

My beloved Holy Trinity,

As we prepare to begin another program year together I thought it might be fun to look back at all we have accomplished in the last year. This has been a busy and fruitful year for our congregation in many ways and we have much to celebrate as we turn to focus on our plans for the coming year.

Last fall, our plans for replacing the addition to the rectory were approved by the Prince George's Historic Commission in just one visit and we moved into the permitting process with the county, began to look for builders, and consider the different options for paying for the addition. Many thanks to Scott Jones who has very nearly single handedly managed this project to date.

In the winter and spring, your wardens and vestry managed the parish while I was away on a three month sabbatical. I can't tell you how grateful I am for that time away and for their diligent and faithful leadership throughout that time. This time frame included our Annual Meeting, in which the congregation approved updates and clarifications to our bylaws – a yearlong project led by the Governance committee and dedicated parishioners.

Also in the winter through spring time frame, we undertook a complete restoration of the organ which graces our sanctuary. Through a painstakingly cautious process, the organ was dismantled, repaired, and carefully put back together. As an added benefit of the repair, the organ was tuned to the proper pitch and shortly after Easter the sounds of organ music returned to Holy Trinity. I am happy to share with you that the organ restoration was completely paid for by generous donations from members of the congregation and beyond. Well done!

In the spring we launched our updated and very interactive website. You can find tons of information and resources on the website from manuscripts of my sermons, to the parish bylaws, to upcoming event information. If you haven't checked out the website please visit soon and make it a regular stop for information and news. Thanks to Nick Short who led the website redesign and Chip Harman who moved us into the digital era and managed the website for many years.

As spring slowly slipped toward summer two other initiatives that the vestry had long believed important to the parish came into focus. The first project was to repair or replace the sidewalks around the church, as they had fallen into serious disrepair and become quite a hazard, as well as to add some much needed sidewalk to the street alongside the handicap parking. Many thanks to Dave Rand and Nick Short for their stewardship of and vision for this project. (Should you have concrete questions in the future I am sure they know the answer.) As an added benefit we worked with the concrete company to repair some bad spots in our asphalt and replace the concrete car stops alongside the school. This project's cost came in at just over \$18k and was, in part, funded by generous gifts from several parishioners. It is not too late to give to this capital improvement if you so desire.

At the same time we were making it safe to walk around our campus we undertook a project to make it easier to find ones way around. Consultants for parishes' growth identify poor signage as one of the major barriers to growth before many other things in a parish's profile. If people can't find you or they can't find their way around once they get to you they will leave frustrated and not come back. Appropriate signage is the first extended hand of welcome; it is hospitality writ large. When you return to campus this fall you will find beautiful signs directing your progress throughout the campus as well as identifying each of the buildings and the appropriate way to access them. You will also find that the signage identifies us as Holy Trinity Episcopal Church and Day School and that the church and school logo show up together - thus continuing our move to a more synergistic relationship. One Holy Trinity! This project cost about \$12k and you still have the opportunity to give to this capital project as well. Many thanks to BJ James and Nikki Clowers for their stewardship of this project.

I want to pause for a moment in this litany of improvements to point out that both the sidewalks and the signage were funded with non-operating monies. We are blessed that we have non-operating funds – made up of donations and bequests from those who have gone before us for the specific purpose of caring for the buildings and grounds of Holy Trinity as well as other purposes. That said, in order to be the best stewards of not only our physical resources but our monetary resources I pray that you will consider giving to one of these projects or to a project in the future.

But back to the accomplishments. Tom Sykes and Ken Wenzel undertook a project to sand and seal our beautiful front porch on the rectory and build steps so that we can actually use the front door. A number of parishioners provided sweat equity to this project; a special thanks to Scott Jones and Sean MacKay who lent their building talents and expertise for this project.

Tom Sykes and the Boy Scouts have begun a project to reclaim the hill out front of the church and Tom Sykes and his son Keith single handedly restored all of the benches around the church. In the spring, Tom Sykes and Nikki Clowers also worked with a dedicated group of parishioners in painting the pews. All in all a lot has been done to restore the campus and to put our best foot forward as we seek to build the kingdom of God and spread the good news from this Holy Hill.

And while all this “improvement” was going on, the work of the kingdom continued in other ways as well. In the fall we partnered with the school to collect food for the Bowie Food Pantry. We collected so much food that Tom Sykes had to make two trips to the pantry in his truck to drop off the food!! We also hosted Warm Nights again, this year during some of the coldest and snowiest weather we had and over the New Year's holiday! There was a baby shower which garnered car loads of items for Newborns in Need, there were Bible studies, and the work of the Hunger committee continued in earnest with carloads of food and toiletries going to the Bowie Food Pantry throughout the year. We offered a confirmation class this spring with six members of the parish either being confirmed or re-affirming their faith. And, of course, we came together in worship and in fellowship in a variety of ways such at the pancake supper, the always popular parish picnic and the new tradition of Graduation Sunday and Bowie Baysox outings.

So how do we top that as we head into the new program year? We do more!! Your wardens, vestry, and I have been hard at work over the summer not only watching the completion of the projects of which I just spoke but to plan for the remainder of this year and into next spring.

The biggest push in terms of physical plant will be the completion of the addition to the rectory so that we can have much needed space, oh and plumbing! You will hear a lot about that project in the days and weeks and months ahead. Tom Sykes and the Boy Scouts will continue their work to reclaim the hill as well as the beautification of the grounds with the planting of native azaleas. This will be a three year project and will include many opportunities for you to participate. There is talk of creating a water feature on the property, which would allow us to seek to be named as a natural habitat by the state of Maryland and I know will make all of our critters happy. The Buildings and Grounds committee will continue to look at the things around about the campus that need either updating or repair and undertake those projects with care and due diligence.

Our Governance committee continues its work to make information clear, concise and accessible. Under the leadership of this committee the Vestry is in the process of finalizing a vestry handbook and of documenting various policies and procedures which will create a clear understanding of how we do things and why. The Governance committee is also working to put our policies and records in digital format and store them in a secure “cloud” environment. In addition this committee is in the process of chartering all of the ministries of the church; something that is required by our bylaws.

The Vision and Missions committee is hard as work as well. We ended the summer with another opportunity to represent Holy Trinity at a Bowie Baysox game on August 29th, followed by the National Back to Church Sunday September 21st. In October look forward to Friday Night on the Hill, which will include a movie night on October 3rd, a Christian Concert on October 17th and a Trunk or Treat and camp out on October 31st. Look forward to a concert dedicating our restored organ in the fall as well!

When you return in the fall you find a retro-fitted coffee hour along with a return to facilitated conversation about our journey’s in faith, what it means to be an Episcopalian, and current events. Later this fall we hope to partner with the city of Bowie to mark Chesapeake storm drainage sites, participate in the Alzheimer’s walk on the National Mall and partner with the school in another Thanksgiving and Christmas food drive. We are looking at volunteer opportunities with Chapel Forge, hopefully helping this special school meet the needs of their special children. We have another blood drive scheduled for October 19th on campus and this winter we will host our annual Warm Nights week, scheduled for February 2015. And of course we will gather to pray and to praise God every Sunday and Wednesday morning and we plan to have special visits from the school on select Sundays’ throughout the year.

And all of this is in addition to the “already on the table activities” like Rectory Readers, who meet every Monday morning; the Prayer Shawl ministry, who meet on Sunday afternoons once a month; and the Sunday morning Bible study led by Sam McGeiver and the work of the altar guild and the readers and the ushers and the acolytes and the counters and the choir and the

Sunday school and EfM. Whew!! All of these things are the parts and pieces which make this a thriving community and an incredible example of the body of Christ in this place and at this time.

I am excited about the year to come, although I must say it makes me a bit tired just reading this. I hope that you are excited too and that you see here something that will feed your soul and spur you to find new ways to live out your baptismal covenant. We are all the ministers of the church and together we make this church an amazing place. See you on the hill.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Leslie M. St. Louis

p.s. One final note, you will find on the website a donate button! If you have not pledged yet this year, here is an easy way to do so!! lsl