

## **Report from the Vestry**

**March 10, 2009**

The vestry of the Church of the Ascension met for its regular monthly meeting on March 10, 2009, with Father Howard Hess, Father Robert Travis, Father Brett Backus, Parish Administrator Bob Wadley and Vestry Clerk Larry Jones.

The Treasurer's report was given by John Pannell for Treasurer Vaiden Taylor. The parish's total monthly revenue was approximately \$2,000 less than what was budgeted for the month of February. The total operating expenses were less than budgeted by approximately \$6,200. For the first two months of the year, total revenue was approximately \$19,000 less than what was budgeted and total expenses were around \$6,000 less than was budgeted, resulting in a deficit through the end of February of around \$13,000. It was noted that, regardless of how exact we attempt to be in preparing the budget, estimating the amount of revenue to be received in a given month and the amount of expenses that will be incurred in a month are determinations that frequently defy predication. Bob Wadley noted that collections from the first two Sundays in March had been very strong. John Pannell gave the Finance Committee's report. The plan approved at the February vestry meeting to refinance the parish's indebtedness and secure a lower interest rate had been approved by the bank.

Pannell also reported, with the assistance of Parish Administrator Bob Wadley, on the need for the parish to lease a higher capacity photocopier. The parish's current practice of copying service leaflets containing all parts of the service for each worship service had put a substantial strain on the existing copier, the lease of which had approximately 18 months remaining. The copier was not designed for the level of usage to which it was being put. The parish could lease a copier for high production for a period of five years at a slightly higher cost per month, but with a lower maintenance cost. The total monthly cost would decrease and the parish's copy needs would be better served. In addition, the existing copier was to be given to the parish by its supplier, Image Matters. This would allow the existing copier to replace the parish's small copier, and the small copier could be donated to FISH. The vestry unanimously approved the lease of the new copier.

The Rector reported that the Celebration of a New Ministry in which he would be installed as the seventh rector of the Church of the Ascension would take place on March 29, 2009, at 4:00 PM. He described the unique nature of the service and requested every member of the vestry who was available to be present. Father Howard noted that Bishop vonRosenberg would officiate and Sister Rosina from the Convent of St. Helena would preach.

Father Howard also reported that the Stewardship Commission had secured the assistance of a recognized authority on Christian Stewardship, Corky Carlisle, to assist the parish in planning and implementing the Stewardship Campaign for the coming year. Carlisle is expected to be with us in May 2009 to preach and begin the process of preparing a stewardship plan for the 2010 campaign.

Senior Warden Tom Hale reported on plans for the coming months including reconvening the Visioning Group and the Emergency Response Group to assess next steps.

Hale applauded Jim Garvey, the members of Ascension's choirs, and all others who participated in the FOMA concert on Sunday, March 8, which included orchestral accompaniment. The substantial crowd that enjoyed the performance was noted.

Julie Hembree, Junior Warden, reported that Youth Sunday had been a great success and that all who heard Sarah LeMense's sermon agreed that it was excellent. Hembree also noted the enthusiasm surrounding the Ascension basketball team at a recent game, and commented specifically on the team's good sportsmanship. She also thanked all those who had participated in the Mardi Gras celebration which had been a very entertaining fellowship event, as well as very successful in raising money for the parish Bolivian mission trip scheduled for late May and early June.

The vestry next took up a discussion of two Letters of Agreement, one between Father Howard Hess and the parish, and the other between Father Robert Travis and the parish. These Letters of Agreement were noted to be primarily standard forms recommended by the Diocese, modified to define the roles and responsibilities of the Vestry and the particular clergy person, hours of work, amount and timing of compensation, leave time and other matters relevant to the work of the clergy within the parish. The Letters were approved by the vestry subject to the Senior Warden and Robin Kell making a number of grammatical and nonsubstantive corrections to the documents.

The next order of business was consideration of the Visioning Statement discussed at some length at the vestry retreat in January 2009. A number of observations were made. Rick Turner noted that the statement was more of an expression of the parish's existing personality than a vision of what it was striving to become. The vestry suggested that the Visioning Task Force be asked to come up with a moniker for the statement other than "Vision Statement." On motion made, the substance of the statement was unanimously approved as an accurate and appropriate way to describe the personality of the parish. It was also pointed out by the Senior Warden that he and Father Howard had discussed asking the Visioning Task Force to reconvene to provide advice to the vestry on how best to utilize the statement to be seen by those who were searching for a church home.

Jim Phillips and Rick Turner, Building and Grounds liaisons, gave their report. It was emphasized that a systematic approach to maintenance supported by a budget would enable the parish to minimize the risk of substantial repair expenses due to equipment breakdown. A number of items will need to be dealt with in the near term including the removal of some problem trees, permanent repair of the stucco on the bell tower, painting and sealing the exterior of the building, replacement of the carpet in the parish hall and replacement of the flat roof over the education building, but those issues were not imminent. A number of items were discussed which the commission recommended be done in the current year. These included replacement of the cooling tower that is integral to the air conditioning

system serving the building. Another item that was felt necessary for 2009 was replacement of the carpet in the nursery with a more substantial pad to soften falls. Following these general discussions, motion was made and approved that the cooling tower be replaced using proceeds in the building fund provided the cost was in the range of the \$30,000 - \$40,000 estimate, and if approved by the Finance Committee.

The next order of business was the consideration of a recommendation by Ann O'Connor that the parish sponsor a neighborhood grant proposal to be submitted to the Opportunity Fund of the Diocese of East Tennessee. The purpose of the grant involves providing training and assistance to persons in need, and the vestry voted to accept the recommendation and approve support for this grant request to the Diocese.

Following a short discussion about the uses and regulation of clergy discretionary accounts, a motion was approved to establish a discretionary account in the name of the Reverend Mary Lee Bergeron so that she will be able to retain and distribute discretionary funds directed to her from parishioners and other sources.

The 100 chairs that the Church of the Ascension donated to furnish the new chapel at Grace Point will be dedicated at the service of dedication of the new St. Paul's chapel to be held on May 2, 2009, at Grace Point beginning at 11:00 AM. Bert Ackermann stated that transportation and lunch will be provided at a nominal cost to any parishioners who are interested in attending the dedication service.

The vestry next approved a resolution requested by the Diocese acknowledging and adopting the diocesan regulations governing the procedures to be employed in handling claims of sexual misconduct on the part of employees of the parish and the wider church.

Finally, the vestry approved the following to serve as Lay Eucharistic Ministers: Francie Elrod, David Johnson, Janet Slabbekorn, Brandon Smithey, Michael Terry-Cochran, Mitzi Terry-Cochran, and Jeannine Weeks. The Vestry also unanimously approved Ben and Nancy Davidson to serve as Lay Eucharistic Visitors.