

Interim Rector Annual Report for 2011

It has been my privilege to be your Interim Rector since January 1, 2011. My Letter of Agreement says that I am the Interim Rector, but I have never really liked to title *Rector* because the word comes from the Latin word *Rex* which means king or ruler. Some Rectors I have known acted as if they were the rulers of their dominion, yet that has never been my style. That is one of the reasons I prefer the title *Interim Pastor*. A pastor or shepherd is one who cares for their people, works with them and gives guidance when it is needed. Or, if you prefer, think of a pastor as being like a sheep dog who runs around the perimeter of the flock, shooing away dangers to the flock, and nipping at the heels of the sheep when they start to wander away into dangerous territory. That analogy is called the sheep dog theology of pastoral ministry, to which I say, Woof!

I sincerely hope that this Interim Year or Year of Transition has been a good year for the people of St. Mark's. Over the last twelve months we have done a number of things together. During 2011 we engaged in the study of three books: one during Lent, another during the fall months, and we just completed another book that was started during the season of Advent.

In the spring of 2011, I guided you in a time of self-study as you engaged first in a Parish History Project. After that, you answered a lengthy questionnaire that gave us a snapshot of the make-up of the congregation, and the questionnaire then asked you to look back at what has worked well at St. Mark's in the past, and then to look ahead to future goals and dreams. It was my hope that the great work you did would be a help to the Search Committee and to those clergy who would be considered for your next Pastor. The parish web site has links to those documents of you wish to look at them.

Bishop Smith made his official visit to St. Mark's in September, and it was our joy to celebrate along with the seven persons who were confirmed and received into the Episcopal Church that day. I hope it was a memorable occasion for them and for you. I encourage each of you to find out the day you were baptized and the day you were confirmed, and to celebrate those events each year because they are important milestones in your walk in faith, and they are important to the rest of us who walk the walk of faith along with you. My baptism day is May 1, and my confirmation date is September 8. Please find out your dates.

In my time at St. Mark's I have been very fortunate to serve with wonderful people. Maybe to their embarrassment, I want to single out our Senior Warden Allen Porter, our Treasurer Sue Healey, our Parish Administrator Carol Eschbacher, our organist and choirmaster Bob Mullgardt, and our Sunday School leader Celeste Kocot. I am deeply appreciative of all that they have done for me and for you.

One Sunday each month I have met with your Vestry and worked with them in their ministry of tending to the finances and the work of the congregation. They are a dedicated group that worked with a sense of purpose and a sense of humor, and I appreciate all they have done.

Our Sunday mornings are made all the more special because of the musical ministry of those who sing in the choir. Week after week they rehearse, and week after week they pour their hearts and voices into the beauty of our worship.

The Altar Guild has been very patient and accommodating as they have adjusted to how I am accustomed to doing things at the altar. Much of what they do for us is done behind the scenes. Only if it were not get done would we realize just how much they do and how important is their ministry to our liturgy running smoothly.

When it comes to our worship services, I have especially appreciated the assistance of the acolytes, lesson readers, and chalice bearers. You may have noticed that when I stand at the altar for the Eucharist, I ask these people to stand with me because they represent you, and my ministry is not something I do alone. When they stand there with me, it shows that liturgy is a "we" thing, not a "me" thing.

We can always use more lesson readers and chalice bearers. Anyone who wishes to volunteer can be a reader. Anyone who is at least 16 years of age can be a chalice bearer. Speak with me if you are interested in either of those ministries.

There are people in our congregation who cannot always be with us on a Sunday because of illness or frailty, and we have a committed core of Eucharistic Visitors whom we send out on Sundays to take communion to them so that they may share in our celebration. We and the people they visit deserve our gratitude.

During the past twelve months our average Sunday attendance has increased, and we are especially grateful to the Greeters who give each person – old-timer and newcomer – a smile, a hello and a Sunday bulletin. As they make people feel welcome, they have an important role in making the visitor want to return again and again until they join the congregation.

We all should be appreciative of the work of your Rector Search Committee and its Chair, Ellen Jeffery. Their task was to take the data and information about St. Mark's, turn it into a profile of the parish, gather the names of candidates who on paper looked as if

they would match the Parish and Rector Profiles, and through resumes and interviews work their way down to the final candidates from whom they would make their selection. You can follow their work with the pieces of the puzzle on the bulletin board.

Caret Tisdal has maintained our Facebook presence on the Internet, and I am grateful to her for her work in being certain that people are able to learn about us through that social network tool.

One of your truly wonderful ministries is the monthly hot lunch that you cook and serve at Trinity Church in the Central West End. That work is the Christian ministry of servanthood at its best. It is the sort of thing that Jesus wants the church to do.

If there are people whom I have inadvertently failed to recognize, please come to me after church and I'm sure to recognize you!

Now, for a few more serious points I want to make. First, the servanthood ministry of Deacons. Deacons are those ordained persons who bring the needs of the world to the church, and then take back to the world the response of the church, because the church is to be a servant community. For all of my ordained life I have been committed to the idea that each congregation should have at least two Deacons to be symbols of this ministry of servanthood, and to be the people who train and equip the congregation to be active in servanthood ministry in the community around us and in the world. Deacons do not do the work of servanthood by themselves. Instead, they help the congregation take on that ministry of servanthood.

You already have at least two Deacons among you. You and I do not yet know who they are, but God knows, and God is waiting for the people of St. Mark's to start talking with each other about who they could be, to start identifying them and their gifts for servanthood ministry, and do this along with your next Pastor, and start the diocesan discernment process so that these persons can be identified and trained for ordination in our diocesan School for Ministry.

Another serious point I want to make in this report is to remind you of my role as the Interim Pastor. The work of an Interim Pastor can most easily be compared to the ministry of John the Baptist. The role of John the Baptist was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. John preached and baptized, he told people that the Kingdom of God was coming, he said some things that made people feel uncomfortable, and he told the people to change their ways so they can be ready for the Kingdom.

My ministry as your Interim Pastor has been to be like John the Baptist, to prepare the congregation for the coming of the next Rector, to help you lay old issues to rest and find new things for you to work on. And then, like John the Baptist, I will fade from the scene. The real John the Baptist had his head cut off at the order of a tyrannical king. I don't plan to make such a dramatic exit. However, I have told your Vestry that after the new rector is called, has accepted the call, and has announced the Sunday when he or she will begin their ministry here, I will arrange for my last Sunday to be one month before the new rector's first Sunday.

We will have an opportunity to say an official good-bye on my last Sunday, whenever that will be, and then you will have one month of supply clergy for Sunday services so that you can get used to me not being around. After the new Rector arrives, if I find out that you are telling that person, "Well, Peter always did it THIS way!", I will make it my job to come back and haunt you! Follow the guidance of your next Rector, because I am just the Interim!

Several times during the past year I have reminded you of the Seven Last Words of the Episcopal Church. There are two versions. One says, "But we've always done it this way!" The other states, "We've never done it that way before!" Whichever version you prefer, I thank you for setting them aside this past year and being willing to try a few new things.

For now, thank you for your cooperation this past year, your hard work, and your friendship. Those helped make my ministry among you that much easier, and that much more fun.

Amen.