

January 29, 2010

1. Coincidence or ... ?

Last weekend about 40 of us gathered in the CLB for conversation, prayer and study around a new vision for St. John's over the next couple of years. The topic was evangelism and I expected a bit more resistance than I received. I know that mainline Methodists have sometimes left churches that had obnoxious evangelism programs. Others picture handing out tracts or banging on doors. So for many, I figured, the idea of doing evangelism might not be all that appealing.

Boy, was I wrong! The leaders who gathered last weekend were ready to go out and share the good news that afternoon.

The need for evangelism is obvious. Most UM churches, including our own, are either maintaining or are dwindling in numbers. Many of us are not doing much in the way of evangelism because ... well ... we just don't get around to it.

Several years ago, Martha Grace Reese spoke to our annual conference about evangelism and involving our churches in the Mainline Evangelism Project, supported by the Lilly Foundation and four years of top-notch research. I bought her books and they have been on my shelf until about a month ago. As I went back through her materials, I thought, this is exactly what we need: a sensible, Biblical, thoughtful approach to evangelism rooted in prayer and faith-sharing.

Our retreat time was focused on Reese's books. We prayed together and shared our faith, and we prayed for those who were still to come to St. John's. And then something happened ...

Late Saturday night, Eddie Houlihan was out changing our sign letters and was engaged in conversation with a young man who was passing by, a resident of the apartments nearby. Eddie had been at the retreat, and he encouraged the young man to come back to church the next day. In fact, he insisted that he come and that he would be welcomed here and would have a wonderful time.

The young man came back and was greeted in the parking lot by Evalynn Bunk, who had also been at the retreat. She enthusiastically told him about classes and worship services and took him to her Sunday school class. He stayed for worship and I met him before the service. His face was beaming as he sat with his new friends. He said this was just what he needed and promised he would be back.

The day before we had prayed for the ones who were on their way ... that we would be ready and loving and open ... and they came and found that it was so. Coincidence? I think not. Thanks be to God!

2. A Special Request

A recent visitor (a retired pastor) asked me about housing in Corpus Christi. He would love to find a garage apartment that he could rent. If you have an apartment or know someone who does, please call me (Pastor John) at 991-4342.

3. Goings On Around the Church

There are always things going on around here. Sometimes I worry that we get so busy that if Jesus came back we might miss him! Let's not get that busy, okay?

In the sanctuary, you've noticed banners covering up areas where the paint is peeling from the walls. And you've probably seen the torn-up area on Parade Drive. They are connected. We are working with the insurance company to find the source of moisture that has created the problems in the sanctuary, repair it, and then repair the damage.

If you drove by the church on Saturday, you saw cars and people all over the place. Our retreat was going on and our youth were preparing for a mission trip. About 35 youth and adults left our church to serve the poor and homeless in San Antonio. They brought food and clothing, and they presented a worship service with the Prophecy Band and Debra Scott Brown leading music. Amen!

A new intercessory prayer group started this week! A group to begin outreach at Cullen Middle School is forming. We have a Women's and Children's Retreat planned for February. Confirmation begins for our middle-schoolers in a few weeks. And there's more—check us out online stjohnsumccc.com or look in this Sunday's bulletin. There is literally something for everyone.

I know you can't do it all, but I hope that everyone who leaves our doors after worship comes back for something. You will bless others and your life will be enriched!!