

Incumbent's Report
St. Theodore of Canterbury
Vestry 2017

From our Old Testament reading this morning: “Sing for joy, O heavens and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains into singing.” When the people of God returned to their homeland after decades of exile, they had reason to celebrate God’s goodness and faithfulness to them.

This morning/afternoon we’re going to recollect how God has been good and faithful to us this past year and how we’ve been faithful to that relationship as well. And we’re going to give thanks and celebrate – because we have so much to celebrate!!

Most importantly and joyfully, we’re celebrating the end of a year-long, successful capital campaign. We launched this campaign last year about this time. Our goal was to raise \$75,000.00 to replenish our capital account, in order to continue to maintain and restore our property, building and worship space. For a parish of this size it was a very ambitious goal.

This campaign took enormous amounts of time and energy from the all the leadership – from me, the wardens and treasurer, those who served on the committee, Rebecca in the office – but, most significantly from the campaign chair, Bonny Hietala. In fact, it’s fair to say that the campaign would never have

happened but for Bonny's vision, perseverance, and passion for the people of God in this place. And for this we are deeply, deeply grateful.

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This capital campaign also took time and energy from all of you – both individually and collectively. It forced us to focus on and dialogue about difficult issues. It forced us to examine and perhaps stretch our understanding of stewardship. We had to talk about money!!!! And we didn't just talk: we secured commitments totalling \$85,000.00!!!! So, we rejoice in a job well done. We celebrate the gift of new life that this sum of money represents for us.

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We also have reason today to celebrate the gift of new growth in our parish community. By this I do not mean merely numerical growth, although numbers can be a useful barometer. We celebrate the inclusion of 5 new members of the family of God in this place through the waters of baptism. We recall and celebrate that in 2016 we baptized Alexander, Steven, Nehemiah, Kathy and Riley. We also pause to recall the celebration of the lives of 5 of our members who died to this life and rose to life eternal in 2016: Betty Johnson, Matthew d'Heureux, Mary Porte, Joyce Tillitson and Joyce Chen. We also remember the recent passing of Doris Phillips, which although a 2017 death, is still very raw for so many of us.

Apart from the milestones of baptisms and deaths, we also have reason to celebrate the new members who chose to make St. Theodore's their spiritual home. We celebrate the gifts and talents they have brought with them, gifts and talents which now enrich our common life and worship.

And then, quite apart from numbers, we recollect and celebrate today the new growth that occurred this year, as almost all of our parish organizations received an infusion of new members. This year many of you responded to a call from God to serve in new ways with a heartfelt Yes! So, as of the end of 2016, we have 5 new Sunday school teachers or assistants; 2 new servers; 2 new members on the Altar Guild; 2 new people serving at coffee hour, a new joint convenor of the hospitality team, a new coordinator of sidespeople, and a new alternate synod delegate. This greater participation in the life of our parish is an important tendrill of new life, a change for which we can thanks and rejoice.

Growth in community also comes when we are willing to move out of our comfort zones – from places and patterns that no longer serve us well – into risky, unfamiliar ways of doing things. This also transpired this year. The chief example of this was our re-thinking of how we sit together here in our worship space and how our intentional sitting closer together – anywhere but not in the back four pews – could effect and has effected a more cohesive sense of community life. We also tried to be more intentional about welcoming the stranger, our visitors; about

learning the name of that parishioner we recognize but have not spoken to in several years or decades!; about dialoguing one with another but especially with the leadership so that channels of communication can be more open and fruitful.

There is so much more that could be said; these are just some highlights. We still have many, many challenges ahead of us and the achievements and blessings about which we rejoice today should not cause us to stop evolving or stretching to serve God beyond the walls of this building. You will hear about some of these challenges during the Vestry meeting. But it is vitally important for us to pause and rejoice for all that God has done for us this year and the ways in which we, as individual disciples and collectively as the people of God at St. Theodore's, have been faithful to our baptismal calling.

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To close I would like to thank Andy Khan, for his service to us as People's Warden for the last three years. I do so with much gratitude and joy in my heart – and also some awe. It is an important responsibility to serve as warden of a church and Andy has not only fulfilled this trust with great competence and prayerful, holy commitment, but he has done so at a time when his health was being challenged. Our hopes and prayers for healing are with him and Sandy and all of

their family at this time, as they continue to be faithful and trusting in this time of continuing uncertainty and adversity.

Rejoice sisters and brothers! Rejoice and give thanks for the Lord is good and faithful. The Lord has done marvellous things here among and through us. Rejoice – and again I say rejoice!!