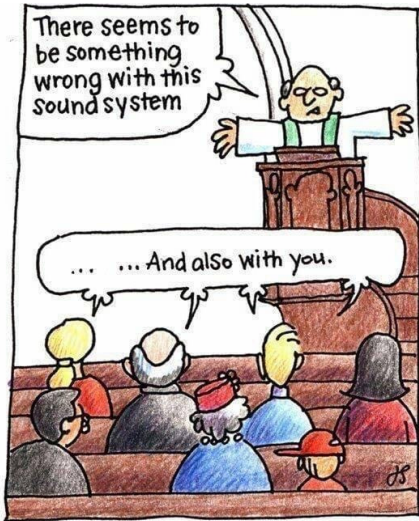


Priest-in-Charge Report Submitted January 23, 2022



In lieu of a typical report, please tolerate a few suggestions of things we may wish to do before a new Rector arrives. In one sense, this time of transition is a wonderful time to make some moves and to see question what has always been in terms of how something works and if something is truly effective.

This time of transition also provides a Vestry with the valuable opportunity of being free to make changes. I may have said this in my address this morning but allow me to say it again...we can either make changes or be held hostage by our unwillingness to change.

By unwritten tradition or nature, the Interim Rector does not make changes quite in the same way that a seated or longer-term Rector might. Interims suggest change to gage the willingness of the Vestry to change. When a new Rector arrives, s/he will want to make many changes and change means growth. Please enjoy a few suggestions and let's see if there are any which will draw enough interest to move forward. My suggestions are not in any order of wish, priority, or rank.

1. Would it be possible to spruce-up the Rector's office and possibly install some real windows to get more light into the room and allow the claustrophobic a view?
2. Many Episcopalians like to kneel to receive communion, can we make that possible? I think there might be simple fix to this.
3. Is a nice conference room the best place for a food pantry? The Canterbury room would be a great Vestry room, meeting room, game room and small reception room. Could an upstairs classroom be used for a food pantry? The Canterbury Room might also be a place for a computer lab that could be used by students or adults that need a supervised computer connection.
4. I have been using the middle-office as an IT room as all Internet and Telephone wiring leads to the middle office.
5. The middle-office should have glass in the door as per SafeChurch.

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6. The security system needs to be updated or ditched. Our current system is antiquated, but that is not its only problem. A number of cameras either do not work or are missing. There is no camera that can see out to the west door near the admin office, nor out the east door under the awning. There is not a camera outside that can see anyone entering the south door, nor one inside.

I would suggest that that the Vestry appoint an ad-hoc group to get some bids (and they will be high) and see what can be done. To add a maglock on the east door with an intercom could run as high as 2k.

7. No matter where the library ends up physically, I believe that it needs to be cleaned-up. There are books that might not be best for an Episcopal library (authors that have publicly stated that Episcopalians are not Christian for example). The large painting in the current library takes up a lot of space that could be used for books.
8. I would like to see a locked cabinet in the sacristy for the required sacramental books of the church. These are the books that contain wedding, death, baptism, confirmation, and service-related information. All of the historic books should be archived, but the current books should be kept somewhere safe. Although helpful, fire-proof cabinets or safes may not work. By canon, the Rector is charged to keep those records and have them available for the bishop when s/he visits. As I write, we cannot locate the parish baptism book.
9. I would suggest the creation of a parish "wish list." The wish list would list things and projects that show thoughtful consideration by the Vestry. When a family would like suggestions for memorials and gifts, the Rector would have list ready for them to consider. As items are purchased (small and large) they would be removed from the list and new items could be added by the Vestry.
10. Speaking of a wish list item, how about the purchase and installation of a very large monitor/television (60") for Barth Hall. The television would be wired in such a way that it could be used for presentations, lectures as well as a way to watch and hear what is going on in the nave. The television could be used as a bulletin board of sorts running announcements of upcoming events. A smaller monitor/television could be installed in the nursery if we are once again blessed with children, Moms and Dads needing time-out space.
11. Our copier lease is up next month. Buying a copier is not only cost prohibitive it is not very smart. Leasing an old copier with or without a maintenance contract has many pros and cons. I would suggest that the Vestry allow the technology committee (you can just see folks lining up to serve) to get bids and suggest what we might do for a new lease or any other practical suggestion.
12. Finally, (and I know this is open for debate) the most important person in any church is the person who has not yet walked in our doors. The Episcopal Church is shrinking at a little faster speed than most of the mainline and some of the evangelical churches. The biggest reason is death, something we cannot do much of anything about. Moving beyond that reality: in 1970 nearly 70% of the population went to church at least once per month. Now 50 years later,

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less than 45% attend, and the largest growing segment of our church population are those who mark "none." What can St. Paul's do to show the world we are open, welcoming, affirming, and nice people.

The most overheard response is that we need a young rector. That might help, might not. What else?

Our beautiful and historic building will attract some folks, but mega churches do well in what I refer to as Butler Buildings, the way the building looks is inconsequential, and location is not as important as it once was. New generations cry out of authenticity and relevancy before anything else. It is not what you believe as much as what you do. People who attend church no longer, if indeed they ever did, accept the theology and doctrine of the denomination they attend. Indeed, those things are not terribly important.

What is important?

a) entertainment (a good band, lots of glitz, and powerful preaching with or without any "real" biblical connection, e.g. Joel O.)

b) outreach (what is the church physically doing for the community, where can I sink my feet into the mud of good work and faithfully respond to the call of Christ) and

c) social-justice (this is less so for evangelicals who tend to be outspoken for politicians rather than issues, than for left-leaning denominations being open and loud about pro-choice, pro-LGBTQ+, pro-labor equality. Thriving churches are not shy, worried, or hesitant about letting the world know for what they stand.)

Conflicted congregations and mean people are not inviting. Good programs that look down or speak down to other people, especially the poor, is not inviting. Events that are billed as this but are nothing but bait and switch – not inviting. Pampas clergy – nope. Crazy rules and nonsense indoctrination -no way. A church that says: "we need you to survive" won't.

The work of wholistic and radical hospitality takes the whole church, not one priest or vestry. The planning takes time. The work is intentional because it is the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ crying out to "all you who labor and are heavy laden, come unto me and I will give you rest." It is listening for Jesus calling the church to be real. Oh, how I pray for that.

Thank you for allowing me to share with you some suggestions.

For the next few months, I am delighted to share with you in the decisions we make and the work we do, in the Name of Christ.

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