

*Rector's Annual Address  
January 23, 2011*

I want to begin my remarks by reiterating my deep gratitude for the great gift of sabbatical leave this past fall. It was a splendid combination of time for puttering at home; time to be with family, including my parents' 60th anniversary in Maryland; time for study, reading, thinking and planning; and finally, in October, my pilgrimage to Turkey and study tour in Italy. It was the perfect balance of rest and stimulation, and I could not have asked for a more restorative gift.

I further want to thank once more those who bore the burden of leadership and extra duties while I was away – most especially Lisa Hackney; Rich Israel; and Betsey Bell; and your two wardens, David Hartt and Jan Wolf. It was *not* a quiet time while I was gone. Administratively, programmatically, and pastorally, there were significant issues at hand. They were dealt with skillfully and gracefully, but not without cost to those who sacrificed a great deal of time and care. We thank them.

The Feast of All Saints is perhaps my favorite day of the year on the church calendar. It celebrates a deep theological affirmation – our recollection of inspiring heroes of the faith, and our own participation in the joyous mystery of being One Body across time and space. So, it was wonderful that the Eve of All Saints was my first Sunday back. It was a great celebration, a warm homecoming. I was that day, and I remain, deeply grateful to be your Rector here at St. Paul's!

Let me highlight a few staffing changes which have been or will be made in 2011.

First, in the area of **Stewardship**. Pam O'Halloran has been serving since last February as Acting Stewardship Coordinator. Effective January 1, 2011 I have appointed Pam as Director of Stewardship at St. Paul's. She brings to her work a passionate commitment to the parish; many years of experience with our stewardship program; and a personal acquaintance with a large proportion of the congregation. Staff members and stewardship volunteers alike have been delighted at Pam's altogether collegial and creative leadership, and we are glad that she is willing now to expand her commitment to us.

Pam shares my eagerness to integrate our understanding of stewardship into our fellowship and spiritual lives, and not just our fundraising. A development design team worked with me last year to envision ways that we might assure a dynamic future for St. Paul's by advancement efforts which understands that membership ministries, volunteer engagement, and fundraising are all parts of a whole. The Stewardship position has been increased from half-time to 3/4-time for 2011, as a first step towards this broader vision of advancement at St. Paul's.

In the area of **Youth Ministry**: The Rev. Matt Humm will continue as half-time Youth Minister at St. Paul's through the end of his two-year appointment, which concludes this summer. We are indebted to Matt for serving us faithfully these two years. As Matt moves forward in his own vocational path towards full-time parish priesthood with the full breadth of responsibilities, St. Paul's will move forward to restore the Youth Ministry position to full-time status.

The severe economic challenges of 2009 and 2010 did not allow us to replace our previously full-time youth minister for this period. It has become quite clear (and it is no surprise to us) that in order to maintain the vibrant youth programs and relational ministry which we cherish at St. Paul's, we must restore that position to full time. It is crucial to our present and to our future. I am grateful to our young people and their parents for their patience during the

inevitably reduced scope of ministry they have experienced these two years. I look forward to working with Kate Gillooly, and advisory input from parents and young people, to search for our next, full-time Youth Minister.

In the area of **Facility Maintenance**: Our custodial staff has been stretched beyond capacity ever since cutbacks initiated during budgetary hard times some eight years ago. In a reconfiguration of sexton positions this year, we have added some ten hours to our custodial staff. Evening sexton John Rynes is now full-time, and weekend evening sexton Paul McCuen has additional hours. I am grateful to both for their hard work and helpful attitudes.

Every member of the parish staff serves faithfully and sacrificially. Their affection and esteem for one another, and their commitment to this parish, is a great gift to us all. I ask those staff members present to stand, that we might acknowledge and thank them!

We have striven this past year to move forward with elements of the Long Range Plan – not only in the realm of facility improvements, but with equal energy for our programs and ministries. Here are a few highlights from the fleet of “ships” in which we journey together at St. Paul’s.

**In Worship** – A new prayer insert in the Sunday bulletin invites us to a fuller and broader upholding of one another, locally and globally. (I hope you are making a habit of taking that insert home with you to use as part of your personal prayer life.) Our expanded routine of Healing Prayers had its first full year. We offered another seasonal sermon series. And St. Paul’s hosted the first (*first annual*, we hope) Treble Fest, a choral festival for youth choristers in the Diocese of Ohio.

**In Discipleship** – We had Lenten and Advent seasonal programs in conjunction with our friends at St. Alban’s, thanks to Matt Humm. We had especially strong attendance at the fall forum series, “Episcopal Church 101.” The pre-school program for children during 9:00 a.m. worship has been redesigned to gratifying response. And a revitalized Church School Board is greatly excited about exploring new curricular programs to bring a spirit of ongoing renewal to our Church School.

**In Kinship** – We had our first full year of the weekly email news blast, and the introduction of an online option for Parish Notes. The inclusion of birthdays and anniversaries on the Sunday prayer insert has enhanced our sense of connectedness. And the formation of the new Parish Fellowship Committee provides long-needed leadership for organizing our parish family celebrations. (They need more members – see your Annual Report booklet for contact information!)

**In Apostleship** – Using the model familiar to many of our parishioners from their volunteering at Reading Camp in Kentucky, we conducted the first Reading Camp Cleveland at Cedar Hills. And with our Anglican partners in South Africa, we helped establish not one but two small, residential foster homes for children with HIV – one in Ocean View and one in Masiphumelele.

**In our Stewardship of Finances** – We accomplished the realignment of pledge year with calendar year, ending a longstanding source of considerable confusion. Despite the resultant 6-month bridge period between pledge periods, we ended the year having balanced a budget originally projected to be some \$28,000 in arrears.

**In our Stewardship of Facilities** – We accomplished long-needed repairs to our 2-octave carillon. The new Green Team initiated steps for greater attention to sustainability issues. We accomplished major renovations to our mechanical and electrical infrastructure, replacing

Smithsonian-worthy boilers, and (what the Parish Manager calls) Frankenstein's-lab electrical panels. The Tucker Hall lift is a thing of beauty, providing access to our parish hall which is long overdue and a source of great thanksgiving.

Our capital improvements continue, and I want to say a word to remind ourselves of the motivation behind these projects. Brick-and-mortar though they are, these projects are not being undertaken out of concern for aesthetics only, nor to satisfy anyone's edifice complex. The new north McCracken entrance is motivated by our desire to be welcoming and clear and accessible to all. The Coventry House purchase is motivated by our desire to reclaim the full space of Tucker Hall for fellowship and community activities. The relocation of offices to Coventry House will allow the Tucker restoration to move forward, restoring the parish hall to the purpose for which it was designed and built, the need for which is rediscovered every time we have an all-parish event or occasions such as large funeral receptions. Our kinship goals will be advanced by these projects.

Finally, a word about our determination to move forward on long-range goals that are not related to the physical plant. I touched on many of those in my highlights from the "ships" a moment ago. Two initiatives, in particular, characterize our eagerness to live into our Long Range Plan.

Last summer I learned of initial organizing efforts in Cleveland by an organization called Industrial Areas Foundation. The IAF helps communities, and especially communities of faith, coalesce around significant issues of common concern relating to justice and well-being for all people. I had very positive experience working with the IAF in Chicago, and so was glad of their organizing assistance here in Cleveland. During the formulation of our Long Range Plan, many members spoke of their desire to see St. Paul's use its voice and leadership presence not only to provide relief to those in poverty, but to help address such systemic, "upstream" issues as education and job creation. So important was this to many of our members that it was articulated separately as one of our seven major goals: "Assume a leadership role in serving the needs of the community, including issues of poverty and racial reconciliation."

This is hard to do, especially in isolation as an individual, or even as an individual congregation. I am delighted that through the IAF organizing efforts, a new organization called Greater Cleveland Congregations is on the verge of formal existence. Already over 50 congregations have become involved, representing an interracial, interfaith, city and suburban, even cross-Cuyahoga-River coalition, to put our collective minds and hearts to some of Cleveland's greatest needs. I am grateful to Lisa Hackney, Rich Israel, Jan Wolf, Ted Wilson, and a core team of St. Paul's members, for their early commitment to this partnership on our behalf. In the next two months you will hear about opportunities here at St. Paul's to gather in small 'house meetings' – in homes and here at the church – for the purpose of hearing from you about what you consider to be the most pressing issues for the initial efforts of Greater Cleveland Congregations. These meetings are part of what makes the effort "grass roots." I hope everyone in this room will attend one of the dozen or so gatherings to be scheduled.

Another of the seven long-range goals was this: "Increase the sense of connectedness and community among St. Paul's parishioners." We'll have a lively presentation on Kinship at St. Paul's in just a moment. But I want to say a word about what I consider an exemplary opportunity to address this goal, and that is our new program called DOCC. Disciples of Christ in Community is a program of instruction, discussion, and fellowship, reflecting the description of small church communities found in the Book of Acts. Participants are invited to "be the

church” by gathering for mutually supportive exploration of biblical concepts and examination of our own spiritual journeys.

DOCC will meet at St. Paul’s on Sunday afternoons 12:15 to 2:30 p.m., beginning February 6 and concluding on June 5. The schedule includes a light lunch, a clergy presentation, and discussion in small groups. The Rev. Richard Israel and I will take turns offering the presentations on biblical topics such as Prayer; the Kingdom of God; the Nature of Unconditional Love; Human Sin and Brokenness; and more. A team of parishioners has been trained to serve as facilitators of the small groups, the membership of which will remain fixed for the duration of the program, in order to allow for the creation of trusting community. Having led the DOCC program for several years in my previous parish, I know it to be a fine program. Participants learn more about their faith, gain a perspective on their own spiritual journey, and make new friendships within the parish. We believe it will become a regular, annual offering. I hope that you will consider joining, or if you cannot, hold this new ministry in your prayers.

This week I re-read my Rector’s Annual Address from last year. I was startled to recall that, in the context of having named that economic “elephant in the room,” I had imposed upon you last year with no fewer than eight elephant jokes. That you did not drive me from the podium is testimony to your Christian exercise of the virtue of patience. Thus am I emboldened to think that, if last year’s focus was on the economic elephant, this year’s excitement is focused on our new entryway – and that, of course, suggests a different genre.

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Wendy. [*Wendy who?*] Wendy saints come marching in, praise God, we’ll have a new ramp and lobby for ‘em!

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Kostya. [*Kostya who?*] Kostya a few bucks, but it’ll be worth it!

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Sadie. [*Sadie who?*] Sadie Lord’s Prayer, and a dozen Hail Marys ... and maybe the Entry will be done by Easter!

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Dexter. [*Dexter who?*] Dexter Halls with boughs of holly ... we hope for the new Tucker Hall by Christmas!

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Amahl. [*Amahl who?*] Amahl shook up over DOCC and those IAF house meetings!

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Moira. [*Moira who?*] Moira these bad jokes and I expect you’ll walk out.

Knock, knock. [*Who’s there?*] Zeke and Doc. [*Zeke who?*] Zeke, and ye shall find! Doc, and it shall be opened unto you!

Well, seriously, dear sisters and brothers: Jesus says, “*Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*” [Luke 11:9] Let us continue to gather in this place for worship, fellowship, and service. Let us ask, humbly. Let us seek, patiently. Let us knock, persistently.

Onward, with God’s grace, into the Year of Our Lord 2011.

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