



The Samaritan

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

If one thing above all was true of the first Christians and their fledgling church, it was that they were *alive*. After the darkness of the crucifixion and the mystery of the resurrection, the scattering uncertainty of Jesus' followers turned into a period of realization, powered by the Holy Ghost, that Christ would live in what they came to call the Body of Christ.

To be alive a body must grow. That is the law of all living things. Health and life itself depend on growth. There is no no-growth option.

Let me make a few observations on words and the Word, and then recount some principles and experiences in church growth. Biblical religion is dynamic. It's impossible to follow the narrative line of scripture without sensing movement and growth. Humankind exiled from the perfect garden; people formed by exodus and wandering; kingdom building followed by the rebukes of the prophets who smelled the rot of static, self-satisfied corruption; a Jesus community of proclamation and healing in the context of journeying, recruiting, and preparing for a new community of journey and growing.

Biblical Greek gives us *dunamis*, the word behind "power" in Acts 1. 8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Dynamic means potential force or energy, marked by continuous, productive activity or change. That same New Testament Greek should inform our understanding of health. *Hygeia* means "living well," or more precisely, "a well way of living." *Euexia* means "well-habitedness" or "good habit of body." English words for health all point to "wholeness" or "completeness," and however spiritually rich this notion is, we have almost unconsciously let ourselves slide into an understanding of wholeness that is structural and static.

The Greek words correctly point us to functioning and activity of the body – not only its working but its working well. So I make sure to read often, and to

*To be alive a body
must grow.
That is the law of
all living things.*



teach clearly, how these understandings fueled the early church. Paul and his successors and colleagues richly put this language to work in their descriptions of mission and growth and in their teaching about it. Ephesians 4. 11ff. speaks of "building up the body" and of "the whole body working properly." Colossians 1. 16 and 2. 19 make clear that growth is not just biological but firmly based on Christ.

I try to remember, too, that growth is mysteriously cumulative; and even the committed, converted soldier of growth is likely to benefit (or suffer) from others' work. Paul, who wasn't always modest, writes engagingly about this in 1 Corinthians 3. 5 – 15. To grow, leaders must have a clear-eyed knowledge of their congregation's past and its personalities.

And of course, Jesus' own teaching constantly uses growth parables (especially the Sower in Matthew 13. 3ff., and its parallels) and his ministry repeatedly challenges his disciples to fish for people, seek the lost, and prepare for the challenges of a growth-focused ministry. He collected a growing number of followers, he "trained" disciples (James the son of Salome and

Zebedee being one of the first), and he preached a growing Kingdom. I see no reason to think that our task is any different.

A word about numbers. They aren't by themselves indicators of anything. But if as members of Christ's mystical Body we're doing what we're supposed to, increasing numbers do matter. Obviously, they measure the reach of our work. They are indicators of whether the body is healthy because it is growing or sick because its organic functions are beginning to shut down. But church leaders, and clergy especially, are often heard putting down any emphasis on growth in numbers. Undeniably, and for a lot of complex reasons, mainline churches like ours have seen an alarming erosion of our share of the population. We could argue about the causes, but why not establish growth as a goal, embracing it as faithfulness to the Great Commission and as commitment to the living health of our beloved church?

I still hear leaders – clergy and religious professionals especially – defend small and declining numbers by saying that numbers are not really the point. I fail to see what glory there is in the rationalization that if we're growing in numbers we are somehow into people pleasing and peddling cheap grace. Isn't it just possible that growth and trouble can go together? "Disturbing the comfortable," which many of us clergy have taken to be the litmus test of our own courage and integrity, often looks a lot like taking a 'stand' on issues. Might it not also look like squeezing the faithful to make room for their neighbors?

.

So herewith some first principles:

THERE IS ALWAYS RESISTANCE TO GROWTH.

Members of a body will resent the strategies that lead to growth, namely, the kind of preaching and worship that strengthens the faithful and also appeals to the seeker. In the mid-90s, we were going through astonishing growth at St Bartholomew's in New York City. My boss, the Rev'd Bill Tully, in a moment of grace (he had run out of clever answers and had tired of being defensive), was able to reply to a parishioner who exploded one Sunday after the service, "I don't know anyone here

anymore. I had to fight for a seat. And they don't even know how to use the prayer book!" And Bill said, "I don't know everyone anymore either, Tom, and if you and I did know them all, this parish would be stuck and ready to decline and die."

HALLOWED HABITS KEEP US SMALL.

The pastoral model of the priest as caretaker – or even a team of ministers primarily offering empathy – seems to ensure putting maintenance over mission. Good pastoring is Biblical and indispensable, but we need to rethink how we do it, or else we will continue caring for a diminishing flock.

THE PRAYER BOOK IS NOT ENOUGH.

We have an unsurpassable liturgy and a book that makes it easy (for the professionals) to open it and "do" it week after week. Attracting people who are unchurched, unfamiliar with the liturgy, or turned off by church memories or associations requires user-friendly leaflets, the best music we can offer (regardless of style), and constant evaluation and improvement. For God to be glorified, Jesus preached, and the Spirit to enliven the proceedings, the Rector and the professional staff will work to get the mechanics, the distractions and the mediocrities out of the way.

I'M ALL IN FAVOR OF THE ESSENTIAL MYSTERY OF THE RELIGIOUS "TRANSACTION" BUT IN MOST OF OUR CHURCHES, GETTING THERE IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

At Good Samaritan we will constantly audit the barriers. The church's communications, our signage, our social media, our ushering, our child care, our furnishings, our sound systems, our coffee, our lights, our editorial standards, our recruitment of fresh volunteers, and our willingness to run, at least sometimes, counter to our own preferences – I could go on – will be subject to constant improvement.

LONG SERVICES ARE KILLING THE CHURCH IN MANY PLACES.

A service of Holy Eucharist with music, real preaching, and 200 coming to communion, can be done beautifully in an hour. It requires work, coordinating, and discipline. People will forgive long services on special occasions. They will be more likely to come to other



venues for teaching and mission and group life if we don't wear them out at the primary event. They will be gladdened and strengthened by the opportunities for education and fellowship created by the discipline of one-hour services. The 10:05 to 10:55 education 'hour' is critical to the growth of this parish.

LARGE AND GROWING CHURCHES ARE STAFF-INTENSIVE.

For the Church of the Good Samaritan Vestry, one question to decide is whether we should get the Vestry out of the program business where everyone seems to wear a portfolio hat, and adopt the older, focused model of Vestry purpose: to raise support of the mission (and plan long range), to maintain the fabric and the property, and to call a Rector. For various reasons, one being the pandemic and the prolonged shutdown of public in-person services, parish members have been sidelined or have dropped out of the parish altogether. The professional staff of the Church of the Good Samaritan has become severely attenuated given our aspirations, and we need to evaluate, restructure, and strengthen our assets. We need to get in increasing numbers lay people – as Jesus got Peter (to his everlasting astonishment) – back on the team and not just on the sideline but back onto the field. I would have us consider every effort to accomplish that, by God's grace. Perhaps it could mean the creation of a standing committee of the Vestry called the Parish Council. This isn't an either / or proposition, but I know this: a key to our strength and growth will be focusing as a Vestry on

the big picture and empowering both lay people and professionals for day-to-day operations. This will leave wide berth for just about any model of lay ministry and involvement. For more about this, see the essay I wrote for the February 2023 edition of the Church of the Good Samaritan newsletter.

THE FOCUS FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF.

Our staff should be highly disciplined and focused on worship, clear communications, continuous improvement of what is offered, and the constant removal of barriers to growth. A corollary, of course, is that the Rector (or the Priest-in-Charge) focus on very few things. Nothing empowers everyone else more than such powerful and humble focus in his or her leader. If the Rector is controlling he is not powerful, humble, or in control.

LEARN WHAT WE CAN FROM THE "EMERGING CHURCH" OR "MEGA CHURCH" MOVEMENT.

Our job is more difficult than that of the pastor or team who invent a congregation from the ground up. But surely we can remain faithful to our theology and our traditions and still learn from those who have aggressively sized up their markets and really thought about the realities of churchgoing in this society. Few of us Episcopalians would want the somewhat plastic feel and consumerist obsession of these churches, but we can imitate some of their focus, their commitment to constant evaluation of what they're doing, and their regard for the non-churched and their responsiveness to those who are just more at ease with a different style of worship. All those elements, it seems to me, are essential for growth and faithful to the Great Commission.

■ +PCE

**TO ASK QUESTIONS OR COMMENT, EMAIL FR. PHILLIP,
AT PHILLIP.ELLSWORTH@GOOD-SAMARITAN.ORG**

Looking for Good Sam Volunteers!



Tech Team

The Good Samaritan Tech Team is seeking new volunteers. Audio, Video and Slide Operator positions are available at the 9 am and 11 am services. No previous experience is required – we are happy to provide training.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JOSH GUENTHER
AT JOSHUA.GUENTHER@GOOD-SAMARITAN.ORG



Sunday Lunch Ministry

Do you believe the best conversations happen around food?
Do you invite potential new friends over for dinner on a whim?
Then come join our Sunday Lunch Ministry! Each Sunday our ministry provides lunch after the 11 am service. There is a role for everyone, regardless of your skill level in the kitchen!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT DAN GARRISON EDWARDS
AT DAN.EDWARDS@GOOD-SAMARITAN.ORG

Chester County Choral Society

50th Anniversary Concert & Reception

Sunday, May 7, 2023 at 3 pm at Church of the Good Samaritan

The concert will feature Mozart's Missa Brevis in D, as well as a celebration of song including works by William Byrd, Elaine Hagenberg, Morten Lauridsen, Gwyneth Walker, Bob Chilcott, Rosephanye Powell, Carly Simon, and Christopher Tin.

A reception will follow.



Upcoming Events

MAY 6

- Chester County Youth Orchestra Concert

MAY 7

- Chester County Choral Society Concert, 3 pm

MAY 10

- Prayer & Praise with Dr. Frank Sizer, 7 pm

MAY 12

- Kid's Movie Night & Parent's Social Gathering, 5:30 pm

MAY 13

- Staff & Vestry Retreat

MAY 16

- Voting

MAY 17

- Retired & Refired, 1 pm

MAY 20

- Family Mental Health Support Group, 11 am

MAY 20

- Car Wash, 9 am – 12 noon
- Caring for Caregivers, 1 pm

MAY 21

- Youth Testimony Night, 4-6 pm
All are welcome!
- Choir Concert

MAY 25

- Persistent Alleluias, Dance Ministry Concert, 6:30 pm

Vestry Update

BY DARREN CLIPSTON

The Vestry meeting was held on Monday April 10. The Vestry began with prayer and a hymn in the Chapel before moving to another room for the Vestry meeting.

Rector's Warden Whitney Kuniholm chaired the meeting and gave his report. A key highlight was the sound and collaborative working relationship he has developed with Fr. Philip during this 'in between priest in charge' period where the Rector's Warden is formally in charge of the church.

Whitney highlighted milestones from a busy season for the Church: A send off service and luncheon for the Morgan's in January, passing a balanced budget for 2023, a well attended Annual meeting in March, a Vestry retreat / meeting the following weekend including newly elected persons, the work of the Interim Priest in Charge search committee, not to mention Sunday services and the conclusion of Lent with well attended Easter services. He expressed appreciation for a cohesive vestry that is working well with many making contributions in different areas. He also expressed gratitude for the effort and commitment of Fr Phillip and staff members.

Mary Anne Weightman shared her People's Warden report and acknowledged the efforts of Betsy Williams and others involved in the Altar guild, whose work was most beautifully on display during the Easter services. More broadly Mary Anne noted a number of ministries where participation is light relative to prior years and relative to the need and she is working to create more awareness within the congregation of volunteer opportunities at Good Samaritan. Finally Mary Anne reported she along with several staff and others are taking a look at the Church's safety policies and procedures for effectiveness and relevance. Mary Anne's report was well-received and her efforts to lead the transition prayer group were acknowledged.

I gave a brief update on the Church's finances which are in good health, certainly compared with the same time last year. Our income – largely from your faithful contributions – are coming in ahead of expenses which is not uncommon early in the year but the overall pace is healthy and reflects people's commitment to the Church.

A motion was passed to approve spending for the repair of leaky windows in the chapel. Thanks to Rusty Smith and the facilities committee for bringing this up to the Vestry. The work will take some time and if you are in the chapel for services you might notice a window section will be removed for a period of time for the repairs to be affected. Separately Rusty presented a design update for a new window for the chapel and is taking feedback regarding the design – which depicts a scene from the Gospels – from vestry members.

A discussion about the interim Priest in charge search process was held. Whitney and Darren are working with the candidate and the Dioceses on the Letter of Agreement and we hope to make an announcement to the congregation the week of April 17. We are thankful to be "at the finish line" of our process.

Rusty Smith shared a draft of changes to the Church's bylaws which are designed to update language and clarify Vestry and Rector responsibilities. The Vestry intends to carefully deliberate and review the proposed changes section by section over a number of meetings this year. Thanks to Rusty for his work and bringing it to the Vestry for attention.

Before closing there was some time for vestry members to raise new business. This has not been typical practice in recent years so know that the opportunity exists if you have ideas, concerns or opportunities you'd like to raise with Vestry – seek someone out ahead of the meetings!

Much like the church community it is drawn from, the Vestry has a wide range of experience – from parents with young families to grandparents, people starting out their careers to retirees, lifelong Episcopalians to those newly arrived from other corners of the church. All share a cooperative spirit, willingness to speak the truth to each other and conviction around the purpose of the Church.

*Please feel free
to share your
ideas, concerns
or opportunities
with a member
of the Vestry.*

**FOR QUESTIONS RELATED TO VESTRY,
EMAIL DARREN CLIPSTON AT DCLIPSTON@MSN.COM**

parents and kids invited!

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENTS OF OUR GOOD SAM CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER!



FRIDAY, MAY 12 AT 5:30 PM

We are hosting a joint event for our students and parents! We provide pizza, popcorn, and a movie for students and a separate dinner for the parents and caregivers.

Scan the QR code below to sign up. If you have questions, please contact Kimberly Lindquist.

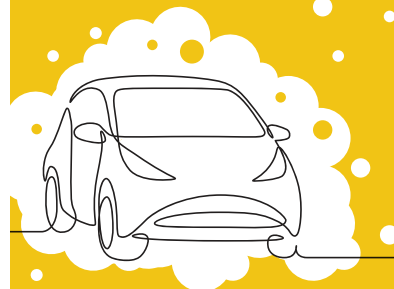
QUESTIONS? EMAIL KIMBERLY LINDQUIST
AT KIMBERLY@GOOD-SAMARITAN.ORG

scan to
sign up!



Car Wash!

The Boy Scouts
and Youth Ministry
Team Up for Clean!



May 20
9 am – 12 noon

Bring your car out for
a fresh Spring wash!

BENEFITS GOOD SAM'S HELPS MINISTRY

The Good Samaritan HELPS Ministry provides funding for practical, short-term relief to our neighbors who need a one-time assistance to pay rent, a utility bill, prescriptions, car repair, or other immediate needs. The ministry focuses on temporary problems and giving our neighbors a helping hand during a difficult time.

VBS 2023

Monday, June 19 through Friday, June 23 • 9 am – 12 noon

Ages: Pre-K (4 years old by September 1, 2023)
through rising Grade 5

Vacation Bible School will be here before you know it! This summer, we will be learning what it means to let Jesus guide us through our wilderness-themed VBS!

Monday through Thursday, kids will participate in memorable Bible-learning activities, sing catchy songs, play team-building games, enjoy snacks, experience Bible Storytelling, and engage in conversation with their peers and leaders. Friday will be a family day with a closing session and family activities!

We are still looking for volunteers! If you're interested in volunteering, scan the QR code below to sign up. If you have questions, please contact Kimberly Lindquist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VBS AND TO VOLUNTEER,
EMAIL KIMBERLY LINDQUIST AT KIMBERLY@GOOD-SAMARITAN.ORG



scan to
volunteer!



Youth Ministry Update

BY BRYNN SCHMIDT

The past two years at the Church of the Good Samaritan have been an impactful and enjoyable time in my life. It has been an absolute privilege to work closely with the students and families and this parish. However, God is calling me to serve at another church. My time serving in Good Sam Youth will be coming to an end.

Please know that this decision has not been easy and has involved a lot of prayer and discernment over the past few months. I want to make it clear that though the timing of my announcement coincides with the announcement of Fr. Phillip as Interim Priest in Charge, they are unrelated. I am excited for Fr. Phillip and the work that he will do for the parish. This is a very bittersweet time for me. I have grown in my time here and am immensely grateful for every single person that has trusted me and encouraged me throughout these years. I truly mean it when I say that you all have a very special place in my heart and I will look back on this chapter of my life with a smile on my face.

I want to thank every parent for allowing me to be a part of your students' lives and trusting me to lead them as they grow in their faith. I'm thankful for your continued investment and support of the youth ministry here. To the students, I cannot thank you enough for allowing me to be a part of your lives. Thank you for the laughs, the conversations, and fellowship we've shared. I look forward to seeing each of you grow into the



awesome people that I know you will be. Even though I will no longer be working here as the director of youth ministry, know that I will always be cheering you on, even from afar.

Good Sam Youth has an amazing team of leaders that care so much about each and every student that walks through the doors. Though things may look different without me here, I know that God is present each time this group gets together and He is continually working in all of your lives. I pray that you all continue to build on the work that we have already done and continue to make this youth ministry an incredibly special group.

My last Sunday at Church of the Good Samaritan will be May 28. Rest assured that there will be plenty of time to say goodbye. Please don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you again for allowing me to serve at the Church of the Good Samaritan and know that I am already praying for you all in this next phase of ministry.

With love,
Brynn Schmidt
Director of Youth Ministries

FOR QUESTIONS RELATED TO YOUTH MINISTRY,
EMAIL PHILLIP.ELLSWORTH@GOOD-SAMARITAN.ORG





CHURCH OF THE Good Samaritan

212 West Lancaster Avenue
Paoli, Pennsylvania 19301

610.644.4040

good-samaritan.org

A Different Way

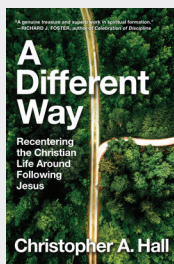


Join us for our continuing
Adult Education Series with Chris Hall

SUNDAYS | 10:10 – 11 AM | ASHTON HALL

The first several weeks of this class have been very well-attended and an immense joy. We are extremely grateful to Chris for this invaluable opportunity to hear directly from him on the ideas and messages of his new book. Through this teaching each week, he is encouraging each of us (and all Christians) to *recenter our Christian life around what has always been its core: following Jesus*. “Change” is at the heart of Christian life. As Christians, we are called to be disciples of Jesus, to actively follow his teachings and become more like him.

Chris has shared personal stories that encourage introspection, thoughtful meditations on spiritual formation from his book, and all through the lens of his profound wisdom and varied (and sometimes humorous), life experience. *A Different Way* is an interactive book and encourages reflection through journaling and Scripture reading. With thoughtful introspection and study, we can be more fruitful in spiritual journey of actively following the way Jesus teaches us to live.



SCAN THIS
CODE TO
VIEW PAST
SESSIONS



goodsampaoli



goodsampaoli



goodsampaoli