

Telling Our Story

Icons: One Thousand Painted Prayers

Jemonde Taylor

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then an icon is one thousand painted prayers. I glimpsed God's brush stroke during the passing of the peace one autumn Sunday in 2017. The passing of the peace at Saint Ambrose, Raleigh, NC, is a sensory experience of smiles, laughter, hugs and handshakes. One eight-year-old member took the hand of a first-time visitor, also eight years old, leading him to a newly installed XII Station of the Cross written in the Ethiopian iconographic tradition that depicts all characters as Africans. Pointing upward to the icon, the young church member said, "See. Jesus looks just like you!" Both boys were African American. The eight-year-old made a profound theological statement. He did not say, "You look like Jesus," meaning the human looked like the divine. He said, "Jesus looks just like you," meaning the divine imprint was on this young African boy.

A new iconographic tradition

That XII Station of the Cross in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church tradition hung as the only Station in that tradition at that time. The other thirteen Stations were lithographs by the Italian artist Giuseppe Vicentini. Jesus, in those Italian paintings, had pale skin and blond hair. That autumn Sunday both eight-year old boys passed four Italian Stations of the Cross to get to the one Ethiopian Station. It was in that African Station both boys saw the divine in themselves, not in the Vicentini Stations.

The journey to the Ethiopian Stations of the Cross took nearly three years. Saint Ambrose is a historically black Episcopal congregation, beginning shortly after the Civil War in 1868 as a mission to formerly enslaved persons of African ancestry. The congregation today is 400 members, and 95 percent are black. The images of white Jesus on the wall did not reflect the congregation.

After the worship committee spent a year searching for more diverse Stations, I reached out to D.C. Christopher Gosey, an African American icon writer in the Ethiopian, Byzantium and Russian traditions living in New Hampshire and commissioned him to write the Stations in the Ethiopian tradition. After two years, Gosey completed all fourteen Stations, with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry baptizing and anointing the final icon at the church's sesquicentennial celebration in December 2018. According to Gosey, Saint Ambrose may be the only church in the world with Stations of the Cross in the Ethiopian iconographic tradition, since Stations are not a part of Ethiopian spirituality.

Ethiopia is an example of what I term Indigenous African Christianity, which is Christianity in Africa before European colonialists and slave traders. Ethiopia has been a Christian nation since 324 C.E., when King Ezana in Axum converted to Christianity and began minting coins with the Byzantium Cross, the first nation in the world to do so.[i]

Windows to heaven

Icons are “God’s words in lines and colors,”[ii] and icon is the Greek word for image. Colossians 1:15 reads, “Jesus is the ikon [image] of the invisible God.” Icons communicate the theology of the Incarnation, Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh. They are “windows into heaven.” One looks “through” them into heaven. Icons look out toward us, not our looking in toward them. They give the spiritual, rather than the physical, reality. When praying with icons, faithful people observe their colors, facial expressions and details the way one observes words and phrases when reading scripture. Icons are doorways to silence and stillness while focusing on God’s creation as seen through the icon. The fourth century theologian, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, wrote, “Look at and be looked at by the great God.” It is an apropos quote. Icons allow us not only to see the divine, but to be seen by the divine in a way that affirms and enlarges us.

The icons at St. Ambrose

D.C. Christopher Gosey wrote the icons at Saint Ambrose in the Gondarine tradition from 18[1] century Ethiopia, with detailed images of clothing, hair styles and genre scenes. The 15[2] century Ethiopian Emperor Zara Yaeqob described how an image (icon) came to life. “This icon is clothed with a (human) body. It moves and talks. The Spirit of God dwells in it. You should not think that it is a mere picture. She is, indeed, Our Lady the Virgin (herself) and he is Jesus, the only begotten Son (himself). Michael and Gabriel too are as themselves, as that icon [has spoken] to a certain monk.” [iii] Emperor Yaeqob’s testimony showed that some Ethiopians did not view icons as simply images or paintings, but rather having great spiritual significance.

In addition to the Ethiopian Stations, Saint Ambrose received icons of three African American Episcopal saints with connections to Saint Ambrose: Blessed Anna Julia Cooper, Blessed Henry Beard Delany and Blessed Pauli Murray. The icon writer, the Rev’d Canon David W. Holland, TSSF, is a retired Episcopal priest with a series of icons entitled, “Black Saints Matter.” Saint Ambrose celebrates two of the feast days by processing the icons to the burial sites of Blessed Cooper and Blessed Delany to offer prayers.

Henri Nouwen wrote in his book, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying With Icons*, “The gaze is clear and benevolent. The same eyes that see into the heart of God saw the suffering heart of God’s people and wept. These eyes that burn like flames of fire penetrating God’s own integrity also hold oceans of tears for the human sorrow of all times and all places.”[iv]

The legacy of white supremacy continues to do excruciating damage, distorting the divine image in people. That eight-year-old theologian gazing at the Ethiopian icon and exclaiming, “Jesus looks just like you!” felt the great God looking at him in a way that affirms him and enlarges him. He saw himself in God’s color palette and in God’s crayon box. That icon, as a window of heaven, radiated God’s love to him as warm as the sun.

The Reverend Jemonde Taylor is the eleventh rector of Saint Ambrose Episcopal Church, Raleigh, NC. Jemonde serves the Diocese of NC as a member of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, the Discipline Board and co-chair for the Bishop's Nominating Committee. Jemonde is a board member of the Seminary of the Southwest and the Gathering of Leaders. He is a member of a five-person group recently awarded a \$400,000 Henry Luce Foundation grant to produce a film and multimedia project on gentrification, race and theological education and practice. Learn more about his ministry by viewing his presentation, [Wrapped in Whiteousness](#), on the Episcopal Church Foundation's YouTube channel.

Resources:

- [Commemorations](#) by Annette Buchanan, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 24, 2019
- [Is This Some Kind of Joke?](#) By Peter Strimer, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 15, 2011
- [Building a Diverse Vestry](#) by Anna Olson, Vestry Papers, January 2019
- [Investing in a Multiracial Vision of Church](#) by Kenji Kuramitsu, Vestry Papers, November 2017

[i] Marilyn Heldman. African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia. Yale University Press. 1993, 8.

[ii] D.C. Christopher Gosey. "Icons and the Hidden Empire." Journal on Religion, Art & Architecture. Fall 1996, 18.

[iii] Deborah Horowitz. Ethiopian Art: The Walters Museum. Third Millennium Printing, UK. 2001, 54.

[iv] Henri Nouwen. Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying With Icons. Ave Maria Press. 2007, 81.

The Heart of the Church is Mission

Edgar Giraldo

The Communications Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico is composed of a creative team that includes a graphic designer and an art designer. We have a press and in the last year have inaugurated an audio recording studio, a radio studio, a video recording studio and an AM broadcast, providing coverage in the southern part of the Island.

Rafael Morales, our diocesan bishop, views communications as an investment, not an expense, and has given a great deal of importance to the Communication Ministry in this diocese. He has emphasized digital output as a tool to support the ministry and pastoral work done by the church in Puerto Rico.

The more congregations feel in touch and in communication with each other, the more they feel they are part of the church. Effective communication in all areas of the church is reflected in evangelism, discipleship and stewardship. If parishioners receive effective digital and printed material, they are likely to respond positively to any campaign undertaken in these three areas.

The importance of communications in challenging times

A communications ministry is of the utmost importance for every diocese. As Christians, it is our duty to share our faith (evangelize). There is no excuse for a church to lag in developing communications – especially now. The need for visibility in the world is even more evident in this pandemic, and the fastest and easiest way to do that is through the use of social media.

Because we already had a great communications ministry in place, we were prepared to take on the challenge posed by the pandemic. The diocese's Office of Communications had tools available to give the clergy and parishioners vital energy.

Some members of the clergy and congregational leaders were already familiar with videoconferencing tools like Zoom and Facebook Live. Those who were not, adapted speedily, so we managed to keep the church alive, despite closing our buildings.

Some church ministries, like youth and women's, found a vehicle for continuing their ministerial work in social media. It was wonderful to see the bishop, surrounded by the church and providing a way through media to carry Christ's message to all Puerto Rican people.

Since my arrival in Puerto Rico in February 2018, it has been easy to develop and advance the Office of Communications and Digital Evangelization. Bishop Morales sees communications as important and vital, especially in these times, and projects are not tied up in the bureaucracy seen in some dioceses. We can work with surprising speed, test and tweak our online projects before posting.

The diocese of Puerto Rico unites around mission

I am heartened by the Bishop's leadership in all areas of the church and by his support for communications. He is always at the forefront of the diocese, encouraging us to do more. The motto for our diocese is "The heart of the church is Mission," and he has called 2020 the Year of Missions. He broadcasts reflections three times per week and also offers Sunday reflections.

But what is most encouraging is to see our churches committed to mission and aligned with the bishop's vision. This was most visible during Holy Week, when all services were held virtually, and it fills me with optimism. As the slogan many of us are using says, "The church buildings are closed, but the church remains alive." We were able to do this because our communications office was prepared.

The church – that is the people – have been making use of our resources, especially those on social media. I have been gratified by their response during this quarantine, living their faith through the media, particularly social media. And not only in Puerto Rico, but in many places around the world.

Steps to an effective social media ministry

As Christians, we have the obligation to share our faith and I have learned that social media is an effective network for doing so. All you need is to want to do it.

My five tips for an effective communications ministry:

1. Interest on the part of the bishop (if at the diocesan level) and the vicar/priest (if at the congregational level). If there is no one trained to do communications, YouTube has thousands of videos showing you how, the tools to use and how to use them.
2. As heads of the church, bishops must understand that communications plays an important role in the church and that a substantial portion of the diocesan budget should be dedicated to developing it. A ministry cannot be sustainable without the support of the church leadership.
3. Money is not a restriction in developing a communications ministry. If you have a smart phone with Internet connection, you are ready to start!
4. Social media and the Internet have a great deal of content, so it is important to generate good material.
5. Communications is not limited to social media. It also involves printed material, phone apps, virtual education, promotional materials, etc.

Let's continue the communications ministry. Let's continue to learn and search out better ways to be a living and committed church. In sharing our faith we are transmitting love, peace, hope and faith to a world tormented by doubts and fears, particularly at this time. God calls us to be light and to share the love of Jesus Christ with all the world. The heart of the church is mission!

*The **Rev. Edgar Giraldo** is Director of Communications and Digital Evangelism for the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico. An Episcopal priest and electronic engineer, he is married and has two children.*

Some ways the Diocese of Puerto Rico communicates its commitment to mission:

- [Get Up! We are Salt and Light that renews!](#)
- [Appreciation for the Diocesan Clergy!](#)
- [Episcopal Radio of the Diocese of Puerto Rico](#)
- [Facebook page, Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico](#)
- [Official Site of the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico](#)
- [Words of reflection and support from the Diocesan Bishop](#)

Resources:

- [The ministry of communications](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, February 27, 2012
- [Using Video to Tell Your Story](#), ECF Vital Practices Tool
- [Social Media Campaigns](#), by Charis Bhagianathan, Vestry Papers, November 2016
- [We're in Jesus' Marketing Department](#), by Sandra Montes, Vestry Papers, July 2018

Be Weird, Be True

David Peters

The picture of a fully naked man flashed across the screen as I led my flock in the Anglican rosary last Sunday night. I groaned and removed the offender from the meeting. We had been Zoom bombed again. We said a brief prayer for him, and continued praying. Doing ministry exclusively on social media has its discouraging moments for sure. As I am typing this, 100 percent of the churches in my diocese are 100 percent on social media. Because of the precautions of the pandemic, all of us are in the same digital boat suddenly.

This past summer I [made some funny videos](#) about being a priest and a Christian and they went viral on social media. If you haven't seen them, the kids you know probably have.

As a priest and church planter, I believe it's my job to be on social media. Social media is the new (now old) town square. Being present in my community means I'm present on social media. If you feel this calling to share the Good News with your social media neighbors, here are some tips that may help you develop your ministry online.

Tips for ministry in the new town square

Be Yourself. The "social" in social media is you. You are a unique creation of God and have so much to offer your community. Start with what you know. Our church plant has a parishioner who posts a picture of the sunrise every morning and a word of encouragement. This is social media ministry. Its authentic to them, and it is for the benefit of others. Remember, share your life and share the good news in Jesus Christ.

To paraphrase Rabbi Zusha (who was not on social media because he lived in the 18th century), "When I get to heaven, I will not be asked, 'Why weren't you like the TikTok Priest?' or 'Why weren't you like @RevDaniel from Twitter?' They will ask, 'Why weren't you like Zusha?'"

Be Weird. If you're part of an Episcopal church in 2020, you're already weird. People in your social media community have no idea what goes on in an Episcopal church. So show them. The quirkiest the better. If you're on the altar guild, take a picture of the linens and explain what they're called and what they do. If you're praying the Daily Office, post an encouraging verse for your followers. Do people know your church is inclusive of LGBTQ people? Do people know your church is a place that is looking for new people to visit? They won't know what you don't tell them.

Being weird means sharing the whole range of human emotions and feelings. Share your grief, share your joy. People need to know we're real, just like them. If you have a really weird sense of humor, run it by someone you trust before you post, because humor is easily misunderstood. During these uncertain and stressful times, we need humor more than ever.

Be Relational. People on social media, especially young people know the difference between someone who is simply marketing on social media and someone who is relational. In my opinion, church pages on Facebook are so much less effective in outreach than parishioners posting about their church. I love seeing someone take a picture in church, knowing that people who will never visit our church will get a glimpse of our sacramental life together.

Prayer and presence in the great social media beyond

There are people who live in Pflugerville where I am a church planter who only know our church through our social media. When I meet these people in real life, they tell me they have been watching us pray for months. Social media interactions sometimes do translate into people showing up on a Sunday morning, often at a church that is much closer to them than yours. Sharing the Gospel on social media is a ministry on behalf of the whole church, not just my church.

I often hear that it's easy to go overboard with social media and that we have to be careful. Perhaps we're worried about being criticized for taking too many selfies. When it comes to evangelism, I like to quote old D.L. Moody who said, "I like the way I do it better than the way you don't do it." Try something. Stick with it for a couple months. See what God does.

Reach out to people who are hurting on social media. Pray for them, even if you have to say, Dear God, bless @ChickenLittle today as they struggle with depression. Tell them you're praying for them. Ask if you can help them find a licensed counselor. Jesus said let your light shine, and in the snark filled, cynical darkness of social media, your light is needed more than ever.

The Rev. David W. Peters, D.Min, aka "The Tiktok Priest" is a 2017 ECF Fellow and the vicar of St. Joan of Arc, a one-year-old church plant in Pflugerville, Texas.

Resources:

- [Social Media as a Pastoral Tool](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, December 8, 2015
- [How I Prayed With Hundreds of People on New Year's Eve](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, January 19, 2018
- [Calling Kids to Communications](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, January 30, 2019
- [Build your Own Social Media Calendar](#) by Kjerstin Besser, Vestry Papers, July 2018

What Happens When Soccer Practice Comes Back?

Pickett Wall

The roads of the southern Appalachian mountains wind through deep hollers and over ancient pinnacles. Tucked along these thin strips of asphalt are small churches of all varieties. This is home to that old time religion and a faith group seldom heard of outside their own families. The Primitive Baptist Universalists are scattered between a dozen little churches on both sides of the great Blue Ridge. They are known among local circles as the "No Hellers." A title which separates them from their close denominational cousins the "Hellers."

There are more "Hellers," of course. The Primitive Baptist Universalists are a religious minority. They made the decision many decades ago to keep their tradition alive and tell their stories. A fundamental approach to this mission is meeting together every Sunday, not as singular churches, but instead as one large mass. They rotate between the old church buildings. A certain family may drive four hours to join his brothers and sisters many states and many mountains away.

Their services are simple and beautiful. Anyone can stand and offer a homily or prayer, foot washing is a sacrament shared every Sunday, and a large meal always follows. They are dedicated to remaining together and telling their unique stories through their unique traditions. They find time every Sunday in a world full of distractions to share the ancient story of our ancestors and to build new ones.

Tuning in to church in a world shaken by COVID-19

The Episcopal Church has a powerful medium for sharing our story. On Sunday mornings all across this land the story of our ancient history, the story of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the story of our present lives collide. How important is this tradition to us? How important are these stories? Do we still yearn for them? Would we pack up the family van and drive four hours every Sunday to experience them?

One thing has been made clear with the outbreak of COVID-19. People still yearn for church. The online response has been tremendous. People are tuning in. There is no doubt that they are seeking the balm that once healed them. There is evangelism happening out there and there is cause for cautious optimism. Long lost sheep are returning home and the fattened calf is being prepared for celebration. The cynic could and should point out that we are now in a world shaken to its core. A world with far less distractions. There are only so many board games, so many jigsaw puzzles, so many reruns of *The Sopranos*. What happens to the beloved church when soccer practice returns? Are we once again relegated to the position of least concern?

What happens next?

The fear that this virus would decimate our church has in many ways subsided. People will die from this disease. People have died from this disease. In the midst of this suffering the church has steeled itself as she always does. She has held fast in the face of swift change and continued to proclaim the Gospel. The new fear is what happens when all those distractions come rushing back.

What happens when that fancy brunch place on the corner opens again? What happens when the sports fields are full with Sunday morning games and practices? What happens when late night college football goes into overtime? What happens when the workweek is such a grind that sleep feels like the better option?

The Primitive Baptist Universalists would brew a cup of coffee and step out into the crisp mountain air and meet again to share their story. What will the Episcopalians of the world do?

Will our people come back?

Attendance is the most important pledge you can make to your church. It is the hardest pledge to keep. The majority of Episcopalians show up for church about fifteen to twenty five percent of the time. The building block of church growth does not come from outside the church. That is a critical step, but not the first step. The first step is getting the church's own people to show up.

They are showing up during this virus, and not because a computer screen makes it easier. They are waking up on Sunday mornings with clear heads and clearer schedules. And suddenly the stories come flooding back to them. Church, we used to go to church on Sunday mornings. Before the organs and canticles were drowned out by referee whistles and mimosas, we went to church as a family.

These are stories that can never be erased. How does the character Terrence Mann put it in Field of dreams? “They will find seats where they sat when they were children and it will be as if they dipped themselves in magic waters. The memories will be so thick they’ll have to brush them away from their faces. People will come.”

Will they come? That is worth a prayer or two. That those empty rows are filled again. That people come. That they come and sit in those seats they left empty long before any virus spread across the globe. That they come and find respite, peace, and nourishment in the stories that have filled the generations.

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Resources:

- [Why are we here?](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 1, 2018
- [Soccer-field Best](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 14, 2014
- [What could being church look like, post COVID-19?](#) by Chantal McKinney, Vestry Papers, March 2020
- [Back-To-Church: Youth Outreach](#), Annette Buchanan, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 12, 2017

El corazón de la iglesia es misión

Edgar Giraldo

El Ministerio de Comunicaciones en la Diócesis Episcopal de Puerto Rico está compuesto por un equipo de creativos que incluye un diseñador gráfico y un diseñador artístico. Contamos con una imprenta y el último año, hemos inaugurado una sala de grabación de audio, estudio de radio, estudio de grabación de video y una emisora en AM con cobertura en el sur de la Isla.

Rafael Morales, nuestro obispo diocesano, ve las comunicaciones como una inversión y no como un gasto, y le ha dado mucha importancia al ministerio de las comunicaciones en esta diócesis. Ha dado mucho énfasis en la producción digital como una herramienta de apoyo a la misión de la iglesia y la pastoral que hace nuestra iglesia en Puerto Rico.

En la medida en que la feligresía se sienta mejor comunicada, tiene más sentido de pertenencia con la iglesia. Una buena comunicación en todos los ámbitos de la iglesia se refleja en la evangelización, el discipulado y la mayordomía. Si la feligresía recibe buenos materiales digitales e impresos, con seguridad responderá de la mejor manera a cualquier campaña que se emprenda en estos tres ámbitos.

La importancia de las comunicaciones en los tiempos difíciles

Es importantísimo que cada iglesia y diócesis tenga un ministerio de comunicaciones. Los cristianos tenemos la obligación de transmitir nuestra fe (evangelizar). Ahora no hay disculpa para que una iglesia no cuente con desarrollo en el área de las comunicaciones. La necesidad de ser visibles en el mundo es mucho más importante durante esta pandemia, y lo más fácil y rápido es ser visibles a través de los medios sociales.

Porque tenemos un ministerio de comunicaciones ya establecido, estábamos preparados para asumir el reto que nos impuso la pandemia. La oficina diocesana de comunicaciones contaba con todas las herramientas para darle al clero y a los feligreses una vitalidad sorprendente.

Algunos clérigos y líderes en las congregaciones ya conocían el uso de algunas herramientas para videoconferencia como zoom, y Facebook Live. Las personas que no las conocían se adaptaron rápidamente y logramos mantener viva la iglesia, aunque nuestros templos estuviesen cerrados. Algunos ministerios de la iglesia como el de los jóvenes y el de las mujeres, también encontraron en las redes sociales un vehículo para continuar ministrando. Fue extraordinario ver la iglesia rodeando al obispo y a través de los medios encontrando la manera de llevar el mensaje de Cristo a todo el pueblo puertorriqueño.

Desde mi llegada a Puerto Rico en febrero 2018, ha sido fácil desarrollar e impulsar La Oficina de Comunicaciones y Evangelización Digital. El Obispo Morales ve el ministerio de las comunicaciones como un ministerio importante y vital, especialmente en estos tiempos y los proyectos no se ven enfrascados en la burocracia que se ve en algunas diócesis. Podemos trabajar de una velocidad sorprendente, probar y ajustar nuestros proyectos antes de producirlos.

La diócesis de Puerto Rico se une alrededor de la misión

Me da mucha esperanza el liderazgo del Obispo en todos los ámbitos de la Iglesia y su apoyo para las comunicaciones. Siempre ha estado al frente de la diócesis, impulsándonos a más. El lema de nuestra diócesis es “El Corazón de la Iglesia se llama Misión” y ha llamado 2020 el Año de la Misión. El obispo tiene una transmisión de reflexiones tres veces a la semana y también ofrece reflexiones los domingos.

Pero lo más esperanzador es ver nuestras iglesias comprometidas a la misión y alineadas a la visión del obispo. Esto se pudo ver más en la Semana Santa, cuando todos los servicios se hicieron virtualmente, y eso me llena de optimismo. Como dice el slogan que recalcamos muchos: “Los Templos están cerrados, pero la Iglesia sigue viva”. Pudimos hacer esto porque nuestra oficina de comunicaciones estaba lista.

La iglesia – es decir la gente – han estado usando nuestros recursos, especialmente los que están en las redes sociales. Me ha sorprendido su respuesta durante esta cuarentena, viviendo su fe a través de los medios sociales, especialmente por las redes sociales. Y no sólo en Puerto Rico sino de muchas partes alrededor del mundo.

Pasos para un ministerio de redes sociales eficaz

Como Cristianos tenemos la obligación de transmitir nuestra fe y he aprendido que los medios sociales son un canal efectivo para hacerlo, solo se requiere interés de hacerlo.

Mis cinco consejos para que un ministerio de comunicación sea eficaz:

1. Interés del obispo (si es a nivel diocesano) y del vicario/sacerdote (si es a nivel de congregación). Si no hay una persona capacitada para hacer las comunicaciones, hay miles de videos en YouTube que te indican cómo hacerlo, sobre las herramientas y cómo usarlas.
2. Como cabezas de la iglesia, los y las obispos deben entender que las comunicaciones son parte importante de la iglesia y que deben destinar buena parte del presupuesto diocesano para su desarrollo. Un ministerio no puede ser sostenible sin el apoyo del liderazgo diocesano.
3. El dinero no es una limitante para desarrollar un ministerio de comunicaciones: ¡Si tienes un móvil inteligente con conexión a internet, ya puedes empezar!
4. Hay mucho contenido en las redes sociales y en la web, por lo tanto, es importante generar muy buen material.
5. Las comunicaciones no solo son las redes sociales. Tiene que ver con material impreso, desarrollo de aplicaciones móviles, educación virtual, material promocional, etc.

Sigamos adelante con el ministerio de comunicaciones. Sigamos aprendiendo y buscando mejores maneras de ser una iglesia viva y comprometida. Al transmitir nuestra fe estamos transmitiendo amor, paz, esperanza y fe a un mundo lleno de duda y miedo, especialmente en estos momentos. Dios nos llama a ser luz y a compartir el amor de su Hijo Jesucristo con todo el mundo. ¡El corazón de la iglesia se llama misión!

Algunas maneras que la diócesis de Puerto Rico comunica su compromiso a la misión:

- [¡Levántate! Somos Sal y Luz que renueva!](#)
- [Agradecimiento al Clero Diocesano!](#)
- [Radio episcopal de la diócesis de Puerto Rico](#)
- [Página de Facebook de la diócesis episcopal de Puerto Rico](#)
- [Página oficial de la diócesis episcopal de Puerto Rico](#)
- [El Obispo Diocesano dando palabras de reflexión y apoyo](#)

El Rvdo. Edgar Giraldo es Director de Comunicaciones y Evangelización Digital de la Iglesia Episcopal Diócesis de Puerto Rico. Es sacerdote episcopal e ingeniero electrónico, está casado y tiene dos hijos.

Recursos:

- [Somos el Departamento de Marketing de Jesús](#), por Sandra Montes, Vestry Papers, julio 2018
- [Dios, es tu iglesia](#) por Alfredo Feregrino, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2016
- [Poner las Comunicaciones a Punto](#) por Bob Williams, Vestry Papers, julio 2012
- [¿Por qué compartir historias?](#) por Julie Lytle, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2014

Evangelism – It’s Now or Never

Kenn Katona

For as long as I’ve been an Episcopalian, I have heard people joke about our aversion to evangelism. These jokes come from not only the pulpit, but also from the deviled egg line at coffee hour. (It is my not so humble opinion that no Episcopal coffee hour is complete without deviled eggs.) There is a pithy statement that I believe many have likely heard before: “There is a grain of truth in every joke.” Concerning the particular and repeated Episcopal habit of joking about evangelism, I’m pretty sure that over the years, our church has amassed enough grains of truth to construct a beach that would rival any exotic island destination.

However, as the membership of our churches has continued to decline over the years, many in our ranks are beginning to change their tune from laughter about being the frozen chosen to serious discussion on what we might do to gain new members and share the hope, love and acceptance we have found in the Episcopal Church with future generations.

Time to spread the Word with enthusiasm and passion

Our challenge now is to think outside the box. We can no longer be the best kept secret in whatever town we reside in. Gone are the days when we can simply paint the door red or rely on our social positions or status to draw people in. Even a flourishing outreach program is not enough to seriously attract a significant population — and especially from the already over-programmed, young singles and families who might carry the torch and light of Christ after us.

We no longer have a choice. We must begin spreading the word about how wonderful our churches are with enthusiasm and passion. We must get serious about evangelism, about sharing God’s love for the world and about fulfilling Jesus’ great commission to “Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

When I first began at my current parish, I felt that God was about to do a new thing with our church community. I began preaching a message that I have shared from the both the pulpit and the dining room table. That message is this:

Your friends and neighbors aren’t going to know just how amazing this caring community is. Your friends and neighbors aren’t going to know about the hope and healing that people experience at this church. Your friends and neighbors aren’t going to know the love that our people have for one another and our surrounding community. And last of all, your friends and neighbors aren’t going to know about the grace, mercy, forgiveness, freedom, love and life that can be found through Christ in the Episcopal Church.

Unless you tell them, they aren’t going to walk into our churches and experience the risen Christ. Unless you invite them to come and see. Unless you say, ‘Hey, you’ve got to come check out the church I go to. It’s different. It’s special.’

Granted, it took some time for this message, for this mission that Christ has given our parish to take hold. But once it did, people were excited, enthusiastic and energized. And we saw results.

Many ways to say 'we're here' and invite people in

We formed an evangelism ministry charged with finding ways to bring people to our church and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. No idea was too far out there for us to consider. We brainstormed ways to let people know that our church was here and that they were invited. Forty of us went Christmas caroling, many armed with ukuleles, and we handed out candy canes and flyers about our loving little church on the corner. During Advent and Lent, we have handed out free coffee to morning commuters and passersby on a weekly basis, culminating in an invitation to our Christmas and Easter services.

We set up outside our church for "Ashes to Go" during the morning rush hour and had 25 cars stop for the imposition of ashes. We've handed out ice cream at little league games, and have even stood out by the street as cars drive by on Sunday mornings, waving to people and holding large signs with messages about the love of Jesus for all people or an invitation to come and check out our church.

We hope people who drive by or live in our neighborhood will notice us and talk about the bold messengers for Christ at the little church on the corner. During this pandemic, in addition to online Sunday services, our congregation is live streaming Morning Prayer at 9:00 am PT and Compline 8:00 pm PT, Monday through Friday, where people from across the street, across the country and even across the world join our online community.

No longer just another church building

This has all been possible because our congregation has decided to own our part in the great commission and take evangelism seriously. Our surrounding neighborhood now knows that the Holy Spirit is active in our community. We are no longer just another church building that people barely notice as they pass by. Once, when my wife and I were touring a daycare, one of the managers kept telling me how familiar I look. Eventually, she said, "I've got it! You're the free coffee guy!" During the holidays, we receive Christmas cards from people in our neighborhood and people who drive by on their commute to work. They tell us that our unconventional approach to evangelism puts a smile on their face every morning when they see us on the curb, holding our signs and spreading the joy and love that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

And to boot, our unorthodox tactics have increased our numbers on Sunday mornings. People who once passed by our little church without even a glance, have joined our congregation and are finding a home in the Episcopal Church. They are taking up the torch of our parish, shining the light of Christ for all to see — or at the very least, anyone who happens to drive by!

The Rev. Kenn Katona is a priest currently serving at St. Clement's Episcopal Church in the diocese of Northern California. Kenn strives to be a sparkplug in his vocation as a priest. From high energy sermons to his contagious enthusiasm while celebrating the liturgy, he believes that when we share the love of Jesus with excitement, seeds are planted and fruit will burst forth, all to the glory of God.

Resources:

- [Midnight Evangelism](#) by Robert Hendrickson, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 22, 2016
- [Drive Through Mission](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, March 18, 2017
- [At the End of the Day...](#) by Mary Parmer, Vestry Papers, January 2012
- [How Do You Share Jesus](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 29, 2016

Branding Can Help You Tell Your Story Better

Beth Wyndham

In January of 2019, my husband and I were commissioned to begin a new community of faith for the Diocese of West Texas. The area we chose is considered the “Front Porch of the Hill Country”, and is on the northern-most edge of San Antonio in the nation’s fastest growing county, Comal County. The nearest Episcopal churches are 16, 20 and 21 miles away. Our new community would offer an inclusive sacramental option that embraces both the beauty of our tradition and new methods for ministry. It is for those who love God as well as those who have been hurt by the church and are in need of healing and love. We knew our community needed to be traditional yet modern, inclusive and creative, a place for all ages, filled with joy and the love of God. We also knew that we had no idea how to present those goals in language or visually! What could we do to set ourselves on the right path?

Fortunately, we had a community of creative thinkers who encouraged us to hire a professional to help with our logo and branding, developing a visual representation of our church and her vision and values. We knew that creating a logo and establishing a branded identity were important. What we didn’t know was how much these efforts would help us form our community, communicate our vision and values and enable us to stay connected through the immense changes and challenges we faced this spring.

A leap and a fresh perspective

We chose to hire a small firm to help us. Given that one of our objectives was to reach out to people who are unchurched or who had been hurt by the church, we decided to take the risky leap of working with someone who had never before worked with churches. We wanted a fresh perspective from a company with a focus on helping new, small businesses grow and thrive.

Looking back, it was a fun translating the business-centered documents into those that would work in the church. The work broadened our perspective, taking us from the comfortable, churchy language we knew to the unknown and less familiar language of business. As we worked through questionnaires for branding, we became acutely aware of how much we, as a church, use insider language. We were challenged to communicate theological concepts and ideas in more down-to-earth language that relates to people on the outside. What an incredible challenge to reach people

where they are without giving up Jesus. Jesus is, after all, all about reaching us and wanting to be in deep relationship with us, and we realized our branding efforts needed to do the same.

We needed to be traditional yet contemporary. We needed to appeal to tried and true churchgoers, but also to reach out to the un- and de-churched. And we wanted to appeal to people of all ages. No small tasks.

Designing a symbol for our values

Creating our logo and brand identity required defining who we are, what we value and who we are trying to reach. Once we had a name for our community, St. Nicholas Hill Country, we began designing our logo. To remind us of the story of St. Nicholas and point to the Texas Hill Country, it was going to be round, with an abstract depiction of the agarita plant, a native Hill Country plant that is evergreen, persistent and drought tolerant. The design was to hint at Christmas, with colors that evoke the feeling of joy and are reminiscent of the Texas Hill Country.

As we began to share our logo, we realized we were achieving the brand identity we had hoped for. It reminded those that were already churched of communion and stained glass and the gold coins from the St. Nicholas stories. Our unchurched friends and neighbors saw wholeness and health and wellness in it. They found our logo warm and inviting and inclusive – an open cross, surrounded by joy.

The logo and branding also helped us instruct our team members on our values and vision. The logo became a symbol of inclusion, joy and creativity. And we were in awe that somehow, through this little symbol, our values were being communicated.

Consistent and focused communication

We worked with an incredible artist who set us up with a thoughtful, creative website and social media templates. That allowed us, right from the beginning, to be consistent in our messaging and our focus on our target community. We encouraged our entire team to keep our key words and messaging consistent in all posts. As a new and growing community of faith, we relied on our team members to share our vision and communicate our message to the broader community. That shared language of faith and branding has helped us communicate the St. Nicholas brand broadly. Postings on our website and multiple social media platforms reinforce our vision of being a joy-filled, creative and inclusive community.

Our branding commitments have helped us discern what and when to post. They have kept us from posting unneeded material for the sake of content, forcing us to be more purposeful in our communications. We also found that people have appreciated the differences in language and logo in our messages and those from the Episcopal Church and our diocese. They feel connected through our thoughtful communication and messaging while also sensing a bigger picture of the body of Christ.

Creating connection in a time of pandemic

When the coronavirus hit the United States this spring, we had been worshipping at St. Nicholas in the Hill Country for only three months. As a new faith community in a season of firsts, with no previous traditions and a good portion of our community new to church or coming back to it, we felt especially challenged to keep our people connected to one another and to St. Nicholas. Our logo has helped us remind people that we belong together. We are St. Nicholas, a group of faithful Christians called to share the joyous love of Jesus Christ, even during physical distancing. Our online worship and prayer offerings include our logo. Our care packages bring logo-bearing gifts to help keep us connected. Our first care package included branded coffee mugs, and every time one shows up in our Zoom meetings, it's a recognizable shout-out for St. Nicholas. It makes me wonder how often the mugs show up in business video conferences too.

It is amazing to me how something so small can do so much. But then again, we are a people who love our symbols. And I love that our people will remember the great and everlasting love of Jesus Christ every time they see our logo. They will remember it as a symbol of wholeness in Jesus Christ, a symbol of joy, perseverance and generosity. And the beauty of this crazy little logo and symbol is the way it not only helps us embrace who we are, but continues to lead us into who God is calling us to be.

The Reverend Beth Wyndham is the founding pastor at St. Nicholas Hill Country Episcopal Church in Spring Branch, Texas. Prior to this she was the Associate Rector at St. Thomas in San Antonio. She is married to Jeremy Wyndham and has a great love for silly looking pets, writing, reading, painting and creating children's books.

Resources:

- [Brand: Burn, Baby, Burn](#), by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 25, 2012
- [Marketing the "E" in Episcopal Schools \(Lessons for Churches...\)](#), ECF Vital Practices blog, May 6, 2016
- [What Godzilla can teach the church](#) by David Davidson-Methot, MDiv, PhD, ECF Vital Practices Tool
- [Chocolate and Discernment](#) by Steve Ayers, ECF Vital Practices blog, November 30, 2012

How Do We Tell Our Story?

Demi Prentiss

Storytelling is one of the most powerful communication strategies available to us human beings and has probably been used ever since a group gathered around a fire or parents engaged with their children. Jesus was a master storyteller, and his metaphors ring true nearly 2,000 years after his death and resurrection. Today, we've expanded the medium of storytelling beyond spoken or written words to include graphic novels, photographs, animation, live-action video, audio books and more. We can even find training to raise our storytelling skills, whatever platform we use.

For congregations, learning to tell our faith community's story is an exercise in self-awareness and engagement. But there's a deeper question, beyond news releases or welcoming videos or live-streaming our worship. How is our congregation telling its story and what stories are we telling when we're just living our lives? What is the story told when our neighbors and visitors focus on our walk, not just our talk?

Our people tell a story . . .

In the way that they gather and greet one another and engage the stranger.

In the way they celebrate and mourn together.

In the individuals they honor and in the way they reinforce their culture.

In the leaders they follow and the way their leaders speak to and for them.

Our ministries tell a story . . .

Who do we seek to serve, and how do we learn from them?

What do we seek to nourish through our work?

Who benefits?

What's the benefit to the greater community?

Where do we draw the line?

Even our congregation's assets tell a story . . .

When our building is open, who's welcome inside? And how do they get in? What will they find?

When our congregation has worked to be rooted in the community, the neighbors and the members know they're welcome, and they can count on finding something they need in our building. Maybe it's a community choir or a children's program or an AA meeting or a school, as well as worship and welcome. Maybe it's people who seek and serve Christ in all persons and value the earth. The best part of the story is when the people who come inside our building experience the presence of God.

When we're seeking support, whom do we ask to contribute, and how is their support received and acknowledged?

Every faith community encounters problems they can't seem to handle, at least at first. Coming to believe that "what we need is here" is a big first step. Opening our eyes to the help that's available both inside and outside our own group is another. And finding the courage to seek the help we need and to welcome unexpected partnerships is the road to liberation. The best part of the story is when all know that each partner is welcome, because their presence and also their gifts are recognized as valuable to the community.

Where are our assets invested?

Most churches invest a lot in their buildings – upkeep, heating, cooling, roof repairs, parking lot maintenance. Lots of churches value investing in their clergy and staff and work hard to pay them justly. Some churches develop endowments to invest in future ministry. Practically all churches seek to do God’s work with the assets they’ve been given. The best part of the story is when the “return on investment” is life-giving and liberating.

What inspires people to invest in our congregation?

Our congregation’s hearts grow when they invest time and energy in hearing and responding to the needs of the community. Partnerships built among faith communities and their neighbors nurture resilience and demonstrate the truth of the Gospel – that God continues to work with, through and among God’s people. The best part of the story is when people look with newfound hope toward the future that God is inviting all to be part of.

So many ways to tell our story and share God’s Good News

How are we telling those stories? We can tell them via social media and broadcast media and even through ink and paper. We can tell them through the ways we act and speak and engage the people we encounter. We can tell them in the ways we choose to play a part in our community. We can tell them through our budget and the ways we choose to be the stewards God is calling us to be.

Ultimately, our presence and our witness will speak more loudly than any public relations campaign ever imagined. God calls us to tell the greatest story ever told – to share God’s Good News every way we possibly can and, when necessary, to use words.

Demi Prentiss has been a ministry developer at the parish, diocesan and church-wide levels for 25 years, and has seen the transformational effect of refocusing the church outside its own walls. She has worked and worshiped in congregations of all sizes, in established and re-organizing dioceses. She lives in Denton, Texas, and her most recent book is Making Money Holy (2019, Church Publishing).

Resources:

- [Telling Stories](#) by Jeremiah Sierra, ECF Vital Practices blog, January 14, 2013
- [Mnemonics and Telling Stories](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 27, 2012
- [Telling Our Story](#) by Annette Buchanan, ECF Vital Practices blog, January 2, 2020
- [Story Sharing](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 27, 2017

Growing God’s Work

Connie Rux

Four things have helped All Saints Episcopal Church in Tarpon Springs, Florida, weather all the changes in its 127-year history: faith, flexibility, resilience and communication. There have been rough times, but the church community survived and grew.

Today's leaders feel a key factor in All Saints' continued vibrancy is its financial foundation. To reflect the church's vision, the Endowment Board has been renamed the Funding Our Future Committee and given expanded responsibilities. The goal is to be a caring community while being good stewards of the church.

An investment in the future

In this year's annual meeting report, Jim Rissler, vestry member and chairman of the Funding Our Future Committee, wrote, "Our church is an example of what we have inherited. Past leadership paid off all mortgages and other encumbrances so the church would be able to provide a community home for all of us." Rissler emphasizes that an endowment really is an investment in the future. "Thank goodness we have the endowment in these times," he says. "The intent is for it to be there to rely on when needed."

Deacon Bob Kinney, business manager for All Saints and longtime member, believes this changing view about the endowment has been a positive step. "We were managing it ourselves," he says, "and a couple years ago, the vestry took a leap of faith to change direction. We elected to have our endowment invested in the Diocese of Southwest Florida's Endowment Management Program, which is managed through the Episcopal Church Foundation's (ECF's) Endowment Management Solutions Program at State Street Global Advisors."

In recent years, All Saints has received two significant gifts that have helped enlarge the endowment. "It has grown from about \$100,000 five years ago, to over \$400,000 now," says Rissler, "thanks to the gifts and good investment of funds."

Past struggles with budget and social issues

All Saints' current financial strength was not always the case, and Rissler recalls when the church was running up deficits of \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year. "Exceeding our budget, but always with the hope that we'd turn it around," he says.

Growing conflict in the Episcopal Church over social issues like same-sex marriage was also having an effect on the congregation. "Down here in Florida, people were questioning the church and what we were doing," Rissler recalls. "It caused a lot of dissension and the loss of a lot of members. We were pretty much operating in the dark – hopeful, but spending beyond our means and struggling to meet our balance every year."

In addition, All Saints' longtime priest was asked to leave. The senior warden at the time, Hank Power, guided the church through two very important decisions. "He insisted that All Saints mend its relationship with the diocese and repay the debt we owed them," says Barb Rulison, longtime vestry member and treasurer. He also insisted that the church needed to start an Endowment Fund.

Optimism, focus and a balanced budget

When the Rev. Wayne Farrell came in 2011 he brought a new spirit of optimism and focus. "He had experience in the church as a lay person and had been a businessman himself," says Kinney. "He created a discipline for us to be better stewards than we had been."

In Farrell's first two years, the church held fundraisers to help meet expenses and balance the budget. The Close the Gap and Finish the Race campaigns included a general appeal along with personal letters to parishioners from vestry members. Rulison says, "Our parishioners were incredible. They really came through. And for the first time in a long time, we were able to balance a budget."

The fundraisers were followed by several successful stewardship campaigns that shared All Saints story and mission and vision. Campaigns were kicked off with an ice cream social after Sunday services, and later a ministry fair was added to encourage parishioners to offer their time and talent as well as to pledge. Additional social events, from monthly breakfasts to Mardi Gras and barbecues, helped get people involved in the church and generated funds, along with a feeling of family.

Since she became rector in 2017, the Rev. Janet Tunnell has continued to support efforts like these to build community and strengthen stewardship.

Today, All Saints is more confident and ready to consider the church's future needs. And while the coronavirus crisis will affect everyone's future, Kinney says, "Fortunately for us we are in excellent shape, and our income has held up. We have to continue to be good stewards."

All Saints shares its story in dialogue with the congregation and the diocese

The vestry strives for transparency in its communications, providing financial updates in the weekly bulletin and a brief monthly report that shares vestry news and decisions. When things happen, the congregation is informed through announcements, in writing and phone calls. It's a team effort involving both members and church leaders.

Formerly focused inward and marginally involved in the Diocese, All Saints now shares its story with other churches through leadership roles on the Finance Committee and Diocesan Council. Rissler, who serves on both, sees diocesan service as a two-way street. "We learn from the experiences of other churches while we share our own experiences," he says.

“The diocese has a strong relationship with ECF,” Rissler says. “and makes us aware of their programs and how to implement them in our own church.” He has special gratitude for Diocese of Southwest Florida Bishop Dabney Smith’s help and encouragement.

Connie Rux is a retired journalist who worked 44 years for newspapers in California and Texas and was editor of several dailies and four weeklies. She and her husband Jack live in Tarpon Springs, Florida, and attend All Saints Episcopal Church. She was part of the team from the Diocese of Southwest Florida that participated in ECF’s Congregational Leadership Initiative in 2019.

Resources:

- [Are We Prepared to Receive?](#) by Erin Weber-Johnson, ECF Vital Practices blog, March 18 2014
- [Talking About Money](#) by Brendon Hunter, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 19, 2013
- [Basics of Endowments](#) an ECF webinar presented by Ken Quigley and Lynn Mander, October 15, 2014
- [Dealing with Risk and Falling Markets](#) by Jerry Keucher, Vestry Papers, March 2009

Evangelismo: ahora o nunca

Kenn Katona

Durante todo el tiempo en que he sido un episcopal, he oído a la gente hacer chistes sobre nuestra aversión al evangelismo. Esos chistes no solo provienen del púlpito, sino también durante la hora del café. Hay un comentario sucinto que creo que probablemente muchas personas han oído antes: “Detrás de todos los chistes hay un granito de arena de verdad”. En lo referente al hábito episcopal particular y repetido de hacer chistes sobre el evangelismo, estoy bastante seguro de que a lo largo de los años nuestra iglesia ha acumulado suficientes granitos de verdad como para hacer una playa hermosa.

Sin embargo, a medida que el número de feligreses en nuestras iglesias ha estado menguando a lo largo de los años, muchos en nuestras filas están empezando a cambiar su actitud de risas sobre ser los escogidos congelados (frozen chosen, en inglés) a una discusión seria sobre lo que podríamos hacer para obtener nuevos miembros y compartir con las generaciones futuras la esperanza, el amor y la aceptación que encontramos en la Iglesia Episcopal.

Es hora de difundir el mensaje con entusiasmo y passion

Nuestro reto ahora es pensar de maneras novedosas. No podemos ser más el secreto mejor guardado del lugar en que residimos. Ya pasaron a la historia los días en que simplemente podíamos pintar la puerta de color rojo o depender de nuestras posturas o condición sociales para atraer gente. Incluso un programa de alcance y de ayuda a la comunidad floreciente no basta para atraer seriamente a una

población significativa, y especialmente de los ya sobrerprogramados: solteros y familias jóvenes que podrán llevar la antorcha y la luz de Cristo después de nosotros.

No tenemos más opción. Tenemos que empezar a difundir el mensaje sobre lo maravillosas que son nuestras iglesias con entusiasmo y pasión. Debemos pensar seriamente en el evangelismo, en compartir el amor de Dios por el mundo y en cumplir la gran comisión de Jesús de “id, y haced discípulos, bautizándolos en el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo”.

Cuando recién empecé en mi parroquia actual, sentí que Dios estaba por hacer algo nuevo con nuestra comunidad eclesial. Empecé a predicar un mensaje que compartí desde el púlpito y desde la mesa del comedor. El mensaje es el siguiente:

Sus amigos y vecinos no van a saber lo increíble que es esta comunidad tan amorosa. Sus amigos y vecinos no van a saber sobre la esperanza y la sanidad que la gente experimenta en esta iglesia. Sus amigos y vecinos no van a saber sobre el amor que nuestra gente siente entre sí y por la comunidad que la rodea. Y finalmente, sus amigos y vecinos no van a saber sobre la gracia, la misericordia, el perdón, la libertad, el amor y la vida que se pueden encontrar mediante Cristo en la Iglesia Episcopal.

A menos que ustedes se los digan, no van a venir a nuestra iglesia y experimentar al Cristo resucitado. A menos que ustedes les inviten a venir y ver. A menos que ustedes les digan ‘Tienen que venir a ver la iglesia a la que voy. Es diferente. Es especial’.

Es cierto que llevó tiempo hasta que este mensaje, hasta que esta misión que Cristo le dio a nuestra parroquia echara raíz. Pero una vez que lo hizo, la gente estuvo entusiasmada y energizada. Y vimos resultados.

Muchas maneras de decir ‘estamos aquí’ e invitar a la gente a entrar

Hemos formado un ministerio de evangelismo cuyo cometido es encontrar maneras de traer gente a nuestra iglesia y compartir el Evangelio de Jesucristo. Consideramos todas las ideas, por más descabelladas que parecieran. Hicimos lluvias de ideas para encontrar maneras de dejarle saber a la gente que nuestra iglesia estaba presente y que todos estaban invitados. Cuarenta de nosotros salimos a cantar villancicos de Navidad, muchos con ukeles, y entregamos bastoncitos de caramelo y volantes sobre nuestra iglesia de la esquina tan llena de amor. Durante el Adviento y la Cuaresma ofrecimos semanalmente café gratuito a los que iban al trabajo por la mañana y a los peatones, culminando en una invitación a nuestros servicios religiosos de Navidad y de Pascua.

Nos instalamos afuera de nuestra iglesia con “Cenizas para llevar” durante la hora pico de la mañana y 25 automóviles pararon para la imposición de la ceniza. Repartimos helados en los partidos de las pequeñas ligas y hasta nos paramos en las aceras los domingos por la mañana saludando a los que

pasan y sosteniendo letreros con mensajes sobre el amor de Jesús para toda la gente o una invitación a venir a ver nuestra iglesia.

Esperamos que la gente que pase por nuestro barrio o que viva en él nos vea y hable sobre los audaces mensajeros de Cristo en nuestra iglesita de la esquina. Durante esta pandemia, además de los servicios religiosos del domingo que celebramos por el internet, transmitimos en vivo la Oración Matutina a las 9 de la mañana, hora del Pacífico, y Completas a las 8 de la noche, hora del Pacífico, de lunes a viernes, a las que gente de la acera de enfrente, de todo el país y hasta de todo el mundo se puede unir a nuestra comunidad.

Ya no es más un edificio como cualquier otro

Todo esto ha sido posible porque nuestra feligresía decidió adueñarse de nuestra parte de la gran comisión y tomar el evangelismo en serio. La gente del barrio ahora sabe que el Espíritu Santo está activo en nuestra comunidad. No somos más un edificio que la gente apenas nota cuando pasa a su lado. Una vez, cuando mi esposa y yo estábamos recorriendo una guardería de niños, uno de los administradores me dijo varias veces que tenía cara conocida. Finalmente ella dijo, “¡Ah, ya lo sé! ¡Usted es el hombre del café gratis!”. Durante las fiestas, recibimos tarjetas de Navidad de gente de nuestro barrio y de gente que pasa por aquí camino al trabajo. Nos dicen que nuestro evangelismo original les pone una sonrisa en la cara todas las mañanas cuando nos ven parados en la acera con letreros y disseminando la alegría y el amor que solo se pueden encontrar en Jesucristo.

Y para más todavía, nuestras tácticas nada ortodoxas aumentaron nuestros números los domingos por la mañana. Gente que antes pasaba por nuestra iglesita sin siquiera mirarla se ha unido a nuestra feligresía y está encontrando un hogar en la Iglesia Episcopal. Están llevando la antorcha de nuestra parroquia, haciendo brillar la luz de Cristo para que todos la vean... ¡o al menos todos los que pasen por aquí!

***El Rev. Kenn Katona** es un sacerdote que sirve actualmente en la Iglesia Episcopal St. Clement's en la diócesis del Norte de California. Kenn se esfuerza en ser una chispa de encendido en su vocación de sacerdote. Desde sus sermones llenos de energía y su entusiasmo contagioso al celebrar la liturgia, cree que cuando compartimos el amor de Jesús con entusiasmo, se siembran semillas que dan fruto, todo para la gloria de Dios.*

Recursos:

- [Dios, es tu iglesia](#), por Alfredo Feregrino, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2016
- [El amor incondicional de Dios](#) por Alex Montes-Vela, Vestry Papers, julio 2015
- [¿Qué está dando a entender?](#) por Anna Olson, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2014
- [Encontrar una Iglesia](#) por Nancy Davidge, Vestry Papers, julio 2012