

II. THE RECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PARISH

Last year, the Annual Report concluded with a question to contextualize our overall parish agenda as the Centennial approaches—"What are we doing as stewards of the Gospel so that we can best minister in Saint Luke's Second Century?" This morning, as we enter the second year of our three-year plan, that question gets turned around into a statement of what we are doing.

First, the "we" who are doing it: "We" have an array of talents and experience. We are English and Architectural Art History professors; we are social workers and advertising executives. We are full-time passionate about cooking, singing and soccer. We are liturgists with degrees in theology; we fight for what we believe in. We have various part time jobs to make ends meet. We traveled far to get here; we grew up here. We are economic consultants, we are community healthcare advocates; we mix in a friendly way with customers at the store. And these are just our Vestry nominees for today's election. It wasn't until I read the 'bios' in the Annual Meeting packet that I found out Ed Geist did his graduate work at UVA. I love Charlottesville; that's something more to talk with Ed about. Maybe we should go beyond Candidate Biographies and have a whole booklet of parishioner biographies just like the cast bios in a Gingerbread Players program; for we are all players in the Body of Christ.

That's the "we" and what we are doing as stewards of the Gospel is all about joy and celebration. Our faith focuses and encourages us. Even when faced with sobering challenges, we are rising to the call. What am I talking about? Well, for one example, listen carefully and read along when the Treasurer gives the report. You might be surprised at what we are doing but good outcomes are what can happen when faith and joy are at play in our celebrating the Body of Christ. Listen to all the reports. We will take a bit more time with them this year and you will hear that what we are doing across the spectrum of our baptismal ministries is giving thanks for all God gives us. As thanks, we give of ourselves. So don't underestimate our resources when the ledger of our participation is the Spirituality of Giving.

Not only was our giving to the support of the parish very impressive in 2011, so too has been our outreach through the parish with Notre Dame de l' Annonciation School in Port-au-Prince, with hands-on commitment at Saint Andrew's Teen Center and so much more. The Parish Ministry Survey shows that strong programs of service with people in need are at the center of our parish identity. Also at the heart of our self-understanding is service of God in and through our parish liturgies in their full prayerful and musical expression when we gather together on Sunday mornings and for the feasts and festivals of the year.

Service/Liturgia, our care for people in need/ our prayer and praise in service of God—Outreach and Worship are inextricably linked in our understanding of what Saint Luke's Church is, of who we are in Christ. And our links with each other is the third crucial element that arose in the survey: the importance of parish community in its many different expressions, yet tangible and palpable experiences of the presence of Christ. We are held together and strengthened for the tasks of becoming Christ's Church more and more by the many ways in which we work together, play together, and pray together and for each other.

Outreach, Worship, the caring presence of Christ built and shared in community—this is the heart of Saint Luke's, the core of our parish identity. We are committed to supporting each other in this life together and to opening our doors wider and wider to welcome those in search of real life. We will do whatever it takes, be accessibility ramp or social media, to invite people on the pilgrimage of *via media*. The historic Anglican/Episcopal way of living one's faith day

by day is via media—the middle way, the balanced pathway of accessibility to God and Christ and each other; faithful openness in a world too often fearfully shutting itself off; the balanced approach, meeting in the middle, in the open space of celebration for all. This is what we are doing as stewards of the Gospel; and all of this needs to be at the centering stability of Saint Luke's Church, and in each one of us, as we discern how best to minister during the parish's second century. In today's world open space is threatened but is all the more important to balanced decision-making. Meeting people face to face, exchanging ideas and hopes, and admitting fears. Doing this with each other moderates and mediates points of view. In such a setting, very different, even opposing perspectives evolve into compromise and consensus allowing people to come together and move forward. In the church, we have a name for that. We call it the power of the Holy Spirit.

This kind of open, public space for face to face meeting and sharing is the explicit intention of our parish three-year plan. It's not just about the financial resources we do or won't have. It's not just about the changing world changing the church with which we had become so familiar. It's also about the ways in which the church needs to change to effectively and faithfully proclaim the Gospel in and to the world. And, yes, it's also about being open to these changes that face us and having the courage to face them, knowing we have a spiritual home together.

We see and feel what is happening in the larger culture, how the once open space of creative ideas is now being flooded with insistent one-sided ideology. And we know why this is happening: fear of moving forward into the new, fear of letting go of one's own map, and fear of losing ground. But we know in our heart that with God leading the way we can take a leap in faith. Yes, that, at times, involves risk but such is the pathway of true life.

Our three-year plan is a time and place—the open space of holy church for prayerful deliberation and care-filled trust with each other. And our Centennial Celebration is via media, a balanced approach, looking back in thanks for our 100 year heritage and ministry and life together now, as well as looking forward in self-giving for the good work yet to come through the Saint Luke's Church of tomorrow.