

Our Hasty Retreat Would Be Hard to Beat! The 2017 Vestry Takes Off with Canon Jim Hanisian

Oh, the weather outside was frightful, but the atmosphere in the conference room of the Beach Cove resort in Myrtle Beach was warm, engaged and purposeful. Your 2017 Vestry members were all in attendance at the weekend retreat on January 6th and 7th, led by our new Priest-in-Charge, Canon Jim Hanisian.

After opening prayer, the first order of business was to get acquainted, with each other and with Jim, as he encourages us to call him. The exercise started with lighthearted questions like “What is your favorite movie” and led up to riskier ones like “What do you most regret in your life?”

Much of our time on Friday and Saturday was a fairly deep dive in to the *polity* - the form, or system, or structure – of the Episcopal Church, at the parish, diocesan and national levels. As Canon Jim explained, our first task is to try to behave like an Episcopal Church, by understanding what Episcopalians do, and why we do it. Much of the information was eye opening to cradle Episcopalians as well as to Vestry members who had come from other denominations, as many had.

Recognizing that we all can benefit from learning more about how the Church works, and that having this knowledge will enable St. Philip’s members to discard some unnecessary sources of conflict, Canon Jim will be soon sharing this information in sessions to which the whole congregation will be invited. Regular adult education will be an important part of his time with us, and will be scheduled between the two Sunday services.

We talked about how our organizational structure of St. Philip’s has not kept pace with our recent rapid growth. Different kinds of leadership are needed for different stages of growth, Canon Jim said, and he expects our parish will be reorganized twice over the next year. The role of Vestry members is certain to change, and we are encouraged to see these changes as faith development experiences.

We looked at St. Philip’s current ministries – more than 40 came to mind – and delved more deeply into what a ministry is. We can expect that we parishioners will cease calling each other volunteers (albeit sometimes reluctant volunteers) and begin to see ourselves as ministers. We learned that we will try to discern what our individual callings are, and how accepting a call differs from having your arm twisted.

When we left late Saturday afternoon the rain had stopped, the roads were dry, and the sun was peeking out from the clouds. We left with much to think about, much reason to be hopeful, and much to be thankful for. There can be no doubt that Canon Jim and Fr. Reggie are a dynamic duo, wonderfully suited to leading St. Philip’s through an invigorating and enlightening process, that will better enable us, as our mission statement states, “to love each other as God loves us, to share our talents and resources with the community and the world.”