

Annual Report 2019 - Seekers

From The Rev. Kathleen Gannon

St. Paul's Ministry to the 20-30's age group grew in faith and numbers in 2019. In the beginning of the year we began the Alpha Program a discussion and video series on the basics of Christianity. We trained six small group leaders so each of these groups would have two leaders and about 10 people. We extended the usual hour-long dinner church by starting at 5pm to add 30 minutes, so that we had good discussion time in addition to prayer, dinner and the message. Flexibility was our watch word in the first quarter as Seekers worked around the Icon exhibit, and helped to install the Icon exhibit! Seekers average attendance in the first part of the year was 25.

After a summer break, Seekers returned on September 8th with a renewed team. The core team members - Rev. Kathleen Gannon, LJ McCarthy, Zee Bissell, Craig Ulmer and Chris Pasquale - organized and defined the leadership tasks, set up a rotation and recruited some helpers. The Seekers format returned to the basic dinner church format: a meal and a message. Seekers average attendance from September to December was 53 – double the attendance from the spring. Seekers are invited to attend by other Seekers, we don't advertise except as the word spreads. The "basic training" of Alpha in the early part of the year served to strengthen the faith of the leaders and their confidence in inviting others in the fall.

To support the growth of Seekers, St. Paul's has applied for a grant from the Young Adult and Campus Ministry of The Episcopal Church. We will learn if the grant is awarded and for how much in February and it will be funded over the summer.

Dinner Church is a model of worship that is nationally known as an alternative to traditional morning worship. The liturgy at Seekers is an evening prayer model. Seekers begins with centering prayers and grace, then moves into the meal. As the meal is about three quarters of the way finished, the preacher reads the scripture and offers the message/sermon/homily. The scripture chosen is from the Revised Common Lectionary appointed for the day, so Seekers hear the same Gospel as those at all of our Saturday and Sunday services. The evening ends with

prayer, the Seekers form a circle around the perimeter of the Parish Hall and offer prayers and thanksgivings and depart with blessings.

St. Paul's has offered this dinner church model for the past 7 years on campus, serving a demographic that is different from the traditional worship styles but reaches a young group with the same Gospel message.