

Rector's Report 2018

In 2017, Holy Communion experienced a remarkable year of growth. Let me get the obvious growth out there first. We significant increases in membership and Sunday attendance. For a full picture, I draw your attention to the Parish register report. But briefly, Sunday attendance was up over 20%. Easter and Christmas both saw growth close to 50%. Our attendance numbers are just the “tip of the iceberg.”

2017 was a year of staff changes and growth. Most recently Angela Breeher departed to continue stepping toward retirement. She will be working three days a week with Episcopal City Mission. I am indebted to her for her capable administration of our parish in the transition, and in my first years as rector. Cheyanne Lovellette, who came on staff in early Fall as our evening building attendant has been ably staffing our office since Angie's departure. In Angie's stead the Vestry and I have reimagined the “parish administrator” position. In the coming weeks I hope to hire a full time “Director of Operations” for the parish, a new position on our staff. In July Barbara Uhlemann, who had contracted with us for many years as bookkeeper, made good on her threat to retire. Jim Kern joined our team as part time Financial Administrator. Bringing this work “in house” has enabled us to do some really thoughtful behind the scenes work, especially with someone as capable as Jim. Heidi Olliff joined our team as Sunday Children's Formation Coordinator and Brooklyn Payne stepped into the role of Youth Director. At the very end of 2017 Sally Thomas began working with us as a doctoral student from Eden as we seek to expand our outreach to children beyond our walls. I am grateful to all of these new colleagues, and to Jerome Harris, The Rev. Marc Smith, Mary Chapman, and Connor Scott. We truly have a phenomenal ministry team at Holy Communion.

Our growth in outreach, in attendance, in program, and in leadership has been fueled by healthy growing finances, driven principally by increased member giving and increased revenue from renting our buildings to non-profits. I believe we are on firm footing to continue our growth as a congregation in 2018. Thank you to all of you who have made our growth possible.

Growth can be a double edged sword for congregations. If churches only measure themselves in growing attendance and finances, how are they different from “for profit” enterprises? In this regard, I want to conclude my report with a few other important “growth indicators.” I truly believe that the numbers above reflect a more integral and important growth: growth in our work for God's Mission in the world and our ability to have an impact in our city, nation, and world as we follow Christ beyond our walls.

2017 might be called “The year of Gannon House.” Dozens of volunteers poured thousands of hours into the renovation of our property at 7400 Gannon. Led by Kara Cummins, Andy Ludwig, and our Junior Warden Susan Norris this monumental effort both brought the parish closer together and allowed us to use a property that had laid dormant for mission. In October I had the privilege of turning over the keys to our partners at Magdalene St Louis. Their first graduate of a two year program of rehabilitation and healing is now living in the house while she works at Magdalene's “Bravely” brand company and studies at Forest Park Community College.

With all the work at Gannon House, it might be easy to miss other ways our Outreach expanded in 2017. We took our first trip to El Salvador, and formalized a partnership with Cristosal looking at ways we can learn from one another as we do the work of Human Rights in Central America and St. Louis. We also launched “Laundry Love” this summer, with monthly events at Classic Coin laundry serving hundreds of neighbors in the course of the last six months.

In this year of growth, we have been blessed by exceptional leadership from the vestry members, and I want to thank our outgoing members: Earl Bonds and Rebecca Rugen. Mary Haggerty is also stepping down from vestry in order to continue her progress toward ordination as an Episcopal priest. She goes with our prayers and support.

As I begin my third year of rector, Ellis and I continue to be thankful for the call to accompany Holy Communion at this time, thankful for the opportunity to work with such talented colleagues and parishioners. It is a blessing to serve God at this time in this place.