

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
The Rev. Rick Veit
082717

Prayer time with Sr. Warden / Sabbatical Reentry (Yellow insert)

Sabbatical Forum – next Sunday, September 3 between services from 9:30 – 10:10 a.m.

I want to thank all of you for keeping this Christ and Love-centered Mission of St. Mark's alive and well during my absence. God was glorified because of your consistent worship and prayer, and more people experienced compassion because of your service to this community, the nation, and the world.

Thank you especially to the Wardens and the Clergy for their leadership and service these past three months. Sr. Warden / Bud Davis, Jr. Warden / Perry Dray, Fr. Dave McElwain, The Rev. Bernadine Craft, Fr. Bob Davidson, and Fr. Dick Nauman. What a blessing you all have been.

It was cute. We visited a number of churches this summer – St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Cheyenne Hills, and a number of churches around the country. They were great. But about half way through the sabbatical, our daughters, Lucy and Elaina, began to complain – why can't we go to OUR church? I miss our church. Let's go back.

We are thankful to be here again.

When Jesus asked one of his closest friends and followers, "Who do you say that I am?", Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah (the Savior), the Son of the Living God." You are the one. You are it, the reason why we are here. You are the one we are to follow, the one we are to trust in. We pray in Jesus' name. We live in Jesus. We follow his life as it was here on earth, and we trust and hope that because of Jesus we will be in heaven with our Lord after we die. Jesus has saved us.

One of my projects during sabbatical this summer was to interview different churches and learn best practices and most difficult challenges. I will be reporting more on that next week at the forum between services

One of the priests had a story: a person from his congregation, who had a family member who was ill, had asked him to pray for healing. He, of course, responded in the affirmative, agreeing to pray for that healing. However, he also mentioned that, for all of us, the ultimate healing comes through Jesus Christ, our Messiah, when we die and go to be with our Lord in heaven. It was a reminder that Jesus offers us healing both in this world and especially beyond this world, life forever in heaven, at peace and rest.

"Who do you say that I am?...You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

So, what does this really mean for us?

As Episcopalians, it means that we are in the restoration business. Our mission and our call is to restore all people, regardless of religion or no religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, atheism, and everything else, our call is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. It is on the front of every bulletin. We are to be one with God and one with each other, unified in all things.

So, what does this mean?

Our Book of Common Prayer reminds us that this restoration process begins with worship and prayer. We meet every Sunday morning and once a month on Friday nights to worship and give praise to God. If you are unable to worship at church, we will come to you. We are called to communicate with God through Jesus, praying always and praying in all ways, not just on Sundays, but every moment of every day. When we walk, we pray. When we work, go to school, when we eat or exercise, we pray. We connect and communicate with God. We become restored to unity with God and each other when we worship and pray through our Messiah, our Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Next, we restore unity by proclaiming the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus loves us and died for us. Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death forever for us. And this is good news. We will be with God forever in heaven, the ultimate healing, because of Jesus. And we are to proclaim this Gospel to the world.

Lastly, we are to promote justice, peace, and love. We are to reach out to those in need of help, in need of peace and love. We begin with those in greatest need, those in need of emotional, physical, spiritual, or financial help. We begin with those who are homeless, those who are parents, those who are married, divorced or widowed. We begin with people who are single, people who are old, and those who are young. We promote justice, peace, and love to those who have a lot of money, those who are educated, and those with little or no schooling at all. We reach out to those who are hurting, those who are rejected: black, white, brown, male and female, gay, straight, and people who are transgendered.

Any of us who have read a newspaper over the past three months, or turned on the television or internet, know how divisive and ugly many have become in this country and throughout the world. If you have kept up with the news, you know that many are also suffering in Texas after the hurricane that recently hit. Many of you today may not know that you are loved. You may feel isolated. It is time to begin and continue the restoration process, unifying ourselves with God and each other in Christ. We worship and pray. We proclaim the gospel, and we promote justice, peace, and love. So, who is first? Maybe it is you. Or, maybe it is me.

Keep up the good work. It is because of Jesus and because of all of us that God's work gets accomplished in Cheyenne and throughout the world. I am so pleased, my whole family is blessed, to be back on this journey in Christ with you. Amen.