

## Report of the Priest-in-Charge for January-June, 2010

Having now completed a year of ministry at the Church of the Nativity, with six months having elapsed since my last formal update to the parish, I want to share with you some reflections on Nativity, its mission, ministry, and parish community.

Nativity's mission, as stated in the profile the Rector Search Committee prepared, is, "We invite all people to glorify God through worship, prayer, fellowship, education, and loving service, and to experience God's love and peace through Jesus Christ." That statement accurately captures who we want to become and our aspirations as a parish.

Senior Warden Chuck Till's semi-annual report highlights some of the many initiatives that Nativity has launched in the last six months to incarnate its mission more fully. The number and breadth of those initiatives in the absence of a permanent rector emphasizes Nativity's healthy, vibrant ministry; this parish is truly alive and well in the Spirit.

Our mission statement calls Nativity to become a community that intentionally practices radical hospitality, welcoming all people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, income, education, wealth, or any other socio-economic variable. Progress in broadening the number of people taking an active role in the life of the parish indicates that Nativity is affirmatively responding to the Spirit's call to embody radical hospitality.

Nobody needs a crystal ball with which to discern the broad outlines of Nativity's future. Nativity's next rector will lead a large and exciting parish. Six months ago, people may have felt an understandable sense of institutional malaise or weariness from coping with the challenges of the last few years (financial and otherwise). Today, those feelings are apparent only in retrospect. The future looks bright, illuminated with realistic hopes for growth:

- Growth in spirituality. For example, Nativity has postponed until completion of the new building formation of two new adult education opportunities on Sunday morning for which we already have leaders.
- Growth in service. For example, our renewed emphasis on Outreach has already born fruit with formation of an environmental stewardship group, aka Nativity's "Green Team."
- Growth in community. For example, with Meg Buerkel Hunn's assistance, our strong pastoral programs are improving their coordination and reach; with Nancy Allison's assistance, we are reinvigorating and expanding Nativity's new member incorporation efforts.
- Growth in capacity. For example, Nativity presently operates on solid financial footing, our physical plant will increase by about 20% in the next six or seven months, and we have a growing number of active volunteers.

Concurrently, ministries that have defined Nativity for its almost twenty-five years of existence – Eucharistic centered worship, pastoral care, music, the arts, youth programming, children's programming, exploring the nexus of faith and science, etc. – flourish and are poised to attain new strengths, depth, and size.

Sharing in Nativity's mission, ministry, and community is a privilege and joy through which God has blessed me and, I hope, has also blessed you.

Fr George  
Priest-in-Charge

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## **Report of the Senior Warden for January-June, 2010**

Much has happened at Nativity since I wrote my full-year report for 2009 in December. Let's begin with the accomplishments since January.

1. The process to call a new Rector is proceeding well. In January we held three Appreciative Inquiry events; based on that information, the Vestry elected to follow the "targeted search" process and appointed a Search Committee. The Committee completed a parish profile, obtained a list of candidates from the Diocese, and has begun interviews. It's impossible to predict exactly when this process will conclude with the announcement of a new Rector, but I expect it to happen this year.
2. Construction of the Education Building is underway! We commissioned an Interior Task Force that is hard at work developing a comprehensive plan to assign all rooms on our campus.
3. We brought on the Reverends Nancy Allison and Meg Buerkel-Hunn to assist Father George, and we said good-bye to the Reverend Lois Boney who had provided us pastoral care.
4. Dave Metzger, whom we hired as part-time Sexton, is doing a splendid job to keep our facilities and grounds clean. We cleared the Rector's office of Mother Diane's materials. An arborist took steps to preserve our landmark willow oak.
5. Our finances looked good January-April but took a downturn in May. Every year we see a "summer swoon", but summer appears to have started the first week in May -- and the swoon is deeper than usual. Fortunately, we have been conservative with spending; the bottom line is slightly positive year-to-date.
6. Our children's and youth programs completed a great academic year. The J2A (Journey to Adulthood) class had a successful Urban Adventure in Washington, and the older teens are currently in Costa Rica.
7. Timothy Owens has settled in as our permanent organist. The second half of the Spirituality in the Arts series was well-attended. Our confirmation service in April was the largest we have had in years.
8. We continue to make selective, high-impact expenditures that improve the efficiency of church operations or the esthetics of our worship experience. We replaced acolyte robes from the 1980s. Our baptismal font, fabricated in the 1920s, is being professionally restored. We purchased a new PC for our parish administrator, Jennie Herrick, who expects it to greatly improve her productivity.
9. We responded to the disaster in Haiti, and our missionaries to Honduras returned safely. Carl Sigel and others are launching an environmental ministry.

10. A new swingset has been installed on the playground, and obsolete equipment is being removed.
11. Jack Crowley is updating records for our Memorial Garden. The records had fallen out of date and out of sync with the plaque in the worship building. Many parishioners have worked to improve the appearance of the Memorial Garden.
12. We launched a formal Planned Giving program. The fruit of this program may not be visible for 10 or even 20 years, but it's an important milestone in the long-term development of Nativity.
13. We developed a plan to revitalize and restructure our hospitality to visitors and our incorporation of new members. If we are to grow in numbers, we must execute this plan expertly and continuously.
14. We received a clean report from our external auditors for 2009.

Let's look ahead to July-December.

1. Completing the search for a new Rector is top-of-mind. This is a matter of prayerful discernment for both Nativity and the candidates. Timing is important, but we must not rush this process. When the new Rector is called, we will have to make a complete transition from our current clergy and greet the new Rector with great joy and energy.
2. We must oversee completion of Education Building and decide how to furnish and use it.
3. We must stay in command of our finances. Frankly, the falloff in revenues in May caught us by surprise. I don't know what to make of it, and it's keeping me awake at night. We face at least one significant non-budgeted expense later this year: relocation expenses for the Rector and family.
4. We will conduct the Annual Operating Campaign for 2011 and adopt a budget.
5. Improving our facilities, in selected high-impact areas, remains a priority. You've probably noticed that the covered entranceway to Estill House looks uninviting from underneath. We don't get a second chance to make a first impression on visitors, so this is the type of project that we want to accelerate.
6. We need leaders and workers for the programs that make us the Church of the Activity. Over the summer, the emphasis is recruitment and program planning. Your participation in these programs – specifically, ***your commitment of time and talent*** – is the fuel for these programs. The staff and Vestry provide guidance and funding, but making these programs happen is the responsibility and prerogative of ***every member***. I encourage you to find a niche where you can contribute your time and talent. If you don't know where you fit in, call me (846 5327) or Father George (844 1060).
7. At our annual parish meeting on December 5, we will celebrate the ***25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nativity's founding*** on Dec. 5, 1985, when Bishop Robert Estill celebrated the Eucharist with our charter members. We won't start planning this celebration until the new Rector arrives, but I'm sure it will be marvelous. Also on that day, we will elect new Vestry members. Come on in, the water's fine!

It continues to be my great pleasure and privilege to serve as your Senior Warden. May God continue to bless our parish richly.

Yours in Christ,  
Chuck Till