



## **Warm and Bubbly**

By The Rev. Jarrett Kerbel (1/16/26)

When shaking hands with visitors and members at the door of the church, I learn many important things. I love to listen and I love to learn, so God has put me in the place I belong.

During Advent, one recent visitor shook my hand vigorously and gave our worship an enthusiastic review. He said, “Your liturgy reminds me of the Roman Catholic Church, but the way you do it is bubbly and warm!” We shared a good laugh, I wished him well, and invited him to come back next time he came to town.

Bubbly and warm is a wonderful description of worship that is animated by the Holy Spirit. In my experience the Holy Spirit is on the move at St. John’s! We need to cherish our warm and bubbly worship.

A healthy church is like a healthy personality after all; i.e., characterized by emotional availability, relational open-ness, mental flexibility, and the capacity for the whole range of human emotions from joy to mourning.

“Come Down, O Love Divine” is a favorite hymn. In fact, my wife and I had it as a hymn at our wedding. Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, the lyrics say, “None can guess its grace, till Love create a place wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.” The Holy Spirit is alive in us creating open space in us for God to pour in love.

Worship - in the power of the Spirit- opens us up to all that God is pouring into our lives. In a community that is intentionally open to what God is doing, this is a somewhat giddy and warm experience characterized by a feeling of safety, togetherness and generosity. A spirit animated space is one where folks feel permission to lower inhibitions and eschew shame and fear so that they may open up in vocal prayer or adopt gestures and postures that indicate praise, gratitude and openness to God.

Disciples in the ancient Church prayed with their arms spread wide in what is called the “Orans Position.” The priest takes this posture at the altar and some of our members do as well. When I spot a member daring to express their praise, openness and dependence on God in the orans posture, my heart is lifted. To me, that is an indicator that our community is experienced as free of shame and fear and that the spirit is dis-inhibited and on the move.

Now, such expressions are not for everyone. Kneeling may be quite expressive for you or genuflecting or standing during the Eucharistic Prayer. The point is - simply put - that our church culture is open to many expressions and not ruled by a hidden code of what was once called the ‘frozen chosen’ a term for the repressed and restrained worship of mainline churches.’