

Connections



Rector's Reflections

The Rev. Brian Shoda

The Annual Convention, Diocese of West Virginia meets this month in Morgantown, West Virginia on October 28 and 29 at the Waterfront Hotel. The convention is a time for representatives from around the diocese to come together, consider resolutions for the delegates to vote on, discuss issues that people need to consider or focus on, network with the various commissions of the diocese, staff members of the chancery, to interact with the Bishop, and to bring the people of our diocese closer together as a family.

This year there are no resolutions to be voted on at this time to my knowledge. I can remember my first convention in 2014 when the issue of blessing same sex unions was approved and the feelings and emotions that were reflected by people on both sides of the issue. The Bishop was quite strong on his decision to approve these blessings and very careful not to offend the people who disagreed. This is important when someone in authority like our bishop wants to be inclusive and pastoral in his approach. That is a refreshing gift of leadership not always found in those in positions of authority.

Various committees set up booths and displays to advertise their events and ministries and I have found these to be very helpful. Being a new member of the diocese I am not always familiar with what these groups are doing and this convention gives us an opportunity to read their literature and talk to the people who are in charge. I also like the vendor's booths where booksellers present books on prayer, spirituality, and all aspects of ministry. We have a charitable outreach to the poor organizations that sell canned fruit, jams, and jellies to help the poor.

Some years we have special speakers like the one who talked about ministry in the missions,

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The Episcopal Church

The coat arms of the Episcopal Church includes a St. George's cross (red) and a St. Andrew's cross (blue) that is composed of nine small crosses.

"Be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead."

- 1 Peter 1:6

Diocese of West Virginia

Autumn at Peterkin in Romney, October 14-16 surrounds us with God's beauty. Contact Daisy McBride at 888-822-4519 for more information.

2015 Parochial Report compilation complete

Every year the Episcopal Church requires that each parish complete what is titled the Parochial Report. Statistics on membership and financial support to the parish are summarized and attested to by parish leadership in January for the year just past.

Statistics submitted for 2015 were just released and a few of those have been summarized below. Several of the numbers have been rounded.

Episcopal domestic Parochial Report data: 2011 and 2015

Domestic parishes and missions: 6,736 in 2011 and 6,510 in 2015

Active baptized members: 1.9 million in 2011 and 1.8 million in 2015

% of churches growing 10%+ in members (past 5 years): 24% in 2011 and 24% in 2015

% of churches declining 10%+ in members (past 5 years): 42% in 2011 and 40% in 2015

Total average Sunday worship attendance (ASA): 658,000 in 2011 and 580,000 in 2015

Ten year % change in ASA: down 23% in 2011 and 26% in 2015

% of churches growing 10%+ in ASA (past 5 years): 18% in 2011 and 18% in 2015

% of churches declining 10%+ in ASA (past 5 years): 54% in 2011 and 55% in 2015

% of congregations with 200 members or less: 58% in 2011 and 60% in 2015

% of congregations with 500 members or more: 15% in 2011 and 14% in 2015

% of congregations with ASA of 100 or less: 68% in 2011 and 71% in 2015

% of congregations with ASA of 300 or more: 5% in 2011 and 4% in 2015

Median average Sunday worship attendance: 65 in 2011 and 58 in 2015

Average pledge: \$2,410 in 2011 and \$2,707 in 2015

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

The Diocese of West Virginia

The Rt. Rev. W. Michie Klusmeyer,
Bishop of West Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Mark Van Koevering,
Assistant Bishop of West Virginia

Clergy and staff

The Rev. D. Brian Shoda, *Rector*
Margaret Place, *Organist*
Eileen Stotler, *Sexton*

Vestry and officers

Arlene Verge, *Senior Warden*
Judy McBee, *Junior Warden*
Sandy Buzzerd, *Treasurer*
Beth Curtin, Jack Kelly, Kim Kelly,
Linda Lockhart

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St. Mark's by the numbers

In 2010 our average Sunday attendance was 36 and in 2015 it was 46.

At the end of August there was \$2,598 in the Stain Glass Window fund.

In 2016 we will pay our diocesan assessment, referred to as Missionary Apportionment, of \$9,600.

At the end of August \$27,829 has been donated against pledges. A total of \$48,000 is expected in 2016.

We are on track to earn \$10,500 in rental income in 2016.



Getting to know you

Ruth Johnson

Ruth was raised in Pennsylvania just outside of Hancock, Maryland. She began her education in a Pennsylvania, one-room schoolhouse and from there went to high school in Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania. Ruth graduated from high school in the late 1950s and the one-room schoolhouse suggests the rural surroundings of her youth.

For the next forty-two years her efforts were devoted to being an office worker at Pennsylvania Glass Sand Corporation, later to become U.S. Silica, in Berkeley Springs. She started with the simple tasks expected by a young woman fresh out of high school and as the years progressed her responsibilities increased.

Ruth and her sister Jane attended St. Thomas Episcopal Church with their Aunt Bessie, who made the communion wine for a time.

It was while working that Ruth met John Dave Johnson and in 1966 they were married at St. Thomas. Dave was a member of St. Mark's and it was after their marriage that Ruth joined him there. The increased activities, shops, and history of Berkeley Springs were exciting and Ruth found that she enjoyed her new home.

Early in their marriage they built a house a few miles out of town on land purchased from a farmer. There was nothing around them and they enjoyed the peace of the countryside. The area has grown tremendously and the hunters that once controlled the surrounding deer population have moved on to less populated areas.

Ruth ended her career with considerably more responsibility than those of a young woman fresh out of high school; she was the executive assistant to the president of U.S. Silica, a very large company, when she retired.

She enjoys attending to her flowers, although her ongoing battles with the increasing deer population have lessened the attraction. Quilting, on the other hand, has increased in importance to Ruth's day-to-day activities. The quilted wall hangings in her home change with the season and fortunate family members have been recipients of her work.

Dave was taken from Ruth in 2004 when he died of lung cancer, but her stepson, 2 grandchildren, and now 2 great-grandchildren enrich and bring joy to her life.

Don't be fooled by Ruth's quiet manner, it is more than clear that she is very capable, can be depended on, and is a faithful worker. Her business career, membership in the St. Mark's altar guild since the early 70's, and her dedication to the Thrift Shop attest to this.

We are grateful for Ruth and all that she is and all that she does as a part of our family.

Come Home

You can go back to God from whom you have come. The object of meditating on 'I come from God' is in order that you may realize that you have the power of traveling back to God. God is thinking of you this instant. God is loving you this instant, and as His thought is traveling to you, so yours can travel back to Him.

-George Congreve, SSJE (1835-1918)
Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Vestry Update – September 11 meeting

Arlene Verge, Jack Kelly, Linda Lockhart, Beth Curtin, Judy McBee, Kim Kelly, and Fr. Brian Shoda were present at the meeting.

Updates on old business:

- Suggestions for the next get together with Mt. Zion such as a short service focusing on music and followed by a dessert buffet; movie night either in the undercroft or perhaps in the Star theatre were discussed. Beth will investigate renting the theater.
- The volunteer appreciation luncheon planning committee (Arlene, Judy, Beth, and Linda) will meet to plan a January event to recognize all the volunteers who help out at St. Mark's.

New actions:

- A used piano has been offered as a gift to the church and will be considered by the vestry.
- Fr. Brian suggested that each year the congregation learn a new prayer that we would all be able to recite from memory and the vestry agreed. We will start with the prayer of St. Francis; Fr. Brian will get prayer cards.
- A leak in the Sunday school room ceiling will be repaired. The leak caused a number of items to be discarded due to mold. A dehumidifier will be put in the room and ceiling tiles will be replaced.
- The undercroft will be painted.

Announcements and general information:

- The first healing service was well received; a healing service will be incorporated into the regular service on an occasional basis
- A blessing of the animals will take place during the church service on October 2 (the feast of St. Francis is October 3). Folks will be invited to bring their animal friends to this service; if an animal is unable to attend, a picture can be used instead.

Rector's Reflections – continued

the priest who spoke about seminaries and seminary education, and the very popular singing group last year from Alderson Women's prison. These are all opportunities to expand our understanding of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

A group of young people attend most of the convention and then leave to have discussions that appeal to their age and interests. It was interesting to see their enthusiasm and to see servers at our Worship services with purple or green hair. The Bishop is very popular with them and they kid around with each other all the time.

My favorite aspect of the convention is that I get to meet and become friends with other people and especially the clergy of the diocese. We do not get to see each other very often as we are focused on our own locations and this is a chance to just talk and draw strength from our common ministries and challenges. I have met some wonderful laity as well and found that many of them I have known from other circles as well.

The annual convention is very important to the life of our diocese even when we do not have controversy or resolutions to consider, as it is the primary gathering of the family that we call the Diocese of West Virginia.

God Bless! *Fr. Brian*