

Report from the Vestry November 11, 2008

Finance Committee Chair, Rick Deaderick, discussed the October financial results. He pointed out that total operating income was \$8920 below budget while expenses were \$15,156 over budget for the period. October expenses included a one-time moving expense of about \$7,000 and an insurance payment that was billed earlier than anticipated. Year to date figures show a deficit of \$22,689 which is pretty close to what was expected at this point in the year.

Parish Administrator Bob Wadley stated that much of this deficit would likely be erased if November's receipts continue as they have in the first two weeks of the month. Receipts in December are expected to bring the year to a close with no deficit.

The Finance Committee continues to look at income and expense trends, and various budget scenarios are being considered, making alternative assumptions about the outcome of the Stewardship Campaign. Those will be covered next month, and the committee will present a proposed budget to the Vestry in January 2009. The annual audit conducted by Robert A. Brown and Associates has been completed and will be distributed to the vestry members for their review. The Vestry will be asked to formally accept the audit report at the December meeting.

Bob Wadley reviewed the status of the 2009 Stewardship Campaign.

As of November 11, 188 pledges have been received for \$699,795.

This included:

- 22 New pledges for \$45,492
- 83 Pledges that have increased compared to 2008
- 19 Pledges that have decreased compared to 2008
- 64 Pledges that equaled the amount in 2008

Compared to the 312 pledges received in 2008, there are approximately 135 parish households who pledged last year but have not yet pledged for 2009. Parishioners were asked this year to select and rank the areas to which they would like to see any excess funds committed.

Based on a rough examination of the responses so far, the top four selections appear to be:

1. Debt Reduction
2. Children's Christian Formation
3. Pastoral Care
4. Building Maintenance Reserve

It was noted that while many parishioners may rank debt reduction as a high priority, Ascension is a relatively young parish that has not yet paid off its mortgage. However, paying off the debt would free up substantial funds that could be used for needed parish programs.

In his report, Father Howard reminded everyone that we need to keep our focus on the positives. He used as an example the large numbers of children at the 10:30 service on Sunday, November 9. It is all too easy to get caught up in pessimism. What we need to focus on is a positive trajectory for the parish. In keeping with that theme, Fr. Howard introduced a video that illustrates the positive values that Ascension brings to its parishioners and to the community. This video was produced by a parishioner for Ascension at no charge.

The video focuses on three questions:

- 1) what brought you to Ascension?
- 2) what keeps you at Ascension?
- 3) what do you give back to Ascension?

Copies of the video will be made available to all new members and will be shown at the February 2009 Diocesan Convention for the Diocese of East Tennessee. The Vestry recommended that, if technically possible, this video also be posted on the Ascension website for prospective members to view online.

Senior Warden Tom Hale reported on his efforts to monitor the progress of the Stewardship Campaign while also getting ready for the Annual Parish Meeting. Looking at the Stewardship Campaign optimistically, we may have as much as \$100,000 in new funds with a significant number of new pledges. Some parishioners traditionally don't return their pledge cards until year's end, so we won't really know what our projected 2009 revenue is going to be until then.

The Special Emergency Response Group will meet with a representative of the Knoxville Police Department for security and emergency response training on Monday, November 17. This is part of a training effort for a large group of churches in our area.

It was also reported that there is work underway to improve our communications with parishioners (e.g., using e-mail and the website). Although parish information is communicated in several different ways and repeated several times, there are still those in the parish who are not finding the information they need. The Communications Commission is currently working on these issues.

The Senior Warden and Father Howard are also working with the Vision Task Force, which will be recommending more technologically savvy ways for Ascension to communicate about itself to the outside world.

Junior Warden Babs Richardson reported on the efforts of the Nominating Committee. Nine candidates have been nominated. There are five vacancies on the Vestry needing to be filled in January. Babs discussed the times and details of the voting process and asked for volunteers from the Vestry to assist with conducting and monitoring the voting, counting the votes, etc. After some lively discussion, Babs had her list of "volunteers." A discussion followed about whether parishioners could submit absentee ballots or vote early. Father Howard explained that based on current regulations, neither of these options is available. Parishioners must vote in person at the proper time and place. Babs expressed her thanks to all who helped with the Pig Roast on Sunday, November 9. A total of \$1993 was collected against total expenses of about \$500. This leaves more than \$1400 to support additional work at Ascension.

The Vestry next heard reports from the following:

1. The Christian Formation Commission
2. The Communications Commission
3. A proposal for a mission trip to Bolivia

These reports were based upon written reports provided to the Vestry. Rather than try to summarize these reports, I have asked the staff to place copies of the full reports on the counter in the church office for those of you who are interested.

Tom Hale
Senior Warden