

SsAM: The Bite-Sized Korean Snack
September 17, 2023.

Because “The Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew and Matthew” is such a mouthful of words, my church calls itself “SsAM”. It is a short bite-sized word. The second “s” is silent, so it sounds just like “SAM”, a name with many favorable connections: Yosemite Sam, Play It Again Sam, Sam the Sham and the Pharoahs, and Samwise Gamgee, Bilbo’s faithful companion in Lord of the Rings.

Trouble is, when anyone does an Internet search for “SsAM”, they do not find our church but find instead articles about tasty bite-sized Korean snacks. Ssam are “leafy vegetables used to wrap a piece of meat ... often accompanied by a condiment known as ssamjang...” says Wikipedia.

This gives the SsAM Communications Committee fits. Our “SsAM” brand name is compromised from the start. How can our website or social-media posts be optimized for search engines when “ssam” is indelibly linked to vegetable-wrapped meat? Actually, if people search for “Sam Church Wilmington DE”, our church pops right up. No problemo. Search engines are smart, not to mention a little bit scary.

My church’s presence on the Internet got praise recently from those involved in finding a new rector. In all, fifteen priests felt called to this ministry. That is a good number in current conditions. It seems that labor shortages affect clergy as well as regular folks. Maybe clergy are regular folks!

In particular, my church’s website — www.ssam.org — told those 15 prospective rectors what to expect. That’s my work, maintaining the website, if I may brag about it. But what really made the difference in attracting would-be rectors is that we televise our 10:30am services live and then have them available on-demand on YouTube and Facebook.

Ironically, the COVID-19 pandemic is responsible for that live television. Within a week or two of the pandemic shut-down, David Christopher, Associate for Liturgy, began videotaping worship services using his smartphone. Since then the broadcasts have improved dramatically as new skills developed and new equipment was purchased. Thank God for COVID? Thank God for those who adapted!

Because of my church’s Internet presence, it made a good impression on our new rector, the Rev. Patrick Burke. This Sunday, September 17, he gives his first sermon and celebrates the Eucharist for the first time at SsAM. He and we have high expectations of each other. May the disappointments be few and the good surprises many as we get to know each other beyond what is found on the Internet.

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