

# ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

## February 3, 2008

### RECTOR'S ADDRESS

When I accepted the call in September 05 to serve as your rector, I did so with the hope and expectation that we would be in a long-term relationship. It takes time to earn trust and to build relationships. It takes time to get to know one another and to begin understanding the many and diverse needs of a parish family like St. Paul's. During the search several years ago, you were praying for a rector who, among other things, would help this parish *manage for future growth, while meeting our present realities* (as stated in "Our Vision for the Future" found in the 2004 Parish Profile).

We're a complex community, but this shouldn't come as a surprise to you! We're complex persons. And our parish membership reflects this diversity. I often say that when it comes to our life together here at St. Paul's, "it's about relationships and being a congregation of congregations."

This morning, I would like to speak briefly about four aspects of being a "congregation of congregations" at the heart of our common life together - from where I stand as your leader.

### CLERGY

When I began my tenure as your rector, the Vestry encouraged me to hire an associate as soon as possible. I appreciated their care and concern for me. But I took my time. And I'm glad I did. We have in Ann Bonner-Stewart a wonderful associate rector. Together, we share in a collaborative ministry as parish priest practitioners. And we do it as clergy explicitly inclusive of Jim Smith, our deacon, and Carrie Craig, a priest whom I hired this past year as our Religious Education Director. Ann and I meet faithfully each week. I also meet regularly with Jim and Carrie individually. And I want you to know that the four of us stay in close touch, meet together occasionally, and hopefully mirror for the parish the kind of clergy leadership essential for our parish family.

### STAFF

Our staff has grown in the time since I've been here. And each August we have a Staff Retreat led by an appropriate facilitator to help us look at and understand our roles and responsibilities and how we interact and work together. St. Paul's is blessed with a good staff. We meet twice a month and, in the interval, there

are other meetings taking place frequently to keep one another informed when it comes to the daily operation of our campus and the many events on the parish calendar. As Office Administrator, Cathy Palmer is the center of our daily operation, Monday through Friday, 9 - 5. Jan Lyons works part-time as our Financial Secretary. Cherie Baker, our new Sexton, and Milka Mrkaljevic, our Housekeeper, work closely together in keeping our buildings and grounds clean and in good shape. Charlie Ewen, as our Junior Warden, is the Vestry liaison for the Buildings and Grounds. He stays in close contact with Cherie. Gretchen Ewen is our Preschool Director. And while our preschool program runs independently of our parish programs, Gretchen is very much a part of our St. Paul's staff. Janette Fishell, as Director of our Music Program, leads our marvelous choir and provides placements each year for her students who assist her and us as extended music staff through the partnership St. Paul's shares with East Carolina's School of Music. We clergy meet several times a year with the Director of Music to review and plan each of the liturgical seasons.

I hired Matt Scully shortly after I came here, first as a part-time campus minister, and then full-time. When Mary Beth Gay finished her year as our interim Youth Minister last May, Matt asked if I would consider him for the part-time position of Youth Minister, which I did. He presently is working as both Episcopal Campus Minister and part-time Youth Minister. And last summer, thanks to a generous gift from an anonymous giver (enhanced by some matching gifts from other members of the parish), I hired Carrie Craig to be our Director of Christian Education and Formation. This 'seed money' allowed me to hire a full-time director, trained and experienced in this much-needed area of our parish life. We are only beginning to explore some of the possibilities for enhancing the educational life of our parish. And while I'm delighted that the new Education Committee, in collaboration with our Director of Christian Education and Formation, have offered several new possibilities for adult education along with a committed evaluation of our children and youth, our children and youth continue to be our priority. And toward this goal, the Vestry has approved moving the Youth Ministry position from part-time to full-time beginning in June. I have begun working closely with Matt and Carrie to explore a plan that best suits the needs of our children and youth.

I bought copies of Alice Mann's book, "Raising the Roof" (The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition) for the staff and vestry as a helpful tool in meeting the challenges we face in this coming year.

## **VESTRY/ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Last August, at a mid-year retreat day, the vestry decided that it's in the best interest of the parish that they function as Vestry Liaisons in the nine

organizational areas, which comprise the Body of Christ at St. Paul's. Please take a moment to look at the chart while I highlight a few structural changes presently in the works in the area of Outreach.

Kathy Taft is the new liaison for Outreach. Together, we are in the process of identifying a chair or chairs for the Outreach Committee. Once we have a chance to meet, we will be inviting at least one representative from every possible outreach venue in the parish. And by this, I mean the various groups and organizations presently providing outreach, from the Community Shelter and Joy Soup Kitchen, to Youth Ministry, Campus Ministry and Episcopal Relief and Development, to representatives of St. Lydia's, Sts. Martha, Mary and Ann, and seasonal outreach like Angel Tree and Food Boxes, as well as the Food Pantry and all the others I'm not mentioning in this moment! The outreach ministries need to come together to let the proverbial left hand know what the right hand is doing (and vice versa). The Vestry has designated .7% of our budget, \$5,100, toward Millennium Development Goals. And it will be the task of an informed and representative outreach committee to recommend to the Vestry where these funds should go. It is my expectation that once the initial meetings to set up a reconstructed outreach committee is in place, these meetings will take place at set times throughout the year, inviting new and veteran members of our parish to 'come and see.'

The Senior Warden will no longer be the vestry liaison for Management as in the recent past. Instead, we have assigned three vestry members to be liaison for Management, with Dave Whichard as coordinator. With the vestry approval of a balanced budget, their work is only beginning. For they have been charged with reviewing all of the parish finances and working toward a more user-friendly budget to help the vestry look at our operational budget to see if it really reflects the mission and ministry of our parish. So besides being the 'rector's warden,' the 'business' of the senior warden this year will be the vestry. *Transparency and Accountability* in all areas of our parish life is a goal we seek to reach, beginning with our finances.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

Stewardship was one of the three goals I established last year as priorities for 2007. And starting in June, a series of meetings on Sunday mornings led to a new chair of stewardship and a new action plan for this past fall's Stewardship Appeal. Jim Holland has done, and continues to do, a wonderful job as Stewardship Chair. Our "Stone Soup Sunday" in September launched our Stewardship Season in which the theme, *Sharing the Gift* opened the way to more than 18 small group gatherings graciously hosted in various homes of members of our parish. People who didn't know one another met, while older members

shared some rich and wonderful stories of how the doors to St. Paul's were opened to them long ago. Many good suggestions were presented at these meetings. And this morning, I'm pleased to announce that one of the best suggestions, given by Ed Newton at a Gathering he and his wife Karen hosted, is the *Pathways to Ministry*. (Karen was gracious enough to follow-up on her husband's suggestion and put together the brochure I hope you all take with you today.)

I'd like to call attention to one of the 'pathways' listed under Administration and Management: *Planned Giving/Legacy Fund*. "Interested in providing resources for future ministries? Gift planning is a means by which anyone concerned with the wise use of his or her personal resources makes a considered choice about their ultimate disposition." This sort of gift will make possible in the future what we can only dream about today.

As many may or may not know, St. Paul's has a mortgage of over one million dollars on our sanctuary, but even so, the vestry has been reluctant to initiate a capital campaign to retire this debt. None of our annual operating budget, which is funded by our stewardship pledges, is utilized in reduction of our mortgage debt. This mortgage debt is a millstone presently preventing orderly and sustainable development, even as we find ourselves increasingly attracting newcomers.

One of our parishioners, being aware of this debt problem, has made a generous offer of a donation to start retiring this debt. A few other parishioners have become aware of this offer and have also pledged donations against this debt, all of which is going to principal and not interest. Twenty people have been asked and fifteen have responded to giving half a million. I am deeply grateful for the generous gifts given and the Finance Review Committee is optimistic that this grass roots effort can be effective and may be able to make a substantial debt reduction. The interest is such that the vestry is opening the opportunity to all parishioners to participate in reducing this debt obligation over the next three years to a manageable level so we can get on with the mission, the ministries, and the work of the church that we as a parish deem to be important.

## CONCLUSION

In his address to the 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of East Carolina this past Friday, Bishop Daniel spoke of how 'our Anglican Tradition first came to these shores in the early 1580's with English attempts at colonization on Roanoke Island, culminating with what has come to be known as the "Lost Colony." He spoke of two baptisms, that of Manteo, an indigenous American, and Virginia Dare, an infant child of English parents in a new world. This extraordinary

moment is depicted in an icon a member of our parish family created and gave as a gift to our diocese. It was dedicated at the opening Eucharist for the convention – and is an expression for me of the enormous and generous gifts members of our church have given, and continue to give, in service of the Good News of Jesus we are called to proclaim in word and action through the grace of our own baptism.

In speaking of the future of our diocese, Bishop Daniel also speaks of those who have gone before us in our 152 years as a parish family here at St. Paul's when he shared the following about those who gathered here in eastern Carolina in 1883 to form our own diocese:

*They moved ahead with courage and hope and trust into the future, which they were confident God, was preparing for them. You and I are the inheritors of their courage and we are their successors to whom they place their hope and in whom they placed their confidence.*

God willing – and if the creek don't rise and all that sort of thing, my hope and prayer is that we are, indeed, gifted with a long term relationship, one that will help us discover together God's power presently at work in us, and able to accomplish within us what we can't ask or imagine in this present moment!

Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21).

*Rev. Bob Hudak  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Greenville, NC*