

Mutual Ministry Review for Church of the Good Shepherd

Summary

A Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) was held October 15, 2011 in Vancouver, Washington. This was the first time our church has engaged in the process, so we were guided through the process by MaryAnn Seward, a consultant from the Diocese of Olympia with a long history of engagement and familiarity with Good Shepherd. Participants included our clergy, Rev. Tom Warne and Assoc. Rev. Shelly Fayette, Senior Warden Kelly Nolen, Junior Warden Jim Green, vestry members Will Barnard, Sharon Farr, Jan French, Julie Gullett, Nancy Huffaker, Roger Lyngholm, Matt Thoreson, and Clerk James Howard.

What is an MMR? The concept is simple. It's a performance review - not just of our clergy, but of the Vestry as well. The purpose of an MMR is to create a time for the Clergy and Vestry of Good Shepherd to come together and evaluate our goals, ask ourselves where we are succeeding with those goals, and what challenges have surfaced that might be impeding progress toward them. Additionally we looked at our relationships and how we are working together as a leadership team. In short, it's an opportunity to reflect and ask, "How are we doing and what can we do better?" Although Good Shepherd has had a history of informally evaluating our progress, this was the first such MMR and it is our intention to make this a yearly event.

We each were given a series of questions as homework, each grounded firmly in Mission 2018. With each question we had to evaluate our performance as leaders and individuals. The categories we considered tracked each of the mission imperatives in Mission 2018 - Spiritual Growth, Evangelism, Diversity, Community, Leadership, Resource Growth, Outreach, and Core Values.

We felt that our strongest category was Spiritual Growth, through which we honor each person's journey toward faith in Christ and one another through a diverse set of spiritual opportunities from Sunday mornings to Thursday Night Light and Education for Ministry. We are currently working to further enhance this area through the "Our Common Spiritual Life" process, considering the Sunday experience and beyond.

Another area of strength was Community. We continue to believe that small groups are essential to building ties and community within our congregation. One challenge is helping new parishioners and those who have been here longer find existing groups or form new ones. We believe this is a communication challenge and are taking steps to help parishioners connect with small groups.

One major challenge that emerged as a central theme of the day was how do we as leaders sustain and advance excellence in leadership throughout the congregation? This will be a pivotal theme for the vestry going forward and ties into all the categories above.

As MaryAnn gracefully guided our conversations, we felt the presence of the Spirit as we were able to be truly open and honest about issues that have been looming but have remained unaddressed. Among them was the need for a system and structure for creating and sustaining ministries. Secondly, we recognized the need to move out of the "transition" mindset. This has to be a mental shift for us all. It is easy to get "stuck" and use transition as an excuse not to move forward. For many years, we have talked about moving from a priest-centered to a mission-centered church. We recognized the need for all of us, laity and clergy, to have a common understanding of what this means and how we will build this new creation.

The first MMR was a day of hard work, honesty, and hope. We left feeling overwhelmed at the work ahead of us but at the same time energized and excited. It was a rewarding experience that we plan to carry forward in the years ahead.