



Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish

"A loving congregation seeking unity with God and each other in Christ"

Newsletter

Dec. 1 & Dec. 8, 2019

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Invite, Welcome, Connect and the Meaning of Thanksgiving

On November 16th, a team of seven parishioners and I attended a Deanery-sponsored training called Invite, Welcome, Connect (IWC.) Presiding Bishop Michael Curry describes IWC as "A ministry designed to help Episcopalians engage in the deep work of evangelism." Bishop Claude Payne believes IWC "Provides a theological rationale for outreach to the spiritually hungry, a means of engaging those who come into our places of worship, and a way to engage those who become part of our community of faith." I believe this work is fundamentally important for us at this point in our Denomination. National trends have shown a decline in membership since the 1950's, but ministries like this are beginning to show exciting signs of church growth in many places around the country. This is very encouraging.

What encourages me the most about this ministry is that this is not a program. It is not a pre-packaged, "Seven ways to a better you," program that will save your church and make you extremely prosperous. This ministry is an "Ethos," a way of life, an attitude that helps churches become more inviting and welcoming to those who come through our doors for the first time. But, it doesn't end there. This ministry spends a considerable amount of time helping churches connect these new comers to ministries that answer their most intimate needs for a living relationship with Christ and the community of the church. It is not Public Relations, it is not Marketing, and it is not a "New Member Acquisition Strategy." It is a way of life. Let me explain why I believe this ministry will radically transform who we are.

INVITE: This last Sunday we welcomed Laurel Grace Pratt, the daughter of our own Claire Ford and granddaughter of Cathleen, into our faith through Baptism. One of the promises we made as we renewed our Baptismal Covenant was to "Proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ." I believe this is the best definition of evangelism in accordance with the Gospel of Matthew 28:19-20.

Proclaiming by word and example begins with a simple invitation. Episcopalians are shy people when it comes to inviting others to church. We somehow feel as though we are imposing our values and our faith on others simply by inviting them to church. This could be true in some cases, but inviting always begins with listening. As you engage in conversation, you look for the opportunity to share your faith, and then you listen and learn about the faith of the person with whom you are speaking. Then, if you perceive that the person feels isolated from God, hasn't attended a church in a while, is dissatisfied with their current faith journey, or is searching for a new experience of God, you say something like, "Hey, I think you would love our church. Would you like to come with me this coming Sunday? I can pick you up on my way in." Bishop Curry believes inviting is primarily about listening and relating, "It is not just about talking -it's about listening and sharing; it's about a relationship where God can get in the midst." Poll after poll say the same thing: four in every five people who come to a church for the

first time come because they were invited by a friend. Billboards don't cut it, television commercials are ineffective, and Facebook ads are a waste of money. Invitations by friends bring new comers in, plain and simple. This reminds me of the famous phrase by D. T. Niles, "Evangelism is just one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread."

WELCOME: This is the ministry of Hospitality as Mary Parmer, the creator of this ministry calls it. She puts it this way, "Welcome asks the question, 'DO your clergy, staff, and lay leaders teach, preach, and model a theology of welcome and hospitality?'" The same polls that state that four in five people first come because they were invited states that 87% of first comers chose to return a second time because they felt welcomed by the members of the church. It is ironic that most priests believe their churches are welcoming but various universities and seminaries who send "Secret Worshipers" to congregations find that a great majority of them are never spoken to, invited to coffee hour, given information about the ministries of the church, or invited to return. The church must do better if they are to attract new comers.

Sister Joan Chittister puts it this way, "Hospitality is one form of worship. Come right in and disturb our perfect lives -you are the Christ for us today." Mary reminds us that our current word Hospitality is derived from Greek words that translate as "Love of Strangers." This is a deeply biblical concept which goes back to the earliest books of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. Welcoming requires a number of practices that go from appropriate signage to a ministry of Greeters, from coffee hour to following up with those who came for a first time, and from a few words of welcome after service to a more formal process of clergy outreach to those who visit us.

CONNECT: We boldly announce at Grace that "We have a ministry for everyone who wants one." And, I believe this is true. Judging by the amount of ladies in the Altar Guild, our wonderful acolytes, our finance committee and vestry, and the multiple ministries we have for prison, nursing home, food bank and others. Yet, much of connecting has to do with discernment. "Connect offers clear pathways to belonging where newcomers are guided in their journey of faith and into the life of the congregation, where new members are empowered and equipped to live into their baptismal covenant by offering their individual gifts and talents to God, and where we help them hear God's call in their lives." We must do better in this respect.

THANKSGIVING: Ultimately, we engage in IWC out of thanksgiving. We reflect on the many blessings God has given us through our church family and we give thanks to God for these blessings. We then extend an invitation, welcome, and a connection to people in our communities who are in need of the same relationship with Christ and the same connectedness with a church community. May God bless you this Thanksgiving, Fr. Roldan+



We are very excited to officially welcome four newcomers to our Church and to celebrate the Confirmation of four of our eighth graders. This grand celebration will take place on Sunday, December 15, at the 10:00 am Service. Immediately following the service, we will have a reception in Jackson Hall in honor of our new members and to welcome Bishop Thompson back to Grace. Kathy Kane has graciously agreed to host this great event. If you would like to help with the setting up, meal preparation, flower arrangements, or serving at the banquet, please let Kathy know. Feel free to call us if you have any questions, Blessings, Fr. Roldan+

**Intercessory prayers
are asked for Grace
Church members who
are ill.**

Valerie Barnes, Libby Dart, Jason Kennedy, Charlotte Maxwell, Elizabeth Denton Mitchell, Tom Morris, Eric Nelson, Sara Nelson, Shane Pollet, Carolyn Porche, Cozette Stevens, Kay Tengler, Anne Timmons, Wendell Wade, Marcia Willis, Pam Wilson, Jake Wray, Madeline Wright.

Birthdays

Helen Williams, Brianna Reinhardt-Dec. 1;
Emily Jo Adams, Mary Jane Walker-Dec. 2;
Dare Didier, Mary Weller Morse, Evelyn Davis Tregle-Dec. 4;
Caleb Allen Norton, Jessica McVea-Dec. 5;
Landon B. Anderson, Austin Roldan, Edward Daniel IV, Gloria Fontenot, Alyssa Louis-Dec. 6;
Andrew David, Joseph Wilson-Dec. 7;
Savanna Clevenger-Dec. 8;
Caroline Sparks, Kell Farmer-Dec. 9;
Louise Jenkins, Barbara Mitchell, Zane and Caleb Smith-Dec. 10;
Joey Penno-Dec.11;
Frank Farmer-Dec. 12;
Lea Williams-Dec. 13;
Chase P. Cunningham-Dec. 14;

**Wedding
Anniversaries**

Al and Patsy Hardouin-Dec. 14

Other persons

prayers are asked for:

Claiborne Arbutnot, Charles Barham, Walker Bell, Micaela Kell Bennett, Wayne Bergeron, Isabella Bertucci, Leslie Bickham, Luanne, Phillip Bowen, Ben Brown, Steve Brown, Mason Brudewick, Willie Bryant, Randy Bryant, Darby Buras, Jenny Clark, Daryn Conrad, Rob Cox, Frances Woods Curry, Sandy Davenport, William David, Kathleen Davis, Jessica DeLee, Debbie Desmar, Helen Desselles, Cathy Doslovic, Molly Douglas, Amy Dwyer, Mark Ellison, Jennifer Erickson, Ellen Ewald, Sara Fahey, Mark Feltner, Dennis Flynn, Matthew Gill, Jerry Green, Jane Hamilton, Roy Hardin, Parke Henderson, Wayne Hudnall, Joel James, Michelle Jeansson, Henry Jones, Mary Jo Kaly, Cathy K., Pat Laurent, Jody Lemoine, Jessica Liddle, Max, Charlotte Mayeaux, Ralph McKenzie, Laine Martrain, Mary Anne McCrory, Ruby McKee, Cheryl Meaux, Robin Michel, Bill Miller, Jimmy Mitchell, Randall Nachman, Walter Oliveaux, Barton Platte, Elizabeth Poole, Susanna Prescott, Tammy Riggs, Butch Ritchie, James and Sylvia Roach, Cole Rourke, Gwin Shanks, Kaizlyn Shockley, Rusty Snyder, Cade Stapleton, Kaitlyn Templet, Roland Toups, Millie and Howard Varner, Deborah Vines, Emily Walz, Jake Washington, Dennisia Williams, Deacon Zekes, Lynn Zinn.

Those serving in the armed forces

Parker Blanche, Amanda Browning, Jay Christopher, Ryan Coacher, Carlile Coiment, John Davis, Joseph Dooley, Polly Finley, Bryan Geltz, Edward Jenkins, Laura Latson, Shawn Lemons, Terry Palmer, James Powers, Jeff Ragusa, Christopher Willis, Aaron Zuccaro, 745th & 746th Exped Squads, 379th & 926th Exped. Support Squads, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 1st 222 Aviation Regiment.

The Grace Pre-School and Youth Group are excited to have a float in this year's Christmas in the Country parade on December 8th at 2:00 p.m. If you would like to contribute candy for the children to throw, please bring your donations to the church office by Friday, December 6th. Thank you for making this a fun event for our little "jingle bells"!

Sounds of the Season Concert featuring Ivan Griffin, America's premier bass-baritone classical singer, will be held on Friday, December 6th at 7:30 p.m. The concert benefits the Old Benevolent Society Building Restoration. A reception will be held in Jackson Hall prior to the concert from 6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

Are you interested in joining the choir? Now is your chance to try your voice out as we worship each Sunday. Come join the choir now through Christmas Eve to see if this is the ministry for you. Choir practices are immediately following the 10 a.m. service for exactly one hour. If you'd like more information please reach out to Jeanne Morris.

New Christmas Eve Service Times

- **Christmas Pageant at 11:00 am at Grace - No Sermon, no Incense**
- **Christmas Eve at St. Johns at 3:30 pm - Sermon by Bp. Jenkins. No Incense**
- **Christmas Vigil at Grace: 4:00 pm - Sermon by Fr. Roldan, Incense**
- **Christmas Day at Grace 10:00 am - Sermon by Fr. Roldan, some incense**

Introducing the Vestry Nominees: We will feature the nominees for vestry in newsletters throughout the next month so that the congregation has time to learn more about those who have been nominated to vestry. Our hope is this will enable you to prayerfully consider each nominee in advance of your vote. Our first nominee is Maria Gerry.



Maria Gerry, 61, recalls her fondest memories of her youth assisting her mother with laundering the altar linen and making the Baptismal bibs at the local Catholic Church in Covington, Louisiana, where she grew up. Although Maria felt drawn to the religious life, she pursued a career in Nursing. She married her husband Joe, in 2000, moved to Maui and settled in Wailuku. They were welcomed into the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church and Maria became an active member through various ministries including: Altar Guild, Eucharistic Minister and Vestry Representative. Maria also volunteered her time in the church office,

posting the weekly pledges into the data base. Maria sang in the community choir, paddled Hawaiian Outrigger canoes, and enjoyed the outdoors when not assisting in the care of her mother in law.

In 2012, the Gerrys moved back to Louisiana to be closer to family. Combined they have 2 sons and 6 grandchildren. In the same year, Maria and Joe settled in St. Francisville and became members of Grace. Being a member of Grace Church has permitted Maria to continue in the ministries she has come to love, Altar Guild, Nursing Home, Angola's Church of Transfiguration, Over 50's and others. Through these ministries, she is able to spread the word of God, help those in need, and bring comfort to the lonely. When possible, Maria enjoys reading, walking, being with family and friends, plus practicing the ukelele and the piano.

If elected for the Vestry, Maria would encourage others to join in a ministry or two so they may share in the blessings and the fellowship that they bring.

Grace Church
of West Feliciana Parish
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Sunday Ministry Assistants & Calendar

December 1, 2019

Acolytes: Grant Rome, Joey Peno, Hayes Whatley, Evelyn Pollet

Chalice bearers: 7:30 a.m.: Carol Stamey
10 a.m.: Karen Snyder, Trish Toburen

Ushers: Kelly Ward, Ellen Williams

Lectors: Karen Snyder, Rucker Leake

Vestry Rep: Drew Nordgren

Altar Guild: Team 3

Children's Church: Carly Whatley, Renee Wilson

Altar Greenery: Sharon Gauthier

Sanctuary Candle: Kelly and Kathryn Ward

Coffee Hour: Kathy Kane

Babysitters: Ashleigh Godke, Andrew Godke

December 8, 2019

Acolytes: Wyatt Olsen, Grant Rome, Hannah Adams, Olivia Adams

Chalice bearers: 7:30 a.m.: Sharon Gauthier
10 a.m.: Richard Kendrick, Brandie Olsen

Ushers: Dixie Blue, Tiger Olsen

Lectors: Landon Anderson, Dixie Blue

Vestry Rep: Dr. Pat Schneider

Children's Church: Alicia Dwyer, Lisa Foster

Altar Guild: Team 4

Altar Greenery: Carol Stamey

Sanctuary Candle: Ronnie and Pat Martin

Coffee Hour: Chris Roldan

Babysitters: Madie Kane, Emma Olsen

December 1, 2019

7:30am - Holy Eucharist

8:45 am - Bible Study

10:00am - Holy Eucharist
Coffee Hour

December 8, 2019

7:30am - Holy Eucharist

8:45 am - Bible Study

10:00am - Holy Eucharist
Coffee Hour

Wednesday, December 4

5 - 7pm - Youth Group

5:15pm - Eucharist

6 - 7pm - Adult Formation

Thursday, December 5

9:15am - Morning Prayer

10:00am - Worship: SF Country Manor

6 - 7pm - Newcomers Class

Friday, December 6

7:00am - Eucharist

8:30am - Lectionary Bible Study

Sunday, December 8

8:45am - Bible Study

10:00am - Eucharist

Wednesday, December 11

5 - 7pm - Youth Group

5:15pm - Eucharist

6 - 7pm - Adult Formation

Thursday, December 12

9:15am - Morning Prayer

10:00am - Worship: SF Country Manor

Friday, December 13

7:00am - Eucharist

8:30am - Lectionary Bible Study