

## **Rector's Report**

### **Annual General Meeting**

**April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

One great tradition which has come out of the United States is the celebration of Thanksgiving, a day when (in addition to eating large quantities of food) we devote our creative energies to counting our blessings and enumerating those things for which we give thanks. I am called upon to again embrace this tradition in presenting my rector's report for the Annual General Meeting-which is celebrated today.

It has been, and continues to be a blessing to share in the ministry of this place and it is good that I set aside a time to tell all of you (and to remind myself) of this fact. It is joy to be here and to be a part of a family who seeks to be faithful disciples of Jesus in their work and their life. I always feel nervous when I single out individuals for, in doing so, I will always exclude many people who serve God and His children in public and very private ways. But I feel compelled to name a few at this time.

I have recently received a reminder to commemorate Baruch, the scribe who is responsible for insuring we that we have a copy of utterances of the prophet Jeremiah, and for the folks who recorded the Gospels we now know as Mathew, Mark, Luke and John (whose actual names we have forgotten). I would like to remember them. In their noble tradition, I would like to add Samuel Mbele Mbong who has grateful and expertly served as scribe of vestry and of this meeting as well. We speak words which would turn to smoke and vanish in the air, to be forgotten-if not for the fact that Samuel remembers them and records them to mind and insures that they will not be forgotten. Indeed they come back to inspire and to haunt us, and we are held accountable and are made more honest because of his labours.

I wanted to thank Chris Koch who has served for 3 years as treasurer and as Junior warden and has spent hundreds of hours helping us to be better stewards of the resources we have been given. I thank Patrice Huegenin for the hours he has spent in updating our church and library accounts. Nobody but God knows how much love, time, energy, and sweat they have poured into this, so I thought you would like to know.

I thank Ruth Anderson who has served for the past two years as Senior Warden and has established the agendas for vestry meeting to insure that can call upon our collective wisdom in our deliberations and has a desire to insure that everyone's voices has been heard. She has made countless phone calls asking for people to commit time, talents, and money for the work of the church in a very gracious, and inviting way. I would find the cumulative affect of such calls rather daunting, but she has done this with a cheerful and gracious heart. This is particularly inspirational in light of the fact that during her term both of her parents have died, and she has had to minister to suffering family members.

She has also reminded me that I am not going crazy (or, if I am, to give me a description of the way in which my craziness is made manifest).

I am thankful for The Rev. Richard Cole who, though his diaconal ministry has reminded us of all of our calling to serve and proclaim good news to the suffering.

I wanted to thank Phil Trumper who faithfully communicates the love of Christ to the youth in a parish. Occasionally this is done in very public way like in the upcoming confirmation and youth service, but considerably more time is spent ministering to the young in private ways, being a pastoral presence to those who are often feeling alone and afraid. Phil has also demonstrated a steadfast devotion to insuring that this church be a safe and nurturing place both in our physical plant and in our spiritual embrace.

I wanted to thank Kristi Strzyzewski who has a large drawer filled with hats-her work coordinating the Sunday school, the altar guild, the UTO coordinator, and the Church Bazaar. Her pastoral concern for those who are suffering and alone is inspirational.

I Shauna who has not only demonstrated great talent and creativity in the production of music, and periodic culinary delights which have found their way into this place, but who has also has a burden for those who are grieving or in pain. She has spent much time in pastoral visits to those who are suffering loss. She has demonstrated remarkable patience with the things I forget.

I would like to thank all of those vestry members whose term has ended, or have had to step down because of other commitments, and those who are coming in to take their places. I would like to thank John Kennedy who has agreed to be treasurer for this year and is entering this task with an amazing lack of anxiety. I wanted to thank both Shannon Keith and Marne Smith for there willingness to co-chair the newcomers commission

There are many who have not named, but who have made this place the healthy and loving community which it has become.

I am grateful for the solid ground which this community has provided for many folks who are going through a very unsettling time. All of us have lost savings, many of you are facing very uncertain times, and some of you lost jobs. Yet Emmanuel Church has been a place of refuge and welcome. Our average Sunday attendance has risen by 14 per cent over last year. I believe this is largely due to the fact that in uncertain times the church provides a much needed rock upon which people can rebuild their lives. It is also due to the generous spirit of those who call this place their spiritual home.

As we carry out ministry this year we are mindful of the fact that we are in economically precarious times. We speak with a little more humility than we had last year, but we speak with a strength which comes from beyond ourselves.

There are several large events which we are hosting this year. These include the Youth Across Europe gathering over Ascension Day weekend. Sixty five young people from across Europe will be descending upon us for a time a prayer, fellowship, and a trip to Taize. They will be returning here for the confirmation service later that weekend.

In October, we are hosting the annual convocation convention. This is the gathering in which discern how to live our common life as a convocation. Looking forward to 2010, we are hosting a gathering of 65 Episcopal University students in July-exposing them to the ministry of the World Council of Churches, the U.N. organizations and a few of the NGO's in Geneva. In November of 2010 we are planning trip to Israel which I am organizing with Fr. Gray Temple, and to which all interested persons are welcome to join us.

I mentioned earlier, that the Bishop will officiate at our confirmation service on Ascension Day. The youth have been meeting for several months in preparation for this. I would like to invite any adults who would like be interested being confirmed to come and speak with me. We will be meeting after the service next Sunday.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all of you, that God has given you ministry to which you are uniquely called at this time in your life. Some are called to teach the faith to Children, some are called to prepare the church for worship, some are called to minister to the poor or the suffering. I would like to invite all of you to prayerfully consider the ministry to which you are called and to consider as well how the church can support you. If this does not become clear to you, please give me a call and we can have a chat. I want every one of you to know that you have been given unique skills, gifts and talents, and the world is a better place because you are here. May God bless and inspire every one of you.

Peace,

John+