



### A Month for Thanks

by Bill Blizzard  
 Vestry Liaison: Communications

Here we are once again preparing for the holiday season. The church calendar and most of you probably start the holiday season with Advent. But I like to back it up all the way to All Saints Day and go through Epiphany. Great time of the year ... football, turkey and cool weather. Thing is, I've now turned into that crazy uncle they warn you about attending your Thanksgiving dinner. It's also a great time to reflect on the things that are important. So here are a few random thoughts.

I'll give thanks for our Jewish heritage. The fall season also ushers in their high-holy days starting with Rosh Hashanah and culminating with Yom Kippur, their holiest day. A day to ask forgiveness of God, a day set aside to atone for their sins. But also importantly is Erev Yom Kippur, the evening before. At this time Jews must ask for the forgiveness of people before asking for God's forgiveness. Seems like a reasonable thing to do.

I'll give thanks for and a shout out to Good Shepherd's snowbirds. Welcome back. We've missed you.

There are many blessings I am thankful for ... my bride of 52 years, family, friends, good health (or at least what passes as good health these days), but I want to give a special thanks to a few parishioners.

We recently embarked on a new adventure - **Invite • Welcome • Connect**. Generally speaking, this process is a continuum of interactions with guests and members alike to bring us closer into a meaningful relationship with each other, Good Shepherd and God. Last month seven of us attended an IWC presentation at a Diocesan mini-retreat and brought back lots of good ideas and enthusiasm.

I am especially grateful to those who have agreed to IWC leadership roles. They are:

**Invite:** Martha Mullinax and Gail Griffin  
**Welcome:** Maureen Belote, Diane and Butch Niford  
**Connect:** Joe Nixon, Mary Ratliff and Tony Bowman.  
 Thank you. Happy Thanksgiving.



### Ubuntu \*

by Mary Ratliff  
 Connect Team, Co-Leader

\* "I Am Who I Am Because of Who We are Together" – Exodus 3:14 and Desmond Tutu

### This Month We Welcome My Mother in Law, Judy Ratliff



So Mom, we've talked about all of this many, many times before, but I would like to share your thoughts with the congregation and have them get to know you a little better. So tell me, how long have you attended services?

***I have been in Florida for almost a year now, I moved from Kentucky last October. I had been coming down for winters for several years and decided I had enough of cold winters back in Kentucky. My family had migrated to this area and I decided this was the place for me. When I moved there was no decision as to where to attend church because you and Jim had already established a wonderful relationship with Good Shepherd.***

Are you coming to Good Shepherd as an Episcopalian? What other churches have you attended?

***I did come to Good Shepherd as an Episcopalian, I came from The Church of the Ascension in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. I grew up with a Roman Catholic background. Our boys grew up in a Disciples of Christ church in our hometown. Our entire family was very active in that Church, but as adults they became members of the Episcopal Church.***

How did you find Good Shepherd?

***I found Good Shepherd because my son and daughter in law were already members. Good choice.***

What inspired you to attend?

***I have always attended church, something that is very important to me and I found Good Shepherd to be a very active and loving Church. One of the things that was so attractive to me was all the outreach that was going on in this church. The concern for others is so much in the forefront.***

What would you want to tell others about Good Shepherd to encourage them to come and explore our parish?

***I would tell others "Come as you are....no exceptions". This is the very best thing about Good Shepherd. The love and acceptance is so real in this congregation. I would also tell others, not only to come and see, but come to hear wonderful messages every service. Also come and be active, there is an opportunity for everyone.***

Please tell us a bit about yourself outside Good Shepherd - family, jobs, and hobbies, whatever you like.

***I have always lived in Kentucky, with the exception of four years in Alabama, where my husband attended Auburn University Veterinary School. I attended Morehead State University. I had one brother who is now deceased. I have three sons, Byram, Jim, and Bill, seven Grandchildren, and am working on # 10 Great Grandchild. I was fortunate enough to be a stay at home Mom. To me that was the greatest career.***

***I enjoy living in Florida and having so many new friends, I like to read, spending time with friends and family (especially enjoying the talent of a very special 16 year old Cello player).***



## 51 and Counting

by Diane Niford  
Vestry Liaison: Spiritual Formation

Several of us attended the 51st Annual Convention of the Diocese of SW Florida in Punta Gorda, as your elected representatives and leaders of various ministries.

This year's theme was **YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** (Matt. 5:14). To quote Bishop Dabney Smith, "We are taught in the Book of Common Prayer that the ministry of the laity is to '...take their place in the life, worship and governance of the Church '... and priests are 'to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church.'" He goes on to say "our responsibility in helping people envision in true light is required and evident .... It is a required responsibility for Diocesan Convention delegates and clergy to participate in the governance of the Church at Convocations and the Diocesan Annual Convention."

And so it was done. There was business to attend to re budget, resolutions, elections. There were workshops to attend on topics like Bishop Curry's Way of Love, youth, grants, healing, communication, missions, music, Eucharist, cybercrime.

The concourse was filled with a variety of ministries like Episcopal Church Women, Episcopal Relief, Abigail's Hope Blankets, etc. and leaders offered kindness, information and chocolate.

The highlight of Convention, however, was worshipping with these people of the Light. To again quote our Bishop, his sermon included this wisdom and admonition: "People go to where there is Light. BE ONE!"

There was far more time at Convention devoted to the joy of worshipping together, socializing with each other and breaking bread together. I told Becky it felt more like a RETREAT than a convention. Convention Chair Judy Stark referred to it as our "annual family reunion."

Jesus said about himself, "I am the light of the world: (John 8:12). And he said "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

Let's be the light. Let's seek it in others.

## Your Vestry Offers Thanks

### I Am Thankful to Have Good Shepherd in My Life Because...



... it has become my emotional and spiritual family since 2015. After the loss of my mother and only brother in 2014, I felt alone and lost. My children, grandchildren and friends all live far away. So, I researched the Episcopal churches within a 25 mile radius of my home and chose three to visit.

After my first encounter at Good Shepherd, there really wasn't a need to search anymore. I found my home. Becky reminds me that I am the guy who came and never left. Since that 2015 Good Friday morning, I've become involved in a number of ministries. Each has provided great satisfaction. Just ask me some time. I'll be happy to share my experiences with you. More importantly, I'd enjoy helping you find your perfect way to celebrate and serve here." **John Russotto, Vestry Liaison for Worship and Music**



"... of the wonderful parishioners. You made my husband & I feel so very welcome. I had been a member of my NJ church for 64 years. You made our transition to Good Shepherd so easy. The love & caring that you show everyone is heartwarming. We are so blessed to call The Church of the Good Shepherd our new church family." **Robyn Harker, Vestry Liaison for Fellowship**



"... of the love and acceptance I see and I feel from each parishioner to all who worship together in this place. I picture heaven being just like this!" **Diane Niford, Vestry Liaison for Spiritual Formation**



"... of the wonderful opportunities provided to worship our Lord, do good things, help those in need, and be around others with similar beliefs." **Dan Depies, Junior Warden and Vestry Liaison for Ministry Support**



"... I have seen God present and active in all sorts and conditions of people, which has changed my life for the better and ended me with profound hope for both the church and the planet. **Becky Robbins-Penniman, Rector**



"... the parish offers multiple opportunities of service to its members, the community and the world." **Pat Cates, Clerk of Vestry**



"... Good Shepherd allows me to share my favorite time of the year with others. Holidays are a time of joy and heartwarming love. Getting time to spend with it my family and have a wonderful meal is one of the greatest traditions I have, and I am so thankful for that. But some people aren't as lucky. In fact some don't even get to have a Thanksgiving meal at all. This is why sharing this time with my extended family at Good Shepherd is so meaningful to me. Every Thanksgiving I do the best I can to help out ones in need. It is such a great feeling to give a gift of love to someone, and to see a face smile back at you.

Thanksgiving is more than just the freshly roasted turkey or the juicy cranberry sauce. It's a time when everyone is able to join together and celebrate their blessings. It's also a time to bless others by giving your time to people that are less fortunate than you. I find that during the holidays people are more willing to give their time to ones who are in need. I find this to be true with myself also, especially during Thanksgiving.

For those who are alone or might not be able to prepare a meal, it's important to know that there is a place to go to celebrate this holiday with others. For those who wish to help me in the kitchen...that's where I'll be. For those who wish to join the meal, all you need to do is show up; no reservations are necessary. Meal service begins at 11:30 am. Plenty of space is available for individuals and large families. We truly believe no one should be alone on Thanksgiving and this community is one in which we all feel like family.

All are welcome, No exceptions. Happy Thanksgiving." **Cheryl Sharpe, Senior Warden**