

St. Martin In The Fields Episcopal Church
Parish Meeting 9:30 and 11:30
Sunday, May 3, 2009

9:30 session (about 100 people)--Fr. McCard opened the meeting at 9:30 with a prayer. He advised everyone that the survey, which can be found on line, can be submitted on line or you may obtain a hard copy from the back table and submit it to any Vestry member for inclusion with all comments received during these two sessions today. Everyone was encouraged to write in important items on the survey and to share your thoughts with us, so that the Vestry and leaders can discern all information to further the work of this parish with your guidance and recommendations. Some emphasis has been placed on the service time schedule, but the Strategic Planning Committee really wants your comments and suggestions regarding your other concerns. Gene Smith provided a list with e-mail addresses of all members of the Strategic Planning Committee. He then turned the meeting over to Michael Kelly and Sid Oakley who were the facilitators for this meeting in order for us to get feedback from everyone as to what is on your mind. This is an open forum with no agenda.

Sid informed us that we wanted to hear from everybody, but only one person at a time. We want the comments in the "first person" commentary, such as "I want" or "I think" or "I would like to see" or "I want to know about," etc. We can all disagree with anyone's comments, but we cannot be disagreeable with each other. Everyone's opinions will be solicited. Don't talk over one another, don't interrupt, and use general common courtesy, etc.

Nancy Runion--She would like to see the 8:00 service changed to 8:15 or 8:30. It is difficult for her family to get to church early in the morning. She was also concerned that the stained glass window leading into Nicholson Hall was replaced with tempered plain glass and not the stained glass window that she remembers a child growing up at St. Martin's.

Sarah Borcharding and Tricia Maloney—They would like to see the reading of the names on the prayer list brought back to the services on Sunday morning, as it is important to hear the person's name they have placed on the list read on Sunday morning. Obviously, it is too long, and suggested that it be completely cleared every month and then have the names resubmitted every month to keep it shorter. They are also concerned that the Rite 13 classes and all other Sunday School classes are down in attendance by 40-50%.

Susie Hall—She would like to see us rethink our service schedule. The 8:00 service only has about 15 people in attendance, while the Saturday night and Sunday night services have about 50 people in attendance. We are now actually down to one major service at 10:30. We need to rethink the time schedules.

Tim Kelly—He agrees with the changing of the service times and his family loves the 10:00 service during the summer time. He is familiar with the reasons for changing the times because he is “very close to one member of the Vestry.” But the 9:00 service got his family to church on time and kept them through the Sunday School hour. He would like to see us return to the 9:00 and 11:15 schedule in the fall of 2009.

Rather than having everyone stand up and give the same comment, it was suggested that people who agreed with Tim’s comments just stand up. This was about half of the people, or about 50 out of 100 attending, who agreed with Tim’s comments.

Michael Kelly and Sid Oakley advised the parishioners that the Vestry would not be commenting or standing during this forum, as we were here to listen and receive comments and suggestions.

Helen Ingebritsen—[Helen told her joke, “Everyone already knows that the Vestry will not stand for anything.”] She very much appreciates the service of the Vestry. From a parent’s point of view, she misses her daughter signing in the choir twice a month and misses the previous service schedule and agrees with the Sunday School issue.

Clay Hale--He applauded the Parish Life Committee, especially David Fricano, for putting together the Concert in the Park. It was fantastic and if you missed it, you missed the kids and the parents having a heck of a good time. You cannot pay enough to have more of that type of fellowship. The kids were playing with their friends and the fellowship was wonderful. By they time they got home the kids were worn out and had no trouble getting to bed on time. We need more of this type of Parish Life activity.

Dana Ray--She really misses the chili cookoff.

Larry Domenico—With the change of the service schedule, his son and that of all the acolytes, have a limited number of opportunities to serve, which was one thing they did in large numbers. His son has been called to be a torchbearer only once since September 2008 because of the change of the service schedules and the number of acolytes. We need to create more opportunities for them to serve in a visible.

Betsy Roberts—Ingrid Siegert asked her to speak on behalf of the choir. When she first started singing in the choir, there was only a choir at the 11:15 service and not at 9:00 service. Then as years went by, the choir changed and wanted to sing at the 9:00 service. Because the budget has been cut, we have issues with supporting the staff singers. If the service goes back to 2 services, we would only have a choir at the 9:00 service. The choir members are very mixed

on having one or two services. The handbell and children's choir only sing once a month and we no longer have the Canterbury choir. We have a problem with the children getting to the 11:15 service because of Sunday School. Most of the choir members like singing at only one service, preferably the 9:00 service. However, if a lot of the congregation would join the choir, we could have 2 full choirs.

Bill Petritz--He is proud of everyone for trying out for this parish meeting. His personal preference is to have a more accessible church for visitors and to change back to the 9:00 and 11:15 services.

Gay Jolley—She has been a member of St. Martin's for almost 40 years and at times had been away for along time, then returned during the last several years. She has been coming to the 9:00 service because frankly, that is where the action is and she has not attended the 11:15 service because the communicant attendance was very low. The 9:00 service is dynamic, exciting, loving, friendly, and open and she loves it.

Neal Marwitz--This is not "church on demand." We have our services for the convenience of our congregation. The time it takes for our staff and clergy to do that is heavy. Are we asking too much or do we want to be so convenient that we come or simply don't come because we don't want to come?

Karen Boor—The church is trying so hard to make it work for everyone and the community and fellowship at the 10:30 service is wonderful. The survey was difficult. Speaking for the Sunday School class that her son attends, it is off by 24%. Sometimes he is the only child in his class and the teacher moves him from the 5th grade class to the 4th grade class, which he doesn't particularly like. The shift to 10:30 service has helped with the service, but it is difficult to get everything to fit into the new schedule.

Betsy Harrington—She and Bert have been members for 36 years and have watched all kinds of changes. She was one of the people who was concerned about the numbers in the 11:15 service and loved the summer 10:00 service and so much of the service and the camaraderie. Our service has been so late in the mornings that it pushes everything for people to get fit it in the afternoon, because of the very late start. There was an article in the Faith & Values section yesterday's paper by Andy Stanley. He has helped to form 3 churches and they have over 20,000 people attending these 3 churches every Sunday. If we don't provide the right setting for the young people and the children, our church is going to die. The young people and the young families are what is going to make our church grow and that is what it is all about. The message delivered in those churches is absolutely phenomenal and you would not leave without applying it to your entire life. The Sunday School program is unbelievable and it draws people. There are some things they are doing in their delivery and programs that make people want to make it their church--where they congregate and where

they live. We could open our eyes and ears and look into the churches to see what makes these people come one time. She does not like the largeness of the congregations or the big screen, but the message is unbelievable.

Amanda Thrasher—We have great opinions on both sides of the service time. Are there any other issues or matters to be brought to the forefront?

Yes, any issues or matters are here to be heard.

Jake Duffy—Andy Stanley's church has enthusiasm. When was the last time you invited someone else to St. Martin's, in order to bring up the attendance?

Elizabeth Hale--We should make St. Martin's open, so that when you are a newcomer, you do not leave without someone speaking to you and you are leaving with a big welcome. Charlotte Smith in the nursery is wonderful in welcoming young families. No one said anything to her when she was a newcomer, but she kept coming back to St. Martin's. Regular attendees at other churches have permanent nametags, and if someone had a temporary nametag, they would be instantly noticed. Perhaps during the announcements the clergy could ask for a show of hands of the visitors in the congregation.

Martha Hammond—Several years ago we used to have a hospitality table to greet everyone who came to the church, along with the visitor table. Should we bring that back?

Fr. Patrick Skutch—The Clergy's job is to show up on Sunday mornings, break bread, and preach the Gospel, regardless of what time the services are held. One of the challenges and feedback we consistently got from the Sunday School time was how long the church service lasted. Another was how hard the teachers work each week to provide Sunday School and often their class was only 30 minutes instead of 45 minutes, such as on days of Baptism, etc. Regardless of what schedule we choose, we need to consider the length of time for the Sunday School classes.

Jodie Guest—The new service change has not worked for their family, and she prefers the old church service schedule, followed by Sunday School.

Louise Kiley—She would like to see, perhaps once a month at the 5:30 service, a folk mass and would not ask the choir to sing. We would try to get the children and teenagers who play instruments to form their own group and lead the singing. This would certainly get them involved in the services again.

Verna Minnick—She lives very near Charles Stanley's church and if she doesn't get home by 12:00, she has to wait for about 80 cars to get out of the parking lot before she can proceed. She also wanted to know at what age the children

begin receiving communion, especially the wafer. It is strictly optional with the parents?

Fr. John advised us that it is strictly a parental option and more instructional. We have printed resources to explain communion to the children.

Elizabeth Beck—Sunday School is her favorite part of Sunday because she has time to be with her girlfriends, to color and talk, etc. The rest of the service just kind of wraps around her and it's OK with her. She taught children's Sunday School for 8-9 years and sometimes she only had 20 minutes to teach, bond and pray with the children. To have a longer Sunday School time is the bedrock of their religious formation. She thinks we moved the schedules around because it was broken, but it still does not feel right. Having fellowship time with Café Martin does not seem to be working either. She thinks we need an early service, time for fellowship, longer amount of time for Sunday School and a later service time that is joyful. Fixing this service does not mean going back to what we had. See the following extra notes from Elizabeth. I wish "my" service wasn't at 10:30; that's too late for my family. I love that Sunday School has been long enough this year. I wish there was a designated fellowship time that people really all attended. 8:45 main church time that would be "my" service with full choirs, acolytes and joy. 10:00-10:15 fellowship in Gable Hall with coffee, donuts, muffins, full of joy and conversation. 10:15-11:10 Sunday School. 11:15 late service, as high church as possible (choir, acolytes, etc.), but more like the currently early morning service, if necessary.

Kelly Spetalnick—She hopes that our outreach efforts will help build the community. Dave Fricano has done a good job on Parish Life. Is the Vestry looking into other items? She also heard that the Wednesday night Lenten programs were well attended and wonders if a regular Wednesday evening program would be good for the parish?

Lee Plunkett—We could possibly move the times to 8:30 and 10:45 so we could have Sunday School in between.

Susanne Snyder—We have got to get more young families with small children into the church, so we can get the life and joy back into the church. The Concert in the Park helped that. She was surprised to see on the survey about adding on to the church with a capital campaign, particularly given our financial service. She is startled with this comment and wanted to see how other people were thinking about that.

Susan Lindley—She agrees with many things everyone has said. She no longer has the enthusiasm she once had. They now come to the 8:00 service because it suits their schedule. She misses everyone by not attending the other services. She also has health issues about having everyone drinking out of one chalice. Could we look into using one chalice for non-drinkers from the chalice?

Fr. John addressed that question by noting that the Mayo Clinic has performed several tests and they had no findings about anyone getting sick by drinking from the same chalice.

Bill Goodhew—Perhaps the clergy should stop putting so much water in the wine so that what little alcohol is there would help kill the germs.

Fr. John said (jokingly) that he would like to have something even stronger in the chalice. [Would that be Chevis Regal Scotch?]

We will put the condensed version of all of these comments on the website. We will also ask visitors to raise their hand so we can reach out to them and greet and welcome them. It would be helpful to have these parish meetings at the end of every year in order to spend time together so we can voice our opinions.

This session closed at 10:15 in order to attend the 10:30 service.

11:30 parish session (about 50 people)—Gene Smith provided a list with e-mail addresses of all members of the Strategic Planning Committee. The survey was put out this week on line, which asks for comments of your positive input. We will take written copies as well, so please fill it out and return it to us. It is hard to choose between certain items. We need your comments. All information will be entered.

Bruce Hall—He is delighted that we are now posting the Vestry minutes on line and that they are made available in the church office for those who don't have computer access. This definitely shows a complete, open and honest transparency to the parish and he thanks the Vestry for this service.

Gay Jolley—During this morning's sermon, Mtr. Mary spoke about the 23rd Psalm, The Good Shepherd and the sheep. We have many wonderful programs for the little lambs (children), but not as many daytime activities for the older mutttons (Senior Citizens).

Charlie Shepherd—Last year we heard a lot about change, but not all change is progress. This past year there was a change he doesn't like. He wants to go back to 2 main services, due to the parking lot. He wants a 9:00 & 11:15 service and not have to walk blocks away from the church. He and Anne have been members here for 55 years. At one time he was the Sunday School Superintendent. The children went to Sunday School and the adults went to the service. There was no chart with an attendance star every time a child showed up for Sunday School. The original construction plans for the church were ridiculous and had the main sanctuary on the site where the school is now located. The most important thing is that our people come to church. Are there

any other members of St. Martin's whose children are attending SMES? We have had building programs in the past that were successful. Right now we just need the people coming so they have a place to come.

Amanda Thrasher—She is just seeing the survey for the first time and is concerned about the #2 about buildings and grounds. “If St. Martin's develops a capital campaign in the next year, what should our priority be for renovation?” What determines if we have a capital campaign? She would like to appoint John Harrison, Melinda Mischick, Elizabeth Beck and _____ as the committee for Sunday School programs.

Gene Smith—He has looked through the records for many years and most everything that was important in years past, is still important today. The growth and change in building primarily involves the school. A capital campaign does not mean we will rebuild a sanctuary. The HVAC will not die tomorrow, but it needs to be addressed. The columbarium is out of space and we need to address that issue. We are occupying facilities that people spent their money for in years past. It may be a specifically bad time to start a campaign like this, but we have been in this position before. Someone may want to fund a new kitchen. We would like comments based on what we have talked about. This meeting is open to all matters, not just the service time. We now have a new acolyte warden, Dennis Matthews, and he is trying to expand their duties at the 8:00 and the 5:30 services. Surveys don't get to everyone and we would like to continue this type of open forum. We want to give everybody an opportunity to visit with your Vestry in the same format.

Ruth Anne Tatum Brumley—With our services they way they are now, 8:00 and 10:30 services, the Eucharist Visitors chose the 8:00 so they could go out and visit with parishioners and take them communion. They have their own program. You can be a Eucharist Visitor and a Lay Eucharist Minister, but you don't have to be all. Now with just the 10:30 service, you have all the EV people at the 8:00 service, so that's the only time we see those people. The acolytes are trying to be expanded. The ushers now only serve one month a year and may forget what they are supposed to do by the next time they serve. The one big service does not help all of these services for the EV, LEM, acolytes, ushers and choirs. She likes the 2 big services. To read the lessons, you do not have to be trained or have a license. We are enlisting the help of more people to be readers, and we will welcome that. Because the ushers have to be here on Sunday anyway, we have asked them to be intercessors. If you are interested in any of these services, we can help you take care of that.

Christine Young—Ingrid Siegert asked her to represent the choir. They surveyed the choir members about the impact the change of the service has upon them. The negative—the children's choir and handbell choir only have an opportunity to perform once a month. The positive—we do sing every Sunday and have one Sunday where they can sit and participate in the congregation. It appears we

have more attendance in the choir. Members did not want to sing at the 11:15 service and wanted to sing in the 9:00 service due to family schedules.

Tim Kelly—He appreciated the old service schedule. This is a challenge as a family member with young children who are involved during the regular year with activities, such as baseball, softball, tennis, etc. We have not come to church as much as we need to and should and certainly have not been coming to Sunday School as much as we need to or should. The Vestry is to be commended for trying different creative things. He would like to ask the Vestry as we go through the summer, to keep the 10:30 service. Acolytes can help drive participation. Consider having children as lay readers and reading the lessons and epistles. The change was made to try to accommodate everyone's schedule. Having the Baptisms at 9:00 made the service run too long, consider changing the Baptisms to the 11:15 service. What can we do to drive people to St. Martin's? Perhaps the concept of a folk service, with less emphasis on the prayers and more emphasis on the folk mass with music, could be tried. Try to find a creative way to go back to the old time.

Tom Reilly—He tried to listen to everything at the first session. There is a certain decline in revenue and enrollment. We are not alone with these issues. All basic churches have the same situation and we will work our way out of it as recovery takes place. As far as the message during the service—Mtr. Mary's sermon today seemed to come more from her heart; while some sermons sometimes sound more like an academic exercise.

Natalie Shaw—She is a Sunday School teacher. As a working mom, it is really nice to wake up a few minutes later on Sunday. Sunday School attendance has dropped off a great deal. The main event for their family is the main service. Only about 12 children attend her daughter's Sunday School class. Her other child's class only has about 4-5 children.

Beth Hawks—She usually tries to keep a low profile. Her biggest blessing at St. Martin's is that she can go to the grocery store or the Botanical Gardens and will always see someone from St. Martin's. Recently her child said, "Look, Mom, that old man goes to our church." They always see someone they know from St. Martin's. We need to celebrate our blessings of having a varied generational, supportive and loving parish. That's how we can get people excited. It made her feel good to know her church was involved with Concert in the Park.

Dennis Matthews—One of the things our church has done an incredible job with, is the Rite 13 and J2A programs and preparing them for the Pilgrimage. We need to ask the Vestry what these children can and should do after the Pilgrimage to stay involved with the church. The enthusiasm is coming up for the Rite 13 group. The worry is that we forget about what happens when the Pilgrims return to church. He hopes that when they kids go off to college, they will stay close to the church.

Bill Goodhew—All churches are feeling financial pressure these days and mainstream churches are not growing, as we should. The people that are growing are the fundamentalist churches. He went to NorthPoint to see what it was all about. He said it was magical and marvelous, somewhere between MTV and Nickelodeon and eating all the cereal that is sugar coated, but it's not church as he knows it. We need to find the time to visit one of the rapidly growing churches to see the competition. He believes we are shrinking faster than the average church. [Did he mean St. Martin's or the Episcopal church as a whole?] We have lost 17% pledges over the past two years. The average pledge has shrunk 5% over the last year, and we need to find out why. Why are we shrinking? Bring the information to an open forum or put it in the printed information. As a long-time member of the Finance Committee, the economy has made them cut back drastically, such as with the music program. The vast majority of our expenses now have to do with the clergy and staff. We have got to come to grips with the financial market.

Collette McDonald—She has been a member for 9 years, but still feels like a new member. She grew up in the Lutheran church and her husband was Catholic. Their children go to SMES, but she still feels like a new member and thinks it has a lot to do with the open communication. It could be that she is not on the parish-wide e-mail distribution list. We have a lot of sub-groups, but could do a much better job in assuring these wide programs are available and could then see the increase in programs and pledges.

John Harrison—He has been in non-profit management for 30 years and was a manager of the American Academy of Religion. We have to pay attention to all of the details for the big picture and the little pictures. Our denomination is not known for the curricula for teaching our young children. We need to work on that and address these issues. The enemy is secularism. We are no longer the "state church." We have to figure out where to grow and how to be where we want to be. We need to pay attention as to the details causing our decline in attendance and pledges. We have a lot of work to do, but we can do it. We should all be a core group of believers doing wonderful things for each other

Elizabeth Beck—She loves Sunday School and it is her favorite part of Sunday. She is currently in her 2nd year of teaching adult Sunday School. You make your own happiness. She invited all of her friends to be in her class and they talk about different things. Last year, Sunday School started after the 9:15 service, which varied wildly, and some times she only had 20 minutes for her class. When the schedule change came about, she loved the notion of the change, especially when someone was telling her children Bible stories. The reality now is that she doesn't like the 10:30 service, but wants her 1-hour Sunday School. There doesn't appear to be a real answer. When she was on the Vestry, she wanted a social time after the service. We need to keep trying to find the right service. [The right one for her is listed during the 9:30 session.] Look to the

Vestry for leadership and more change in not going back to something that was broken.

Fr. John—We need to strive to meet the needs of our community and the desire to share the cloak, to wash each other's feet and be servants to each of you.

Closed this session at 12:45 p.m.

The below comments were received from parishioners after the forums, either on hand-written notes or by e-mail submissions.

Linda McArthur, 404-233-3704—I am writing from the perspective of a mother of teenagers. I also have had 3 kids go through J2A. The J2A program is losing steam, which is a shame, because it really should be a beacon for the younger kids at church. Also, once the kids return from the pilgrimage, they should tell the Parish about their trip in a service and then should be expected to serve the church in the youth education department. Give me a call!

Martha Evans—Need to reevaluate usage of entire plant, including school. Existing resources could be maximized. Outreach could be integrated into resources available here with careful planning and strategic multi-use. Careful maintenance is important—as well as basic cleanliness. Church does not look well loved. Thanks.

Judith Windsor—Would like to see us go to the 8:30 and 11:00 services. Also, for choir members to have an alms basis either upon entry into the church or during the service.

From a senior citizen--During daylight savings time will attend 5:30 service instead of 10:30. Finds 10:30 too noisy and not just the children – parents continue outside conversations after sitting down. Would like a reminder during announcements to enter the church reverently and silently.

And another senior--Loves being in church with the children, loves the 10:30 time slot because it gets out so much earlier than the 11:15. Is afraid that someone new will be put off when they get to church at 10:25 and many of the seats have signs saying seats are saved for children and the newcomer can't find a seat. Would like for the ushers to do a better job of walking with people down the aisles to help them find a seat. Said that the front pews were empty Palm Sunday.

Deborah Thompson--I am sorry that Herb and I were not in attendance at the Vestry Forum meetings. But we wanted to take this opportunity to tell you all "THANK YOU," for your service to our parish, for your unending love of God and his word, and for your tireless energy and work to meet the needs of our parish family. It is often a "thankless" job, but you are very appreciated by so many of us. And you are doing a wonderful job.

It is impossible to be "all things to all people" or to please everyone. But as one member of our group said in our Christ Care meeting yesterday--as parishioners, we should revise the words of John F. Kennedy to say, "*Ask not what your church can do for you, ask what you can do for your church.*"

And while Herb and I preferred the 11:15 service, we support your efforts to work within the constraints of our resources, your attempts to fine-tune our programs and worship schedule to fit the needs of the majority, and the open forums you provide for input from our members. We respect the changes you have made, as we know that much thought, prayer, and study preceded the making of those changes.

We, also, would love to see the Sunday night service include some contemporary Christian music (not necessarily a choir, but perhaps other musicians), and feel that it might help to attract more youth. (Knowing full well that any change is not going to be palatable to ALL concerned). Again, we defer to your wisdom and council.

Additionally, we believe that our parish has taken a meaningful step forward with the advent of the small group ministry of Christ Care. The small group ministry model has proven to be quite successful in many other churches and it has certainly filled a void in our lives and enhanced our spiritual journey. We hope it will expand and grow to personally touch more members. We believe it has the power to enhance the meaning of true fellowship within our church family.

Primarily, we just wanted to extend our support and our thanks to all of the Clergy, Staff and Vestry. If there is anything we can do to assist you going forward, please don't hesitate to ask. We are fortunate to have your leadership and grateful to call you friends. God Bless You in your work, your decision-making, and in your lives.

Steve Hurlbutt--I thought y'all did a great job with the forum yesterday; it was very constructive. You had asked for written feedback; if ok by y'all, mine follows:

Like any parish, St. Martins has lots of issues and always will. But it's clear that the pressing problem right now is the service time issue. I understand and support what we were trying to do, but what we've implemented has clearly not provided the results we were hoping for.

The comments of these 4 folks really rang true to me...

Betsy Harrington – we need to re-engage the young folk; they ARE the future of our church.

Larry D – having fewer services minimizes involvement opportunities; he mentioned acolytes, but true for ushers, vergers, readers, etc.

Elizabeth Beck – yes we need to do something, but it doesn't have to be exactly what we had before.

Lee Plunkett – perhaps we should stick with two services, just tinker with the times, e.g. 8:45 and 10:45.

Another thing that should be thrown into the mix is what I will call the newcomer abyss; sandwiching a newcomer greeting in the parlor between two major services has always served us well. My sense is that these folks have gotten lost with the current setup.

So, summing my position up: I would like to go on record as saying that I think we need to make an effort to have two full-scale services again, starting in the fall. Thanks for listening,

Joel Brockmann--Thanks for moderating the parish meeting yesterday. I had a few additional thoughts that I wanted to pass on to you.

* Regarding Nancy Runion's request to fix the stained glass window on the back door to Nicholson Hall: Nancy herself does stained glass which may explain her interest in this. I also know that Bobby Jo Walker does stained glass, and I have done some as well.

*Facilities: In my opinion, we need to first preserve what we have, then consider upgrades and expansions as funds allow. For instance, I know that we need to repair the leaky roof in the nave and in other various places around the property, then repaint. Walls need to be painted in other areas as well (like near the Music and Movement room). I'm happy to do painting myself, but I think it may have more energy to have a group of people work on it to help create community. How about a church fix-up day?

* In my opinion this is not a good time to go into a capital campaign for church expansion, primarily because there will be people who want to contribute but will not be able to because of the general economy and their own personal economics. A false start to raise money would be worse than a postponement. In my opinion, we need to prioritize the outreach center before a church expansion for limited capital campaign dollars. The upside of new construction now is that construction prices are relatively low, and I do know that construction activity brings energy and potentially new members, I just don't think this is the right time.

Guests and new members: Does the church have data on where new members come from? Friends? People searching us out? Drive-by? Web site? Other? What are they attracted to, and if they become members why did they choose us? If somebody stops coming do we know why? If we know the answers to these questions maybe we can better serve the congregation.

* When I've ushered, I don't think I've ever seen anybody sign into the guest books at the back, so we might consider whether that's needed. It is redundant with the sign-in slips that are in the pews also.

* Would we get guests by posting the service times on the main sign in front of the building? Are the times on a banner at the street or someplace else that I haven't seen?

* Communications: Parish communications have improved exponentially over the last couple of years, an improvement that I am grateful. I'm still concerned with--

* Ease of finding information. For instance, there isn't any notice on the web site that I could find about the parish meeting yesterday, even on the calendar. How about putting things like this in the News section of the web site (which is pretty out of date)? It's generally the same information as what Jason sends out by e-mail each week, so it wouldn't take a lot of extra writing. Or maybe put major announcements like this on the website home page, or even a link on the home page to the weekly announcements e-mail?

* Accuracy. The church bulletin consistently lists clergy's roles incorrectly (sorry for the gripe, it just doesn't take that much effort to do it right).

I hope you take these comments in the spirit of observations and thoughts, not as complaints. We have a vast network of resources within our congregation, of leadership and other skills, and we need to full advantage of these resources particularly during these tough budget times. You two providing leadership on the vestry are two examples. Asking Nancy or Bobby Jo to make a window to replace the broken one would be great, too, or I would be happy to do so if the vestry would like. Sometimes all it takes is to ask somebody for their help.

Thanks for letting me pass these things on to you. Let me know how I can help.

Mary Alice Bancroft—Suggestion: Put guest register on table with nametags or perhaps outside door to sanctuary. Pros: Capture more guests possibly those going to Sunday School and not church. Where register is now is too confusing; coming in and being greeted in a small foyer area, others coming in, reach for programs, etc. Guest would not feel so rushed to sign if book located elsewhere.

From Mary Alice Bancroft 5/20/09

Dear Father John and anyone else who wants to read.

Thank you so much for having the minutes from the Parish Meeting published online. A huge help and very interesting to those of us who didn't make it. I would have been there had I used my brain to make a written note of the date! But aside from that I would like to make a couple of comments that I didn't see.

First: Out Reach. One of my greatest joys has been the fact that Bryce has continued going to church after he left for college. St. Albans has a Canterbury group at Davidson each Sunday evening and what started out as only a "free meal" has grown into service with that group and a continuance of religious activities. St. Martin's is so close to Oglethorpe University that we are missing an opportunity to invite them into our church. We have several college age young people that are going to school locally, perhaps we could utilize them in helping organize a college age program on Sunday evenings. Maybe there are enough families that would offer to cook a meal for the kids on Sunday evenings to entice them to come or if nothing else bring in some Chinese or pizza. Many Oglethorpe students are local which has the potential of bringing St. Martins to the minds of families. My mind often creates ideas with little thought of how it may be accomplished, however in this case I don't see how there could be much money involved in opening our doors to college age kids in need of a meal and some fellowship.

Another area relating to Out Reach is this idea of having an offsite campus to take care of AAA, boy scouts, etc. which to me would be detrimental to the health of St. Martins. We need to be a more cohesive group and if we start outsourcing meetings somewhere else then you have that many more reasons for people to not feel at home within the church.

If you want to provide a meeting space for people without causing so much wear and tear on the church then get a trailer and put it somewhere on the premises. Get one of the small trailers that contractors use while on site somewhere. Perhaps there is one from the Ssembler construction down the street and they offer to bring it here rather than spend hundreds of dollars taking it somewhere else when they are done with it. Kingswood Methodist put one under the trees at the edge of their property and use it for the boy scouts and other groups that meet on a regular basis. It is in really poor condition after all these years but it gets the job done. Getting a used trailer for a few thousand has to be cheaper than operating another building somewhere, whether it is rented or bought.

Then take the closet in Gable Hall and deck it out with metal shelving and put the food pantry in there. It was a mess the last time I looked in it and my thought is that if you put some money into organizing the space you have then some of our space needs might work themselves out. Or use my handy man neighbor to build a wall the entire length of Gable Hall making a narrow but long closet for the storage of items. He has put walls in for us and is quick, cheap and looks great. And don't forget the construction trailer will have various rooms, designate one of them for some items that need to be stored.

Second: Growth in the Church. I have thought long and hard about this issue, in fact Bryce and I discuss it from time to time. His main thoughts are look at Dunwoody United Methodist and see all the things for kids to do, and then look at what St. Martin's offers. There really is no comparison. We don't sell pumpkins in the fall and Christmas trees in the winter in order to provide seed money for the youth to take mission trips. Lots of things we don't provide that DUM does.

But looking beyond that, DUM has one thing that we don't have -- **access** to young people. DUM is located in the middle of neighborhoods full of kids. They are located close to the high school. Before you know it kids talk to each other about what they are doing and everything is open to anyone who wants to come and then boom you have a church filled to capacity with them and their families. Everyone knows everyone else because they are on the PTA or baseball teams. So the church becomes an extension of the family. Can we somehow accomplish a similar feeling?

One of the paragraphs from a lady the meeting stated that she had been a member for 9 years and that she still felt like a newcomer. I know the feeling exactly, that's how I feel and I've been here for 20+ years. This last year I have come closest to the feeling of belonging and it is because of the involvement in the fund raisers for the J2A program. Forces one to become a part of something and even though I went kicking and screaming into it does make a difference in feeling a part of a group.

They say that disaster or tragedy can bring a community together and bind them together. Well we certainly don't want a disaster to deal with but if we created a situation where everyone needed to work together for a common goal then perhaps we could get beyond this feeling individually. Or is this just the "Episcopal" way?

And lastly my own pet peeve.... the church seems to be going more in the direction of Methodist than sticking to our Episcopal ways. For example, talking while in the sanctuary -- Methodist do that, Episcopalians don't. Have music as soon as people come walking in, will help keep the talking down. We stand for more prayers than we kneel--- Methodist do that, Episcopalians don't. Many times I say the prayer of thanksgiving after communion myself... why have we forgotten to say "thank you" after being fed. And it seems that over the course of a year the number of times we actually say a confessional prayer seems to be few and far between. I come away with the feeling that I have not been penitent enough for my sins during the service.

I know you are saying to yourself if you are down on this church so much then go somewhere else. My kids say the same thing... stop nagging mom about my grades or where I'm going and whom I am going with. And I will say the same thing to you that I say to them, if I didn't care then I wouldn't nag or offer an opinion what needs to be fixed. I'll be quiet one day, for now I hope you will read this in the light of which it is offered, just thoughts and opinions of what I see. May God bless this church and help it become a place of haven for all.

Mary Alice Bancroft