

2/10/19

Good morning, my name is Char Frith and I am wrapping up my second year as Senior Warden.

I played team sports for many years and watched my children play on countless teams. Every once in awhile, a season was just pure magic. Not always measured by winning or losing, but by how the team blended together, the gifted leadership from coaches and the connections between families. Where players recognized that the key to teamwork is seeing their need for one another and enjoying working towards a common purpose. I witnessed that passion, deep caring, thoughtfulness, individual commitment and team engagement from our parish on many occasions throughout the past year.

Reflecting on the year at St. Andrews for a theme of this year's Senior Warden's message, what stood out for me were moments where individually and collectively we sought deeper connections and to be part of solutions to challenges.

I would like to point out a few examples where the shared purpose of shining the light of Christ and the power of collectivity from the St. Andrews congregation stood out.

- First, worshipping together is the foundation of our life together as Christians. Together we hear the ancient stories of our faith come to life which helps inform our current experiences, deepens our hunger to serve others and hear our call to care for one another and grow in practices of living faithfully. In today's world, we can receive emails of inspiration in our daily inbox, listen to spiritual podcasts, and watch sermons via Facebook Live. But, collectively being together feels transformative and the meaning of church more fully expressed in the feeling of worshipping together, quietly seeking solace or expressing gratitude together, lifting our voices in song, considering verses that are not always easy to understand and to put into the context of our lives, serving together and praying together the Prayers of the People.
- A second example of shared purpose to celebrate from the past year is our music program. It is so hard to believe, but at this time last year, Ken was playing on a small Casio keyboard. At the Vestry retreat in February, the idea of "selling" piano keys was voiced as a creative and collaborative solution to meet the balance needed to purchase an instrument after kickoff donations were made. It was so great to see the set of keys from a roll of wallpaper being unfurled and individual keys being purchased. By April, the piano was paid for in full and in June, The Herald and Joyful Noise Choirs sang during worship and we celebrated the generosity of over 60 contributors to the piano fund.

- In the early summer, the Vestry approved a search for a vocal director which was a further reflection on our shared appreciation for a strong music program. The search culminated in the hiring of Nichi. When she mentioned at the Evening of Song held in January that she had been at St. Andrews for four months, it was hard to believe as her impact has already been so enduring. There was something magnetic in this space that mirrored not just Nichi's gifts, but the collective gathering of community members for a special evening of fellowship.
- Adult Forums were an opportunity to gather collectively and focus on a range of issues from values and voting, Invite Welcome and Connect, and reimagining how to be in ministry during trips to el Hogar and Appalachia, and our relationship with Guardian Angel. Adult Forums and similarly the EfM and Sunday School group conversations stir our souls and invite us to reflect, think critically, and exchange information and ideas.
- The congregation generously responded to this year's stewardship campaign. Individuals donations to the stewardship campaign and the Roots capital campaign, which was a focus in 2017, allows us to collectively leverage our funds in order Shine God's light in the Glenwood community and afar. I would like to thank Laura Laport for her time and dedication to successfully sheparding the campaign.
- Our congregation was witness to several baptisms, in July we had a send off for Katie Beaver to seminary and in May, we celebrated the Rite 13 group which included a charge to the congregation "Will you as a community of faith, which spans the generations, share your knowledge and experience with these young people as they begin their journey to adulthood?" The collective response of "We will with God's help" is such a positive affirmation when surrounding a candidate for baptism and joining in milestone rituals for young people in our midst.
- Community dinners are an example of the magic of extending an open door to the community and gathering together. What I find so remarkable is that many of the people who attend are not members of St. Andrews, but they clearly seem to look forward to the food and fellowship offered because of the hospitality of the community dinner team.

The Oxfam Hunger Banquet held a few months ago also drew a large group of youth and adults, members of St. Andrews and not. Sure, you could learn about food insecurity and related complex social issues on your own, but participating as a group and having a shared experience with others made the evening more meaningful and memorable and helped shine God's light in the wider community by raising more awareness on the issue.

- In September, we held the second Pig & Jig fundraiser. With God's grace, we were able to dodge a hurricane and enjoy a beautiful Fall evening at Tranquility Farm. The Pig & Jig was a collective commitment to St. Andrews financial underpinnings as well as strengthening our ties to the broader Howard County community, including Grassroots which received a check for the purpose of providing support to families impacted by opioid addiction. The Vestry and Pig & Jig committee spent countless hours to make sure this event was a success that unfolded smoothly, but it was made possible by the generous and gracious hospitality of the Dwelleys and Scriveners.
- The Vestry team consistently demonstrates faithful diligence and are truly committed to working hard to hear God's word, provide guidance, and discern how to be good stewards on behalf of St. Andrews. Could the existing Vestry please stand?

To our outgoing Vestry members Jen Birsa, Stan Puchalla, Angie Cost, and Junior Warden, Bill Brittle, thank you for your dedication and time and I offer my profound gratitude for your generosity.

Gary Streeton has been nominated to fill the role of Junior Warden which will be voted upon by the Vestry at the next Vestry meeting.

A few of the important topics that the Vestry voted on, discerned, and provided direction on included:

- Physical changes to the buildings and grounds and financial decisions that will be outlined later in further detail
 - Vestry Person of the Day during summer months when there were guest preachers
 - Members in Discernment and postulancy applications (Scott Lipscomb, Katie Beaver, and Sara Yoe)
 - Election of Delegates to the Diocesan Convention
 - Endorsement of the creation of an Annual Review Team that is responsible for the routine assessment of matters including a financial audit, bylaws and insurance
- One of the most rewarding aspects of being Senior Warden is being able to have more insight into the abundant talents and dedication of our staff; and the gifted leadership, entrepreneurial thinking and depth and range of insights of our Rector, Dina.

This January marked 10 years in ministry together at St. Andrews with Dina as our priest. In honor of that milestone, I'd like to share the remarks from this proclamation from Bishop Sutton:

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- In November 2020, St. Andrews will be celebrating 40 years since 12 families departed St. Peter's in Ellicott City to sponsor a mission congregation and to worship at Union Chapel. My prayer is that this chapter in the life of St. Andrews is marked by continuing to move forward as followers of Christ, undeterred by challenges and filled with the peace of being surrounded by a wonderful faith community.

To go back to my earlier reference to sports teams, when Jesus picked the 12 disciples, he didn't pick the elite of society. He picked the uneducated, the unprivileged, the outcasts. But, each had their strengths, their gifts, their passions and their places in God's plan. God has created every one of us with our own gifts, strengths, and passions to fulfill our roles on his "team"—not the "best" talents, necessarily, but the right ones. St. Andrews is not an institution here to serve us. We are the church and the church is the body that is called to serve Christ by serving others and I invite you to consider areas of ministry that you could support with your gifts.

In closing, I want to thank the entire parish for your generous support and contributions of time, energy, commitment, finances, and prayers. My family and I are grateful to be on our faith journey as part of this St. Andrew's community and serving as your Senior Warden has been a humbling experience and truly been my good fortune and honor.