



# *The Epistle*

## *October, 2016*

### **Father Bob's message**

I recently attended a Diocesan workshop, introducing a new program called SHIFT. I am sure that some of you are rolling your eyes and saying here we go again, another program from the Diocese. I can say this because I did the same thing. The church has had programs upon programs that we were told were the solution to the way ahead for the church but still the same issues remain unresolved. So I went to the workshop having a bit of skepticism but as I sat through the presentation, I found my skepticism waning. I found myself actually daring to believe that that this program could be different. I left believing that this program was not perfect but different, having the potential, I felt, to provide a way ahead that will not only begin to address in a creative way the serious issues and concerns that we have but to be transformational for the Church and for St Stephen's.

I do not have the space to go into detail about this program but one aspect of the program that intrigued and excited my imagination the most was the idea that the Church must shift from a member identity to a disciple identity. Most of us identify ourselves as being a member of the Episcopal Church and a member of St Stephen's. Now this is certainly biblical, providing a description of individuals intertwined into a community based upon a close relationship between members under the Lordship of Jesus. But as Mark Tidsworth, the developer of the SHIFT Program has points out, the concept of "membership devolved to a description of one's relationship to an organization, rather than a referent to living relationships." He further points out "when membership becomes an organizational term, then membership becomes optional." I think that this is a critical observation.

Interestingly if one does a quick count of how many times "membership" and "discipleship" appear in the New Testament, you find that "member" or "membership" appears 45 times. At the same time, the term disciple appears 263 times in the New Testament. To me, this suggests that while "membership" is important, "discipleship" is critical to the Christian way.

You and I are inclined to think of ourselves as church members. At the same time we tend to think of discipleship as a whole different way of thinking and relating. It is as Tidsworth points out, "Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ is a powerful calling towards

living the ways and teachings of Jesus.”  
This is daunting to us.  
Yet could this be where we need to go?  
The things that used to attract folks to church are not working today.

Mark Tidsworth wrote the following, which is worth thinking long and hard about.

He wrote, “Postmodern people need to experience Christ through real live people before they can move toward belief. When they experience this genuine integrated faith, observing Christ-followers giving themselves in love for the good of the world, then they think that there may be something to the gospel. Then they are interested in participating with this group.”

As I said, something to think about.

Fr Bob

### Senior Warden Update

The blessing of the animals and picnic at The McGrew’s farm was enjoyed by all who attended. Pictures of the festivities will be in the November Epistle. Posts with reflectors have been added to each driveway at the front of the church. The posts are treated and will be painted with gloss white paint later. Reflective tape will also be added to each side to help in keeping anyone from running into them. (We hope) David has also obtained two fans, one for the church and one for the Vicarage, which will create positive ventilation under the buildings.

All Saint’s Day is fast approaching. Anyone who would like to submit names of those who have died since the last All Saints Day, for remembrance in the All Saints insert should give the names to JoAnn or email them to her at [jldp@truvista.net](mailto:jldp@truvista.net) She has volunteered to be the contact point for the insert. Remember we will be having the **St. Stephen’s Annual Meeting on November 13th** after church. We will have to elect two new members to the Mission Committee at that meeting along with two Diocesan Convention delegates and alternates. Anyone who has an interest in serving in any of these capacities please let me or any member of the Mission Committee know by Sunday October 30<sup>th</sup>. We need help.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE YOUR PLACE...

Q.: Who are the ministers of the Church?

A.: The ministers of the Church are *lay persons*, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q.: What is the ministry of the laity?

The ministry of laypersons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, **worship**, and governance Of the Church.

*(The Catechism, BCP, page 855)*

Additional lectors and Eucharistic ministers are needed. Short training sessions for both Lay ministries will be provided. If you are interested in one or both opportunities, please

Contact JoAnn Palmer (803-337-3394 or [jldp@truvista.net](mailto:jldp@truvista.net)), or Fr. Bob (803-477-3900)

DID YOU SIGN UP  
FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?

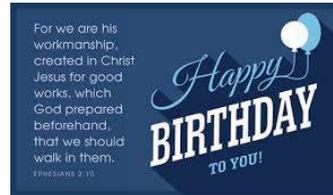


October

10/2	OPEN
10/9	OPEN
10/16	OPEN
10/23	OPEN
10/30	OPEN

November

11/6	OPEN
11/13	Mike & Jennifer Autry
11/20	OPEN
11/27	OPEN



*Please wish the following people  
Happy Birthday*

October

10/1	Don Babb
10/3	Jason Branham
10/15	Sieglinde Thomas
10/23	Kayla Branham
10/23	Bob Moore
10/24	John Davis
10/26	David Ford

November

11/3	Jim McGrew
11/5	Kathleen Harwood
11/13	Sharon Swafford
11/15	Justin Autry
11/16	Tom Harwood
11/17	Jo Milling
11/30	Jay Branham