

St. Francis-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church
Annual Meeting Recap
Sunday, February 7, 2010

Opening remarks

It was this time last year that Sandi first announced her plans to retire. Having been guided by such a strong individual for such a long time, we all wondered how we would do without her leadership. Here we are more than 8 months after Sandi's departure, and while we all miss Sandi personally, we are working together well as a parish to manage the day-to-day administration of the church as well as plan for an exciting new future.

These have been our objectives over the past 8 months:

- Bring parish administration more in line with "church norms," rather than reflecting the management style of any one clergyperson
- Strengthen our ties with the diocese
- Re-energize volunteer base
- Improve communications
- Sort through and organize church records

All of these efforts go toward our overall objective of identifying and calling a new permanent rector. Everything that we can do to make our parish run more smoothly, and to make our membership more active and involved makes the job of our search committee easier. The committee is working extremely hard, and we all owe them a great deal of gratitude for the time and emotional energy that they are putting into this effort.

Intro to the budget

In the budget, there are several items which warrant particular attention. The first is that the budget is not balanced. It shows a shortfall between anticipated revenues and needed cash (for 2010 expenses and for some 2009 expenses that were paid for in 2010.) Our pledge income is significantly lower than it was last year, and the total number of pledges is down, too. This is expected in a time of transition, and it is made worse by the economy and uncertainties that some of us have about job security. The vestry feels, however, that this amount can be dealt with through additional fundraising and more efforts to lower expenses through volunteer efforts.

St. Francis has parishioners who firmly believe in the future of St. Francis who are helping in a bigger way this year, which is one of the things that makes this budget possible. The vestry is very grateful for this show of confidence, but as a parish, we know that *we all* have to help support our parish as much as possible. We still welcome new pledges and we really need everyone to support our fundraising efforts.

Given this context, the vestry has had to make some difficult decisions regarding salaries. The budget shows that no raises are being given. Most importantly, it shows that our Associate Rector, Fr. Jesse, is

only budgeted for 6 months of this year. Father Jesse will be getting married in June and will be relocating with Allison. It was Jesse's hope to be able to continue to work at St. Francis through July or August, until Allison is free to move to their new location. Because of our budget restraints, however, we are able only to keep Jesse through June. In order to make the transition a bit easier for him, however, we are paying for Jesse's health insurance for July and August, and Jesse is receiving an extra week of vacation, as a wedding gift. It was with great difficulty that we as a vestry made the decision to put an earlier end-date on Jesse's employment, but with our financial limitations and with the slowdown in church activities through the summer, we felt that it had to be done. Jesse has been gracious in accepting the reality of this situation, and for this we are appreciative.

Discussion of fundraising projects

The three main fundraising efforts which will be held this year are Country Market, the rummage sale and the pumpkin sale. Interest was raised in holding Jazz Fest again. The vestry indicated that it would be happy to support parishioners who wish to organize this event separately, but that there is no money in the budget for its expenses and the vestry is unable to help with its organization this year because vestry members' resources are already spread so thinly. Peggy Robinson volunteered to work with Lee to see if Jazz Fest can be held again this year. Parishioners who wish to help organize Jazz Fest are encouraged to contact Peggy.

Discussion of major building and grounds issues

Dan Bradley presented a list of major building and grounds repairs that are needed at St. Francis that are not budgeted for in 2010. The goal of doing so is to make the parish aware of current and future needs that go beyond what we have currently budgeted. (This list is available at church and will be emailed in a separate message.)

Election of delegates to the 2010 Diocesan Convention

The parish voted by acclamation to elect Jane and David Savage as delegates to the 2010 Diocesan Convention to be held in October in Terre Haute. St. Francis may send one more delegate, so if other parishioners are interested in attending, they should contact Laura. Thanks go out to Jane and David for serving the parish and the diocese in this way.

Comments on replacement of vestry members

The vestry realizes that maintaining the same leadership for too long in any organization can be problematic. We have weighed this against the advantages of continuity during this transition time and have determined that vestry elections will not be held at this time. It is expected that as we come closer to calling our new permanent rector, we will begin "rolling off" vestry members quarterly or semi-annually, in order to bring in new leadership in progressively, but without changing all members over at once. Parishioners interested in being considered for serving on the vestry should contact Laura.

Update by the Search Committee

Wendell Walls discussed the progress of the search committee to date. He announced that the Parish

Profile, which describes both “who we are” and “what person we are looking for” is nearly complete and will be unveiled at the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.

Closing remarks

Clearly, St. Francis (like most other churches today) has some major financial challenges ahead. With challenge comes opportunity, however. The opportunity we have is to re-focus our efforts on growth in our parish. We need to do this now, rather than wait for a new rector to be called and settle in and then somehow “do it for us.” We had growth in mind when we expanded our building, and we need to go back to that mindset. The vestry will be developing some new initiatives to support this, and the congregation is encouraged to get involved as these roll out. We have an exciting new future, and we need to get the word out to friends, neighbors and our community and invite them to join us. Together we’ll build a great new future for St. Francis.