

## Annual Report of the Senior Warden - 2009

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we close 2009, let me summarize the collective accomplishments of Nativity's clergy, staff, Vestry, committees, and parishioners. I also want to highlight some ongoing challenges and address the opportunities that 2010 will bring us.

### Accomplishments

1. Stabilized finances. Driven by deficits in prior years and reductions in pledges attributable to the economic crisis, we sharply reduced spending to avert a melt-down. We ran a Caring Connections program for parishioners who were affected by the economy. As the year went on, we rebuilt a small but crucially important cushion of cash. We conducted a thorough review of our designated and restricted accounts, and we established new policies for these accounts. We received a clean audit report for 2008 and took corrective action on the one item raised by our external auditor.

2. Managed transitions of clergy. While waiting to see what would eventuate with Mother Diane's illness, we brought on the Rev. Lois Boney for pastoral care; said good-bye to the Rev. Nancy Titus and the Rev. Jay Lawlor; and engaged the Rev. George Clifford in new a role. Subsequently we engaged Father George as our Priest-in-Charge.

3. Preserved the "essence of Nativity". Although we reduced spending in virtually every area of the budget, only one major program (interpretation of services in American Sign Language) was entirely eliminated. Worship attendance has remained stable compared to 2008. A newcomer attending Nativity this Sunday will experience the same worshipful and learning community that he or she would have seen 18 months ago.

4. Ministered to Mother Diane. From weekly delivery of the Holy Eucharist to interfacing with insurance companies to providing personal assistance, we took care of Mother Diane and her family. During this period we honored her status as our Rector. Eventually we said good-bye to Mother Diane in an appropriately festive and thankful manner.

5. Continued the Build It Forward program. We updated our long-term plan for Nativity's site. We obtained construction financing for the education building, completed its design, and began checking with contractors about possible reductions in construction cost since estimates were obtained in 2008 when the economy was hot.

6. Improved management of our assets. We shifted room assignments to eliminate use of the old trailer. We adopted a policy for renting out our buildings. We began a complete review of our existing facilities to identify how to make them more attractive and functional – and how to exercise better stewardship in caring for them systematically. We upgraded our primary church management software to the latest release, and we installed a flat-bed scanner to improve

desktop publishing capability. We made several small but noticeable improvements in the worship building, got a new coffee machine, and had our altarware repaired.

7. Prepared for 2010. Under the guidance of Bishop Michael Curry, Bishop William Gregg, and Canon Michael Hunn, we designed an approach to identifying a successor for Mother Diane.

8. Communicated more effectively. We revamped our worship bulletin and began distributing it (and Glad Tidings) by email. Included in the bulletin is a weekly view of income received and attendance. We also began distributing Vestry minutes and summary financial information by email. We held four Open Forums at which parishioners could state concerns and pose questions to the parish leadership.

I believe this is a solid list of accomplishments under any circumstances. Your clergy, staff, and Vestry thank you for your support and your contributions of time, talent, and treasure that make everything happen at Nativity.

Now, on to 2010.

## **Opportunities**

1. Revisioning Nativity. Our mission statement has changed little in the last 15 years, but our community has changed a lot – both inside our walls and outside. Using the Appreciative Inquiry process that focuses on our strengths and our successes, let's come together and articulate a vision for Nativity that will guide our programs throughout the coming decade.

2. Identifying a new Rector. At this time it's unclear whether we will call a new Rector in 2010 or call an Interim in 2010 with a permanent Rector to follow in 2011. In either case, we must listen to the Holy Spirit and discern the "right" person to serve us. Then we must welcome her or him with open arms and do everything possible to make her or his ministry among us successful. Let's keep an open mind about the fresh perspectives, ideas, and ways of doing ministry that our new Rector will bring.

3. Reallocating leadership. Mother Diane was centric to nearly every major decision and activity at Nativity. As we grow in the future, Nativity will trend toward a "Corporate church" paradigm in which the Rector cannot possibly be directly involved in everything that happens or make every decision that is necessary. Let's rebalance the roles of our clergy, the Vestry, and our committees and groups so that we can undertake more ministry while increasing breadth of involvement.

4. Continuing to improve our finances. We are not a wealthy "old money" congregation, but it's time to reexamine our stewardship practices. Our congregation struggles more than it should to raise the funds needed to carry out our programs. Let's see what other parishes are doing in the area of stewardship and select a more energetic model to follow.

5. Invigorating outreach. At inception, Nativity made outreach a primary objective. The Honduras Medical Missions are an important fulfillment of that objective; but if we are honest,

we would confess that outreach is far less a fundamental activity of Nativity than it once was. Jesus has new things in mind for Nativity in the area of Outreach. Let's discern what they are and then engage the entire community in doing them.

6. Executing the education building project. This building is a key "growth engine" for Nativity. Not only will it provide the space we need to grow our education program, it will allow us to accommodate more community group meetings. In 2011 or beyond, we could consider a Monday-Friday daycare or day school operation in the education building.

7. Attending to other aspects of growth. We've got to do something about the size of our parking lot, which fills up before our worship building does. It is also time to put a program in place for planned giving. Our long-term plan is to replace Estill House with a new church and re-use our existing church as a parish hall. That won't happen until 2020-2025, but a planned giving program is the right way to prepare for it.

8. Recommitting to "All Are Welcome." The demographics of 27613 and vicinity give us the potential to grow to 1500 parishioners and an average Sunday attendance of 450 -- twice our current size, which is the limit of what our real estate tract will accommodate. This means being sensitive to the needs and concerns of the unchurched... exercising radical hospitality... and some purposeful marketing, too, such as a redesigned website. And as we grow, let's ensure that our growth reflects our community.

At first, these eight opportunities may seem like a lot for a congregation in transition to undertake. I believe, however, that we can do all of these -- and more. Father George, Mother Lois, our staff, and your Vestry look forward to 2010.

Between January 1 and December 31, 2009 as your Senior Warden I will have received or sent about 6,000 emails pertaining to Nativity... an average of 16 emails a day. Seems like a lot? Perhaps, but it's indicative of the energetic discipleship that pervades our community. Keep up the good work, and let's look forward to a new decade.

Yours in Christ,

Chuck Till