

September 2019

Dear Parish Family,

Greetings to you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord!

I hope you have had a great summer. It is so hard to believe that we are already well into September, isn't it? I am writing this letter to draw your attention to some of the marvelous ways that the Holy Spirit is at work in our midst, and to update you on what we are doing with the insights gained through the Renewal Works process.

Wasn't the visit last June from **Pastor Harvey Carey** wonderful? We had lively worship on Pentecost and we had about 40 people from St. Luke's on retreat with Harvey, focusing on the Holy Spirit. Lives were changed. Many were blessed. The joy of the Lord continues!

We had a **great summer at St. Luke's** also! For the first time we had weekly potlucks, which were well attended by enthusiastic participants. We also offered the 5pm Intersect service on two Sundays with great success. Average Sunday Attendance was up significantly over the same period last year since May: May +14.3%, June +27.2%, July +11.7% and August +7.8%! And during this time, we have seen new members join us.

This Fall we have additional people joining the Alpha team and the Bible studies, already 18 people signed up for Tavern Talk to discuss C.S. Lewis, and 17 people are interested in the pilgrimage. As I write this, **we have collected \$2100 for hurricane relief to the Bahamas** with two Sunday offerings still to come. The PLG and committee chairs for the Fair are already preparing for our Fall fellowship and fund-raising events that allow us to join together in supporting worthy causes as we "Serve God's people with loving action and generosity"!

All of this comes on the heels of the **Renewal Works process** that began last Winter when 131 of you completed a rather extensive survey about your spiritual life; thank you! The results were carefully considered by the leadership of St. Luke's and a presentation was given in May to share with the parish some of what we learned. In July, the Renewal Works Leadership Committee, Workshop Team, the St. Luke's staff and vestry met to discuss next steps. It was a wonderful, lively discussion that identified themes and generated a list of ideas in response to what people indicated they were hungry for on the survey. Then in the beginning of September the vestry held a retreat to further discuss next steps and the direction we are heading. Please

see the attached document that was produced from that retreat for the details. Here are some highlights:

- *The People of St. Luke's indicated they want more to help them grow spiritually.*
- *There are many at St. Luke's with doubts and questions who come regularly to worship.*
- *There is a desire for increased understanding of core Christian beliefs as found in the creeds and Baptismal Covenant.*
- *There is a desire for more of a focus on the Bible.*
- *There is a desire for resources for spiritual growth.*
- *There is a desire to grow in experiencing God through the Holy Spirit.*
- *The concept of small groups (both the existing and creating new ones) frequently emerged as an approach that could help with all of these.*

I learned a lot from this process. My bottom line is that I am thankful to serve as rector at a church where people feel comfortable worshipping and being a part of our community though they may have many doubts and questions. I am thrilled to hear of the desire people have to grow closer in relationship to God. The attached document from the Vestry retreat offers some practical next steps for us to try – and note that several of these things are not new programs but different ways of doing things we already do. My sermons have been informed by the results of the survey. The choices we have made for adult forums, having summer potlucks, and new groups that are forming all flow from what you indicated on the Renewal Works survey.

So much of this desire for spiritual growth, for an experience of God, and for an increased understanding of core Christian beliefs is also addressed in a fun, humorous, academically sound way by the Rev. Nicky Gumbel in the **Alpha Series**. I am so thankful for the Alpha Team who initiated and coordinated the retreat with Harvey Carey in June, and who are even now gearing up for a new Alpha series on Sunday nights starting January 5th. Alpha has already blessed many with deeper understanding and renewed spiritual growth. I urge everyone at St. Luke's to seriously try to attend Alpha 2020 on Sunday nights – dinner, fellowship and fun are all included.

We are so blessed here at St. Luke's – God has brought such an amazing group of people together. As we start this Fall season, won't you join me in praising God and giving thanks for His many blessings to us at St. Luke's through Jesus Christ in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit?

See you at St. Luke's!

The Lord Be With You,