

WHERE WE ARE – Week of October 18, 2009

1. The Vestry voted to continue working on planning the logistics for common worship of the five Southern Berkshire churches. By the end of October, all of the Vestries will have made the decision to proceed or not. It is unfortunate that the media wrote a story about this prematurely. We will worship together for six Sundays in Lent, beginning with the first Sunday before Ash Wednesday. If you recall, we thought it would happen sooner, however, as we conversed with each church, we discovered that each had their Annual Meeting on a different Sunday in January and early February. Worship will be at Crissey Farm – it is large enough and viewed as a neutral space.
2. Now, more about our Parish meeting on November 8, 2009. The Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) process has been a “True” gift to St. James. The exercises involving you have given us some powerful information about us and, being consistent with our goal of transparency, we need to share that with you. The six overviews are being honed down to no more than ten minutes each. You will receive a copy of each report. All of the information has to do with St. James.

We will break into small table groups of eight to ten each, with a facilitator. This will ensure that everyone will have a chance and adequate time to say exactly what they want to say. The tables of eight will be integrated – let me explain why. Observation: We sit in the same place with the same people every time and we do not even have pews, we have moveable chairs. With people you know well, communication patterns are established so that what you hear is filtered by pre-determined expectations. What we need, instead, is increased awareness and listening. (Ex: this week’s, DPH presentation on the H1N1 virus: my Infection Control Director and I could have given the same information because we have the appropriate level of knowledge. However, having someone else present the information enabled the audience to listen differently and it was heard.)

We have a short period of time to dig deeper to really get to what you are feeling and thinking. We have a lot of gardeners here. The pictures are of flowers, vegetables, trees – what is on top of the ground and visible. We want to get to the roots of those trees – the conversations that go on beneath the surface. We can accomplish that if we are engaged with people we are not used to hearing regularly. In that way, what each of you says can be heard with an increased level of awareness. It will be those conversations that will prove crucial.

The leaders here are not coming up with some secret grand plan, there will be no voting. We are trying to create an environment in which you, as the people of God, imagine the mission to which God is calling St. James for our community.

You may not realize how our congregation is being viewed by others. Here are some comments we have heard: You are “heroes.” Your resilience, your flexibility and your generosity are a model for others. Christ Church at Pentecost

said, “there is a change...” Bud Coyne came here on Palm Sunday to see for himself what was causing the buzz he was hearing. We are being transformed – there is a new spirit among us now and we need to see it, recognize it and celebrate our gifts – and they are many!