

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Wardens' Report for 2007

It is a pleasure to report that 2007 has been another year of strength and growth for St. Andrew's. Most encouraging is the variety of our many successes during the past year and the very high level of participation by our parishioners, both long-time members and newcomers. Consider what we have accomplished together in the past 12 months:

- Our First Annual Epiphany Pageant, starring the children in our Sunday School.
- A thought-provoking Lenten Program, with movies and discussion groups.
- Publication of a new photographic directory of St. Andrew's families.
- Our first Tri-Parish Ascension Day Service, an evening of faith and fellowship.
- A new Vestry Covenant, to guide our Vestry in its decisionmaking process.
- Our first Outreach Fair, with presentations by the organizations that we support.
- Successful fund raising for 20 new choir chairs.
- All Saints' Day Service with St. Andrew's choir performing Haydn's Mass No. 7, with chamber music accompaniment--a brilliant accomplishment!
- Relocation of the Nursery and the Sunday School to our former Rectory.
- Our biggest-ever Apple Pie Day, with all pies sold out in advance.
- Another extremely successful Holiday Fair, well-attended and profitable.
- New exterior signs in front of the Church and on the Parish Hall.
- A reinvigorated and well organized Foyers Group program, which immediately became the most popular activity in the parish.
- Construction of the long-awaited handicap ramp at the side of the Parish Hall.
- Our Sixth Annual "In A Manger" exhibit, with over 225 Nativities on display.
- The Second Annual Community Carol Sing.
- Timely appointment of Nominating, Auditing, and Investment Committees for 2008.
- A new Building Use Agreement, with Regulations for the groups using our properties.
- Comprehensive revision of our Safe Church and Safety-at-Church Policy.
- Agreement to host a Korean-speaking congregation, beginning in February 2008.

None of what we have accomplished here at St. Andrew's would have been possible without the commitment of literally thousands of hours of time and talent by all of us working together. Special thanks are due to Fr. Alan MacKillop for his leadership, Michael Smith and Judy Adams for their work with our music program, Lynn Ferrillo for her patience with all of us, to our Vestry members, our commission chairs and members, our newsletter staff, our convention and deanery delegates, to our Sunday School teachers, our choir (which Bishop Shaw described as the best small choir in the diocese), our ushers and coffee hour hosts, our acolytes, chalice bearers, lectors and counters, and to the Altar Guild for the incredibly high standard of their work, through all the seasons of our Church Year.

As hard as it is to highlight specific people for their contribution, we give special thanks to John Ferrillo and Phil Welton for their faithfulness in taking communion to our homebound parishioners, to Alan Rogers for the countless hours he has spent looking after our facilities, to Ned Barringer for his constancy as head acolyte and as a role model for our younger acolytes, to this year's Nominating Committee, and to all the ladies on the Parish Life Commission who have sustained us with their delicious food for yet another year, with humor and grace. Finally, we thank Anne Cahill, who retired as editor of "The X-Press" after 14 years of service, and John Ferrillo, who completes today his full three-year term as a Vestry member.

And we thank all of you for your support.

Having basked for a moment in our many successes during 2007, we would like to turn our attention to the future.

As we all know, St. Andrew's is in a period of transition. Since 1900, when the Rev. Thomas Legate Fisher became our first resident rector, living and working here in Ayer and occupying our newly-completed rectory on Christmas Eve 1901, St. Andrew's Church has had a full-time vicar or rector almost continuously--until February 2005. Since then, we have had a half-time interim rector and half-time Priest-in-Residence. With our present membership and our present budget, we cannot support a full-time rector.

By contract, the role of a Priest-in-Residence is to provide liturgical and pastoral care for the congregation and to prepare the congregation for the next phase of their life together. The parish is not "in search", but rather taking steps to discern and make decisions about the future. It is to be a time of renewal and re-energizing the parish in its life and mission. It is the responsibility of the wardens and vestry to undertake the strategic planning necessary for the transition, working together with the Priest-in-Residence.

The wardens believe that 2008 will need to be a year of discernment for St. Andrew's. While continuing to strengthen our membership growth, stewardship commitment, and shared life together as a faith community, we will need to begin the tough decisionmaking process that, hopefully, will take us through the transition from half-time Priest-in-Residence to full-time Rector. What the exact timeline on this transition will be, no one can say at the moment, but we would be judged remiss as stewards of this wonderful place, if we were to fail to prepare ourselves for the future with openness to new possibilities.

In any case, we are going to need to bring the parish up to the standards described in the diocese's new guidelines for parishes entitled "Vitality, Viability and Mutuality", introduced at the Special Diocesan Convention in March 2007. Just recently, Bishop Cederholm requested that all our vestry members familiarize themselves with these guidelines and be prepared to discuss them during his visit in February. Copies are available at the Annual Meeting today and will be available in the Parish Office at any time for anyone in the parish.

No question that 2008 will be an exciting and challenging time for St. Andrew's. We are going to need to build on our many successes of the past two years and to work very hard to bring our parish to a place of strength and stability.

We look forward to working together with you,

Richard Dabrowski
Linda Kaferle
Wardens