

SMALL(ER) CHURCHES DISCERNMENT AND PLANNING MEETING #2

BEING THE CHURCH—ALWAYS!



OPENING

- SOME REMINDERS:
 - DON'T FORGET TO MAKE SURE FOLKS FROM YOUR PARISH ARE REGISTERED BY THURSDAY FOR THE DIOCESAN LEARNING EVENT THIS WEEKEND. WE WILL HEAR A SERMON FROM THE BISHOP AND TALK ABOUT FAITH GROUPS.
 - NEXT CHURCH LEADER UNIVERSITY IS MARCH 6
- QUESTIONS YOU HAVE THIS EVENING? (PUT IN CHAT WILL TRY TO TAKE THOSE AT THE END)
- AND—HOW ARE YOU DOING TONIGHT, REALLY?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SPEAK OF SMALL(ER) CHURCHES?

- Around 70% of churches in the Episcopal Church average 100 people or fewer on a Sunday, and the median is well under 75. Church attendance has declined significantly in last decade—by over 15% church-wide
- Small churches are predominant and they are here to stay! Size is only one measurement
- Many small churches are places of vibrant and life giving ministry. However, little changes can cause big challenges.
- Small(er) churches vary widely, and yet have common interests and concerns!
- As someone wise pointed out, we don't want to wind up only being laundromats or museums!



● EPHESIANS 2: 11-22

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth,^[b] called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body^[c] through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.^[d] ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.^[e] ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually^[f] into a dwelling place for God.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

- Catechism BCP pp. 854-855 (and BCP 850-51)
- Last time we talked about:
 - What does this look like in our world, and in our lives?
 - What are the spiritual aspects? What are the practical aspects?
 - How do we evaluate where we are and what we are doing?
- Questions for this evening (and to reflect on in the weeks to come):
 - Reflecting back on recent months (including “the holidays”), name one way your church has been connecting people to God and each other in Christ in this time
 - Was there a moment or was there an activity that made you feel—“Wow, we really are doing this church thing!”?
 - What have you learned in this time of Pandemic about your church? About yourself? What might that say about who God is calling you to be going forward?

LENT RESOURCES AND IDEAS

- More guidance will be forthcoming about Ash Wednesday
- Consider a fun way to gather by Zoom from homes—have a pancake shape or recipe contest for shrove Tuesday!
- A neat resource that, again, folks can do from home and share is [IllustratedMinistry.com](https://www.illustratedministry.com)
- Consider reading a book of the Bible together—the Bishop has suggested the Book for Esther multiple times in recent months and this year’s Sunday lectionary focuses on the book of Mark which is only sixteen chapters.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury puts out a Lent book every year (Just Google. . .)
- Consider taking on a way to support those in food scarcity as a congregation if you haven’t

NEXT MEETING

- March 22 at 7
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