

THE KEYS



Church of St. Peter the Apostle
Anglican Catholic Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic States
www.dmas-acc.org

The Rev. Canon Peter Geromel, OHI, DMin - Rector
January 2024
<https://stpetersacc.org>

The Rector's Rambling (in and out of brambles)

Post-Christmas Reflection on Evangelism in a Parish

The first comment that I would like to make (that has to do with the rest of the thesis of this piece) is about the use of Facebook. I have had some in the past who have said to me, "We started a Facebook page!" and one formed the impression that the person stating this thought Facebook a "Chia Pet" approach to Evangelism ("Just add Water"). The fact is that a Facebook page or presence is nothing more than the new newspaper advertisement. For years, parishes spent a good deal of money on newspaper ads. One might eventually form the impression that they might be helpful at Christmas time to pay for one, but a weekly or monthly one (unless free) is simply throwing money to check a box. If you want to do it, go ahead. But don't expect much return on that investment! Actually, I would say that the Facebook page is not even that. It is more like being in the phone book. Not much more than that really. It is the new phone book. Now, one should be in the phone book. One could be found twenty plus years ago in the phone book and in this way it might "bring somebody in". So, you should have a Facebook page in addition to a website, but in the age of algorithm manipulation (especially after the last election) this is less of a useful avenue than it was five or ten years ago.

Really, the old-fashioned adage that "you build a parish by wearing out shoe leather" is exactly right, although the phrase is more accurately "wearing out rubber tires." It is through personal contacts that parishes have *always* been built. That hasn't changed. And that personal contact may now be through Private Messenger ("PM") on Facebook or some other such social media rather than in person – that is possible. That is no different from the priest hanging out in the church office years ago in case a potential parishioner dropped a line after finding the parish in the phone book. Now he carries his office around with him through his smart phone. That is all.

But the thing I want to talk about today is a combination, a double punch combination, that is sometimes missing in our approach to personal invitations to church. For some time now, there has been discussion (and very good discussion it is too) about having events that are not quite church, and may not even be in the church building, as a way for people to "darken the door" even if it is the door of another person's home, rather than the worship service initially. This is a first step and a good first step. Yet recently I heard a fellow tell me that in his congregation they had done just this – he had facilitated Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University a total of 17 times in the church building! It had not led to a single new member. Thus, this "extracurricular" approach to parish evangelism isn't a "chia pet" either. More finesse may be needed.

On the other hand, there is an approach to evangelism that is very good and very personal. You know someone. You invite that person to church. Maybe they come once. They don't come again. What happened? You knew them after all. You knew the people in the church too. They should have all hit it off. Sometimes this works. Often it doesn't.

Here's where the "double punch combination" comes in. Rather than relying solely on inviting total strangers to events that are mildly associated with church or the parish buildings or rather than solely inviting people one knows to the worship service, try this: Invite the people you personally know to the events that are associated with the church but not worship and do this first. Let them get to know the people in the congregation in that context first, then allow them to invite themselves to the worship service. They most likely know that they are very welcome. May you have to invite them to worship, maybe you don't even need to do that.

Again, either of the first two options might work. But many have found that in several cases neither does. Only you can consider what is the right approach and this must be done with prayer. This short piece is simply a suggestion that you consider this third option – invite folks you know to a "non-committal low-pressure event" first. Don't stop inviting outsiders to these other things too. You might as well. You shouldn't be surprised, however, if that doesn't work because it is through personal contacts most of all that good evangelism is done. Relationship as well as integrity in worship is something valued by folks, and relationship building is a necessary way to go about things in an era where everything that they see and hear about Christians on TV isn't good at all.

News and Information

Monday, January 1, The Feast of the Circumcision – Mass at 11 am and 7 pm.

Saturday, January 5, The Feast of the Epiphany – Mass at 5 pm.

Wednesday, January 24, Mass at 7 pm, Vestry at 7:30 PM.

Thursday, January 25, The Conversion of St. Paul – Mass at 12 Noon.

JANUARY, 2024						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	[1] 11:00 a.m. HC 7:00 p.m. HC CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST	[2]	[3]	[4] 12 noon HC	[5]	[6] 5:00 p.m. HC EPIPHANY
[7] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE EPIPHANY I	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11] 12 noon HC	[12]	[13] 5:00 p.m. HC
[14] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE EPIPHANY II	[15]	[16]	[17]	[18] 12 noon HC	[19]	[20] 5:00 p.m. HC
[21] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE EPIPHANY III	[22]	[23]	[24] 7:00 p.m. HC 7:30 p.m. Vestry	[25] 12 noon HC	[26]	[27] 5:00 p.m. HC
[28] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE SEPTUAGESIMA	[29]	[30]	[31]	LEGEND: HC - Holy Communion; FHE – Festal Holy Eucharist; HE - Holy Eucharist; SS – Sunday School; PG - Prayer Group; EP – Evening Prayer; MP – Morning Prayer; P&HU – Prayers and Holy Unction		

IN THE LORD'S SERVICE

If you cannot fulfill your assigned duty because of an urgent reason, PLEASE SECURE A REPLACEMENT.

	January 7	January 14	January 21	January 28	February 4
Coffee Hour	C. Pappas	G. Terrell	S. Darby	C. Kurstedt	V. Williams
Epistoler 8 a.m.	D. Drysdale	C. Von Claparede	G. Mauney	D. Drysdale	C. Von Claparede
Epistoler 10 a.m.	P. Williams	T. Paisley	G. Terrell	P. Williams	T. Paisley

Altar servers and ushers will be assigned as available before each service.

2024 Vestry (term end): George Mauney (‘25), Lisa Olver (‘24), Ted Paisley (‘24),
Mike Slayton (‘25), George Terrell (‘26), Vicki Williams (‘26)