

Dean's Remarks to the Annual Meeting

The report packet tells you all about 2020 – many new things, amazing witness to our ability to pivot, reinvent, and flourish under very different circumstances. I want to offer a special thank you to our Circles of Love leaders and callers, who did crucial ministry to hold us together and who are now winding up that formal ministry. The positive effects of that effort will be felt for years to come.

What are our plans to love Christ, serve others, and welcome all in 2021? The crystal ball is very foggy, as we move into a new phase of the pandemic, with the vaccine being administered and new variants of the virus spreading. One prominent public health expert has suggested to our diocesan clergy that in the best possible case, we cannot expect to be back in church as we were in January 2020 before December 2021. So, for now, we continue to improve and refine our use of online tools. I cannot express how grateful I am for the gift of the audiovisual system that we installed nearly four years ago: without it our ability to provide spiritual nurture in this time would have been severely diminished. While we continue to operate solely online, our regathering task force continues to meet every other week, and we are developing a plan for what the Sunday schedule might look like when the time comes for us to open our doors, with a focus on continuing the online ministry while also restoring as much in-person ministry as possible, without over-burdening our staff and ministry leaders.

Another priority for our planning is to make the most of this time to prepare our buildings for multiple uses so that they will support our mission. This is the work of the Revenue Task Force and the Chancel Task Force. I created the Revenue Task force to develop a marketing plan for making our beautiful spaces maximally available to the wider community, once gathering is permitted. This will bring in additional revenue to support our ministry. The task force consists of parishioners who are professionals in the areas of sales, marketing, and event production, and Kathleen Burgess is the chair.

I pulled together the Chancel Task Force in response to an extraordinary offer from a generous donor who said “I’d like to buy chairs for the nave, but only if we can also remodel the Chancel”. This task force includes liturgical leaders and Chapter members, and is working with architects from Domus Studio and with our project manager Tom Delaney to develop detailed plans, budget and timeline for a comprehensive re-imagining of our Chancel – the area behind the altar rail – to make it flexible and fully accessible. The selection and purchase of suitable chairs to replace the pews is a parallel effort overseen by this task force. The flexibility afforded by these changes will also play into the work of the Revenue Task Force.

Alongside our own facility, of course, we are watching the rise of 525 Olive, the 20-story apartment building that will share our block and give us an additional 16,000 square feet for ministry, as well as potential new parishioners in the shape of the residents of over 200 apartments. The Revenue Task Force is including the new and expanded Guild Room in its marketing plan. We can expect to move into our new space early next year.

Once again we are planning for Ash Wednesday and Lent: this year we know what to expect and we are ready with plans for parishioners to pick up blessed ashes and participate in online services. Can you believe it's almost a full year since we gathered in the cathedral?

As if a pandemic weren't enough, of course last year we were confronted with a nationwide reckoning around systemic racism. St. Paul's rose brilliantly to this challenge with a Lenten series followed by a broad commitment to the Sacred Ground curriculum. As we approach the end of Sacred Ground, we are looking at what comes next: this is an effort we cannot and must not drop with so much energy already invested. The Episcopal Church has created a follow-up program which seeks to tackle both the continuing work of dismantling racism and the epidemic of toxic political division: it's called *From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference*. Stay tuned for further details on this. One thing that I am very interested in is finding a congregation that leans conservative and is willing to have conversations with us. If you have a personal connection with such a congregation, I would love to hear from you. In this time of Zoom they don't even have to be local.

The circumstances we have lived with since last March have made it exceedingly difficult to develop a longterm strategic plan: we are in a unique situation and the most important qualities for us now are hope and adaptability. I am looking at a planning technique called Scenario Planning, which aims to lay out the different possible paths ahead and to create a general approach for each, without getting too specific. This seems like the best way forward for now. ,

Having said that, we still have the big dreams for the future that we had a year ago, first, to provide adequate housing for our music program, particularly since the old choir room, with no ventilation, is no longer appropriate for the post-pandemic era. Our music ministry is one of our shining stars. We have an incredible tradition, unmatched on the west coast, of the classic Anglican Evensong, and not only does our music enrich the lives of people all over the region but it also forms a very significant portion of our youth ministry: our youth choir program is an extraordinary offering that helps develop young brains and a sense of community spirit. I hope that we will find the resources to create a hospitable music suite that can be used by our own five choirs but also by outside groups, broadening our reach to the community and providing a self-contained space for rehearsal, library, vesting, and offices – which are currently distributed inconveniently over four floors.

The second big dream is that of building a self-contained center to serve our unsheltered neighbors. The undercroft of the chapel lends itself to this use, in part because it's accessible from Nutmeg Street, which will avoid unnecessary tension with the residents of the new apartment building. It's a complicated space with multiple levels but it has potential, with the current choir vesting rooms and bathrooms providing the infrastructure for permanent showers. We can also render the space fully accessible with the installation of an exterior lift on the wall facing what we used to call the clergy parking lot, which will be the only outdoor space that we will actually own on the east side of the campus. While our agreement with Greystar allows us certain activities in the shared courtyard, the scope is limited. Therefore it's important that, once we regain use of the "clergy parking lot", we are very intentional about making it a multi-purpose space.

There are other needed improvements and additions, including the purchase of suitable furniture and appliances for our space in the new building, and a bathroom on the third floor of the Great Hall, to compensate for the loss of the old bathrooms off the administration building. Remember that the proceeds of the land sale have created a cushion of capital from which we can draw income for operating expenses, but if we eat into that capital for these projects we will be reducing our operating capacity going forward. So we are launching an effort to discern if the resources exist within the congregation to bring these dreams to fruition. I'm grateful to Rockette Ewell for stepping forward to lead this effort and to Claudia Dixon, Mark Lester, Elizabeth Carey, and Brad Lovelace for each taking on one part of the project.

Appointment of Dean's Warden

Given our unusual situation, I have discerned that stability is a helpful virtue, and I'm happy to say that Donna Perdue has accepted my invitation to serve as Dean's Warden for a second year.

Robinson Cross

Two people will receive the Robinson Cross this year.

Person 1

Someone who is always near the front, always smiling, always positive. Committed to stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.

Contributed generously to special events and delivered food, mystery boxes, Women Together meals, and poinsettias this year.

Level-headed, mission-minded, kind, and straightforward.

A key member of the finance committee and endowment committee.

She's always got a smile and exudes positivity (which we need around the offices sometimes).

She's a mentor to many and a friend to all.

Recently appointed as a manager of Nutmeg & Olive

As Cathedral treasurer during this difficult time: kept us informed, ensured good practices, led by example, was calm, steady and helped us navigate the unclear waters of the COVID-19 crisis from the beginning.

She reviewed the books, guided us on financial decisions, and ensured the organization was in a stable place to be able to pay the staff for the emergency phase of the stay at home orders and beyond.

All the work and clean-up she was responsible for in previous years bore fruit in a crisis. Our solid accounting team and transparency in our reporting made it easy for the Chapter to make generous decisions regarding pay for staff.

For her leadership in calm and turbulent times, I am honored to present the Robinson Cross to Betsey Monsell. [Craig presents cross]

Person 2

Our second honoree has a slightly different cathedral profile. While the effect of Betsey's ministry has been felt principally, although not exclusively, in the finance and accounting area, this person has participated in a broad variety of cathedral ministries over the course of an entire lifetime as a parishioner.

Has consistently sung in both the youth and adult choirs.

Serves as Acolyte and Lector.

Is a member of the altar guild, with a particular ministry of sewing and embroidering Baptismal towels.

Serves as a Godly Play leader, Sunday School teacher, and Youth mentor, and particularly over the last year has been a key support to Maya in the youth program.

Is courageous in her witness about her life, the challenges she has faced, and the grace she has received.

Gives of her loving heart through the Stephen Ministry and has nourished her faith through EfM.

I recently heard her say, "When I taught school I always tried to look for Christ in each of the kids."

For a lifetime of faithful service and her example of Christian witness, I am honored to award the Robinson Cross to Joanna Airhart. [Don presents cross]