

Giving Help & Respect

by Bill Blizzard,
 Vestry Liaison for Communications

I love communications as a ministry. It allows me to live vicariously through you and the wonderful things you do for others. Take for example the Furniture Thrift Store. This article was going to be about how our volunteers have turned things around since the paid store manager left last year, and they have! But it finally dawned on me that you may want to experience their joy as I had. So here's what I learned ...

Last year Religious Community Services, Inc. (RCS) closed its thrift store. With a mission to support our neighbors facing hunger, homelessness, domestic violence, or a lack of basic needs, RCS now looks to COGS to help out. For those in need and leaving The Haven of RCS (a shelter from domestic violence) and RCS Grace House (emergency family housing) to live on their own, RCS gives vouchers for needed furniture or clothing found at our store. Dave Dube showed me a stack of about 300 vouchers that FTS filled in the last 12 months. This represents \$5,400 in in-kind charitable contributions that we've made. Dave also shared one of his happiest days was the time he received a voucher from a mother with son in tow. Jumping up and down with joy, her son was simply ecstatic that he would now be able to eat at a table.

Another lesson came from one of the stores' employees, Lydell Rogers. Lydell considers everyone at the store to be his family. As an African American with a troubled past, Lydell said, **"People here treat me, and everyone, with respect.** For example, we now have a young man working here who has found a real purpose in his life. The people here don't see color and now I don't either. We're here for the community and they know it. We're here to help them furnish their houses. We look after them and they look after us."

And the most poignant story from Lydell was one about a homeless man who entered the store in need of help. His inability to pay was of no concern. A volunteer parishioner actually took off his own shoes and gave them to him. Doesn't get more Christ-like than that!

Thanks, FTS volunteers... all 36 of you!

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 David Thornton



David, we're so glad that you decided to make our family a part of your life. We'd like to get to know you a little better, so tell me, how long have you attended services?

Since October 2018. Just prior to that I moved from Ohio to take care of my aunt and father in nearby towns. When she passed away I found in her personal affects she too was an Episcopalian, having previously been a Lutheran. Several months later I decided to start attending Good Shepherd.

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

I was brought up in churches relating to both Baptist and Presbyterian denominations. I accepted the gift of salvation while still a child and was baptized by immersion during college. For a long period after that I did not attend any church, but when my wife died eight years ago, I started attending an Episcopal Church while still living in New Jersey.

How did you find Good Shepherd?

Good Shepherd was only about one-half mile away from the condo I rented, so it was very convenient for me to attend.

What inspired you to attend?

First, I became comfortable with the Episcopal services while attending the churches up north. They gave me more of a feeling of God's love than the other denominations. Second, as encouraged in the New Testament, I needed to find fellowship with others in worship.

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

I would tell them (and have) to come visit and enjoy the same worship, biblical teaching, and fellowship I have. I also point out that Good Shepherd ministers to its nearby community in a practical sense. I truly believe that is what makes it such a joyful place.

Please tell us a bit about yourself outside Good Shepherd – your jobs, your family, your hobbies – whatever you like."

Originally I came from a town near Philadelphia, PA, but I grew up near here in St. Petersburg, FL. At 15 I moved back to Pennsylvania and went to high school and college there and then attended graduate school in Ithaca, NY. I have also lived and worked in Alaska, New Jersey (where I met my wife), Louisiana, and Ohio. I have two younger siblings, a sister and brother, who still live in the Philadelphia area. On May 1, 2019, I retired after 44 years working as a mechanical and civil engineer. During my practice I traveled to over 20 other countries in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific area. (As a civil engineer I admire the internal wooden structure supporting COGS' roof).

I have enjoyed tent camping, bicycling, swimming, and (long ago) scuba diving. And while I have been blessed to travel internationally, I now want to see some of the spectacular sights in the U.S., including some of the national parks.

All Are Welcome ...

Last month we reported that if we continue to **“Aspire to live in a world where all creation thrives in God’s love”**, growth at COGS is inevitable. We also shared the Diocesan labels “Pastoral Church” and “Program Church” simply relating to average Sunday attendance of below 140 and above 225 respectively and stated: *“We are committed to moving from a pastoral-centered parish to a program-centered parish, not only by growing our membership, but also by engaging and enabling our congregation to become more involved and to grow spiritually and thrive.”*

We are well on our way to doing just that. Recently we initiated a program called **INVITE • WELCOME • CONNECT.**

Generally speaking, this program is a continuum of interactions with visitors and members alike to bring us closer into a meaningful relationship with each other, Good Shepherd and God.

Mary Parmer is the Director of Invite • Welcome • Connect at the University of the South, School of Theology, Sewanee, TN. Her book is a series of *“stories and tools to transform your church”*. She will be a guest speaker at DaySpring on 9/25/19. Please join us. A few excerpts are quoted below.

INVITE

“Invitation is not only about inviting people into a relationship with you and others in your congregation, but also it is about inviting them into a relationship with God.”

WELCOME

“Welcome is the ministry of hospitality, and this essential covers everything from first impressions to follow-up with visitors. Welcome asks the question, ‘Do your clergy, staff, and lay leaders teach, preach, and model a theology of welcome and hospitality?’”

CONNECT

“Connection is giving meaning to membership and discovering the gifts of the people. Connection helps the newcomer answer these questions: Where do I fit in? Can I make friends in this church? Is there room for me relationally? Does this church need me? Can I find a place to belong and serve? Am I safe here?”

The Team Leaders all welcome you to participate in their ministries. Here’s what they had to say ...

... ABOUT INVITE - Martha Mullinax
“You’re invited. How exciting! Everyone likes to receive an invitation. Many people are waiting for - and hungry for - an invitation to become a part of a faith community. We want to be intentional and smart about inviting people to Good Shepherd, not only to worship, but also to special events. Please share with us your ideas on good ways to do this.”

... ABOUT WELCOME - Maureen Belote
“Do you remember your first visit to Good Shepherd? Who inspired your choice? Do you remember how you felt? What brought you back for a second and more visits? I can still remember the faces and NAMES of the people who greeted us, invited us to fellowship and sat with us. They made us want to consider changing our church allegiance. Yes, the physical ambience of COGS is lovely, but it is the people that make a church.”

... ABOUT CONNECT - Mary Ratliff
“The connect piece is all about Love. Listening and Loving. As we walk with each other, listen to our stories, witness our lives together, our relationship with God and each other deepens and grows. It’s in relationship that we can help each other discern our particular gifts, talents and interests and connect with the various programs and ministries at COGS. Those connections give each of us a deep sense of belonging and investment. It’s that sense of belonging and investment that cause a sense of excitement and joy which we then want to share with others.”

Connect with **REALM** ...



To join either go to COGS’ website at www.cogsdunedin.com and click on **Realm** at the top right hand corner or send an email to info@cogsdunedin.com.

Build It & They Will Come

Look in the racks on the back of pews right in front of you. Among other things you will see a document titled *“The 2019 Edition of the Mission and Ministry Directory.”* This is a listing of 44 separate ministries in which the parishioners of Good Shepherd find the time to volunteer their efforts.

You may think this is an overwhelming list of activities for a church our size. In truth, it very well may be, had the Vestry developed the list and asked you to join. But that is not the case. Each of the ministries is driven by a person(s) who is passionate about directly serving our community through his/her ministry. It is this passion, this commitment, which makes COGS the special place it is. The Vestry is now reviewing yet another ministry brought to us by two parishioners who feel passionate about working for justice in Pinellas County. Stay tuned.

In other news, last year we polled the Vestry about *“The Reasons You Attend Church.”* This questionnaire was based on a Gallop survey, also having interesting results. One question, phrased here as a statement, was: *“The reason I attend church is spiritual programs geared toward children and teens.”* As you might expect this came in last place. Then we asked the questions another way. If our limited funds were not a consideration, where would you choose to spend our money to improve COGS? **Suddenly this line item rocketed to first place.**

We all understand the need to have young families engaged in COGS. Youth and children are at the heart of any vital and growing church. Carey Cherivtch is doing a terrific job of running the youth program one new member at a time with few financial resources. But here’s the question: **Do you see this ministry, as we do, critical to the growth and health of the church? If so, would you consider working with Carey to articulate a vision and plan for the future?** You know ... *“build it and they will come.”*

This catalyst for the future will likely be based on volunteer help at first, then putting financial resources into this critical work as we grow. If interested, please let Carey know at kiddos@cogsdunedin.com.