

St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church's 11:30am "Sandals, Shorts and Steel Drum" Service Innovative Episcopal Service Draws in New Seekers

Last year, The Rev. Louanne Loch came to St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church (SPBTS), located in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, with big ideas to grow church membership. One of her early innovative ideas was to create a 30-minute, 11:30am Eucharistic service accompanied by steel drum music to draw new attendees into the church, and also to accommodate church members who would like to surf before church – there are a lot of surfers of all ages who live at the beaches – or members whose children have early soccer matches, or for members with small children who occasionally want to sleep late on Sunday morning. Because SPBTS is located a mere four blocks from the Atlantic Ocean, congregants have the opportunity to leave church after any of the services, and head straight to the beach for the rest of the day.

The "Shorts, Sandals and Steel Drums" service has been popular since May 2017 when it was first offered. Congregants receive music sheets particular to the day and are offered musical shakers so that – as they shake, shake, shake - they feel more involved in the musical portion of this service. During this 11:30 "Come as You Are" service, congregants share that they feel the spirit of joy during the service.

Between 30 and 60 people attend this steel drum service weekly. The music is provided by a church member who donates his God-given talent. If you are interested in hearing a portion of after the service steel drum music, please visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/spbts/videos/vb.111517002222095/1667919126581867/?type=2&theater>

SPBTS was the first religious congregation established on the coastal area east of Jacksonville—now known as "the Beaches"—bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the St. Johns River, the Intracoastal Waterway, and Ponte Vedra Beach. SPBTS is located at the corner of 11th Avenue North and 5th Street in Jacksonville Beach, Florida 32250. Call SPBTS for more information about any of their services or ministries at (904) 249-4091.

If you'd like to read an article about SPBTS's "Shorts, Sandals and Steel Drums" recently published in **The Beaches Leader**, a well-known beaches area newspaper, please continue to the next page.

St. Paul's offering a 'beachy' service

by LIZA MITCHELL
CONTRIBUTOR

St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church is embracing its coastal ties with a new Sunday designed to appeal to those seeking a non-traditional approach to worship. "Shorts, Sandals and Steel Drums" is a compact, half hour service that features steel drum music, a later start time and a casual atmosphere at 465 11th Ave. N. in Jacksonville Beach.

"We are a pretty laid back, open parish. We thought what better thing being St. Paul's by-the-Sea than to have a steel drum service," said Rev. Louanne Loch. "It's very beachy. And since it's called Shorts, Sandals and Steel Drums, it's very informal. You can roll right out of bed and come in."

Unlike the traditional Sunday services, the Steel Drum Service begins at 11:30 a.m. to allow families time to sleep in, have breakfast together or shuttle kids to activities before coming to church. The shorter service offers meditation instead of a sermon, making it easier for smaller kids who have trouble sitting still for an hour and 15 minutes.

"We understand how parents are running around and trying to get their kids to sports and classes and all that kind of stuff so we decided to have an 11:30 service so people can take their time," said Rev. Loch. "We want to meet people where they are."

Music is provided by drummer Mike Wilson, who

taught drumming lessons to kids at the church five years ago. When Rev. Loch first proposed the idea of the steel drum service, she knew exactly who to call on to play them.

"Mike is very talented," she said. "I knew immediately who I wanted to call. And he doesn't charge us a dime. It's his gift to the church."

Rev. Loch said she discovered the beauty of the steel drums while completing clinical pastor education work at a mental health facility in Hawaii. She attended a traditional Hawaiian service at St. Andrews Church and was immediately drawn to the service, which opened with the blowing of a conch shell.

"I loved hearing the steel drums. It gave me the inspiration to try something new. I wanted a contemporary service for young families who are seeking a new experience," she said. "It's for everybody."

Over 60 people attended the first Steel Drum Service at St. Paul's by-the-Sea on May 7, and Rev. Loch said she is more than encouraged by the response. To help spread the word about the new service, they entered a float in the recent Opening of the Beaches Parade with Wilson playing steel drums on the back of the float for three and a half hours.

Said Rev. Loch, "This is a joyous and friendly parish and we want people to understand what a loving community experience is like."