten series at library was successful
- Prayer shawl ministry held at library
- Music ministry
- Resurgence of small groups

- Collaboration in practice rather than in theory

E. General Discussion

Sharing (services, clergy, etc.) is being done in other deaneries

Too many buildings too close together as a diocese (Bishop Scruton quoting Bishop Hatch from 40 years ago)

Cannot afford buildings and clergy going forward, some sort of sharing must be done

Adams/N. Adams are sharing clergy and ministries through a covenant

S. Lee has voted to merge but do not have a partner as of yet

IV. Top 3 goals for each congregation, led by Fr. Jim Craig

A. Chapel of All Saints

- Getting new members
- Reach a conclusion on future of AS
- More positivity/less negativity

B. Good Shepherd

- Sustainability
- Come to a conclusion and implement sometime in 2010
- Increase attendance (including getting current members to come)

C. Christ Church

- Become a more welcoming church
- Get a priest that is a good fit
- Communication (leadership, parishioners, deanery)

D. St. Mark's

- Community outreach – reason for existence (new ways to bring the Good News to the lost and forgotten)
- Effective communication with parishioners through smaller groups
- Increase parish spiritual growth

Notes: Communication and increasing membership are common themes

V. Next Steps

Christ Church invited the rest of the Deanery to Pentecost services on May 23 (8:00am and 10:00am)

AS and GS will get together to discuss possibilities for those parishes in a subgroup (close, merge, partner). Bishop met with GS during his visit to discuss what the options were at that point.

ALPHA program in the fall at CC – get to worship together or delve into scripture together

Find the people that are not coming to church anymore but remember the people who are still here!

Program on grieving/loss for parishes affected by potential mergers?

As there are hard decisions to be made, the vestries/wardens of GS and AS will meet in a subgroup in an attempt to get to a decision without facilitation. Question was asked: Would an outside mediator be available for GS and AS?

The other parishes will be invited for intentional prayer during the discussions (including Gardner, Athol and S. Barre) where the final decisions are being discussed.

Next Deanery meeting: June 3 at Christ Church at 6pm with dinner and meeting to follow. Details forthcoming.