

Saints Alive! + August 2007

All Saints Episcopal Parish, San Leandro, California, 510-569-7020

Green, Growing Season



Rector's Letter

Becoming a Vital Congregation

Most of you know that for the next three years, I'll be doing doctoral work (Advanced Studies in Congregational Development). I'm glad to say that the first of three summer residencies went very well.

This course of study offers All Saints a wonderful opportunity—a three-year focus on us, as a community of faith that wants to thrive. We will be supported by the best thought and research that the church has to offer. We have really embarked on a new journey together—what might be called the “second chapter” of my time with you.

Of course, there's far too much information to share with you in a monthly newsletter article. Over the coming years, I'll pass along everything I can as the time is right. But to start, I wanted to share an important new approach to church growth: a focus on parish vitality instead of parish growth.

This might seem like just semantics. It's not. The choice to speak of increasing our congregation's vitality rather than church growth reflects a very different spirit—one that's focused on being the healthiest parish we can be regardless of our numerical size at any time.

This isn't to say that numbers aren't important. But a focus on growing numbers puts the cart in front of the horse. Parishes that focus on getting healthy are the ones most capable and likely to grow in number. So I'm going to be talking about increasing our vitality—and letting growth follow.

Growth in numbers is, after all, up to God, not us. And a focus on numbers adds tremendous pressure and anxiety to our parish family—hardly making us more appealing to visitors and newcomers. “Vitality,” on the other hand, tends to create hope and optimism.

With that, I'm going to give you three characteristics of a healthy congregation. They are part of a list developed by Peter Steinke, one of the country's leading experts on healthy parishes. The three are (1) clarity of purpose; (2) a predominant focus outward, not inward; and (3) a commitment to healthy communication and effective conflict resolution.

Each of these is fairly self-explanatory—common sense tells us that they would be required for any parish to do well. Over the past year, we have been working on each of these—and many people have noticed that we are more upbeat and positive as a parish than we have been in a while. That's no coincidence. We will talk a lot more about each of these in the year to come. I hope you'll mull these over and think about what they mean to you. They are the core of what we're going to be up to. It's really very exciting!

Fr. Rob Droste

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Courtyard Party for Neighbors a Rousing Success

On the evening of Tuesday, August 7, All Saints parishioners served up food and good cheer to the immediate neighborhood. Tom Breckenridge wrote to those who worked on the event:

Wow.

Thank you.

What a night! There was so much good spirit flowing around the courtyard—stirred up by all of you who attended meetings, designed the flyer, contacted merchants and civil servants, delivered flyers, rang doorbells, gathered materials, cooked, set up, cleaned up, and spread goodwill through your presence or your good wishes. The party was a lovely gift to the neighborhood. Thank you.

Many blessings to you all,

Tom

Mark Your Calendars

Social ministry items have flags. 🚩

Wednesday evenings—Oktoberfest Auction planning meetings

When: 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Where: Parish Hall

🚩 **Saturday, September 1—Soup Stop**

Feeding the homeless in the All Saints parish hall.

When: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Contact: Church Office, allsaintsepiscopal911@earthlink.net

Wednesday, September 5—Women's Spiritual Direction Group

When: 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Where: Fireside Room

Contact: Church Office, allsaintsepiscopal911@earthlink.net

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*Submit news items for the September 2007 issue to marypat56@comcast.net or mail to Mary Nelson care of the church; deadline is **August 26**.*

For changes to the parish database (names, phone numbers, addresses, or e-mail addresses), please e-mail John Trubina at jtrubina@comcast.net or leave a message for him at the church. To get information on All Saints' people and programs, please visit us on the Internet at <http://www.saintsalive.net>.