

Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church

State of the Parish Report

November 18, 2018

How do you measure the State of a Parish? What are the signs of health and vitality? What are the signs that a parish is thriving and not just surviving? Who gets to do the measuring? Who decides how well a church community is doing?

These might seem like silly questions but I have to tell you that the answers are shifting and moving. As a member of the Committee on Diocesan and Congregational Vitality at this year's General Convention, I heard lots of conversation about ASA (Average Sunday Attendance), about Community Contact Hours (how a congregation interfaces with and partners with community organizations), Maintenance Focused vs. Mission Focused congregations, and the financial stability and sustainability of congregations, ministries, and dioceses.

Some of this seemed to be driven by a need to present a rosier picture than we get when we look at membership and attendance numbers. Maybe we will seem healthier if we measure different things... but a lot of it is a response to a shift in the place and role of church in our culture and society.

You will notice on the next page, where I provide the inevitable numbers, that our membership has grown over the last several years while our Sunday attendance remains relatively flat. While regular attendance used to mean going to church pretty much every Sunday, it now seems to mean once or twice a month. We used to read attendance as a sign of commitment and engagement but, in today's "economy," people who are committed, active, contributing members of our churches may only be here every other week. So Average Sunday Attendance doesn't seem to be a fair way to assess a church's engagement with its membership or the memberships commitment to the church. The whole church is wrestling with how to measure health and vitality in the local congregation.

Measuring health and vitality is important. If we know what factors contribute the health and vitality of a parish we can focus our attention on those things, making sure that we have them in order. If we know what to measure and when, we might be able to see when something needs to be tweaked, adjusted, propped up. If we know what to measure, if we know how to measure it, and we know what to do when those measurements seem to indicate a problem, we will be in a better position to help churches to grow, thrive, and flourish.

I'd like to be able to say the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church gathered in Austin Texas this past July and came up with the perfect set of tools: interpretive, diagnostic, and predictive, for measuring the state of a parish. We did not. The conversation is ongoing. And if you push me on it I would tell you that I don't really believe that a single set of tools will prove effective for every parish, in every context in which the church lives and moves and has its being. I think that we can develop some indicators that will help us to begin to answer questions about church health and vitality, but I think that the real measure begins when you put your feet on the ground, and experience a community as it worships, serves, learns, and spends time

together in fellowship. No numbers on a page can tell the story of the love and commitment that people in a parish share with one another and with God.

Now before I go on I want to say that I am not trying to distract you from the numbers that we have for St Andrew's. When you turn to the chart in this report you will see that our ASA fluctuates a little every year but continues to hold steady in a range that only varies by 16 over the last eight years. Our total membership number has grown by 36 over the last four years. We are the third largest parish in the Diocese of Milwaukee, and our numbers are trending very positively. Our numbers are good. But put your feet on the ground, experience our community as it worships, serves, learns, and spends time together in fellowship, and you will see that our positive numbers only tell a small portion of the story of St Andrew's. Again and again people tell me that there is a palpable sense of community at St Andrew's. Newcomers tell me, and they said it at the brunch we held in October, that it is clear as soon as you walk through our doors that we love and care about one another in this place.

Our numbers will tell you that there are children in this parish. The numbers won't tell you how welcome they are in the pews, how they feel like this place is their home, how safe they feel here.

Our numbers, if we dig a little deeper, will tell you that we take communion to people that can't come to church. That we visit people in the hospital, at home and in hospice. They won't tell you about the Casserole Brigade that takes them food, about the choir that will go and sing in the hospital when someone is dying, about the countless ways that we offer one another support on a regular basis.

The numbers used to measure the state of the Parish will tell you that our pews are full at Christmas and at Easter. They won't tell you how many people from the community come to St Andrew's for concerts and recitals; how many local musicians and music ensembles use our space to practice and rehearse; how many AA, Girl Scout, and Cub Scout groups gather in the Newell House and in the Parish Hall. Our numbers won't tell you that our local Alder uses our space to convene community meetings and that the Regent Co Op Market holds their annual shareholder meeting and party in our Parish Hall. And our numbers won't tell you that we offer our space for all to all of these community endeavors at no charge, that we see ourselves as a resource to the community, and that maintaining this space for their use is part of our ministry. Those numbers won't tell you that we are hosting a startup church community, Resurrection Presbyterian Church, for the second year, leasing space to them on Sunday afternoons until they are ready to purchase their own building. The numbers used to measure the state of the Parish won't tell you that we give to local, national, and international ministries an amount equaling almost a tenth of our operating budget.

Our numbers are good. By any measure they tell us that we are a healthy and vital congregation. But they are just the beginning of the story. If you really want to know the state of the parish here at St Andrew's, put your feet on the ground, experience our community as it worships, serves, learns, and spends time together in fellowship. You will learn all that you need to know about the state of the parish!

Congregation	Average Sunday Attendance 17/16/15/14/13/12/11/10	Members 17/16/15/14	Children 17/16/15/14	Baptisms 17/16/15/14	Confirm 17/16/15/14	Wedding 17/16/15/14	Burial 17/16/15/14
ASA 141- 225 Transitional Size							
Christ Church, Whitefish Bay	208/207/207/224/222/216/211/191	621/661/663/678	112/88/89/80	18/7/9/13	0/24/0/13	3/7/3/1	12/8/5/7
Grace, Madison	165/155/155/168/175/175/180/185	415/419/452/466	25/30/16/22	5/13/4/8	7/1/3/0	5/6/2/2	5/4/3/3
St. Andrew's, Madison	153/146/145/143/156/155/159/155	403/391/364/367	47/42/31/20	3/4/2/4	13/5/0/6	1/2/0/0	7/6/6/3
Trinity, Wauwatosa	152/152/156/165/170/168/170/172	430/427/477/507	40/30/25/25	4/6/5/15	0/0/0/13	0/2/2/5	5/8/3/10

Membership over the last 4 years has grown from 367 to 403 - A total of 36
ASA over the last seven years has ranged from 143 to 159 - Averaging 156
Our ASA in 2017 was a little below average at 153

Our ASA in 2013 was 156 – our average over the last eight years
On Nov 10, 2013 our ASA was 158
As of Nov 11, 2018 our ASA is 150

So far in 2018

We have had 2 Baptisms: 1 infant and 1 adult,
We have had 4 funerals 4 at St Andrew's
And we have not had any Weddings

More thoughts as we gather for the Annual Meeting.

Calling a new Associate

In hiring associate clergy, we are calling someone to serve on the Rector's staff. The process for such a hire is different from the search for a Rector.

In calling a Rector, the congregation forms a profile committee who polls the congregation, discerns needs and priorities, assess the financial, spiritual and organizational health of the parish, and then publishes a profile, a "personal ad" in the hopes of finding a good match. A Search Committee is formed to evaluate applicants, to interview and visit them at their current parish, and to present a slate of final candidates to the Vestry for confirmation.

In contrast, when calling associate clergy, because the associate works for the Rector as a member of the staff, the Rector has the authority and responsibility for selecting and calling the new hire.

I hope that you know me well enough by now to know that my first instinct, my preferred working style, is collaboration and collegiality. I firmly believe in the Anglican/Episcopal process of group discernment guided by the Holy Spirit. And I would never hire someone to serve in such a critical position in the parish without the advice and support of the Vestry.

The Vestry has had many conversations about the position we need to fill in the coming months. We have talked about the kind of person we would like to see behind the altar, in the pulpit, and at the Vestry table. We have talked about the qualities that we seek in that person, and the diversity of leadership, and the representation of a broad segment of the congregation that we hope to maintain as we move forward. The Executive Committee of the Vestry, both Senior and Junior wardens, and our Treasurer, have served as council of advice in this process.

I am happy to be able to tell you that we have a candidate about whom I am very excited. We are in the advanced stages of conversation and I hope to be able to make an announcement before the end of January. Calling someone to join us here means that they will have to bring their current ministry to a close, find housing here, and then move their household to Madison. It is not unreasonable to assume that our new Associate won't be joining us until sometime this summer. I know that may feel like a long way away but I want to tell you that I am very pleased with the progress we have made and am excited for the team that I see coming together as we prepare to enter the fall of 2019.

Many of you, including the Vestry, have expressed your concern over the workload that I have been carrying since Mother Dorota's departure. I thank you all for your concern. I am paying attention to my hours and am working to maintain a balanced approach as we work our way through this transition period. I have been looking for places and way to delegate tasks that don't require my attention and participation, and, with the Vestry's approval, will be inviting guest preachers to take the pulpit in those places where I can already see the calendar becoming overloaded with appointments, meetings, and assignments.

As we move forward I ask for your prayers: for discernment, for balance, and for the working of the Holy Spirit as we prepare to welcome another Priest to minister among us. I also ask for your patience as we work through the process and structures of the church, trusting that, once again, the Holy Spirit will bless us with just the person we need to help us to Grow Together as The Body of Christ, right here at 1833 Regent Street.

Sabbatical plans

Related to the search for a new Associate to join us are plans for my upcoming sabbatical. I am due for a 10-week sabbatical in 2019 but finding space on the calendar for that time away becomes extremely complicated in the absence of an Associate. Taking a 10-week sabbatical shortly after the arrival of a new Associate seems just as unwise, and more than a little unfair to boot. The sabbatical plan I have proposed, and which the Vestry approved at our October meeting seeks to minimize the disruption caused by my time away.

The approved Sabbatical Plan includes a return to St George's College in Jerusalem, the completion of a Doctor of Ministry in Ministry Development at Virginia Theological Seminary, and another trip TBA in 2020 after our new Associate is on board and acclimated to life at St Andrew's.

A note about the DMin program at VTS. Several people have asked me what I will do with this advanced degree. If all goes as planned I will finish the program sometime around my 62nd birthday. I am not sure what a DMin will allow me to do as a 62-year-old but that's not really the attraction for me. I am attracted to the idea of being among a community of learners who are thinking about ways that the church might stay vital and healthy in this rapidly changing culture and society. I am excited at the prospect of being among people who are looking for new models for being the church. I am excited about have access to a faculty who can help direct my reading and study, and I am excited ab out being back on campus at the school that formed me for ministry as a Priest in the church.

It's also important for me to thank you all at this moment for the gift of a sabbatical. While it is built into my letter of agreement with you, and therefore part of my total compensation package, I want to acknowledge that the opportunity to get away, to recharge, to learn new things, and to rediscover the creativity and passion that makes my position in the community a joy, is a gift to me, to my ministry, and to my family. And so I thank you. I also want to say that I am confident that this sabbatical time will also be a gift to all of you and to the church as we continue our journey together here in this place.

Total Sabbatical Time Available

Ten Weeks

Distribution of Sabbatical Time

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem	2 Weeks
Doctor of Ministry Program	3 Weeks
2020 Sabbatical Trip (tbd)	5 weeks

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Footsteps of Jesus Class, St George's College, Jerusalem
May 1 – 10, 2019

Virginia Theological Seminary - Doctor of Ministry Program

Summer of 2019 – Summer of 2021

- Three Summer residences – Three weeks each
- Residencies are the last two weeks of June and the first week of July
June 17 – July 8 in 2019
- Each residency will use existing 2-week Continuing Education allowance and 1 week of Sabbatical allowance

Final Five weeks to be taken in 2020 after a new Associate has come on board and acclimated

Places I would like to see us focus our attention in the coming year

Outreach

Saint Andrew's has a long a rich history of outreach in the community. Stories of the founding of the Red Caboose Child Care Center during the tenure, and through the funding, of Saint Andrew's 6th Rector, the Rev Bob Shaw; memories of Jesse Crane and her amazing ability to create connections between the people of St Andrew's and families in need; our long relationship with the Appalachia Service Project; our ongoing support of the Diocese of Milwaukee Haiti Project; and the many, many outreach ministries that we help to fund here in Madison, all serve as witness to the importance the people of St Andrew's place on reaching out to those around us seeking an swerving Christ in all people, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and working for justice and peace as we respect the dignity of every human being.

When I arrived in Madison twelve years ago St Andrew's was celebrating the construction of a Habitat for Humanity house that we, and the other Episcopal Churches in Madison partnered to fund and build. The sense of community that working together for a common good created in our congregation was palpable and clear. Not only did we help to provide a home for a family here in Madison but we deepened our relationships with one another and we built the potential to do even more together. I think that it is time for us to take on a major outreach project once again.

There are lots of opportunities right in our own neighborhood. We could work to deepen our relationships and partner with Randal Elementary and West High Schools. We have contributed to their food pantries and we have contributed classroom supplies for students and teachers. Is there more we can do to support vulnerable and at-risk kids in the schools on our block? We have been looking for ways to partner with St Paul's AME. Might we find a way to work together, supporting school kids at a campus on the East and West sides of town? Perhaps it is time to build another Habitat House. Maybe we need to get involved with Pastor Everett Mitchell's church Christ the Solid Rock and look for a social justice program that we can

support; or with Pastor Alex Gee at Fountain of Life Covenant Church and work to support the Nehemiah Project's ministries here in Madison.

There are lots of opportunities, in fact the need is so great that it can be overwhelming. That is one of the benefits of choosing a major project. Focusing our energy and attention on one thing, one issue, one theme, allows us to come together and make a bigger impact than we can make when a few of us are working on one of a wide array of projects.

I will be working with our Outreach Committee in the coming months as we look for your input, suggestions, and ideas. We won't be asking "what we should be doing." We will be asking "what you would like to do." The next step will be to bring those ideas to the community so that we can then decide "what we are going to do."

I believe that it will be an exciting time as we work to find our place, our voice, our passion, and our role in this community, grow together as a community of disciples through service to the people around us.

Newcomer's

One of the Vestry's priorities for 2018 was a deepening of the ways that we welcome and integrate new members of our community. We have had some real successes. A new Photo Directory will be in our hands in the next month or so; a tool that we can use to develop and foster relationships; an aid to getting to know one another so that we can greet each other by name when we meet. We held a Newcomer's Brunch in October. Reaching back three years we invited the folks who have come through our doors and stuck around. We had thirty people who were new to the parish in the last three years and a dozen established members gathered in the Parish Hall while coffee hour happened in the nave. People talked about what a welcoming and supportive community they have found here. They talked about the things that they love about St Andrew's and the things that have kept them coming back. And they talked about how much they valued and appreciated the opportunity to come together as newer members of the community and to hear one another's stories.

We created our invitation list for that October brunch by combing through the guest book in the Narthex and identifying people who are still around. We wondered how many of the people who had signed the book and then stopped coming might have stayed if we had invited them to a brunch. We also wondered how many people had never signed the book but might have come to a brunch if we had invited them during the time they were visiting us. How many people have come through our doors in need of a Christ centered community, just like ours, and not come back because they didn't experience us at our best? How many might be among us today if we had done a better job of welcoming them when they first arrived?

We have two more newcomer gatherings on the calendar, each with a different format. We will gather on Saturday January 19 from 6:00 - 7:30 pm, and again on Sunday, May 5 from 9:15 - 10:15 in the Parish Hall during the regular Sunday Forum time. And we hope that offering these brunches on a regular basis will help us to reach more people who are looking for a home among

us; will give us a chance to share what we have found; will help them to find their place here. But there is a lot more we can do.

We ran an announcement for over a month, looking for people willing to stand with me in the Narthex after church to help welcome newcomers and to offer to “host” them at coffee hour. The receiving line at the end of the 10:30 service is fast paced and busy. I can introduce myself and recognize someone as new, thanking them for joining us, but it is hard for me to offer a listening ear and to hear what has brought them through our doors for the first time. Having another person, or two, to offer a newcomer a chance to tell their story, and to offer a story of their own in turn, might just be the difference between that person coming back the next week and their going home saying to themselves, “I knew that would happen. Why did I think I might be welcomed there?”

It’s not a matter of adding members. It’s not about padding our Average Sunday Attendance. It’s about ministry. It’s about manifesting the radical hospitality of God. It’s about recognizing that someone who come through the church for the first time is taking a risk, making themselves vulnerable, and likely in some pastoral need. I hope that in the months to come we will work together to raise our awareness of, and response to the newcomer in our midst and that we will heed the instruction of St Benedict’s Rule for Monasteries which says,

“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35).”