

## **REPORT FROM THE VESTRY**

**August 4, 2009**

Having taken a break during July, the vestry of the Church of Ascension met on August 4, 2009 to consider a full agenda.

Treasurer Vaiden Taylor reported that July income was down a bit from May but still better than where we were at this point last year and slightly ahead of budget. Total operating income was about \$14,000 ahead of budget at the end of July.

Father Howard reported on matters arising from General Convention and provided copies of his sermons of July 26 and August 2 related to this topic. He also shared his positive perspective about the Diocesan meeting held at Ascension on July 23, 2009, and invited vestry members who attended to share their impressions as well. Father Howard strongly requested that members of the vestry make every effort to provide a pastoral, listening and information-giving response to parishioners who are seeking to understand the outcome of General Convention and our own diocesan study process. Further vestry conversations will be held on this issue in subsequent vestry meetings.

Senior Warden Tom Hale thanked three groups which have been working hard to accomplish improvements for the parish. Support groups such as these are critical to our ability to do the substantive work of the parish although they are not directly involved in planning and implementing that work. The first group is the Finance Committee, and in particular Vaiden Taylor, John Pannell and Bob Wadley. The second group is the Building and Grounds Committee, in particular Rick Turner and Jim Phillips. The third group is the Communications Committee, in particular Bert Ackermann and Steve Catron, as well as the Visioning Group. All three groups are doing an excellent job in promoting exciting new initiatives to substantially improve parish facilities and operations in the years to come.

Junior Warden Julie Hembree expressed her appreciation for all the people who participate in the greeting process each Sunday. Everyone is making an effort to welcome new people, and the feedback on this process has been very positive.

Rick Turner presented the results from several assessments of the church buildings and grounds. We need to focus first on functional issues, second on appearance items, and third on capital improvements. Rick stated that we could easily spend \$60,000 per year to keep things maintained properly. However, we need to take a risk-based approach by focusing on the things that pose the greatest risk. The single largest maintenance repair area is the exterior shell of the building. Cost to repair stucco and re-point limestone and precast joints is estimated at \$50,000 to \$90,000. Painting and sealing the entire exterior is estimated at \$55,000 to \$70,000. The masonry stucco is deteriorating, mainly due to a cycle of water penetration and cracking. The flat EPDM roof will need to be replaced in about five years, although it is not currently leaking. Replacing the roof is estimated to cost \$36,000

to \$41,000. Our buildings are well built and have been relatively free of major repairs and maintenance issues to date. However, the original structure is now fifty years old and the addition is twenty-five years old. Preventive maintenance issues should be expected and planned for. We can fix things better and more cheaply if we research repair methods and costs before we are in a crisis situation. Bob Wadley reminded the vestry that we need to re-establish a maintenance fund; the prior maintenance fund has been used up and not re-established in recent years because of budget shortfalls. The Finance Committee report focused on the building and grounds needs addressed in Rick Turner's report. A motion passed unanimously to fund a list of maintenance items presented which included, among other things, removal of some dead trees from church property, replacing the carpet in the nursery, and repair of the oven and service of the exhaust hood in the kitchen.

Tom Hale asked the vestry members to spend some time before the September meeting thinking about developing a Stewardship Statement for the parish, recommended by consultant Corky Carlisle, with the objective of completing the statement at that next meeting. As the spiritual leaders of Ascension, it is incumbent on the vestry to lead the parish with respect to matters involving Stewardship. Tom pointed out that giving in Episcopal churches has traditionally been lower than giving in churches of other denominations. A statement that speaks to parishioners would focus attention on a wholesome way to view stewardship. Our statement needs to reach everyone, regardless of how they view the stewardship aspect of parish life. Simply increasing our budget won't result in greater donations. We have to help people change the way they think about money and about giving to the church. Robin Kell presented three lists of changes and corrections to the By-laws for the vestry's consideration. The first list consists of typographical errors and corrections needed to be consistent with the Constitution and Canons of the National Church and of the Diocese of East Tennessee. The second list consists of possible corrections and updates to clarify vestry member terms, replace gender specific language, and clarify certain names used in the By-laws. The third list includes other topics to consider which address the voting process, indemnification of vestry members, conflict of interest policy, identification of standing committees, etc. These revisions to the By-laws will be discussed, if desired, at future meetings.

Father Brett Backus presented a proposal for creating an international mission partnership with the Anglican Church of Christ - Bread of Life in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, which ministers mainly to children. As part of this relationship, Ascension would send a small amount of money (e.g., \$200) each month to "keep their doors open." They have recently lost their support from another larger Anglican church in their area. Such a partnership will benefit Ascension by taking our church family "beyond our own walls." Ann O'Connor commented that the parish needs a mission that is international and strongly supports having a line item in the 2010 budget for this mission partnership. In the interim, Ann recommended that individual families at Ascension be offered the opportunity to donate one month's support for this international mission. Ann presented a sheet for pledges by vestry families to cover the needed support through the end of this fiscal year. A motion was made that the vestry support this fundraising effort. Approval was unanimous.

Bert Ackermann announced a celebration dinner on Friday, September 25, 2009, to officially kick off the campaign. A keynote address will be given by Corky Carlisle. November 1, 2009, will mark the end of the campaign with the annual pig roast. Bert also pointed out that the contract for design of the new website for Church of the Ascension has been signed. This design effort will be completed in about one month. Members of the vestry will be asked to "test drive" the new website so that any final comments can be incorporated promptly.

### **Financial report through July 2009**

	<b>July Budget</b>	<b>July Actual</b>	<b>YTD Budget</b>	<b>YTD Actual</b>
Pledge, plate, & unpledged contributions:	\$86,352	93,738	603,348	612,253
All other income:	11,445	21,578	138,119	175,507
Total income:	97,797	105,316	741,467	787,760
Total expenditures:	105,064	114,289	808,164	842,598
Net Surplus (loss):	(7,267)	(8,973)	(66,697)	(54,838)