

Come and Dine!

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Palatka launches Dinner Church

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Sunday mornings are important and St. Mark's will always have a Sunday morning, prayer book, liturgical expression with all the things we are used to: Word and Sacrament, vestments and candles, singing and preaching. But that can't be all we do as it will not reach many of the unchurched folks who see coming through the sanctuary doors as a high hurdle or for the simple fact that 40%-60% of the population is working on Sundays. It's a lot easier to come to a meal and be grafted into a community around a table, after all-- we all have to eat! The second *Neighborhood* followed the same pattern with more people, new folks and returning guests. We focused on a Memorial Day theme that moved many to tears as we remembered and honored those who gave the ultimate price for the freedoms we now enjoy.

We have to grow a bit, continue to develop our craft, strengthen the effort where needed. As that happens it is my hope that rather than being a monthly gathering this will become a weekly engagement and those who come will see it as their faith community.

The Reformation was a wonderful, somewhat painful but needed moment in the life of the church. On one level it made the church a place you go on Sundays to be catechized, given the right teaching. Our sanctuaries, especially the nave area, are places of instruction where we stare at the back of someone's head. I understand this and love the preaching and teaching of scripture as it is an essential as we devote ourselves to the Apostle's Teaching and Fellowship, the Breaking of Bread and Prayer. (Baptismal Covenant BCP p.304) However, Dinner Church offers us a new way to be church, following the pattern of Jesus' ministry who regularly found himself at a table and a meal.

Resources, books and training

There are lots of resources, books, trainings and more as a part of [Fresh Expressions](#) and [Dinner Church](#). I would hope we would have the 3-part training offered in the

Diocese designed to introduce and equip people for this new missional work called Dinner Church. I believe it is an essential and need investment that will yield growth. We have developed training seminars; *An Encounter, A Launch and A Lead* – all a progressive series of events to prepare congregations to embrace and launch Dinner Churches. For more information you can contact me.

Regardless of the size of a congregation, large or small, this is a doable mission and really quite easy. St. Mark's has an *Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)* of about 50 and a budget of \$130k. There are churches of less than 15 people who have launched Dinner Church and seen great success in mission. Most churches understand how to feed people, put on a pot-luck--- it's in our wheelhouse! We just need to bring to the table some Gospel intention and purpose.

Dinner Church is a new and prime way (also ancient way) in which we are fulfilling our Baptismal Covenant. Moreso it is an appropriate response to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). In an age where the church continues to decline, we could focus on the scarcity of funds, people, children, spiritual fervor and more. OR, we could focus on the abundance we see in Luke 10:2... *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

There is a plentiful harvest before us, in every city, town, rural community there are people in need of the Gospel. Mission begins with prayer and other than the Lord's Prayer this is the only other prayer where Jesus gives us vocabulary. We are to ask the Lord to *send laborers into his harvest field*. I believe that Dinner Church is something God is using to see lost people get found, broken people healed, captives set free and is a manifestation of His Kingdom come and His will being done as in heaven, so on earth!

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www.freshexpressions.com

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To Schedule and appointment use my Calendly link: calendly.com/jon-davis-fx

Invitations



The Neighborhood
a community dinner

gathering neighbors, friends,
strangers, everyday people to talk
about life, dreams, hopes, faith and
more in this historic area of Palatka
to get to know one another and
connect with the people next door!

A free, fun & nutritious meal hosted
by your friends @  St. Mark's Episcopal Church
of Palatka, Florida

Sunday April, 21st @ 4pm
in the Parish Hall of
St. Mark's

