

Genesis

by Bill Blizzard,
 Vestry Liaison for Communications

Recently several parishioners said to me, "The financial report from Joe was great! We need to know more about what is happening in Vestry." This was the genesis of this newsletter. But it's not a one-way street. Please let me know what questions you have and I'll see if I can find the answers.

Get Connected

My wife, Pat Blizzard, and I started going to COGS in October, 2016. During our first visit Maureen Belote made a point of getting to know us during coffee hour. Then Joe Nixon reached out to me and Miriam Benitez-Nixon reached out to both of us. "Why don't you and Bill join a few of us for dinner?" "Great," I thought. "Will anyone at dinner be from COGS?" I asked. We were newbies at that point and wanted to meet and get to know the people here. "Everyone there will be from COGS," Miriam said. "Except for our families, that's most of the people we know."

A little while later Joe asked, "Hey Bill, why don't you audit the Furniture Thrift Store? ... Why don't you consider the Finance Committee?" Of course, Miriam was always talking about what was going on at the Little Thrift Shop. Pat looked at the great work being done and found a way she could contribute to COGS as well. Later Joe and Dan Depies asked, "Bill, why not run for Vestry?" I did, and here I am reaching out to you. The point is, Pat and I were well attended to. We were connected to COGS in a meaningful way. Find a way to connect to a newbie ... find a way to connect to COGS.

Survey Says ...

This is the way you prefer receiving info about COGS ...

- 67% Announcements from the Altar
- 58% Word of Mouth
- 58% Newsletter at Church
- 50% Electronic Newsletter
- 38% Website
- 27% Facebook
- 17% Realm
- 8% Other

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 Gail Griffin



Gail, 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?

"I started coming in February of this year."

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

"I grew up a Catholic, and this past year have tried the Unity Church and Methodist Church."

How did you find Good Shepherd?

"I had passed it many times while driving and our family friend, Joe Hall, is active here."

What inspired you to attend?

"I was looking for a welcoming church, where I could get to know other members, and most importantly get 'spiritual nourishment.'"

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

"Give it a try - members are friendly and welcoming, Becky and Cindy give encouraging sermons, and you'll be invited to coffee after service!"

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

I am originally from Rhode Island, but have been here for the past 23 years. I worked for the Pinellas County School System for many years, and now I work part-time for Baycare. My husband, Jeff, recently retired from his career as a pharmacist, plays golf and loves all the Boston teams. Is that okay to say in a Rays/Bucs/Lightning world?

And speaking of sports, when we moved to Florida I was really confused about how many people here followed college sports. We have three adult children, two daughters and a son. All three went to FSU so I learned to cheer for the young men and women in garnet and gold. "Go 'Noles". Sorry Gators!

Our oldest, Courtney, lives in New York City; the second, Brenna, in Arlington, VA; and our son, Connor is in the Peace Corps in the country of Vanuatu, a Pacific archipelago about 1,000 miles northeast of Australia. He will be there until July, 2020. Family means everything to me, and we miss our kids a lot, but we will all be reunited this August when we visit our son in Vanuatu. Can't wait!

I enjoy sewing & crafts, love walking on the causeway and other parks, and I'm an avid reader.

In transmitting her story, Gail said,

"It was great to meet all the nice people at the gathering. I was overwhelmed by all the people who genuinely wanted to get to know me! Peace, Gail"

All Are Welcome ...

It seems our visitors are beginning to understand we really mean it when we say, **“Come as you are ... All are welcome.”** Last year alone we said that with God’s help we would welcome, embrace, recognize and support 43 new (23 net new) members into a congregation of 210 members. That’s an 11% growth at a time when national statistics say that church membership is declining. Why do you think this is? Really, we’d like to hear from you.

Our suspicion is it has a lot to do with you. We recently looked into polling information provided by the Diocese of SW Florida for the reasons people attend church. An overwhelming majority (81% of the people surveyed) said that **“warm and friendly encounters”** were either moderately important or very important to them. It ranked #1 among seven categories having to do with reasons folks attend. So keep up the good work ... as if the joy we experience could be considered work.

Challenges/Opportunities

When it comes to the operation of a church, growth presents both challenges and opportunities. As much as we think Pastor Becky is Wonder Woman, there’s only so much of her to go around. So your Vestry is stepping up to the challenge in her support. At the end of last year we coined the term “Vestry Liaison”. It seems this was not actually a new concept. Many, many parishioners have said since, “We used to have ‘Vestry Liaisons’ as a part of this church when we were larger.”

The Diocese of SW Florida categorizes its 76 churches by their average monthly Sunday attendance (ASA): Family (0-75), Pastoral (76-140), Transitional (141-224) and Program Churches (225-800). COGS is a “Transitional Church” meaning that we’re growing from a Pastoral to a Program Church. With a size last year of 233 members with an ASA averaging 183 (153 summer-213 winter), we are on the cusp becoming reclassified and feel it in winter. In addition to size, delivery of programs changes from a single pastor being able to handle everything to more expansive roles for others, be they staff or volunteers.

Funny thing about serving on Vestry, not everyone agrees with everyone all the time. We vet things quite thoroughly. It’s a humbling experience. We discussed and discussed the pluses and minuses of growth - what we had to gain, what we had to lose. We began to understand that with our many ministries we already function as a program church, and realized that if: **“We aspire to live in a world where all creation thrives in God’s love and seek to be who God created us to be by: Worshipping Joyfully, Respecting All, Sharing Generously and Nurturing Every Spirit”** growth is not aspirational, but inevitable. We concluded we had better prepare ourselves for the future. This resulted in a formal statement of intent:

“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.”

The Realm Connection

by Joe Nixon,
Connect Team, Co-Leader

REALM is an easy way to communicate and stay connected with your fellow parishioners. It’s a single place where you can sign in, stay informed about church activity, communicate with your ministries, team leaders and Vestry Liaisons, privately track your pledge and gifts, and stay connected to our growing church community.



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. You’ll be glad you did!

Your Vestry Liaisons

The 2019 Mission and Ministries Directory has recently been published. You can find it on our website at www.cogsdunedin.com and in the racks on the back of the pews. There are 43 separate ministries your parish supports by over 15,000 volunteer hours a year. Each Vestry Liaison now coordinates, supports and otherwise assists the Rector through Team Leaders in various areas of ministry. Choose to join us in support of COGS. **Contact a liaison!**



Worship and Music:
John Russotto



Spiritual Formation:
Diane Niford



Outreach - Feeding the Hungry and Clothing the Naked:
Jim Ratliff



Outreach - Loving Our Neighbors as Ourselves:
Phil Beauchamp



Ministry Support:
Dan Depies, Jr Warden



Finance & Administration:
Joe Nixon



Communications:
Bill Blizzard



Fellowship:
Robyn Harker, and



Senior Warden:
Cheryl Sharpe