

## A MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR FOR FEBRUARY 15 AND 22 FINANCIAL FORUMS

**We all know this year is different** as we are all experiencing economic stress. Since I am teaching a long scheduled class and cannot be present at the forum on parish finances, I want you to have my take on the excellent management undertaken by the vestry and staff of our common resources. Remembering that church finances are very much like home finances, and “prudent householder” rules apply, here’s what we are doing.

**First a little perspective.** Saint Boniface is a strong parish and in the last few years our programs and ministries grew. As our response we decided that it would help us with pastoral care, Sunday worship, and youth ministries to expand our staff to restore the position of Associate Rector and find a priest who was young, energetic, and smart. Membership and program were growing, so we weren’t afraid of a little financial challenge when we hired Andi Taylor. She arrived in August 2007 and her first full year was 2008. We all know that this was a great decision. Then, we faced the financial challenge early on in 2008, and beginning with a letter from our wardens in April, we rallied to close the gap. As the economy began to slow, we used some reserves put aside in previous years, and with new donations, finished the year in the black. We wished we could have given the staff a promised raise in April 2008, but we put that on hold.

**By October 2008, as we looked ahead,** it was obvious that all of us would be affected significantly by the economic downturn. The Vestry looked at what we could do. None of us wanted to lay off staff or cut back on programs. We should all be aware that church employees are not eligible for unemployment compensation, so a lay off could mean financial disaster. Still, we knew that cutting the budget was the right thing to do. Many of us have had the same experience at work or with our home budgets. We cut my salary 25%, other salaries 20%, and asked the staff to pick up increases in health insurance. When a position is vacant we do not fill it. We have one less sexton, one less preschool teacher, we no longer have an outside website coordinator, and we have only one music minister with part time assistance. We have cut our program and operating costs back to 2008 or 2007 levels by being even more careful than we have always been.

**Our sources of income** are pledges and donations, occasional bequests, and any reserves from previous years. For this year we have pledges in hand and a prudent estimate of donations (including those from the extra envelopes in the packet mailed to you each month). Even with the typical generosity of all of us who support St. Boniface, it is wise to estimate a lower income in 2009.

**A word about outreach.** No operating funds, that is to say, none of your pledges and donations, go for outreach other than the diocesan apportionment (10% of our income and our mandatory fair share of the costs of the diocese and Episcopal Church). Some of us have worried that outreach is a luxury we cannot afford while cutting salaries. But all of our outreach comes from fund raisers, special gifts made for aid and relief, or from our small endowment called the Foundation for Outreach. That endowment was established in 1994 and is funded by bequests to the parish. Following “prudent householder rules” we’ve decided to allocate the funds for grants according to a three year rolling average of the income. Well, guess what that figure will be for 2009! Less than zero. There is no new grant money for 2009. Service is part of our mission, and this year our outreach will be hands-on support, special fund raising and the community grants made by our Thrift Shop.

**I think we should be both realistic and optimistic.** This means we should be very aware of how the economy affects all our households and be very careful in our parish budget, but remain optimistic about our values and generosity to continue the ministries of this parish to which we remain so committed. 2009 is a good time to sharpen our values!

The Rev. Canon Edward M. Copland

