

SENIOR WARDEN REPORT – 2019

It was another busy year with lots of changes for St. James. The new year greeted us with the departure of our Associate Rector, Fr. Eric Zubler to become the Rector of St. Pauls Church in Magnolia Springs. Fr. De began his search for a new assistant, and in March hired Rev. Dr. Mary Jayne Ledgerwood. Mary Jayne came to us after completing service as an interim rector in the Diocese. Several other staffing changes occurred over the year. Leslie Guilian moved on from many years of service as the head of Children's Ministry. Anne McEniry changed from being the Youth Ministry Lead to being the Director of Christian Formation. She still heads up the Jr and Sr High Youth Groups, but now is responsible for the new small group ministry as well as the Children's Ministry. Sarah Walton Ford has taken over for Leslie as the head of the Children's Ministry. Finally, this fall Elizabeth Phelps started as a new Administrative Assistant. We have been incredibly blessed with a staff that works very hard and exceptionally well. I can't imagine a better staff than the one we are fortunate enough to have now.

January also saw the election of four new vestry members, along with approval of the 2018 budget of \$1.325M. Included in the budget was a big step for St. James – opening a new pre-school in August. The pre-school start-up entailed both interior and exterior renovations to the church campus, as well as the development of curriculum, hiring of a director and staff, and establishment of a Board of Directors. Major renovations to the Mark Wilson Education Building included wall removals, new flooring, plumbing and electrical modifications and repairs, new doors, new trim, paint throughout and installation of a new security system. Vital to getting all this work done were several individuals – Mac and Gina Walcott for architectural design; Randy Sternenberg for project management; Terry Moore for countless hours of labor; Rush Garrett for the new flooring; Randy Best for the new cabinets; new Director Shelley Miller for ensuring compliance with all state requirements; and the many volunteers along with the Men of St. James for the renovation of the playground.

St. James was asked to host the Diocesan Convention in February 2019, and joyfully accepted. The planning process began with taking careful notes of everything happening at the 2018 convention in Destin. This upcoming event hastened the execution of several projects that have been in the planning stages but hadn't yet been executed. Everyone's help is welcome as we host our Diocesan brothers and sisters.

Physical plant upgrades were made throughout the campus to accommodate the new pre-school, the upcoming convention, and to correct deficiencies that had existed for some time. Bruce Stone, the Junior Warden, together with our Parish Administrator Meghan Fancher expertly managed these myriad projects. Among the projects completed were: upgrades to the phone systems to better serve the staff as well as carry alarm signals; installation of a new sound system, lighting upgrades and video system in the main sanctuary; construction of a covered portico at the rear entrance; construction of new handicap-accessible ramps at the front and rear of campus; relocation of the storage shed; construction of new access to the storage yard behind Green Hall; window repairs and installation of a new Rose window above the

organ; refinishing of all the entry doors and the church floor; installation of new signage throughout campus; and landscaping throughout the campus.

Ministry offerings also grew this past year. The church has modified its restrictions on use of the church for weddings to allow non-members to rent the facility. This change is an opportunity to share with outside members of the community while exposing them to the beauty of both our worship and our church. Use still has restrictions, and is subject to the approval of De. Mary Jayne began a Dementia Support Group to assist caregivers that provide support for loved ones with some form of dementia. A new small group ministry was started to facilitate parishioners meeting, socializing and studying with other parishioners.

The tragedy of Hurricane Michael showed the generosity of St. James. Over \$40K in financial aid, as well as supplies and labor to help in recovery were provided to the Holy Nativity Episcopal Church in Panama City, FL following the storm. This was only a part of the outreach from our congregation to those in need. For the year, almost 25% of our budget went toward outreach.

The Rector and Vestry finished the year up with a Mutual Ministry Review as directed by the Diocese. This review, conducted by a retired clergy, was an assessment of how expectations were being met by both the Rector and the Vestry. This is an important step for the parish, as it allows us collectively to evaluate where we are relative to what was expected coming out of the search process. The review highlighted the need for more and better communication, which was an area that was identified during the parish survey three years ago. It was acknowledged that parish-wide communication is much improved thanks to our Communications Director Jennifer Glover. We do need to continue to improve the communication within the Vestry and between the Vestry and the congregation.

Financially, 2018 had its ups and downs. The year started with giving exceeding budget for the first several months – something that hasn't happened in over 6 years. As historically happens, contributions lagged over the summer months, as we switched from 3 Sunday services to 2 and while many people were away on vacation. We resumed 3 services in the fall, and while attendance rebounded strongly, giving did not. We finished the year nearly \$200K short of our budgeted income, and showed a net loss of about \$50K thanks to some significant under-runs in expenses for the year. Stewardship will require continued emphasis in the coming year if St James is going to accomplish all that we hope to in fulfilling God's will for us.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your Senior Warden for the past year. I am encouraged by the vibrancy of our church, the incredible hard work and abilities of our staff, and the leadership of our clergy. I continue to see great things in our future as a community anchored in Christ, seeking God, sharing his love, and serving others.

God's Peace!

Bob Keyser, Senior Warden