

The Bells of St. Mary's

May Edition



St. Mary's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
The Mustard Seed Church

The mission of St. Mary's is to unite all people into a relationship with God and each other in Christ.



In the midst of the Covid-19 news hitting our shores in late February and early March, the Reboot Leadership Team was finalizing our plans for a new joint youth group with our neighbors at Columbia United Methodist Church (CUMC). After receiving a small planning grant from the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University last August, our group of youth and adults met faithfully from early November 2019 through early March 2020. We followed all of the expectations and planning guidelines given to us: attending a kick-off retreat in late September in Waxahachie, causing our youth to miss planned activities here at home; active participation in six planning meetings squeezed in after long days at school and work and extracurricular activities; sending two adult members to a week-long training in Dallas in early January; and finally, listening to God and to one another to come up with a vision for a shared youth ministry between St. Mary's and CUMC.

As the virus marched its way to our shores and eventually sent us into "staying at home," the Reboot Leadership Team's plans were drafted into a proposal and sent to Dallas. Our vision is to build Christian youth community by meeting twice monthly during the school year, forming our youth into leaders who desire to not only continue to grow as followers of Jesus but to invite others into that journey as well. This core group will learn more about the scriptures, elements of our faith, as well as prayer and mission. Every two-to-three months during the eighteen-month grant period we will host, at either St. Mary's or CUMC, an "invitational" event, a focused fun-filled time together designed not only to have fun but to be a gathering to which our youth can invite their friends. Our hope is that at these special events, youth currently unaffiliated with a West Columbia youth group will be drawn to become more involved in the CREW: Christians Ready, Equipped and Willing, as we decided to name our new youth group this past week.

What is important for both parishes to understand is that youth ministry is no longer the domain of paid-staff or one or two volunteers. Youth ministry, especially at small

parishes, requires the involvement of the entire church. We will need both youth and adults to serve on a reconstituted CREW Youth Leadership Board. We will need volunteers to help at each of the “invitational” events. We will need help gathering materials and supplies before each event. We will need worship leaders. We will need help with communications including social media. We will need prayers.

We believe we have submitted a strong proposal. However, leadership at both St. Mary’s and CUMC have discussed that should we not be awarded the grant, we would still like to see how we can implement these plans without the grant funds. We were told that SMU would be making their grant awards sometime in May. With our project proposal crafted during “life before Covid-19” times, some of these plans will need to be adjusted as some of the precautions we have been living under for the last six weeks will still remain a part of our lives. But all of us involved in this planning process remain grateful to God for inspiring us and giving us a mission to create a Christian youth community for youth at our parishes and in West Columbia and possibly beyond.

Your prayers will be needed. Please also begin to prayerfully consider how else you might be able to support this ministry!

Blessings,



Disaster Response Coordinator

In working with other congregations across Brazoria County on Covid-19 community needs, St. Mary’s has been asked to identify a Disaster Response Coordinator (DRC). The DRC will be a liaison with this coalition to build disaster readiness and response in communities across the county. Responsibilities would include:

- Communicate and serve as a point of contact between St. Mary’s and the coalition to keep the parish informed of needs and opportunities to meet them.
- Coordinate parish volunteers for coalition efforts.
- Participate in coalition meetings, projects, and any St. Mary’s response to disasters or crises.
- Prepare the parish’s disaster readiness plan.

This coalition, Brazoria Responds, plans to work together not only through the Covid-19 response but in hurricane readiness and response as well as other disasters.

Please let Rev. Sharron know if you would be willing to serve St. Mary’s in this capacity.

The Mustard Seed Church

Sowing Seeds in the Community...

Mask Maker, Mask Maker, Make Us a Mask

Now that that people are being encouraged and, in some places, required to wear a mask in public, there is a need in the community for handmade masks that can be cleaned and reused. In her recent "The Coronavirus and Worship at St. Mary's" article sent to the parishioners, Rev. Sharron addressed this issue. Theata Miller, Doris Grosvenor, Mary Stewart, and Carol Jones are all involved in making masks. If you would like to help with this project, contact Theata or email the church. Rev. Sharron has also indicated a need to distribute the masks. If you would like to help with this task, contact Rev. Sharron.

Food Pantry - Iglesia Centro Cristiano

The Thursday food pantry at Iglesia Centro Cristiano has seen a large increase in need over the last two months. They are now servicing approximately 450 families each week. Their large storage area packed with crates, boxes, and wooden flats and several refrigerators and freezers that are full on Wednesday, will be completely depleted by Thursday evening. A weekly scripture reading is also placed in each box of food. St. Mary's is now helping with their ministry by providing a weekly donation and the scripture inserts. Karen Logue has typed up scripture readings in English and Spanish, and with the help of Dani Mikel, they have been printed and cut to be distributed over the next 4 weeks. Shyanne Roddy has also volunteered to help with the scriptures.



Narthex Committee

As the renovations of the Parish Hall restroom begin to take shape, it is time to revisit the interest expressed at the Annual Meeting to renovate the Narthex (the small entrance room of the church building itself). Two-thirds of the St. Mary's members present at the annual meeting on January 26th supported incorporating the "Mary" Room and the Chapel into one big Narthex. Neither of these rooms on each side of our tiny Narthex is utilized; in fact, the Mary Room has been closed up for several decades and is now mildewed along with the extra hymnals stored in its cabinet. While the Chapel is beautiful, security concerns caused it no longer to be used as it was intended: a space for those who wish to enter St. Mary's other than on Sunday mornings for a place and a time of prayer and reflection. Since our Narthex gets crowded when more than three people are in it, it makes sense to see if we can make use of these two underutilized rooms. An expanded Narthex could become more of a greeting place for visitors and even a place of hospitality and visiting among members.

As with any renovations of the church buildings, permission had to be sought from the Diocese prior to embarking on any changes. St. Mary's was given that permission for both the Parish Hall restrooms and the Church's Narthex at a meeting of the Protestant Episcopal Church Council of the Diocese of Texas (aka, the Church Corporation). However, the Church Corporation placed a requirement that St. Mary's work with an interior designer or architect on the Narthex designs to ensure the architectural continuity between the redesigned Narthex and the rest of the church building.

This requirement calls for a committee of St. Mary's members willing to work with the Rector in finding an architect, assisting with vision and design, and communicating that vision to the rest of the parish. Please prayerfully consider being a part of this committee and notify the Rector of your willingness to serve St. Mary's through this ministry.

Donations and Offerings

Although Rev. Sharron and Dani have moved the church office to their homes, St. Mary's is still conducting business. Emails and phone messages sent to the church are able to be retrieved. Mail is checked several times a week. Bills are being paid and all correspondence is handled. Our main concerns continue to be our church family and their well-being as well as West Columbia, the surrounding communities, and our nation.

As Rev. Sharron indicated in one of her Coronavirus messages, family comes first, and your main concern should be your family's needs. If, however, you do want to pay part or all of your monthly pledge or make a donation to St. Mary's, there are two ways you can this.

One way is to pay through our webpage, www.stmaryswestcolumbia.com. At the top of the first page, you will see the "GIVE" tab. This will direct you to our PayPal information. You do not have to have a PayPal account to contribute. You can use a credit card, debit card, or your PayPal account. You can also set up recurring donations. One thing to note is, the church does pay a very small percentage of each donation to PayPal.

Donations and offerings can also be mailed to the church's post office box (PO Box 786, West Columbia, 77486). If you write a check, please indicate the purpose of the donation.

In the last newsletter, it was stated donations could also be brought to the church and placed in the mail slot on the rector's office door. Because the current construction work involves Rev. Sharron's office, this is no longer an option.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, *coming down from the Father of lights... (James 1:17)*



Prayer List

The Prayer List for St. Mary's will be emailed weekly. The email is updated weekly and includes those needing healing (physically, mentally, spiritually), those in the military, and those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries. Please remember to keep these people in your prayers.

If you need anyone added, email the church at stmaryswc@centurylink.net. If possible, please make sure they are aware you have requested they be added to our list. You can also email the church if someone is no longer in need of prayers for healing.

Safeguarding God's People and God's Children

As a small church with big plans the need for everyone's involvement is crucial. We need to be prepared when called to serve. One way to be prepared is to be certified in Safeguarding God's People and Safeguarding God's Children.

We had hoped to have our own Safeguarding trainers, Gwynne Olson and Colleen Matocha, but all Training the Trainer sessions have been canceled for now. The Safeguarding office at the Diocese of Texas is not sure when they will be scheduled. In the meantime, Safeguarding God's People (SGP) certification and Safeguarding God's Children (SGC) certification are, for now, available virtually (online). SGP is scheduled for 2 hours and SGC is scheduled for 3 hours, although, they may not last that long. If you can only take one, Safeguarding God's Children is more important, since they have changed the requirements of who must have it.

If you are interested in either or both trainings or have questions, please contact Dani Mikel, and she will get you started.



News from the Vestry

Gwynne Olson, Clerk

The vestry met Sunday, April 19, 2020.

Rector Report: The Reverend Sharron Cox

Rev. Sharron stated that for the past month, she directed most of her attention to learning technology and planning for the Holy Week services. She also stated that the restroom plans only replicated what the existing restrooms currently have. The vestry approved tile to go halfway up the wall to prevent future rotting of baseboards and walls. The Reboot grant application was submitted. Rev. Sharron is confident that we submitted a strong application. Perkins School of Theology will award grants in May. She also attended her first Church Corporation Meeting via Zoom on March 25th. The committee requested that we obtain an interior designer with experience in designing worship areas for the Narthex renovation. And in regards to our parish returning to “normal”, Rev. Sharron stated that Bishop Doyle has yet to decide when we will return to face-to-face worship. Rev. Sharron has been invited to a Brazoria County Responds Zoom conference on Wednesdays, scheduled through June 3rd.

Senior Warden's Report: Marvin Miller

Marvin did not have anything to report.

Junior Warden's Report: Charlotte Blount

Charlotte stated that Dan Roddy and Ed Logue treated the grounds for fire ants. She also stated that restroom renovations are beginning. An open-top dumpster has been placed by the Parish Hall door by the Baptist Church playground.

A copy of the vestry minutes will be placed on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall once approved at the April meeting. The next Vestry meeting is Sunday, May 17th at 11:00 a.m.



Community Assistance

In April, we made a donation to the food pantry at Iglesia Centro Cristiano.

If you know of anyone needing assistance, please contact Tracy Lane, Jackie Walker, or Karen Logue.

Message from Marvin Miller

" Keep Them Close "

I grew up with practical parents. A mother, God love her, who washed aluminum foil after she cooked in it, then reused it. She was the original recycle queen before they had a name for it. A father who was happier trying to fix or repair broken cars and things around the house or getting old shoes fixed rather than buying new ones.

I can see them now, Dad in trousers, tee shirt and a hat, a wrench in one hand and a paint brush in the other. Mom in a house dress, washing clothes, packing school lunches, cleaning house and cooking supper every day. It was the time for fixing things. A curtain rod, the kitchen radio, screen door, the oven door, the hem in a dress. Things we keep.

It was a way of life, and sometimes it made me crazy. All that re-fixing, eating leftovers, second hand clothes, used books, etc., I just wanted to have something new and just throw away all that old stuff. Throwing things away didn't always mean that you could go out and simply get "new" stuff, but it gave a sense of knowing that there'd always be more.

But then my dad died suddenly and fixing things became a lot harder. Some years later, my mother died, and on that clear summer's night, in the warmth of the hospital room, I was struck with the pain in learning that sometimes there isn't any more.

Sometimes, what we care about most gets all used up and goes away...never to return.. So... While we have it..... it's best we love it.... And care for it... And fix it when it's broken..... And heal it when it's sick.

This is true. For marriage..... And old cars..... And children with bad report cards..... And dogs with bad hips... And aging parents..... And grandparents. We keep them because they are worth it, because we are worth it.

Some things we keep. Like a best friend that moved away or a classmate we grew up with.

There are just some things that make life important, like people we know who are special. Keep them close!

~ Author Unknown ~

Congratulations NICE GOING!
GREAT! Way to Go!
Yea! FELICITATIONS
CHEERS Take A BEST
BOW! WISHES!

To everyone reading this: Give yourselves a pat on the back for all you have done during the last two months. You have had to adjust your life, learn new things, clean like crazy, and visit family and friends electronically. You are pioneers and have accomplished so much.



Camp Allen Events

"Camp Allen is celebrating its 100th year-Centennial milestone in 2021. We hope you will make plans well in advance to attend the official celebration at camp on May 1st 2021." (Camp Allen)



Don't Forget

For those that are working at home and having to use their printer, remember to keep your empty print cartridges for St. Mary's. All brands and types are welcomed. We have been turning in 10 cartridges a month, earning a \$20 credit. This greatly helps defray the cost of our office supplies.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Special thanks and gratitude to:

- Karen Logue, Tracy Lane, Dani Mikel, Wendy Hankins, and Gwynne Olson for reading the scriptures during our Facebook Live services after Palm Sunday.
- Theata Miller, Doris Grosvenor, Mary Stewart, and Carol Jones for volunteering to make masks.
- Karen Logue and Dani Mikel for providing scripture reading handouts for the food pantry at Iglesia Centro Cristiano.

You are awesome, and St. Mary's greatly appreciates all you did.

Prayer Request

If you or someone you know is in need of prayers, please notify the office by email or phone. The prayer list will be updated each month, so if prayers need to continue for an individual person please fill out a new card or let Dani know. Prayers for the sick and those in need are the joyful duty of the Christian community. Help us keep our parish prayer list current by notifying us of those in need of prayer and when those listed are no longer in need.

Dates to Remember

Sundays: Liturgy of the Word on St. Mary's
Facebook Live at 9:00 a.m.

Sundays: (Lenten) Book Study on Zoom at
10:00 a.m. (May 3rd and May 10th)

Wednesdays: Compline on St. Mary's
Facebook Live at 8:00 p.m.

May 17th: Vestry Meeting at 11:00 a.m.

May Birthdays

Debbie Burns - May 8

Reesie Cantrell - May 15

Dane Arana, Sr. - May 19

AJ Mikel - May 28

Jasey Hussey - May 30

May Anniversaries

St. Mary's Leadership

Rector

The Reverend Sharron Cox

Vestry

Sr. Warden: Marvin Miller

Jr. Warden: Charlotte Blount

Clerk: Gwynne Olson

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The Bells of St. Mary's is a monthly newsletter for members and friends of St Mary's Episcopal Church. Submissions for publication should be sent to the church office on or before the 25th of the month prior to the publication.