

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

October 2016

From Fr. John: St. Elizabeth doesn't really have members. That may come as a surprise to many of you who have called yourselves "members"; some of you for decades. Diocesan staff may also be a little curious as to why we send "membership" reports every year if we don't have any. But we don't have members. Or maybe a better way to say it is that "membership" is not the most accurate way to frame how we actually behave or who we are as a community. What we are is a community of practitioners.

We will still turn in our membership reports to the Diocese to record our baptisms, deaths and other changes, as well as our Average Sunday Attendance because these numbers are still useful as partial indicators of our parish life. But there are limitations to actually framing our parish life in terms of membership:

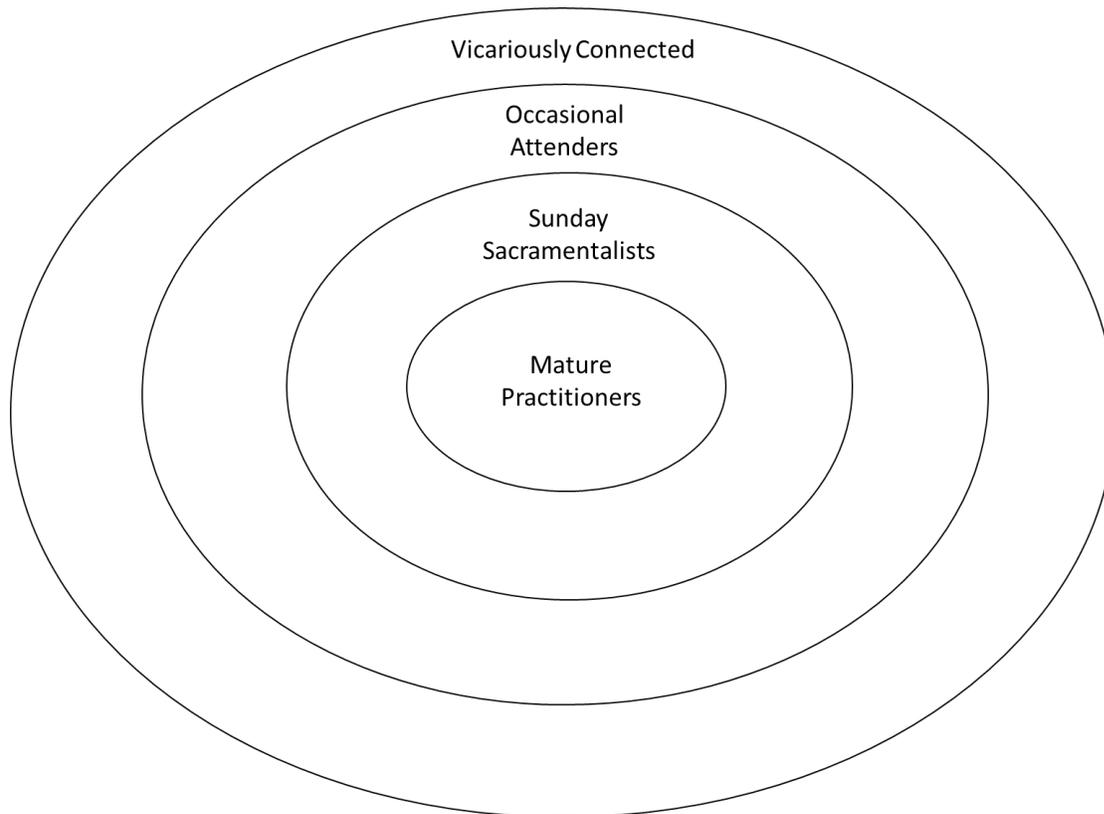
Membership is "either/or": A member is in. Everyone else is out. That structure works for some organizations, but Episcopalians show up in such a wide variety of expressions, the implications of "membership" cancel the subtleties that are actually the strength of the Episcopal way of being Christians in the world.

Membership is single-level: Once a person is a member, that's all there is to say. But we welcome people in all phases and seasons of their spiritual growth, development and maturity. There is so much more to parish life than getting through the door!

Membership considers only external realities: Membership records do capture some helpful information about the parish; a growing ASA might indicate one aspect of a healthy church, for example. But counting the number of people who took communion on Sunday tells us nothing about why or what is on the hearts and minds of those who came to the Mass but did not take communion—the internal information that "membership" thinking doesn't look for.

Membership is supported by dues: Episcopal Churches rely on pledges to keep the doors open, the heat and lights on and the staff salaries paid. Membership thinking leads to a limiting attitude about pledges, budgets and finances in general that quickly becomes focused on scarcity. But generosity and giving are spiritual gifts and practices that foster gratitude, and there are a wide variety of reasons for giving. God's resources given into our care are invested in ministry to people, not collected like an overdue bill for the sole purpose of making budget.

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This is an image developed by the Rt. Rev. Melissa Skelton for the College for Congregational Development that helps imagine some of the different levels of engagement that a community of faith practitioners experience with St. Elizabeth. God is at work in the lives of every person in every ring, but peoples' responses to God vary. Without assuming that each person in a ring is exactly like everyone else, there are some useful commonalities that help us to think about the community, each other and the people that God draws into our particular spheres of influence.

There are different ways to recognize and support people where they actually are, to acknowledge the presence of God in person regardless of the ring they inhabit and different ways invite people deeper into the next ring when they show readiness or curiosity.

Vicariously Connected: The outmost ring reminds us of all the people who think of St. Elizabeth as "the Church I don't go to." These are the people who are connected to us in some way, but who do not worship with us. These are the neighbors who park on our lot, the folks who come in to our food pantry from time to time, people coming to the Jazz Festival, Navos staff and kids, our various AA or NA attendees and the people who use our lot when they go to the Mark or the Tin Room. It also includes those people who walk or drive by St. Elizabeth on their way to town or to work, and the people who receive clean, new socks and toiletries from us through Operation Nightwatch. But they are also the considerable number of people who visit our website or FaceBook page and all the people who receive the Elizabethan by mail, but who, for various reasons, do not worship with us. And they are those people who are your friends and neighbors who know that you worship, pray and learn at St. Elizabeth, but who don't yet come with you!

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To say that they experience our faith practices vicariously means that they have some sense of who we are and what we are about in a way that they remember or that interests them and may, in time, coax them to come closer for the first time. We serve them by keeping our food cupboard stocked, updating our websites, taking good care of the building and grounds, remembering them in prayer and by greeting them with hospitality whenever they come into the church. We can invite those who are ready or curious about us by being a good neighbor, making sure people know that we are a welcoming and non-judgmental community, and seeing that our service times are obvious and consistent. We also keep our eyes and ears and hearts open so that God might inspire new ways for us to invite people bring their unique personalities, gifts and needs to St. Elizabeth from time to time, so that they might find themselves moving gracefully into the next ring!

Occasional Attenders: We used to refer to these folks as the “C and E Crowd” because they came only at Christmas and Easter. But if we are living true to our claim of being non-judgmental, then our role is to be glad to see them when they do come. They are connected to us in their own way and often have compelling reasons for not coming more often. By welcoming them instead of chastising them or chasing after them weeks later, we allow God to work in their hearts in God’s own good ways and we are free to enjoy their presence with us for as long as we have them. That is also a more inviting way to draw them deeper into more regular worship (the next ring) along with making sure that we are at our best on Christmas and Easter when we expect our Occasional Attenders to show up.

Sunday Sacramentalists: These are the folks that the “membership” framework captures in numbers; the ring with the people who regularly attend more frequently than a few times a year. They can vary in the frequency of their attendance, but also in the depth of their spiritual maturity. They also differ in what they need to practice and develop their faith. Some show up every Sunday and more than a few Wednesday evenings, while others come once or twice a month or maybe quarterly. Some are relatively new in their spiritual life. Others have more experience with a fairly stable spirituality and still others are actively pursuing a deeper spiritual life. Some are also deeply involved in the day to day life and ministries of the parish, while others stay at a distance and some prefer or are limited for various reasons simply to worship. Regardless, we want to make sure that everyone who connects to us in this ring to feel like they belong.

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***The more good we find to say
about anyone, the more good that
person will become.***

October Potluck

We will be having another potluck (since they are a smashing success) on October 30th after the service. There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board for you to tell us what you plan on bringing to share and another sheet for those that are willing to help setup and clean up.

Sunday Morning Coffee Hospitality

During the summer, into the fall 12 different teams have served coffee. If you haven't served yet, you too can join in helping to provide treats, serve or clean up. To shore up your confidence, ask anyone who has done coffee serving for tips on how to do this very needed hospitality service for St. Elizabeth. Also, if you like good coffee, pay attention to the morning coffee quality in upcoming Sundays. Something good is coming.



From our webmaster:

Do you have any digital photographs or videos featuring the people and happenings of St. Elizabeth that you are willing to share? If you do, please send them to Meg MacDonald for posting on the web site, with a brief explanation of when and where they were taken.

Newcomers often check the online photo gallery when they're looking for a church. With your help, we can keep it updated with pictures of some of our fun activities.

The easiest way to get your photos to Meg is by emailing megmmac@comcast.net. Thank you!

The Elizabethan

The Elizabethan is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

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We also want to make sure than there are always opportunities for further involvement in the many ministries working at St. Elizabeth. This ring is where most people are finding themselves at St. Elizabeth, a sign of a return to good health! More than a few of our Occasional Attendees have commented on this phenomenon and that alone will draw more people from the outer rings a little closer. We will continue to provide ways for our Sunday Sacramentalists to develop their faith, to learn and practice, and to find and give the gift of ministry that God has planted within them.

Mature Practitioners: At the center of attraction, there is a core group of practitioners who have come to really understand what makes St. Elizabeth remarkable. They have experienced transformation or healing or God's presence in a way that they can articulate and that feeds them. Their spiritual maturity is deepened and broadened by coming to Mass and to Adult Formation classes as often as they can. They also have a lively prayer life and at least one active practice of ministry that they give as an expression of the love of God. They are often also active in the day-to-day non-worship ministries of the church, but not always. We refer to this ring as "mature" not in reference to their age, but because they are deepening their faith at and through St. Elizabeth.

God is, of course, present in all people in each of these rings, but the availability of God's presence in the lives of our mature practitioners works magnetically. The love of God that radiates from them reaches through each of the other rings, inviting people deeper into a relationship with God that serves and broadens the entire community of faith practitioners both inside the church and outside.

Just a reminder... HIGHLINE FOOD BANK CHANGE COLLECTION

Sunday school will be once again collecting change from anyone's pocket from which we hear coins jingling.

Typically, we will be collecting change on the first Sunday of each month. So, please empty those loose change vessels and help our neighbors in need.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Great news for Hospitality House.

The annual Walk for the Women which was held on September 17th, raised \$20,335 for the work of the house! Thanks to all who helped out . The weather was chilly and windy but the walkers were undaunted! Old and young, swift and slow, four legged and two, all made the effort to walk the two miles and help the house. Many who could not walk, donated and it all added up to a wonderful success!

Thanks again to all, and if you were not able to attend the walk maybe you could sign up to bring dinner to the women during the week of October 11-16. There are a few evenings that need dinner delivered. Please consider helping out during the last week for St. Elizabeth to contribute during 2016.