

The Little Church That Could

Published in the July 2017 issue of St. Jude's Newsletter)

By Don Hatch, Contributing Editor

Editor's Note: *This article was written after the author spent dozens of hours scouring Bishop's Committee minutes. His intent was to glean events, statics and benchmarks to reveal a data-driven look at St. Jude's history. The information and figures were compiled and processed to give our congregation an idea of where we were just a few short years ago, and where we are today. Thank you, Don, for your tenacious research and this comprehensive report.*



On May 21st 2017, Roberta Kennedy shared a story with the congregation. She said that while she was reading her grand-children the story about “The Little Engine That Could,” she realized the similarities between that children’s story and what she has seen St. Jude’s going through over the last nine years. She was referring to how the church struggled with overwhelming obstacles, but kept saying “I Think I Can, I Think I Can,” and never gave up.

Roberta was born in Oahu and is a childhood friend of Cynn timer Salley. She currently lives in Portland Oregon and each year she comes to the Big Island and to St. Jude’s.

She has a unique perspective of what has happened at St. Jude’s, because each time she visits, she sees a snap-shot of what has happened or changed since her last visit. Therefore, instead of living the daily struggle and seemingly slow progress at St. Jude’s over the last nine years, Robert’s view is fast forward changes that have taken place.

Have you ever watched a time-lapse movie of a flower opening? The hours or even days needed for a flower to form and open are compressed into a two to three minute movie? It looks like magic as the flower forms and opens as you watch. That’s how Roberta has watched St. Jude’s struggle, change, and grow over the last nine years.

When Roberta visited St. Jude’s nine years ago, she saw the members struggling and then in early 2011, after the church lost their priest, Roberta observed a greater struggle, when the church service became Morning Prayer, led by one of the congregation. During that time, about once a month, a priest would come to St. Jude’s to lead a Eucharist Service. Despite the lack of a priest leader, the faithful members of St. Jude’s never lost hope; they kept pushing ahead, struggling, and saying “I think I can, I think I can,” but never giving up.

Roberta observed a slow and then accelerated growth in the size of St. Jude’s congregation. Since 2011 the church has experienced an increase in regular Sunday services every year, going from an average attendance of 26 people in 2011 to 50 in the first half of 2017.

Over the last 9 years Roberta watched St. Jude’s go from “I think I can, I think I can” to “I know I can, I know I can.”

Here are a few of St. Jude’s milestones that Roberta may have observed

2012

Fr. Thomas Beuchele and his wife Jean joined St. Jude's as the Interim Priest for one year. They stayed until Feb. 2013 and their goal was to help revitalize St. Jude's fledging congregation.

That year was like a rebirth of St. Jude's because many of the congregation's dreams became a reality and plans were put in place to continue the work on other goals and dreams.

While with St. Jude's, Fr. Tom and Jean helped the church accomplish the following:

Congregation: The minimum Sunday attendance was 19, the averaged 27, and the maximum non-holiday Sunday was 41.

- Helped justify and fund a Free Hot Shower Out-reach Program (opened in 2013)
- Start the tradition of an annual Beach Mass at Whittington Beach
- Start process for a Free Medical Van that would be parked in our parking lot each week (available in 2013)
- Redecorated McKinney Place, our vicarage, to be a place for our priests to live
- Helped organize and establish a Visiting Priest Program (Flavor of the Month). This was a critical piece of the success of the church solvency. The new and innovative program allowed for St. Jude's to provide a visiting priest and his/her family with a home to live in and a car to drive while they served the congregation, in exchange for conducting Sunday morning Eucharist services each week of their stay.
- St. Jude's women started a weekly Women's Bible Study. Attendance ranges from five to 15 members.

2013

Congregation: The minimum Sunday attendance was 18, the averaged 33, and the maximum non-holiday Sunday was 47.

Of special interest is the maximum attendance for the year was the day when Cynn timer Salley's grandson Max Unger (Center for the NFL New Orleans Saints) and his wife Leah joined us for Sunday services.

The first of the visiting priests arrived in March when Rev's Leonard & Lindsey Freeman arrived.

Across that first year we had 6 priests serve the congregation. 4 of them have come back for a second visit, and 1 is planning a third visit later this year.

- The Free Medical Van arrived. It was available in our parking lot, three days a week, every other week. We credit that van with saving the lives of two of our congregation.
- The church built an outdoor hot shower that opened in September. It has been open every Saturday since and provides a Free Hot Shower to the Ocean View community. On the first day only 1 person took a shower, but by the end of the year the event averaged 13 showers each week. The maximum number of showers for a Saturday was 21. The church provided 203 showers that year.
- Along with the Free Hot Shower St. Jude's members served a free hot lunch. When the program first started one pot of soup was enough, but now it takes 3-5 pots each week.

2014

Congregation: The minimum Sunday attendance was 28, the averaged 37, and the maximum non-holiday Sunday was 51.

Priests: In 2014 we had 7 new priests and 1 priest from prior years returned to be with us. Of those 7 new priests, 3 of them have returned to be with us for a second time.

The second year of the free hot shower and free hot meal program, the minimum week was 5 showers, the average week was 16 showers, the maximum week was 27 showers. The total for the year was 819 showers.

- A website was built for St. Jude's that includes information on St. Jude's philosophy, mission, goals, activities, ministries, schedules, and events. Recently this website has been receiving around 135 unique visits each week, with around 425 pages viewed.

2015

Congregation: The minimum Sunday attendance was 28, the averaged 41, and the maximum non-holiday Sunday was 59.

Priests: In 2015 the church welcomed 5 new priests and 4 priests from prior years re-turned again. Of those 5 priests, 1 has returned to be with us a second time.

The third year of the free hot shower and free hot meal program. The minimum week was 7 the average week was 16 showers, and the maximum week was 27 showers. The total for the year was 834 showers.

- Fr. Moki became our Priest with Oversight.
- The first edition of a monthly St. Jude's newsletter called "Talking Story, at St. Jude's" which was renamed in March 2016 to "Talk Story." This is a professionally edited magazine style format covering a wide area of interests and activities within the parish.

Each month stories are contributed by congregation members and priests. It is posted on our web site, copies are handed out during Sunday services, and copies are emailed to church members and our clergy.
- The first version of St. Jude's travel guide called "Things to do When You're in Ocean View" was published. Ocean View is located in a rural area an hour drive or more from most of the tourist sites described in commercial travel guides. This guide is for our visiting priests to help them find things of interest closer to home, but also a helpful guide for anyone visiting the District of Ka'u. It is posted on our web site so anyone can use it.
- A new car was required for our visiting priests. The Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii provided a \$10,000 grant to help with the cost, and a new Kia sedan was purchased for the priests to drive during their stay.
- Over the last three and a half years St. Jude's has many new members in its congregation; and a new-comers dinner was hosted to greet and get to know those new members. There were 37 people at the dinner and after that dinner, many of those newcomers became new volunteers for our outreach programs.
- The lava flow in Pahoia started going across some roads and isolating the residents. The Medical Van that was parked in our parking lot was, moved to Pahoia to support the people being isolated by the lava flow.

- Ka'u Food Pantry moved to St. Jude's for their food distribution. The church is the host site for distribution of food to hundreds of Ka'u residents on the last Tuesday of each month.

2016

Congregation: The minimum Sunday attendance was 33, the averaged 45, and the maximum non-holiday Sunday was 58.

Priests: We had 7 new priests in 2016 and 1 priest from a prior year came back to be with us a second time.

This was the fourth year of the free hot shower and free hot meal program. The minimum week was 10 showers, the average week was 25 showers, and the maximum week was 37 showers. The total for the year was 1,366 showers.

- An upgraded St. Jude's Directory to include photographs was published. The new directory also included our priests and our extended family. Our extended family includes people that participate in our Saturday free hot shower and soup kitchen. The photographs have helped our new priests recognize the congregation and help the people working the shower and soup kitchen recognize the people using our services.
- The Diocese of Hawaii provided a \$5,000 grant to replace range and refrigerator in the church kitchen and the refrigerator in McKinney Place.
- The Diocese of Hawaii also provided a \$4,975 grant to support Saturday soup kitchen ingredients.
- St. Jude's received the donation of a large scale Thomas Kinkade Nativity Set. The set includes ten individual figurines, ranging in size from 12 inches to 36 inches tall. Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus, shepherds, kings, angels and assorted animals have been lovingly designed by West Coast artist Thomas Kinkade, known as the "Painter of Light." Each figurine is an exquisite piece of artwork. See the story in the Feb. 2016 newsletter.
- St. Jude's received a grant for \$15,000 to replace their 43 year old kitchen. The church was able to use the entire grant to replace the kitchen cabinets, counter top, movable serving island, and microwave oven. The congregation includes several retired tradesmen including general contractors, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers; so, in addition to the grant, the church also received in-kind donations of professional services from members in the congregation. While the value of these donations can't be accurately measured, it exceeds \$5000.
- Members hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for our Saturday shower extended family, on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.
- Members hosted a Leftover Party on November 25th (day after Thanksgiving)
- Cindy Cutts composed a song about St. Jude's called "The Little Red Church at the End of the Road", which she sang for Fr. Moki's going away party, when he moved from the Big Island to become Canon Administrator and Priest-in-Charge of the Cathedral of St. Andrew on Oahu. The words for the song were posted in Feb. 2017 newsletter
- A task force completed Operational Support Duties (Duty Roster) which is a document defining the various jobs that have to be done to keep St. Jude's operating. The congregation volunteered to fill those duties.

- In early December 2016, I was helping install our new kitchen when two men visiting the Big Island dropped by the church. They told me they were going to be in the Ocean View area for a few days before moving on toward Hilo, and were thinking about attending our services the next Sunday. They asked me how many people usually attended our Sunday services, and when I said “around 40 or 45”. He looked surprised and replied, “I’m surprised there are that many Episcopalians in Ocean View”. I told him that he was right, there aren’t. Our congregation is comprised on Episcopalians, Lutherans, Catholics, Methodist’s, Baptists, and who knows what else. Many of our congregation joined St. Jude’s so they can be part of and help with our community support efforts.

2017 (1st 6 months of the year)

Congregation: The minimum Sunday attendance was 34, the averaged 50, and the maximum non-holiday Sunday was 67.

Priests: So far, this year, we have had 3 new priests and plan on having 2 more new priests scheduled. We have also had 2 of our prior priests join us and expect another 1 later in the year. We also have 1 priest scheduled for a 3rd visit.

We had a special treat in January when Fr. Thomas Beuchele and his wife Jean joined us as our “Flavor of the Month”; so, we had a chance to show them what their help and guidance had enabled St. Jude’s to accomplish.

The Fifth year of our free hot shower and free hot meal program started. Through June, the minimum week was 19 showers, the average was 29, and the maximum was 42. The total for the year, so far, was 647 showers.

In February and again in April there were days when the shower count exceeded 40 people. The demand has exceeded the capacity of a single shower stall; so, one of St. Jude’s top priority is to build a second shower stall.

- The new kitchen was completed. It has light oak cabinets, light colored counter top, and white walls lightens the kitchen and makes it feel larger. It has a cathedral ceiling painted white, with six lights that make it feel even larger. The cathedral ceiling makes enough room for a ceiling fan. The ceiling fan provides adequate air circulation to our little kitchen. The upper cabinets are taller, giving additional storage. One bottom cabinet has full extending drawers, and the corner cabinet has Lazy-Susan revolving storage, which increases the storage.
- An All-Comers potluck was hosted as a social gathering to welcome the new members to St. Jude’s. It provided an additional opportunity to socialize and become better acquainted with one another. This was a new version of the new-comers dinner we had in 2015.

Beverly and I were dining at a table with our new priest Celine Burke, who had just arrived few days before the event. During dinner, she said, “This isn’t a normal church dinner; it is more like a family gathering. ”I’m sure I was beaming with a smile from ear-to-ear because, for many of us that is what St. Jude’s has become – It’s not just a church, it’s a family and a way of life.

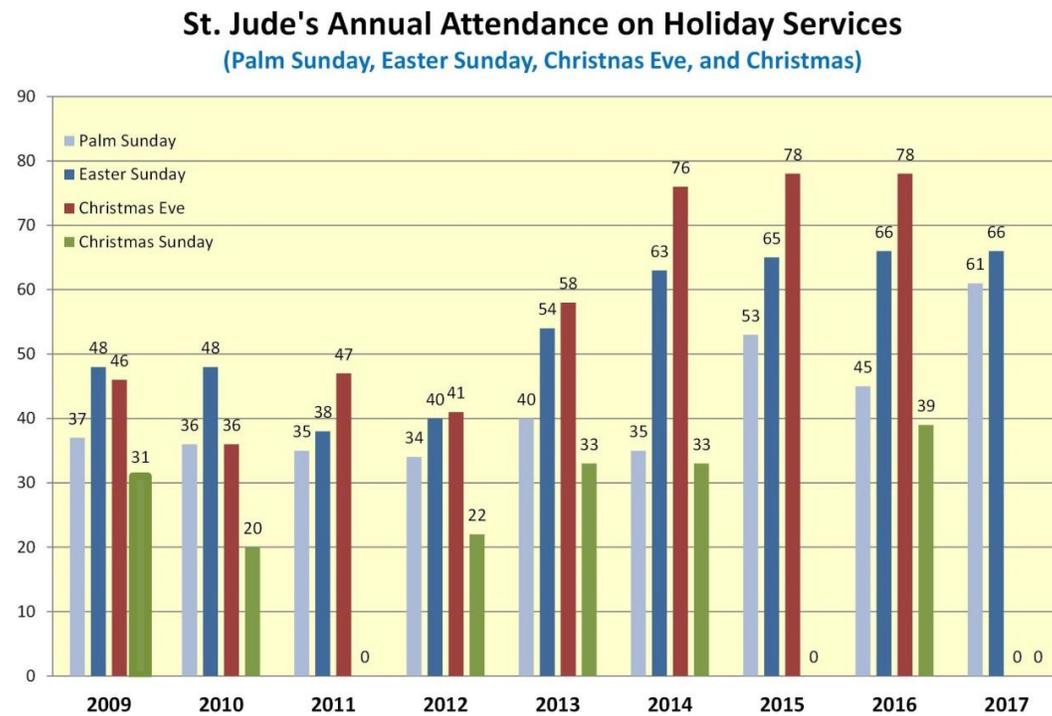
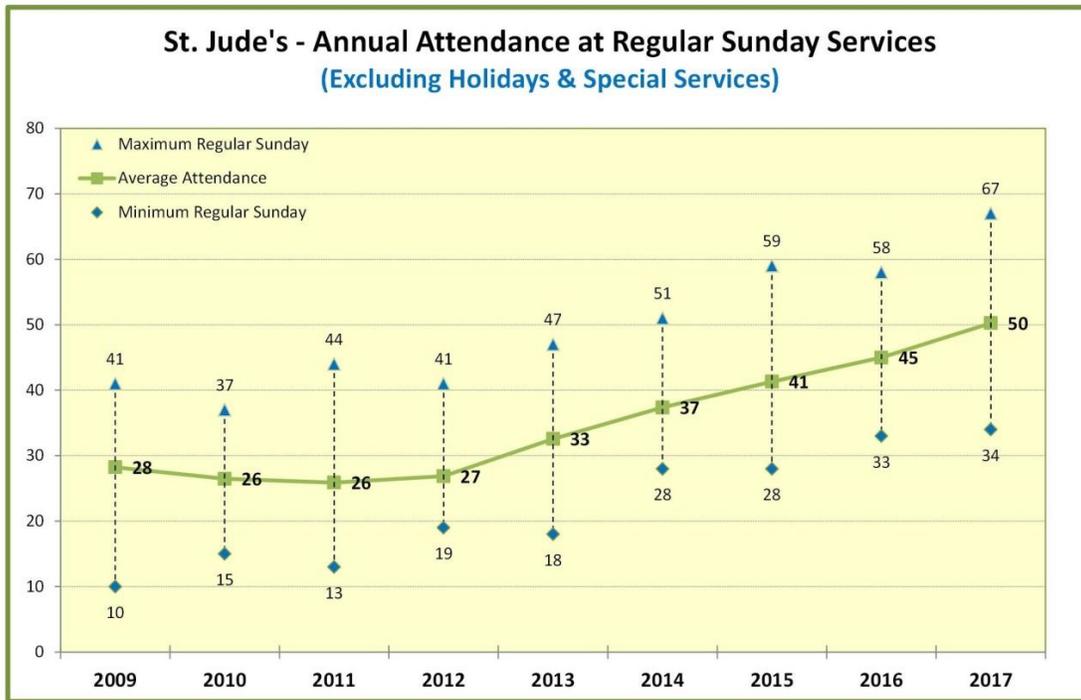
Last month, in the June issue of Talk Story, Cindy Cutts did a great job of summing up what St. Jude’s has be-come when she wrote, “The success of St. Jude’s and their out-reach programs may be due to the open hearted



philosophy of the parish. Basically, at St. Jude’s, if you want to be in, you’re in. If you want to volunteer, be prepared to go to work, because you will be included.”

The graphs and statistics show that Roberta’s observations have substance.

St. Jude’s is the Little Engine that Could. The devoted leaders and dedicated volunteers strive to serve God by serving the community of Ocean View. They work together with cheerful tenacity to meet the needs of our neighborhood and creatively solve problems.



St. Jude's - Weekly Shower Count by Year



Statistics used in Document

	Sunday Church Attendance			Visiting Priests		Weekly Showers			
	Min	Avg.	Max	New	Repeat	Min	Avg.	Max	Total
2009	10	28	41						
2010	15	26	37						
2011	13	26	44						
2012	19	27	41						
2013	18	33	47	6		1	13	21	203
2014	28	37	51	7	1	5	16	27	819
2015	28	41	59	5	4	7	16	27	834
2016	33	45	58	7	1	10	25	37	1,366
2017*	34	50	67	3	2	19	29	42	728

* Through June 2017