

From the Rector  
The Reverend Mark C. McKone-Sweet

## Ubuntu (oo-boon-too)

My friends,

If you have ever spent time with a priest from Haiti, Belize, El Salvador or Kenya ... as I have, you will hear them speak about the community of God in much different terms than we normally do here in Massachusetts. **Their Church is focused on caring for the entire community** – regardless of faith affiliation; they are providing public schools, teachers, clothing, books for each child; the church is focused on feeding all children – to keep them from starving to death; the church is trying to protect their communities from attacks by gangs, oppressive dictatorships and uncontrolled militaries. It is the church which presents the Bible, our sacraments and our teachings as a cure for poverty, isolation, classism, racism, pain and suffering.

A few years ago, there was a survey done in New England. It was trying to figure out why people join church communities today. **The number one thing people wanted and needed was .... Community!** The denomination was a distant second place.

My friends, I have only been here six weeks and what I keep experiencing is an amazing community and the desire for more of it. To be honest, my experience of community has been absolutely overwhelming (in a good way). Keep it up!

Let me explain what I mean by “overwhelming”:

I am completely overwhelmed by our time together on Sunday mornings. Each Sunday has been a absolute joy... worshiping quietly and intimately at the 8:00 a.m. services, teaching the children at 9:45 a.m., the great music, breaking bread and energy of the 10:00 a.m. service & coffee hour. Do not be surprised by the number of people coming through our doors ... we added 13 new names tags to the board this week. Amen!

So, I am really overwhelmed:

- by the strength and capacity of our confirmation class and their mentors.
- by the fun, energy and happiness the children and teens had at the renewal of our baptisms (sorry if I you got too wet), at the story telling and the ”music together” workshops at annual meeting
- by the great food provided at the annual meeting, coffee hours and “coffees with the rector” (thanks MK and everyone else).
- by the return of many families after taking a “break.” Respite is part of everyone’s spiritual journey – welcome home.
- by the stories being shared at the “coffees with the Rector.” I can’t thank everyone enough for coming out to these – please sign up if you have not.
- by the vestries commitment to build for the future.
- by the countless offerings to “help out” as we move forward together.

- by the care that many of you put into ministries and relationships. Have you ever watched Sue and Dorothy work over floral arrangements/options before they run to the city? Have you ever paid attention to how dedicated the choir is to their ministry and to supporting each other? Have you ever watched how members of the altar guild put so much care and intentionality into every item they place out? Have you watched how the kids light up when Zu and Patty put their hard work to the test on Sundays?
- by the joy people are sharing in their stories and hopes with me all day long.
- by the devastation in Haiti ....200,000 dead and 1 million homeless.
- by the generosity of this parish family.

Did you know that we have exceeded our first goal for Haiti? We started with \$3,500 which the vestry wanted to match ... and we have received over \$5,800 in less than three weeks. When I called Sister Carolyn Darr, SSM, Superior of the Sisters of Saint Margaret Convent she was said "Thanks be to God." I think she was a bit overwhelmed too. Our treasurer, Chris Cowperthwaite, sent out a check for \$7,000 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January. We will add to the fund we still have, especially at my installation, and give that to the sisters who will be in attendance then. Then we can begin pray about preparing ourselves for our first rebuild mission trip at the end of the year.

Building Community is the building of the Kingdom of God in our midst.

"We are made for companionship and relationship. It is not good for us to be alone. In our African idiom we say, 'A person is a person *through* other persons. **The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network, of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation.** In Africa recognition of our interdependence is called *ubuntu*..." - Bishop Tutu.

Join me and shout "Ubuntu."

If your experience in the past six weeks or in the past years has not been reflected in what I write today, please contact me. I want to know your story. I can be blind sometimes ... help me see what I can not. Help me walk the walk with you on your journey with God and Jesus Christ. It would be my honor to do so.

**As always, please know that you can call me anytime on my cell phone: 781-801-3586.** I especially want to know if you are sick, in the hospital, experiencing loss, trying to make a big decision or simply need someone to walk with you.

Faithfully yours,  
Mark+