

2020 RECTOR'S REPORT

“My heart is firmly fixed, O God, my heart is firmly fixed.” Psalm 57.7

I don't think I have ever compiled an Annual Report quite like this one. But then, there has not been another year quite like this one. Not only for our congregation, this faithful crew that has piloted the stormy waters of life for almost three hundred and twenty years - but not another year like this one for our entire country – and even the world. The Covid 19 Pandemic has dominated the whole of humanity. Not only has the disease devastated us, it has also pulled back the façade of our society: both the things we do very well, and the grave injustices and inequalities that remain. For both, I am profoundly thankful. They have given us all an opportunity to examine who we are, what are lives mean, and where we are going. I think we are finding this as true for the Church as well as for our us as an American people.

I am deeply proud of the way our congregation took on this year of 2020. From that last vestry meeting in March before we were completely shut down, when your leaders decided we would not allow fear to dominate our lives and voted unanimously to erect a message on the front lawn of our church (which also graces the front of this report) to the challenge of holding Christmas services, we have been faithful the whole year long. Rolling with the punches, praying, adapting, listening to the Spirit, praying some more, and again and again readjusting just how we do church – and how we *are* Church.

As the Psalmist declares – we have been firmly fixed! Despite it all, we are firmly fixed. We have discovered what is most important to us. We have discovered that sometimes we don't need all the pomp and liturgy (did I ever think I would say that?). What we discovered is how much we need God, how much we need each other, and how much we love both.

In the pages of this Annual Report, you will find the unique stories of our sojourn in the land of Pandemic Uncertainty. You will find how we safely traveled from **A**ltar Guild to **Z**oom as each committee and ministry reimagined how they would carry out their mission. From new visions of teaching our little ones to on-line adult learning to planning a Pledge Campaign totally around videos – nothing was the same! And each step of the way, I was amazed and enthralled by the creativity and resourcefulness of our staff and our members.

My own ministry, and the way I do it, took on a decidedly different look and feel. I never would have guessed that I would have written as much as I have in this year – nor enjoyed it so much. I hope the daily and then weekly *Cloistering Along* meditations were as helpful to you as they were to me. I so appreciated and enjoyed the many on-going conversations that blossomed from those daily dalliances, some from across the land and others from around the globe. I quickly learned how to Zoom; even though my daughter still often gives me a helping hand. Pastoral care became quite creative, as I learned how to be “present” without entering a home or touching another person.

All in all? This year has been one I would not have expected, would not wish on anyone else – but one I would not change if I could. I believe we are stronger than we ever guessed, more

centered than before we started, and have learned such lessons of Faith that could not be learned anywhere else. Most of all, I am extremely grateful for having traveled through it with you.

I would like to especially acknowledge our two Wardens, Elaine Feyereisen and Peggy James, who exercised extraordinary leadership through this year. They were constant and faithful, gave me complete support and excellent counsel, and if not for them, I am not sure how we would have reopened!

I am also profoundly grateful for wonderful staff. For our Organist/Choirmaster Chris Psolka, who told me early in the year she was ready to retire – but has stayed on through it all: her skill and innate grasp of what will work in worship was exactly what we needed; *she* was who we needed. Chris will be sorely missed as she finally retires this spring. For our Office Administrator Casey Surgent, who was extraordinary during this time, always attentive to needs and changes, always ready to go with the flow, and helping to keep my daily sanity intact. And for Jeff Veil our Sexton, who when there were no services to clean up after (nor coffee hours or Church School or AA groups) made it his mission to look around and take care of the small or unusual repairs which never seem to end.

Lastly, I am so very thankful for our Bishop and his staff, who met with us clergy almost every single week, exhibiting such capable leadership and support to us in the trenches of parish ministry and offering countless opportunities and resources for our parishes and their ministries.

It is sometimes said a crisis brings out either the best or the worst in us. I believe we have found this to be true, and I believe we are finding our better selves. May our hearts continue to stay fixed on the prize, which is our Lord himself.

Peace,

Mother Lisa+