

Rector's Report

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace to you, and peace, in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to God for the honor to serve among you as your priest in the past year. We started out the year facing the challenge of making our financial commitments, but we reached and managed to fulfill some of our dreams. I am grateful for what we are doing together in God's name, and I am grateful for your continued love and support.

God is indeed working in and through us as we offer ourselves in ministry in our community. The recent success of the initial week of the winter storm shelter hosted at St. Michael's provides an example for us of what God can do when we offer ourselves in service to God.

One of last year's goals was to shelter the needy in our community. Through the planning efforts of the ecumenical Love in Action group, St. Michael's participated in the first offering of a church-based homeless shelter from December 14 to 22. Of the eleven men who took part in the first week of shelter in our church, five are now enrolled in a substance abuse recovery program and are living in long term housing, two returned home to their families, and two more are in more stable housing. God has moved in the lives of these men!

Our first goal last year was to begin a new worship service with a lively and varied music ministry. We discussed worship planning throughout the year, and developed the plan to initiate a new style of worship service on February 1 this year. We will go "paperless" at the 10:00 service, using an LCD video screen to display all songs and spoken parts of the liturgy. Beginning February 1, a variety of musicians will be leading us in worship each Sunday.

Here is a list of some more of our accomplishments in 2008 (with God's help and through the commitment of all of you):

- ✓ We continued to offer the Education for Ministry class (a four year course in theological reflection) with six students in their second and third years.
- ✓ We continued the Godly Play Sunday School through May, with a number of teachers and helpers.
- ✓ We continued to offer the after school arts and cooking program for middle school youth, led by Karen McDonell and Sandy Savidge and recently by Scott Dabel, with funding from Big Brothers and Sisters.
- ✓ We offered occasional evening intergenerational potluck and game nights.
- ✓ We began small group dinner fellowships in members' homes.
- ✓ We offered adult spiritual growth series, thanks to the leadership of Blake Leighton and the Rev. Tansy Chapman.

The past year was particularly difficult for us as a community, as we sadly said farewell and gave thanks to God for the lives of many good and faithful servants of the Lord. Last year we lost through death: Louise Eastman, Dorothy Friberg,

Karen-Ita McNeel, Jessie Jaques, Barbara Barnard, Beverly Bumstead, Vernona Granvall, Sue Nowlin, Rudi Wuennenberg, and Darla Paoli. We greatly mourn the loss of these dear sisters and brother in faith – may they rest in God’s peace.

The loss of these people of great faith and many years of service to the church adds greater urgency to our need to raise up new leaders in the church and to share the good news of God’s love with the next generations. We have wrestled with ways to invite new members into this household of faith. For 2009, our goals focus on making our worship services inviting, joyful, worshipful, and full of people; and creating a vital ministry with our youth to form them in faith and give them spiritual tools to meet their life challenges.

On March 2, we welcomed Bishop Barry Beisner for his first official visit to our parish, as we welcomed several new members into our fellowship. Pamela and Nicolette Hudson were baptized that day. John Cinnamon, Bob Neese, Penny Neese, Ana Lucas, Nancy Nelson, Tommy Barron, and Tom Hudson were all either confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. And Charles and Kathy Wall were welcomed back into the Episcopal Church and into our parish fellowship. If we can add that many more members into our community each year, then we will be thriving once again!

Meeting our financial obligations will be a great challenge for us this year. As many of you already know, faced with a significant financial shortfall in the parish budget, I have offered to take a 2.5 month leave of absence this summer. I plan to work as a commercial salmon fisherman in Kodiak, Alaska, for the summer at a shore-based fish camp with my family. We really look forward to the adventure – one that I have been hoping to arrange for my family. I am planning for clergy coverage for the summer, and I am certain that God’s spirit will continue to enliven this place while I am away.

At the beginning of 2008, I formed a Parish Commission on Ministry to discern with the congregation whether Blake Leighton was called to ordained ministry. The PCOM and the Vestry endorsed Blake’s call to ministry, and in the fall Blake was named as a Postulant for Holy Orders. Now Blake begins the process toward ordination, the path for which will be developed by Bishop Beisner and the diocesan Commission on Ministry. Please pray for Blake and all of us as Blake continues this process. In Blake’s call, we remember that we are all called to ministry by virtue of our baptism.

I am grateful for the ministry of all the members of this parish in the past year. I am especially grateful for the steady leadership of our Senior Warden, Dave Turner, who has agreed to serve another year in that capacity. I also thank the members of the Vestry, all of whom will continue for another year of service.

I am thankful for the work of Madeleine Melo, who has kept the parish books balanced for several years as Treasurer, but now is handing over the computer files to Anne Turner. And I thank Anne for meeting that challenge.

I am grateful for the Rev. Tansy Chapman who is always willing to provide emergency pastoral care and to preach and celebrate worship. And I thank Tansy and Blake Leighton for their service in leading adult spiritual formation classes.

I am grateful for the office volunteers, especially for Marcia Waters, Sandi Smith, and Tommy Barron – and also for Jim Waters who does so many tasks behind the scenes.

I am grateful for the musical leadership of Blake Leighton, who faithfully plays the organ every Sunday, and for Jim Blanton our cantor who gives us confidence to sing. I am grateful that the Celebration Singers are reorganizing to lead us in worship, and I am grateful for the ministry of all the lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, and ushers.

I give thanks for Margaret Drumm who continues to offer her service for the education of our youth, and for all the teachers and helpers. I give thanks for those who made possible the youth summer camp at Swales Camp last summer.

I give thanks for the newly inducted members of our elders society, the Archangels: Frank and Beverly Engelhardt, Julia Angelo, Gloria Blanton, and Marilyn Ward.

We have many challenges ahead of us in the coming year, but we have accomplished much and God will certainly bless us in our ministries in 2009.

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Your Rector and servant in Christ,

Bill Osborne+