

Rectors Report 01/18/2024

Worship Report

Since our last vestry meeting, the roller coaster of worship has truly begun. Christmas was stellar, with improved attendance pretty much across the board. Christmas Eve at 4 saw our largest service yet with 131 up from 84 the year prior and the later service was up from 57 to 65. All in all, including the advent 4 service earlier that morning and the Christmas Day service that Monday, we had 263 folks in the church. The other remarkable attendance day was Epiphany. We had 14 at the 8am service which seemed to serve as a wonderful option for folks wary of Covid but then had 105 for the pageant/baptism combo. Were it not for our passing both the spirit of Christmas and the coronavirus amongst the congregation at Christmas Eve, our Epiphany pageant Sunday may have been more populated than our family Christmas Eve.

With regard to worship form, the biggest change, at least for myself, was what happened at the family Christmas Eve service and the Epiphany Pageant. Both included elements of a standard 11AM Rite II service as well as some Wiggle Worship elements, namely reduced/adjusted readings, more child participation like in the prayers of the people and baptism, and inclusion of kids at the altar. I've received lots of positive feedback from visitors, while also hearing of how some parishioners who attended that service found themselves hungering for something more contemplative/solemn. I believe that we're serving all such needs, but I continue to consider how we might refine our services and in particular, any joint services we do. Which, incidentally, I'm going to avoid for a little while.

For Lent, I plan to shake things up. We would switch to Rite I from Rite II at Saint Paul and the Redeemer in Hyde Park and I intend to do that with St. Christopher's unless I hear outright mutiny. I anticipate modifying language to be both Rite I-y and more inclusive. I'll also plan to mix up the 8am service. I met with Richard and we've talked through Holy Week, which I'll be mapping out soon.

We've had some traction with new servers, most visibly Ben, but our beloved Pete Curtin will be serving as an acolyte in the near future as I continue to encourage kids. I've drafted an Altar Guild Guide which Peter Walters will look at and I'll be doing the same for a LEM manual which will be edited by Mary Kay.

Formation Report

Formation is really feeling more and more full. Chloe's work with the teens has been incredible and they remain invested. She was sick for a couple of sessions, but it seemed that their time together was fun and meaningful, AND they came in for the Eucharist when they've been here. While somewhat in infancy, I think this provides a basic pipeline for kids who may be aging out of Wiggle Worship (i.e. Judah Streitzel) and want something more mature.

For kids, wiggle worship continues to be a blast and there's great participation. Even on the Sunday that the coldwave hit, we had 30 folks which was amazing to me, especially given we had so many at the pageant. Most exciting to me has been the amount parishioner leadership that has arisen. Kenzie and Abby headed up the outreach work set up by Paul Clark which allowed me to start the Episcopal 101 class. In addition, Laura Reed, Laurie Bachrach, the Ursos, Rebecca Ho, and more have helped out at different times.

Speaking of which, Episcopal 101 was fairly well attended though chaotic. I've played with doing formation in that corner of the parish hall, but this past Sunday made it truly feel untenable. The kids will be in the basement this coming Sunday as I work with adults in the Aldworth Room.

In addition to this class, Blaise has triumphed a new zoom Bible Study. I'll be pushing this more heavily this Sunday in the announcements.

St. C.'s Outreach

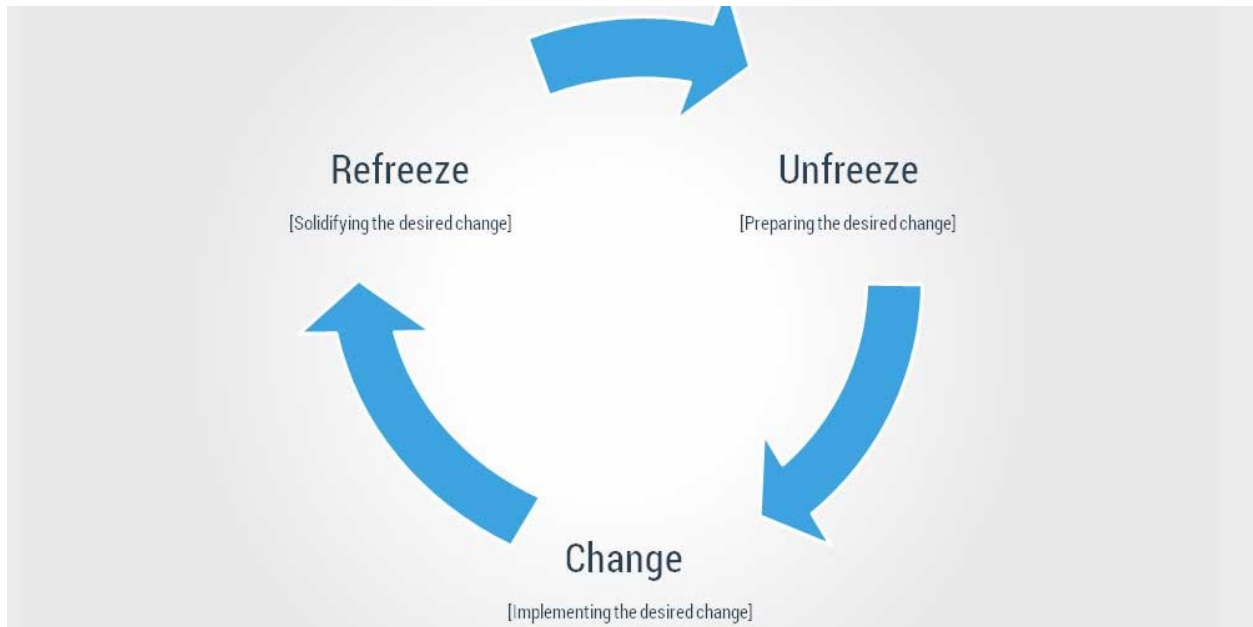
The work of Emily, Mark, Eileen, and Paul has been amazing across the different realms of the migrant ministry and the Housing Forward and Beyond Hunger work. I feel like the visibility of the Migrant Ministry and the Neighborhood Bridge's offering at Lessons and Carols was great for communicating St. Christopher's commitment to outreach and service. That said, I believe there is more work to be done. Thinking about outreach help me slow my roll and remember that the best way to promote sustainable church growth in terms of both numbers and cohesive identity is consistent and (at least fairly-well) controlled activity. That consistency has absolutely been there with regard to outreach.

Staffing

With about a month under her belt, Ann is getting more and more comfortable with the job. She is now comfortable in creating and printing the bulletin and in preparing the Messenger. Ian's advice was that one should always hire for one's weaknesses. As such, she has been great at helping me reign in my predilection for over-commitment and has helped me slow down to some projects for the building. This particularly includes the bulletin boards which she's already been attacking (see the leadership board as an example where she saw it incomplete and did something about it).

Given we've gone about four months without a youth director, I'm going to begin asking around as to how people are feeling with regard to a youth person. I'm currently wondering about hosting an intern and using funds budgeted for a youth director to help pay a postulant/intern. I find this could help us live into the church's history of training priests ;) and bring some new blood in. Regardless of whether or not money is part of this discussion, I'm playing phone tag with Louisa McKelleston over at the diocese about talking interns. Unofficially, I know at least one person who is navigating the process who has articulated excitement about being at St. Christopher's.

Systems Changes



As we continue to enjoy this first year together, I find myself mindful of Kurt Lewin's Change Model. It illustrates the way in which healthy, sustainable change occurs to help solidify a cultural identity within a system. You highlight and "agitate" the current state of something. For St. Christopher's much of this work has been undertaken as youth and children's ministry, parish and finance administration, rota management, and the rector position (just to name a few) are all areas which have been unfrozen and made subject to change.

The hopes articulated in the CAT survey are what we hope to change towards and then "refreeze" so they become habituated into the lifeblood of St. Christopher's. To make healthy change, the model encourages us to share information with the congregation about what's going on, train people so that they are equipped to make the change happen, get leaders moving, and to involve others as much as possible. While we have a ways to go in these areas, I think we're conveying to the congregation a healthy attitude and they are returning it in kind through greater participation in a great many arenas (youth and kids ministry, the rota, migrant ministries, parish life, etc.).

Upcoming

Mardi Gras is truly going to be a celebration as we celebrate a new vestry, the successes of the past few months, and as we get to calmly come into Lent for a bit. I'm really very excited for Lent and Holy Week as while the winter holidays feel like a joyful sprint, Holy Week is like a relaxing marathon. I anticipate being both exhausted by the end of it but loving every second. Richard and I sat down talking about services and it was incredibly life giving. I'm very eager for the next few months, even as I write this.

Also I'm gonna be a dad, so that's nice too 😊.

Current Calendar of Planned Events:

01/28 – Annual Meeting

02/04 – Bishop Visit

02/13 – Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday)

02/14 – Ash Wednesday

03/24 – Palm Sunday and Holy Week Begins

Late Feb/ Early March Chili cook off