Feeding our Spiritual Side

On the Second Sunday of Advent St. Paul's in downtown Sacramento started something new.

At the Diocesan Convention we were inspired by the Keynote Speaker the Rev. Dr. Michael Moynagh's challenge to create opportunities for diverse worshipping communities in our outreach ministries. As Bishop Megan noted in her address at convention St. Paul's has had a sack lunch program for our unhomed and hungry neighbors for many years. It was reimagined in recent years from a mostly passive ministry – where we gave out sack lunches if someone asked, to an active ministry. St. Paul's now sets up, on the sidewalk in front of our 15th street doors, weather permitting, or inside our modular building parish hall. We give out upwards of 50 sack lunches a week and partner with Sacramento Street Medicine and the Downtown Partnership to provide medical and outreach services. In essence we provide food, conversation, medical screening, and other outreach opportunities. But what about feeding them spiritually?

On the weekend of the second Sunday in Advent we developed a simple service based on the resources that Dr. Moynagh highlighted at convention (https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/how-to-introduce-worship-into-an-outreach-or-social-action-group/) . The service adapted an advent candle lighting service from A Sanctified Art (https://sanctifiedart.org/), a short reading from the Gospel, silent prayer, a closing prayer and blessing. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent we invited the participants to create prayer ornaments which were used to decorate the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. (a copy of one of the services can be downloaded here https://files.constantcontact.com/5fc7a7f7701/74262d1f-18d9-4b9a-aa4b-0bf80382bc10.pdf)

The first time only one of our regulars stayed for the service -which we did at the very end of our advertised distribution time. We realized that once we started putting things away people leave. Now we offer the service 15 minutes before we start putting things away. Two weeks ago, we added anointing with unction and prayers for healing for anyone who wished to have it. This week Lewis commented that he came last week for a sack lunch and coffee, stayed for the service and decided he would come every week – he really appreciated being fed both physically and spiritually. We have grown from one person staying for prayer to eleven people this week.

We are looking forward to where the Holy Spirit will lead us as we work not only to physically feed our hungry neighbors but as our outgoing Surgeon General, Vivek

Murthy said in an interview on NPR to address the four dimensions of health which include physical health, mental health, social health, and spiritual health.