

Rector's Report – The Rev. Aimée Eyer-Delevett 2016 Annual Meeting

Scripture is rich with language and imagery referring to foundations. Whether the foundation of the earth laid by God in creation (Job 38:4), the stone foundation of the temple set by a workforce of 30,000 Israelites (1 Kings), or the Word of God we are to make foundational for our lives (Matthew 7:24), scripture encourages us to build our lives and our faith upon a solid foundation. The ministries of All Saints-by-the-Sea have made firmer the foundations of our community of faith in 2016.

We opened 2016 with a kick-off celebration for our Capital Campaign: How Firm Our Foundation. Following the event, parishioners had opportunities to learn more about the dire needs of our 116 year old sanctuary through 18 receptions and countless individual meetings. Thanks to the time and talent of over 100 campaign volunteers and the generosity of parishioners and community members, we raised \$2,917,735 in 2016 to help fund the seismic retrofitting and renovation work necessary to ensure our sanctuary will stand for the next 116 years. As of December 31, 2016 we had raised a total of \$10,040,068 toward the \$10.1 million needed for construction.

Having secured the funds to repair our Bell Tower, we embarked on Phase 1 of our building project and watched the Bell Tower be carefully deconstructed and reconstructed between May and October of 2016. Weekly meetings of parish lay leaders, staff members, our architect and general contractor ensured that a seismically secure replica of our original Bell Tower was completed in a timely manner and under budget. Simultaneously, behind the scenes, dozens of church leaders met (and continue to meet) to continue the planning and design processes that will result in a seismically secure and missionally improved sanctuary. Though Episcopalians aren't biblical literalist, we have certainly taken seriously the call to build a firm foundation to ensure our sanctuary can house future generations of Christians.

Yet, we know the church does not exist to serve a building. The building exists to form the faithful in service to God and God's creation. If we only address the crumbling foundation of our building, we risk neglecting the spiritual foundation of the lives of the people we serve. Fortunately, in 2016 we also sought to strengthen the household of God at All Saints by engaging one another as brothers and sisters in Christ across generational lines. We continued our burgeoning Intergenerational Services. With each monthly Intergenerational Service, we saw a growing number of children gather at the altar steps. Children and youth were able to claim their ministries alongside their adult siblings in Christ by reading the Word of God, leading the church in prayer, and coming close to the mystery of the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. As they take their places among the ministers of the church, we help our young Christian brothers and sisters lay a solid foundation upon which to build a life of faith. We are renewed and energized as we share the Good News with the next generation, claiming our responsibility as stewards of God's grace passed down to us by previous generations.

At our 2015 annual meeting, the leadership spoke to the parish of a decade long \$200,000 budget deficit. We affirmed that we will not be able to position ourselves effectively for missional growth while running such a substantial budget deficit, and we promised to continue moving toward a balanced budget. Getting our financial life in order secures a firm foundation on which to sustain and grow Christ's ministry at All Saints. However, striving to live within our financial means does not

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mean that we cannot grow new ministries or deepen the impact of existing ministries. Recognizing the gifts we do have among us in dedicated Christian Formation teachers and a growing number of young children, we overhauled our children's ministry. We launched a Christian Formation process called Godly Play to deepen the spiritual lives of our children. At Rev. Vicki's invitation, 18 lay people participated in up to 18 hours of training, giving 2 weekends of their time to learn the theology and pedagogy of Godly Play. We kicked off Homecoming Sunday in September with two new Godly Play classrooms and many freshly formed teachers. Parents attended an orientation to experience for themselves the Godly Play approach and to learn how they could support the program. The response from families was so overwhelming there wasn't enough room in the classrooms to accommodate all of the children who came. By the next Sunday, Rev. Vicki and her dedicated team of children's ministry leaders had organized a new Godly Play classroom. We continue to run three Godly Play rooms each Sunday. Rev. Vicki and I also sought to strengthen All Saints' youth ministry. Again, Rev. Vicki began working with 5 adults in our parish who were willing to serve as mentors to our youth. She recruited two older youth to serve as peer mentors, helping to guide the ministry. Led by Rev. Vicki and this group of lay leaders, youth group met on average twice a month last fall. These advancements in children and youth ministries strengthen the spiritual foundation for our children and youth, and they have been budget neutral. Our investment in this ministry has not been in money, but in the significant investment of parishioners' time and talent.

I and your lay leaders continue to strive to create a firm financial foundation for All Saints. We've done so in 2016 by further reducing our budget deficit, as you can read in more detail in the Sr. Warden's Report. In order to do so, we have had to make some difficult budget cuts. By far, the most difficult of these cuts was the elimination of a staff position currently held by Anne Hopkinson. Anne has been an invaluable member of the All Saints staff for 21 years, and she will be sorely missed among the staff. Anne spearheads necessary services for this church that must still be fulfilled. Among these ministries are office and liturgical ministries, fellowship events and coffee hour, Flower Power, and Eventide dinners. Please consider how you can step forward on your own, or when asked, to ensure the continuation of our parish ministries during this transition and beyond.

The foundation of our Christian life is Baptism into the Body of Christ. All Christian ministry flows from the font. In baptism, Christ calls each one of us into ministry. It is essential to the sustenance and growth of All Saints' ministries and to our financial health that we lessen our dependence on staff-driven ministries. This will entail flattening our hierarchies and sharing ministry more effectively and enthusiastically among clergy, staff, and parishioners. In the language of baptismal ministry, this means organizing and equipping you, the baptized ministers of Christ, to carry out your congregational ministries. Called by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, together we will keep our community of faith thriving and build a stronger foundation, not only for our sanctuary, but for the life-giving ministries of All Saints-by-the-Sea. I look forward to building our future together.

The Rev. Aimée Eyer-Delevett