



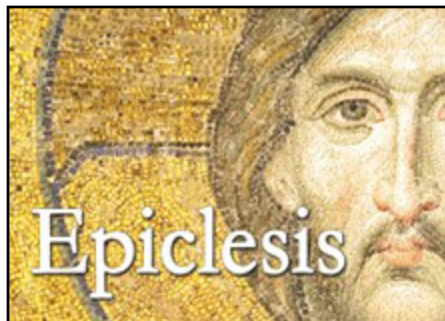
A Report of Activity for the Year
July, 2018 – June, 2019

Sunday, September 15, 2019

***A report for the Body of Christ at
Epiclesis: An Ancient-Future Faith Community
of Sacramento, California.***

Introduction

Each year, the Elders of the church prepare a narrative report of the many activities and ministries that occurred at Epiclesis during the previous twelve months. But we can't get everything down onto paper. Why? Because some of the very best ministry is that which happens daily, quietly, and in a thousand ways by the people of Epiclesis as they walk out their baptisms in the world around us.



One of the most precious times in our worship services happens when the saints share how they saw God at work in their lives during the previous week— and how they joined Him there. And by the way, we do this sharing at the offering time to reinforce the truth that giving God our time, talents, and testimony is as important as giving Him our treasures.

Our hope is that this report will be received in that same spirit— a joyful testimony to how Epiclesis is joining God in working out His purposes for the world. This report is an offering.

Something we should highlight: It's easy to focus on numbers— things that are easiest to count. While we believe that facts and figures, when it comes to participation or budgets, are important, we don't want to become a church whose primary lens for evaluation is "nickels and noses." Growth in discipleship, depth in worship, and an enriching spirituality are rarely, if ever, measured by numbers. God has surely blessed our church in both nickels and noses, but our heart-felt desire is that our annual reports mostly focus on ministry, discipleship, covenant keeping, and Kingdom building.

Have we missed something? Let us know if we have inadvertently left out any activities or events that you think should have been included.

Please find a report on the following areas:

- Mission and Kingdom Building Activity (p. 2)
- Ministry Activity: Worship, Discipleship, the Life of the Body (p. 4)
- Basic Financial Activity (p. 9)

Mission and Kingdom Building Activity (July 2018-June 2019)

Acts 1:8 records the last command given by Christ before His Ascension: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

One of the most encouraging qualities of the Epiclesis community is our being Christ to others, not only as a church body, but as individuals. There are probably as many “mission” projects as there are people in the congregation. Most are done quietly, without a great deal of attention. All have impacted the lives of those being ministered to as well as those doing the ministry.

At Epiclesis, we strive to have a healthy balance of sending both monetary resources and people when it comes to missions, for we don’t want merely to be a church that sends money to a place or a cause and believe our work is done.

Several significant financial gifts were made in support of ministries that reached far beyond Epiclesis: Funds were given to purchase and distribute Scriptures (the Gideons, for example), and we supported individual ministries by faithful saints in our community of faith (a local prison ministry, for example).

Before we send monies or resources to far-flung missions projects, the community first gathers around the items— from the smallest check to the largest collection of prison ministry Bibles— to bless them.

A continued project has been the financial and physical support of the local Sunrise Christian Food Ministry. Epiclesis continued to give monetary gifts and technical advice for the design, construction, installation, and the long-awaited opening of a new industrial, walk-in refrigerator/freezer room. Two in our church continue to be very active, ongoing volunteers for the ministry.



Epiclesis continues to be involved in the Carmichael HART (Homeless Assistance Resource Team). Carmichael HART, working in coopera-

tion with the nonprofit Sacramento Self-Help Housing, is a coalition of faith communities, non-profits, businesses, agencies, and residents that are committed to finding solutions to local homelessness.

“Ancient-Future Faith” with Dr. Chris Alford, the radio program launched by Epiclesis in January 2014, continues to air Mondays on 710-AM “The Word,” as well as three additional times weekly. The radio program provides not only an outreach opportunity but is also intended as a gift to the community. Many people who visit and attend Epiclesis first become acquainted with us through the radio broadcast, and we often hear from folks in the area who listen regularly.



Epiclesis maintains a very robust website with thousands of items of content, including liturgies and podcasts. Apart from keeping our own members informed of news and upcoming events, the website is visited by people from all over the world. In the past year, the website has had thousands of visitors and pageviews. The podcast portion of our ministry, which includes sermons, radio programming, and long-form interviews, is also available through a free iTunes subscription.

Three most-used offshoots of our website are a virtual online church directory, an interactive calendar, and a birthday list.



One of the primary ways we keep in touch with both church members and those interested in our ministry is through the “Constant Contact” email and social media tool. Epiclesis has been an award-winning “All Star” organization each of the last nine years in recognition of our excellent communications and activity rates that surpass industry standards. Epiclesis also has a presence on Facebook.

The Epiclesis video team continued the ministry begun in 2018, providing a means to share meaningful content within the congregation (both locals and those afar). The specific goal was and is to capture the reading of the liturgy and music aspects of worship from the service as well as the teaching for those not able to attend a given service or those who would like to re-listen to content. To protect privacy, church service videos are edited to remove personal sharing.



The password-protected content is hosted on Vimeo, and is accessible via the Epiclesis website. As of the end of June, there were 60 titles posted in four folders: regular services for 2018 and 2019, retreats, and special ser-

vices and concerts. In 2018-2019, we developed our video sound capture and mixing abilities, as well as our depth and size of the talent pool for video capture, recording, editing, and posting. In the coming year, our goals include continuing to develop and broaden the content of our service video recordings, and to make a series of short, informational videos about Epiclesis and our various ministries.

Ministry Activity: Worship, Discipleship, and Life of the Body ***Worship (July 2018-June 2019)***

Ever thought about the purpose of the church? At Epiclesis we ponder that question a lot, and we're convinced that there is really only one purpose. We want to help people remember why they were born-- to worship-- and we really believe, with all our hearts, that if we lift up Jesus, then He will draw all people to Himself.

At our church, we have several tasks that include making disciples and loving the world as Jesus does. And we have one single purpose that fuels it all: worship.

Therefore, for us the central and centering thing that we do is the weekly worship gathering, when the Body of Christ comes together to sing, tell, and enact God's story— to respond to God's invitation to come before Him, to hear His word, to renew the covenant in Christ at table, and to be sent forth into the world to love and serve the Lord.



Worship was enhanced this past year with the addition of brand new seasonal banners (particularly for Advent, Holy Week, and Pentecost), and dramatic, overhead fabric installations at high points of the Christian calendar.

EPIC Kids

This last year saw the launch of a prototype test run of "EpicKids," an interactive learning time for grades 1-5 that takes place during the teaching component of worship at Epiclesis. The program compliments the biblical texts and themes for each week so families can

share what they experienced and learned. Additionally, the church began to offer expert care for infants (through age 3) on Sunday mornings during the worship service.

One continuing feature of worship is our “prayer box ministry.” There are two small boxes, marked “Prayers of the Saints” and “Thanksgivings and Blessings.” Members write down their requests; take others’ requests with them to hold up to the Lord; bring their words, drawings, and expressions of thanksgiving and testimony to encourage and bless others; and with thanksgiving and expectation take a word or expression of blessings with them.

Apart from our regular and recurring weekly worship, we also engage in several special services throughout the year and associated with the Christian calendar. This past year we had several of them, including two very moving services of Lessons and Carols (both at the beginning of Advent and also on Christmas Eve), plus special services on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday (Tenebrae).

Additionally, the church hosted two first-ever interactive services: an “All Saints Worship Night,” and “Stations of the Tomb”:

The fall of 2018 saw us focus on Celtic spirituality which culminated in an interactive, all family worship gathering on Sunday, November 4th (All Saints Sunday), at 7 PM. Interactive worship stations suitable for all ages and a gathered time of remembrance and celebration pulled together all the spiritual threads of our small groups, fall retreat, and October devotional.

The “Stations of the Tomb,” offered during Holy Week, was an interactive, family-friendly worship gathering for all ages where we explored the time between the cross and the resurrection.

Discipleship (July 2017-June 2018)

Our sixth annual fall retreat was held in October at the Christ the King Retreat Center with a focus on Celtic spirituality. The early Celtic Christians in Ireland and Scotland knew a faith that acknowledged the immanence of God, where His presence was recognized at every turn, and ordinary places were celebrated as sacred. Titled “Thin Places,” our retreat featured special

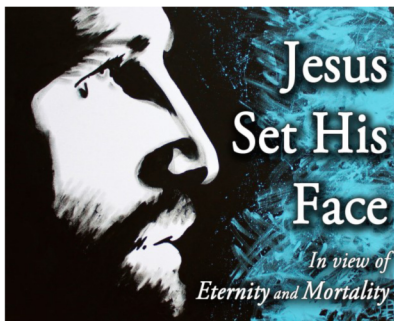


guest Dr. Tracy Balzer, an author and expert on Celtic spirituality, who led us through two days of significant aspects of the life of Patrick and other notable Celts.

In preparation for the retreat, our small groups met in three sessions to study and discuss three chapters in Tracy Balzer's book, *Thin Places*. As we explored Celtic attitudes and patterns of prayer, we kept these questions in mind: How do we perceive, welcome, and embrace God's immanence in our everyday lives? How can that lead us into a deeper relationship of prayer with Him? And how can that deepen and grow our relationships and ministry to others?

Then, following the retreat, those of us who did not go on the Israel tour continued our focus on Celtic spirituality through a wonderful devotional resource we prepared, which we titled *The Saints in Our Lives: Following the Examples of the Wise and the Good*. In it, we included Scripture readings, meditations, brief narrative biographies of a selection of saints down through the ages, and prayers. In each of the four weeks of this devotional journey, we ended by writing out a short biography of a "saint" who's been important and/or influential in our individual lives. This was great preparation for our all-family, interactive worship gathering on the evening of All Saints' Sunday (November 4).

This year saw the continuation of weekly discipleship opportunity called "Sunday Morning Compass," a short series of varying topics designed to "help give disciples some direction in an upside down world." A continued edition came in the form of "On-Ramp" sessions, as well as other topical studies, led by Dr. Rick Asche, Jay Dudley, and Pastor Chris. Topics included "Epiclesis:101" and "Encounter with the Qur'an."



During the Season of Lent, we embarked on a small group series titled "Jesus Set His Face: In View of Eternity and Mortality." Each week we explored the biblical and theological implications of eternity and mortality, and did so by using many voices from both the lectionary readings and Sunday teachings. The study focused on these truths: At the center of who Jesus is, and at the very heart of the person and

work of Jesus, we have the miracle of the incarnation. God and man come together, fully, completely, miraculously. Divine-human. Spirit-truth. Transcendent-immanent. Teacher-healer. One who lived his life, at once, in view of eternity and in view of mortality.

To further our commitment to inter-generational worship, we continued to provide "Kids' Boxes," filled with the kids' worksheets that go along with the teaching emphasis for the day; prayer and thanksgiving cards; a card with a Scripture verse for children to illustrate; stickers; and crayons, pencils, etc.

The Journey to Jesus: When God leads people to Epiclesis, and they feel led to become members, we like for them to learn more about how the Lord has led us to "do church" in the postmodern world. Then we ask them to walk through an intentional, deliberate process of learning and discipleship, called Journey to Jesus (or "J2J" as we affectionately call it), that fully brings participants into our amazing community of faith.



This process is very similar to how early Christians brought people into the life of the worshiping community-- as a matter of fact, the basic design of "Journey to Jesus" is based on a method of evangelism and spiritual instruction in the ancient church.

Along the way and throughout the four steps of the Journey to Jesus, there are some rites of passage that we observe in our worship services including a Rite of Conversion/Welcome and a Rite of Covenant. This past year, several new J2J mentorships began and we had several people go through the rites.

The Life of the Body (July 2018-June 2019)

The men of Epiclesis continue to meet for breakfast one Saturday every month for prayer, devotional time, and fellowship. In addition, the men extend aid and assistance to various members of the Epiclesis community with service projects on a regular basis, including yard cleanup, fence building, moving assistance, etc.

The women of Epiclesis planned and implemented their second and third annual retreats in the summers of 2018 and 2019. The location, again, was the Jesuit Retreat Center in Applegate. Sheila Alford was the speaker at the 2018 gathering, where the topic was "Adventures with God" (with 20 in attendance), and Connie Hice was the guest in 2019, where the focus was "Compelled by His Love" (with 24 women present)

After a couple of years of actively looking, and much prayer, last summer we joyfully announced the opening of the Epiclesis “Chapter House” in Old Fair Oaks Village. The Chapter House was opened in July after an old-fashioned “Pounding” and dedication. Several projects were undertaken to enhance the space including a new deck and storage container, all accomplished by Epiclesis volunteers. The Chapter House interior features the artwork of several Epiclesis members.



The Chapter House is used for office needs and small meetings, Bible study, prayer, and as a launching pad for ministry. Why is it called a “Chapter House”? A chapter house is a building or room attached to a cathedral where meetings are held. In monastic communities, the monks gather there to read aloud from the Bible, discuss theology, or share the news of the day. In more modern times, the church leadership uses the chapter house to conduct the business of the worshipping community. We love the idea of recovering and reinterpreting this practice in an Ancient-Future way.

The address is: 7985 Park Drive; Fair Oaks; 95628, across the street from the Plaza Park, Village Park, and Fair Oaks Theater Festival— and just a short stroll to all the Fair Oaks Village shops and restaurants.

On May 5, the church observed its first-ever ordination. The Pastor and Elders of Epiclesis, having met on March 15, 2019, after a period of godly discernment, including a rigorous examination in regard to Christian experience, call to ministry, and views of the orthodox Christian faith, and after following a fulsome process of evaluation over the course of several months, presented Dr. Richard D. Asche to the congregation for ordination to the gospel ministry.



Each Thursday morning at the Chapter House we have simple 30-minute service of prayer and communion. The gatherings use the Celtic Daily Prayer book (Northumbria Community) as our guide for prayers and responses.

The Chapter House was the location for several “Movie Night” events during the year, featuring a film and discussion, hosted by Jay Dudley. The Chapter House is also used for a brand new Women’s Book Club, a “Girl’s Game Night,” and various small group meetings.



Movie Night
at the
Chapter House

The church hosted a special genealogy evening on June 26. Bill Cole, Epiclesis elder emeritus, and his friend and colleague, Dirk Weissleder from Laatzen, Germany, led the discussion. Both men shared stories, methods, and techniques to help you get going on your genealogy.

The church continued to extend support to Diane Collard’s arts ministry, which includes “Montage International” and “Arts Charlotte.” Diane is the Europe director for “Artists in Christian Testimony, International” and publishes a monthly newsletter titled “Labyrinth.”

We continued to use the tool “Text in Church” to help us extend hospitality and maintain communication with people who come to worship with us or attend our events. The program allows us to follow up with texts, emails, and gives handy reminders both to call and send personal notes to our visitors.

Last fall, Pastor Chris, with help from Pastor Rick and Drs. Carl Peters and Teresa Gardner, hosted a legacy, once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A group of nearly 30 spent 13 days in the Land of the Bible touring notable spots in Israel, along with an unforgettable side trip to Petra, Jordan.

Basic Financial Activity (July 2018-June 2019)

Epiclesis’ income is derived from tithes, offerings, and donations. Expenses are classified as Fixed Expenses (infrastructure and administration) or Discretionary Expenses (all other expenses). Examples of fixed expenses include facility rental, pastors’ compensation, and so on. The discretionary income is allocated on a set percentage basis to all the various ministries of Epiclesis.

Total income for the 12 months ending June 30, 2019 was \$254,391.75, an increase over FY 2018 (which was \$237,309.27).

Fixed expenses, infrastructure and administrative costs for FY 2018-2019 totaled \$200,099.73, which made available \$54,292.02 to fund the various Epiclesis Ministries including Worship, Discipleship, Missions, Needs, and Kingdom Building.

We ended the fiscal year with a positive cash flow as we have in all previous years.



Sometimes people ask me, "Just what is 'Ancient-Future'? And what's an 'Epiclesis' anyway?" Well, part of it means that we believe that the "road to the future runs through the past." Our worship and our spirituality are deeply rooted in the classic Christianity of the ancient Church, for we believe that the faith and practice of the ancient Church engages our present culture more effectively and provides a way forward in a time of great transition and change.

The word "epiclesis" is Greek for "transforming prayer," and most especially the prayer at the Lord's Table when we ask the Holy Spirit to change the ordinary into the extraordinary-- when we ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to make the elements become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. And at the heart of it, really, that's the prayer we have for ourselves, too: That God would change us, and use us, for His purposes.

Ancient-Future is not a style of worship, it's a theology and a way of life-- a life modeled, in many ways, after our brothers and sisters in the early church.

There's a lot to learn from the ancient Christian church-- those amazing saints who hammered out so many tenets of the faith in a sometimes hostile world not so different from our own. But sometimes what you find there can feel pretty counter-intuitive. In fact, some of what we've embraced from the early church seems to go against the modern ideas about church life and church growth. But our pastoral intention is to challenge a modern consumer church mentality and connect with folks who truly want to live out biblical values.



So, we're not looking for more church members for the sake of numbers. We're seeking people who want to join the Father's amazing story— *an ancient-future story of the redemption of all creation through Christ*— and to worship Him with abandon and passion in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sound exciting? Oh, join us! Bless you, friend and...

The Lord be with you!
Pastor Chris

Our Purpose

Pur-pose [pur-puhs]

-noun

Etymology: *to propose*.

1. the reason for which something exists or is done, made.
2. an intended end; aim; goal.

- This **Community** has one divine *Purpose*: Worship.

Task [tahsk]

-noun

Etymology: *a service to the Sovereign*.

1. a definite piece of work assigned to, or expected of a person.
2. a piece of work to be finished within a certain time.

- **Worship** is the source of this community's spirituality and it fuels our divine *Tasks*: Making disciples and walking out our baptisms in the world around us.

Vision Statement:

In line with Scripture, creed, and tradition, it is our deepest desire to embody God's purposes in the mission of the Church through our theological reflection, our worship, our spirituality, and our life in the world, all the while proclaiming that Jesus is Lord over all creation.

(From *A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future*, "Epilogue", available from www.AncientFutureFaithNetwork.org).

Epiclesis

An Ancient-Future Faith Community...

**Worshiping Sundays at 10:30 AM at the Chapel
4600 Winding Way; Sacramento, CA; 95841**

For more information or to sign up for our eNewsletter:
www.Epiclesis.org

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