

**COMBINED COMMISSION REPORTS – MAY 2023**  
**RECTOR, SENIOR WARDEN, JUNIOR WARDEN**

**GOOD SHEPHERD VENICE RECTOR REPORT**

May 11 – June 13, 2023

As I sat down to reflect on the past month as a community of Christ followers who meet at Good Shepherd here in Venice, a passage of scripture from the Book of Acts immediately came to my mind. It was the story of the early Christian church and God's blessings upon it. Here is how it reads in the New Living Translation of the Bible: "All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer . . . And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had . . . They . . . shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." That first fledgling church was not perfect. No church is. But the presence and power of God was among them, and God's blessing was evident on their community.

I see the same blessing and presence and power of God here, at Good Shepherd, despite the almost three years of Covid pandemic, and the category 4 hurricane which immediately inflicted damage on the homes of many of our parishioners and our beloved church facility as well. Despite all this, God has – and amazingly continues to – dwell among us. I see it on the faces of our people. I sense it in my mind and soul. I hear of it from the words of our people, and the words each new person speaks as they walk through our doors. I see it in the faithful loving generous work of God given freely by our people as they offer their time and talents and expertise; and as they give financially to the work of God here.

When the vestry and other leaders of this church first met following the hurricane, we all expected the restoration process to be long and drawn out. However, as

one of those leaders, I never thought that now, exactly nine months since the storm, the reconstruction work would still not be started! But here we are, waiting, and being blessed by God. Methodically, slowly, ploddingly, step-by-step, we have been setting all the behind the scenes work in motion. We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The restoration work will shortly begin, to the glory and praise to God and God's people.

Beyond the hours I and so many others have put into this restoration work, here are a few of the other activities I was involved in this past month apart from the usual staff, Project Management Team, Parish Revisioning Team, Finance, Executive, Spiritual Formation meetings, Deanery Clericus, and Centering Prayer:

- End of May through early June I used thirteen vacation days which included two Sunday's when Desiree and I traveled to the Philippines.
- Visits with various diocesan clergy.
- Visits parishioners at the hospital, in homes, and for dinner.

Fr. Joe Hudson

### **Commission: Senior Warden – Christine Neal**

And another month flies by...May was fleeting. They all seem to be! It's been eight months since Ian ravished the area and our church. The mark of the storm still lingers for us as a parish family and for so many personally.

Our Restoration/Revisioning Project continues to progress, albeit not as quickly as any of us would like; but forward is forward, so all is good. The Project Management Team continues to meet weekly to share status updates regarding the many details of the project scope, work done with the contractors to come to terms of agreement, the legal review of the contracts and tracking of the costs and funding reimbursements. Restoration takes patience and perseverance, lots of willing hands, understanding and support; we all play a part.

At the same time, work of the church needs our attention to constantly focus on our mission and vision. In light of complexity of the project and the involvement of so many, how do we maintain that focus? Two recent sermons, one given by Fr. Joe on May 14<sup>th</sup>, ***"If You Love Me"*** and the other, ***"So That They May Be One"*** on May

21<sup>st</sup> by Archdeacon Michael have given me pause for reflection in answer to that question. The text of both can be found on the website; I encourage you to read them in their entirety to view their messages through the lens of love and unity that continues to grow and surround us as we simultaneously work to restore our church and live out our mission. Here I offer a brief summary of their words.

Fr. Joe tells us that each and everyone one of us are challenged by Jesus to grabble with the statement, “If you love me”. He asked us to ask ourselves, “Do I really love Jesus? Do I genuinely love Jesus?”. He goes on to say if your answer is a confident yes, I do love Christ, then you might consider another question, “In what ways do I demonstrate that love?” He ends with “If you love me, obey and be filled with the Spirit”.

In Deacon Michael’s discussion Jesus’ actions on Wednesday of Holy Week, he suggests that Jesus is deep in prayer for himself, his disciples and a prayer for community. It is a prayer for unity “that we all may be one”; he explains that our unity, our “oneness” is a sign to the world of God’s love for us in Jesus. Oneness and unity are about love. He goes on to say that it is with God’s help that we can live into oneness...One Body, One Spirit, One Lord, One God, One Mission, One Church, One Baptism.

Like many of you, I keep a gratitude journal. Recently I have been trying to focus my entries by answering the question “How did I show my love today?” And I’m finding that answering that question has the power to change our daily living.

Submitted with gratitude and thanksgiving for all your demonstrations of love in oneness,

Christine Neal

### **Commission: Junior Warden – Don McKelvy**

I attended the Dismantling Racism Training sponsored by the Diocese on April 28 through April 29, 2023.

A propane leak in our propane system (outside) was repaired and the pilot light was lit on our new stove.

Simply Trees removed the dead slash pine trees near our parking lot and in the Memorial Garden on June 1, 2023. Thanks to Bob Clark for following up with the tree issues in the Memorial Garden.

Paul Altimier and I hung our new “summer schedule” banner by Center Road on June 2, 2023. Thanks, Paul!