

Rector's Address - St. Martin's Annual Parish Mtg.
- Jan. 29, 2012

Today brings me great joy because I am speaking to a room full of my inherited brothers and sisters. We are here together because of what Jesus did 2000 years ago. We are here because of the grace of our Lord and savior. We are here because we each claim in a unique way that we are people of the resurrection. We have a story to tell the nations and that story looks like the faces in this room.

We might tell the story of God's love with our words, sing language, our actions, and our outreach, but they all say that the faith we have in God makes a difference to us.

I take my sense of excitement from the key gospel for this year's lectionary, which is the gospel according to Mark. Like never before I identify closer to the message within Mark's storytelling about the ministry of Jesus. Mark has often been over simplified as an early account and therefore discounted as crude and lacking in literary substance. However what I have learned is that the pace and even the choppy nature of Mark's style is due to his propulsion toward the real purpose for writing about Christ at all.

Mark is not merely writing down the stories of Jesus. He is racing the early church readership towards belief and therefore action. He was not and is not naming miracles of the day nor is he just cataloging mighty acts of the Holy Spirit. Mark is presenting the church with one of the greatest gifts that God offers creation. Mark invites the living Church into the reality of an appropriate urgency.

This type of urgency is what I am seeing St. Martin's with in 2012. Yes, I am settled and Yes, I am at peace. However one can be at peace with God and still accepting that God moves through these walls with ease just like he appeared to the disciples in the locked upper room. In other words God is keeping us honest to being alert and present. We are always learning how to be the church in our community.

Therefore I say with confidence that I am excited in this new year to be a witness with you to the amazing ways God creatively speaks to us and through us.

Looking at 2012 I see two main areas of urgent ministry that I would like to draw our attention to today:

1. The first involves each of us accepting an invitation towards spiritual growth. Ask yourselves what you can do that takes you further out of your comfort zone. What risks can you take that would cause you to depend more on God's goodness this year? Please build a relationship of ongoing discernment about how God might call upon you as a servant leader. Then test what you find with prayer, discussion within community, and action. You may find that others are being moved in a similar way and that your idea is welcomed and even timely.

2. The second is to organize our resources of time, talent, and treasure to be more about disciplining seekers.

We need to continually make decisions that welcome the newcomer. We never know what the Spirit is already doing in the hearts and minds of another person. So it is our job to be

faithful by making ourselves available to ministries in a new way. What I am referring to is called Hospitality. The Hospitality we offer in terms of our committee under that same name is indeed wonderful and yet what I am talking about is more universal and goes across all areas of our parish life. This universal sense of Hospitality is a Christian virtue and takes many forms in the life of St. Martin's.

Discipleship looks like being a servant-leader:

a. The staff as servants:

- Clergy are first in this category asking what can we do to be helpful and supportive of what God is calling YOU to do.
- Dynamic of a Transitional sized parish (nearing 225 ASA) vs. Pastoral sized
 - 75% rule
 - The role of the staff becomes leading leaders in ministries.
 - Staff restructuring (budget based) of Music Ministries from 27-30 hours to 20 hours.

b. The role of vestry to set vision with committee chairs:

- Steering the parish with a combination of infrastructure and mission
- Our new Sr. Warden is Steve Young. Jane Klieve will become the vestry clerk. Larry will remain our treasurer and the vestry at the first meeting of the new vestry will select the Jr. Warden.

New leadership:

How we have grown since a year ago: We are having conversations now that were not possible this time last year:

- a. The Rev. Emily Hillquist Davis as Assistant Priest (15 hours a week) - 5:05 service, teaching
- b. The addition of Michelle Magee for membership and worship bulletins.
- c. Heidi as youth director and the youth and youth group leaders going on mission trips to Joplin, Shannondale, MO and with other youth from the diocese to a reservation in South Dakota. As I speak Heidi Gioia and Steve Gillies are returning from a national youth leaders conference in Chicago.

The Spirit is moving in this place!

Other areas of new ministries include Stewardship, which has done an incredible job this last year with educating our parish through discussion forums, by hosting the Ministry Fair that highlighted at least 25 St. Martin's ministries, through articles and letters, and personal testimonies about how faith operates from a sense of gratitude and abundance. We have been blessed by this group more than we will ever know because they have reminded us that God's grace is always more than what we see.

Our Legacy Committee found its legs this year as well. I cannot count the number of times I have been visiting with a spouse and/or family in the midst of end of life issues with a loved one. It is something we all must think about at some point. How are their witness and lasting wishes to be best honored? Well - the ministry of the Legacy Committee is to help us have that conversation in a sensitive and responsible manner. We are indebted to the folks who have shared this vision within our parish so that families in the future will have greater access to information and therefore greater peace of mind. The Legacy Committee helps us to ask

what we believe in and how we continue to show those values on an ongoing basis. One's life and faith can be a blessing to others for a long time if intentional plans are made while they can make them.

Other areas of new growth -

- a. Communications Director Janis Greenbaum, as of last July.
- b. Children's ministry - Kay Fletcher and company.
- c. VBS - average over 5 days was 31. This year will be led by Heather Vogt and Ann Kidd and will most likely occur June 18-22 this summer.
- d. Toddler Sunday School - Susan Miraflores
- e. Nursery with Jody Mena, Chen Nelson
- f. I would like to thank our sextons for their hard work. Tom for years of faithful service as our guardian angel.

Susan Cupini who has been not only a superb sexton but also a terrific person. She is one of those people I find I just want to be around. I respect her presence and greatly appreciate what she has offered as our sister in the Lord. She is a minister of amazing hospitality!

- g. Carole Clary and the adult Christian Formation Committee (2012 focus on Bible studies)
- h. A Week of Guided Prayer March 4-10 with Loretta Go and Rich Luebcke.
- i. Inquirer's class for adults wanting to know more about the Christian faith and the role of the church in the world today.

My wish list for 2012

- a. That we would consider changing the location of our nursery. They need more room and we need to put kids first by putting them physically front and center in the building of our church building.
- b. We would form an adult class specifically for those in their late 20s to early 40s. We can keep the adult forum option of course, which offers a great deal of interesting topics. However the relational nature of a regular group for people in their 20s, 30s, 40s is becoming an immediate opportunity for us.
- c. Faith Groups - forming this Lent, beginning Wednesday evenings following Ash Wednesday and hopefully to continue in the fall.
- d. An end of the summer or early fall Parish Weekend to reconnect and/or to build community. Important as we move from a Pastoral size to Program.
- e. An increase in Emily's position from 15 hours to 20.
- f. Hiring a retired priest or ELCA Lutheran pastor to serve and teach among us.
- g. Increasing Outreach and missional activities such as Circle of Concern, ECM, Men's group, ECW, ERD, etc.
- h. Community visioning in the West County area. Rich Luebcke will serve as Chamber of Commerce representative.
- i. And Magdalene Ministries of St. Louis.
- j. Diocesan relationships to increase.
- k. My Diocesan Involvement includes Fresh Start, Clergy Days, Retreats, Commission on Ministry,

Thank you all for your prayers and actions for St. Martin's to truly be a beacon of Christ's love, a

community that is spirit fed, and a place of energy and vitality that seeks to serve others as an outpouring of God's goodness. Thank you for listening today to what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

May we praise the Lord during times of joy and struggle. May we turn our lives this year in a new way that lets others know that we are not better people but better off as people who live with conviction that Jesus is Lord and Savior of all creation. May we be a blessing in the simple tasks as well as the days we rely on God to get us through. We are people of the Resurrection and we are people who follow the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Thanks be to God!