

Senior Warden Annual Report – 2018

Last year at his time, I began my report, "Our first full year under Mike's leadership was a positive one." For this year's report, I am grateful that I do not need to repeat myself as I begin this year's report with....our second year under Mike's *superb* leadership was an *ever better one*. Our attendance and membership are continuing their upward trend and our pledge numbers, especially given the anxiety of the first year of the new administration, are so good that I don't want to say anything to jinx them (and even though I know that as a Christian I am not to be superstitious, it is really hard to type with my fingers crossed). Under Mike's guidance the vestry embraced their responsibilities with a passion and energy that is quite uncharacteristic of many church vestries. It continued to explore the core values of Diversity, Welcome and Community laid down the previous year and to embrace the challenges that meeting these goals present. At the risk of embarrassing them, I need to commend, specifically, the tireless efforts and marvelous work of Susan Norris, as Junior Warden, and Brian Barnhart, as treasurer. Moreover, I don't believe that we will be able to fully appreciate the countless hours that they, along with the amazing Kara Cummins, spent on the Gannon House but to witness their passion in order to bring this project to fruition was personally inspiring. We can look around one year later and bear witness to what we, as a church community, have achieved with God's blessing. In addition to the Gannon house and our relationship with Magdalene St Louis, last year we made new friends in El Salvador and we began sharing our quarters once a month with customers who drop by Classic Coin Laundry. Cristosal and Laundry Love resulted from living through our core values, and I am confident that these ministries will not only bear their own fruit but lay the seeds for further relationships in University City and beyond. We are blessed that Heidi Olliff has brought her gifts of children's education and worship to us; that Brooklyn Payne is helping with our youth after her year in Panama City, and, because God truly has smiled on our Holy Communion community....Chester has returned. Yes, it has been a bountiful year.

I also included in my report last year a caution that the optimism generated by the growth of parishioners and pledges and by what had been achieved the previous year not allow us to become too casual. Once again, I will offer this concern. We certainly can take comfort in knowing that we have a wonderful clerical team, or that we have willing and very capable leaders in our pews, or that we have numbers that are defying the trend. Yes, we need to celebrate as only Holy Communion can and does but do so with the understanding that we are charged, as our Bishop has said personally to the

vestry, to do great things in the diocese. Being a healthier church grants us the opportunity to act out of thoughtful, truly prayer-filled reflection without the urgency of needing to do just something. It affords us the gift of deeply listening to what the community is saying to us without the temptation of asking first how can we benefit from the relationship. Especially in times of growth, there is the call to pay attention to the voices of our parishioners, of those in the neighborhoods around us and above all, of God. Being a healthier faith community provides us with the confidence to experiment, to explore and to lead as we follow Jesus. To do so with the grace, dedication and humility that are true to His words, I have no doubt.

So, our work continues: to increase our diversity both in the pews and on the altar; to pursue living *in* welcome rather than merely professing it; to reach out farther and deeper into the communities near and far that challenge us to be better disciples of Christ. Next year at this time, with God's blessing and our hard work, there will be even more new faces and new talent to move us forward, to help aspire us to write new and exciting chapters of mission and worship in the life of Holy Communion. Perhaps there will a new ministry or two. To live this life is a blessing, a gift, and as I can attest, transformative. It is the best of the Good News and I thank God daily that I am a part of it.

To those members of the vestry rotating off – Rebecca Rugen, Earl Bonds and Mary Haggerty – on behalf of all of us I offer our deep gratitude and appreciation for your service. To the new members coming on board, I say welcome, we are grateful for your commitment and even though it might sound like I am crazier than I am, I know that you will realize very soon that you never thought church meetings could be so much fun and so rewarding! Welcome.

Scott Ferguson

Senior Warden, January 28, 2018