



The Keystone

Saint Peter's Episcopal Church

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Winter 2022

**“God is calling the community of Saint Peter’s Parish to live, worship
and serve according to Christ’s word and example.”**

Endings and Beginnings

January was a transition month from the “keeping it going” energies of 2021 to the more creative and expansive possibilities of 2022. It is a very good time to recover from the intensity of 2021, which you all have felt in different ways, take time to be still, and open to a new vision for what you want St. Peter’s Church to be in 2022. If you have been carrying within you a dream that you know is part of the new story of St Peter’s Church life, but it hasn’t yet shown up in the way you’ve hoped, you will be given an opportunity this year to bring your dream to “life”.

At the End of 2021

As this year draws to an end

We give thanks for the gifts it brought

And we bless this year for all we learned.

A New Beginning to 2022

Though our destination is not yet clear

Out we step into this New Year, onto new ground.

And, as St. Peter’s Church enters this new year of unknowing, may we have the faith to keep moving forward.

I cannot but help to weave together beginnings and endings because they are one thread.



~Liz Luca

A Return to The Parish Hall

In early January, we had our first service back in the Parish Hall. Hats off to the Altar Guild once again for transforming the space into such a warm, inviting, and gracious worship annex. This congregation has truly become so adaptable over this past year. We have prayed, sung, recited, proclaimed, created, loved, and supported each other. We have done this on Zoom, in the front and back yards, in the Sanctuary, and now in the Parish Hall.

When I first began attending St. Peter's regularly, instead of just an occasional drop-in visit, the services had started in the Parish Hall. Even though I didn't quite understand why we weren't kneeling in this beautiful Sanctuary, I found it very intimate and welcoming. Here we are again and I feel I've come full circle, with so many new friends who have taught me so much about the value of community.

As we have all had to face the challenges of so much change in our church, Bishop Shannon reminded us in her sermon at the Diocesan Convention, that "we must no longer deny that constant change is part of our tradition." Some of us will be attending the book study led by Bishop Shannon on the book by Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, entitled "The Church Cracked Open." I love this title as it reminds me of the lyrics from the Leonard Cohen song: "There are cracks in everything, that's how the light gets in."

Gail Broussard

A Broad View of Endings and Beginnings

The focus of the winter edition of the Keystone is to publish thoughts on the endings and beginnings particular to St Peter's in 2021 as well as looking ahead to 2022. I, however, thought it might also be of interest to share how we are faring compared to other churches nationally in those areas especially with a special focus on the effects of the pandemic.

In November, an invitation came to the office to participate in a national survey from the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford, CT. I filled out the survey and the report arrived last week. The full report can be found at the link below.

The following is the bird's eye view:

"Based on 820 survey responses from 38 Christian denominations collected between early to late November 2021. Key findings from the study include:

- Since the pandemic began, 45% of congregations have made permanent changes to their community outreach
- More than half of congregations (54%) started a new ministry or expanded and increased an existing one
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of churches reported offering some form of community service or ministry
- About 25% of congregations expanded their building use for things like 12-step programs, the houseless, and additional childcare
- 22% of congregations engaged in new and expanded food resource ministries such as food banks, food distribution, and community gardens as the needs soared

- Roughly 20% of churches engaged in pandemic-related ministries making masks, hosting vaccine clinics, and offering support to medical workers
- The majority of churches are employing a hybrid form of gathering with 85% using both in-person and virtual ways of worshipping

The work that is happening now at St. Peter's is in step with many other churches nationally. What a fantastic, energizing feeling to know new beginnings are happening all over the country similar to what we are doing here. The full report can be found at:

https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Congregational-Response-to-the-Pandemic_Extraordinary-Social-Outreach-in-a-Time-of-Crisis_Dec-2021.pdf

I'm convinced new ideas and new beginnings will be coming this year for the national church at large and for St Peter's!

~ Collins Sennett

Thoughts on Our Future

I think we are heading for permanent changes in our worship experience in the future.

For example:

- ❖ Wearing masks
- ❖ How we take the host and wine
- ❖ Passing the peace
- ❖ Lack of our coffee hour/social experience
- ❖ Using Zoom (and its almost impersonal effect)
- ❖ The increase in Morning Prayer led by laypersons and the concurrent decrease in Eucharistic services
- ❖ The increased rate of folks who are struggling with these changes

Well now, let's look at some positive stuff:

- ❖ We have a very dedicated and loving cadre of faithful followers of Christ.
- ❖ There is a certain bond when we meet at church or in town - markets, restaurants -anywhere.
- ❖ We share the history of a common worship experience which is the 'glue' that keeps many of us together.
- ❖ We are part of a larger faith community of the Diocese, which is comforting. No matter where you visit a church, commonality reigns.
- ❖ We all mourn those who intentionally wandered from our family of faith and wish so much that they would return and we would be whole again.
- ❖ I think that we really are being tested in these times of Covid in more than physical health matters.

God calls us. Are we listening?

~ Dick Bower

Expect the Unexpected

In December, we ended a year that taught us to "expect the unexpected". Every day we were confronted with change. Covid guidelines, vaccinations and boosters, rising prices, and supply chain issues made us realize that life as we knew it may never completely return. Here at St. Peter's, we have also had to embrace some changes. We have learned to adjust the way we worship to meet covid guidelines. Our worship team has provided wonderful services in the absence of a rector. Our congregation has reached out to our neighbors and community. Our congregation may be somewhat smaller, but we have worked together and become stronger. Let us continue to keep our hearts and minds open to change and make 2022 a year of new beginnings.

~ Cherie Jacobs