

---

## *Average Weekly Engagement – AWE!*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times* by Dean Sam Candler**

It has become common, even in churches themselves, to question the role of “church” in today’s modern world. Every month, it seems, another sociological study claims that people are trending away from church attendance and church membership. Some speakers and writers make a living by worrying about the decreasing relevance of the Christian Church. Now, I am all in favor of being informed and aware, but sometimes I wonder why churches themselves keep these writers in business!

I am glad to report that the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip is not one of those churches which fits into the category of decreasing vitality and relevance. Our numbers are strong, especially in activity, membership, and financial stewardship. In addition, for years now, we have been aware that Sunday attendance has not been as relevant a mark of Christian commitment as has “average weekly engagement.”

“Average weekly engagement” is a term that has yet to be formally quantified or measured. But it means that we strive for parishioner engagement with church activity—and Christian mission—throughout the week, not just on Sundays. In our era of easy mobility and broad communication, we know that some people are in town on Sundays, but many are away: tending to children or grandchildren or parents, or visiting another city or mountain or beach, or even on some business trip. Many of the people who are not in church on Sunday are at some Bible Study during the week. Or they are serving at a homeless shelter or local outreach station. Many take advantage of podcasts and social media to keep up with Cathedral energy that they missed in the previous week. People connect to the Cathedral weekly, but not always on a Sunday!

In the beginning, I called this statistic an “average weekly touch,” but my staff advised me that the phrase has unfortunate connotations. I realize that, but regret it. I believe that God does want to touch us, deeply and spiritually, throughout the week; and the Church is about touching the world with healing and grace. Still, I have turned to the phrase “average weekly engagement.”

At the Cathedral, we exist to actively engage people, with grace and love, throughout the week. On weekdays, we are as active and busy here as we are on a Sunday – sometimes more so! Our Cathedral Farmers Market makes Saturday a phenomenal day of service and engagement with our town. Our afterschool tutoring sessions serve the neighborhood during the weekdays. Our preschool keeps the Spirit alive during the weekdays. Bible studies and prayer groups and bookstores and counseling sessions and daily Eucharists offer engagement with God throughout the week. Furthermore, “active weekly engagement” does not occur only on the church campus! Many groups and guilds meet in parishioners’ homes during the week; mission trips travel everywhere from downtown Atlanta to Israel! All that activity is also gathered on our website and distributed on social media like Facebook and Twitter.

“Average Weekly Engagement” is about AWE! Something incredibly awesome is being generated and nurtured at the Cathedral of St. Philip. That awe is nothing less than the presence of the living God. There is nothing important about people attending church if nothing is happening at church! But if the presence of God is alive in our meetings and in our serving and in our prayer—indeed, in our community and koinonia!—then something awesome is here.

This fall, at the Dean’s Forum, and in other venues, I will be discussing the renewed vitality and relevance of the Christian Church. We are the location for certain activity and community that just cannot be duplicated anywhere else. I will be discussing “Koinonia and the Marks of Christian Community;” I will be discussing “AWE!” Engage it!

Sam Candler

---

© The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.