

Parish Meeting, Rector's Report
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

January 21, 2018
Rev. Paul Moore

Review of 2017: Good Shepherd

I will leave details to the different Vestry people who will report. I will concentrate on big-picture sorts of things.

We are becoming known in the community in a positive way. We were extended an invitation to bless the bikes this year rather than having to request it. There is ecumenical cooperation on the Blessing of the Animals. The Sufi Circle requested to meet in our hall, something the Bishop completely supports and the Vestry quickly approved. Silver Chorale's first concert drew a capacity crowd. Our reinvention of Good Friday drew more people in than in the previous two years. My dream is that we be a value-adding function in the community at large and I think we are doing it.

We concentrated on being a church that talks. We hosted the marriage discussion once more, and that seemed to answer that question.

We lost some folks, but on the other hand, we have been getting visitors regularly. More and more of them are young families. When the Bishop was here in November 11 people joined the Church.

It took a year and some minor modifications to our Foundation Rule, but we are now operating under it. The new Committee consists of Betty Himes, Sherry Wooten and Homer Hamby.

Streamlining the life of the Church:

The physical plant: We looked long and hard at the possibility of a ramp into Henderson Hall. The Jr. Warden can give you more details, suffice it to me to say that project is on the long-term back burner.

We have an effective calendar coordination system now to avoid conflicting use of space.

The eddies: Churches, like homes, have eddies where things stack up unused and largely ignored. If we are to be a streamlined church with a clear mission toward which everything works, eddies need to be looked at, thought about, and either cleared out or focused. The Vestry has been working on that, especially with the help of Dora Somerville, to clean up and focus the eddies. Part of that is a comprehensive inventory for insurance purposes. This is a big job, and we're over half-way done, but it is progressing slowly. We will finish this year for sure. (If you oversee an area that has not been inventoried I urge you to get some people together and do it. Should something happen (heaven forbid) having an inventory makes it incredibly smoother to replace what we lost.)

Realm database: The potential of this program has just begun to be tapped. If you have not signed on and updated your profile please do so. If you need help doing it come into the office and Lisa or Dora will help you.

Being welcoming: Others will give details, but I want to tell you a little story about Clergy Conference this year. People were talking about how to get millennials into the churches. It was "millennials" this and "millennials" that. I began to wonder if we knew who we were talking about until one of our clergy who is in that age demographic stood up and said out-loud, "It's because you don't really want us in your churches."

Finally, I had had enough. I said, "We have millennials in our church, but we don't call them millennials, we call them members!" There was a round of laughter, and another younger cleric behind me said, "Thank you!"

We DO want children, teens, younger adults, older adults, Anglos, Hispanics, Native Americans, expatriates, undocumented immigrants--you name it, and we're getting them, thanks be to God!

Diocesan Involvement:

The Bishop Search continues. I am no longer on the Standing Committee, so I'm out of any sort of loop. What I hear is that things are progressing as they should. We remain in prayer until the prayer is answered. There have been rumors out there that my name is in the hat for our next Bishop. Let me tell you now that I am not under consideration.

Borderland Ministries continues to expand. We work constantly on clarifying our focus. This past year it has moved more clearly out of just attending to the needs of people along the border to disseminating information about immigration and building awareness of border issues. This has expanded our influence beyond just the border area. Now we are taking our message to General Convention, and we are planning a Border Ministry Summit in November to include all the Episcopal dioceses that share a border with Mexico, both sides. We work in three major areas: West, Central and South, including locations on both sides of the border, to include Casa Hogar in Ojinaga, Palomas, and Conóachic. Anapra has fallen off the radar. With a change in leadership in that congregation and the diminished relationship we have with Northern Mexico, we have made a decision to put our resources elsewhere. Information I have received, however, indicates that they have found alternate sources of funding for their needs.

We have requested to host Diocesan Convention in 2019. A delegation is to come down from the Diocese to look at possible venues. The Convention Center would be our primary location. The big question right now is where to have the opening Eucharist.

Miscellanea: I want to talk about a few other things.

The Priest's Discretionary Fund. In all my 25+ years of parish ministry, my discretionary fund here is the healthiest of them all, hands down! I am grateful to those of you who always make sure there is money for all those things that discretionary funds do. According to the rules, the funds in the discretionary account are intended for the relief of the poor, or any other worthy

ministry for which there are insufficient funds in the general operating accounts. I have used it to:

- Pay utility bills and rent,
- Send people on their journeys,
- Put gas in cars and food in kitchens,
- Send kids to camp,
- Subsidize EfM scholarships,
- Provide Christmas to poor families at 6th Street School,
- and many other things.

There are things that the discretionary fund does not do. It cannot be used to pay regular operational expenses, and it is never a contribution to my personal coffers. When you give to the discretionary fund, please keep this in mind. If you are ONLY giving to the discretionary fund, please know that you are not keeping the lights on.

Pastor Sarah: We all mourned as we celebrated the life of Tony. If there was anything about Tony that I appreciated it was his peaceful presence. Others admired his authenticity, his compassion and his intelligence, and we will all miss him terribly—but none so much, however, as Sarah, Josiah and Toby. I have given Sarah a month's leave-of-absence from liturgical duties in the Church. This is to be renegotiated at the end of the month. We'll play it month to month, and we will be the community that holds this precious family when they can hardly hold themselves. The Bishop has been advised and is supportive.

You may see her in Church from time to time, or even behind the Altar with me. For a priest, presiding at the Eucharist feeds us, and it may be that this is something she needs, but she is not on the "call the pastor" list, and her sharing in the life of the church will be at her own pace. The time will come when she rejoins the ministry team fully. Until then, pray for the family, make brief visits, especially of an evening when they're home, and bring food for the hungry boys.

I took some left-overs from the Epiphany Tea to their house that Sunday evening. Only Josiah was there. When I handed him the bag of food I mentioned that most of it was made of sugar, and he laughed appreciatively—and quickly dispatched a piece of cheese cake. I said to him, "you know why we do this, don't you?" And his reply was, "Because you care about us?" Yes, because we care about them.

Music. I am delighted that Adele took over our music ministry after Mick Coon retired. He had been music director here for 18 years and did a fine job, but Adele is another kind of musician and another kind of music minister. She and I work more closely together than I have with any other music minister in my years of parish ministry. It has allowed us to streamline our worship experiences, coordinating sermon, song and special events. I like how it's working.

Her selection of music is different than Mick's. I support her selections, or I nix them and you guys never hear about it. We have broadened the repertoire. It takes learning some new music, but it is good music. I trust you will jump in with open heart and voice.

She is also taking our music ministry in a new and bigger direction. She is working to base our music ministry in the community as well as the parish. This effort allowed us to have a great choir on Christmas Eve, and she is working on a community-based bell choir now. In other words, she is intentionally taking our music ministry out into the streets of Silver City, and I fully support it.

I encourage you to read the "music notes" in the bulletin. They contain good information about our music ministry.

Questions: Deacon Tom, in a sermon a good number of months ago, put out a box for questions. I apologize that those questions have gone unattended until now. Beginning next week, I will take one of the questions and give a brief answer during the announcement period. Thank you to those of you who took the time to express your questions in this way.

Priorities for 2018:

These will be taken up in more detail when the new Vestry gathers for our annual strategic planning retreat, but here are my druthers.

Family Ministries: With the rise of the number of little ones in the Church I hold as top priority building a team of people to address their needs. I want a coordinator who has a passion for seeing young children have fun learning to worship and learning about God in Church. I want a team of dedicated people so that every Sunday there are at least two (unrelated adults who are fully trained in our Safe Church Policies) to take children out who want to go (and whose parents want them to go) during the first half of the service, or even until Communion time, and even perhaps start a children's ministry program between services.

In a recent conversation with Pastor Sarah she said, "If you are in the desert, if you are wondering why you do this Church thing, if you are just going through the motions and it's empty and dry, if you're unsure of what you believe or why, work with the kids. It will ground our faith, it will energize and enthuse your worship and your service, it will renew you." And if it renews you, it will renew the parish!

Here is an example of the kind of preparation that is already in place for you who are going to volunteer for this ministry. It is a curriculum, complete with a story, an activity and a craft are all ready for you. The Sunday School Room downstairs is organized and ready for you. Just sign on the dotted line and let's get this really rolling! This just **HAS** to be our top priority in 2018. Words escape me to say how important this is!

There are two other things regarding young families that I would like to see happen in 2018.

- 1) We had three young women confirmed when the Bishop was here. They want to continue as the seeds of a youth group. I want a team of people (same requirements as with kids) to meet with these girls and others who want to join for fun, food, fellowship and Christian formation weekly. I want a commitment from the parish to fund trips for them to Camp, Snow Slam and other diocesan events.

- 2) I want another Young Adult Small Group, designed specifically for couples with children. This will take some resources, for they will need child-care.

Budget: Right now the budget we are projecting for 2018 projects less of a shortfall than the last three years running, but there is still about an \$14,000 gap. I betcha, betcha that we can round up all the change in our couches, extra cash laying around, and perhaps dip into some of our personal "fun money" and just take care of that 14 Grand! Whaddya say?

Crosses: We have been offered some beautiful cedar wood. I would love to see us end the year with new cedar crosses, one for the church and one for Henderson Hall, clad in copper! This is a project that Kathy Strange has been trying to push down the road, but she now has much greater concerns to deal with and I'd like it if someone could pick it up and make it happen.

Church Space: We are learning to talk with one another in deep and meaningful ways, And we have been building a culture of listening deeply to one another. The Vestry and I have begun some conversations about space. Worship space, to be specific, and we're excited about it. The question is, "*What does our current worship space say to us and to our community about who we are as a parish, what we stand for, what we love and what we're doing?*" Is there or is there not a desire to reconceive our worship space in a way that might more clearly and accurately reflect these questions, and if so, what might it look like?

This is a conversation of at least two years, possibly three, but I challenge us to begin the conversation this year. I will be calling together a committee to spearhead just how to engage us in this conversation. Remember, just like in the discussions about marriage, every voice is important, and every voice spoken in humility and openness to other voices should be heard, respected and affirmed.

Gratitude:

Once more, I want to express my gratitude for so many things about Good Shepherd that I appreciate, and I know I will miss something or someone important. (*Chalk it up to an accumulation of too many birthdays in the remembrance, that pushes stuff into the forgettery.*)

Thank you to Tom and Sarah, my assisting clergy. We have formed a warm, collegial bond that I value so very highly. Thank you for sharing the clerical ministry of this great parish.

I want to thank the members of the Vestry. These people have worked hard, not just at meetings every month, but in the hundred things they have done in their areas of ministry between meetings, not the least of which has been, as the case may be, the growing, care and feeding of a team.

- Anita Larson as Sr. Warden,
- Paul Sherell as Jr. Warden,
- Jeanie Locicero, clerk and Christian Education,
- Kaylin Henderson in Health and Spirituality
- Frances Vasquez in Hospitality with her "well-oiled machine,"

- Linda Shay, for worship,
- Homer Hamby, special projects,
- Rosana Hart in charge of our award-winning (well, it oughta be!) website and facebook page,
- Kathy Strange, in absentia for good reasons, in charge of memorials and columbarium. *A note on Kathy: Don had a biopsy a couple of weeks ago after getting over gall bladder surgery. Next steps are being planned.*

Thank you to everyone on the worship team. Our monthly meetings are really a war council on what we're going to do, how, when and why.

Thank you to Adele for leading the music team, your innovations have breathed new life into this essential part of our worship. I don't mind telling everyone that you are as qualified as the best of the music directors that I have ever had, and you see it as a ministry, which is absolutely indispensable. Thank you, also, to Jeanie, the Wootens, Larry and others who have punctuated our worship ministry with their special gifts.

Thank you to Linda, head verger, who keeps my head on my shoulders—no small task—scheduler of a hundred people for a hundred tasks, and shepherd to what happens at worship.

Thank you to Mary Harrell. Through knee-replacement surgery and other challenges you have continued to lead the Altar Guild. I know you want to step down—perhaps today someone will step up for you and us all.

Special thanks go to Lisa for her tireless work. For financial reasons we cannot pay her for all the hours she puts in, and nothing can compensate the creative effort she infuses all of her work with. She is pleasant in the office, receives people with grace, and answers the phone like a pro! And she keeps my schedule!

I cannot say enough to thank Dora for being the all-around gofer, picker-upper, do-it-when-nobody-else-can person. She is Lisa and my right hand, and the office would just run a whole lot less smoothly if she wasn't there doing her magic.

Thanks to Win as Treasurer, who writes our checks and prepares reports for the Vestry, and thanks to Mary and Dave who count and deposit the money every week, and to Betty who reconciles the books.

Then there are those who serve at the altar, serve on Altar Guild, show up for decorating and meals and events of all kinds, dishwashers and cooks and cleaners and servers and donators of donuts and all kinds of goodies, thank you for all of you whose hours and hands and feet make the life of God Shepherd possible.

In the end, thanks be to God for calling us into such a great community of faith, blessing us, giving us avenues of meaningful service, and giving us hope for our tomorrows.