

January 28, 2018
Al Rider, Senior Warden

Good Morning. When I was walking my dog Dora earlier this week, I sensed that first smell of spring. While I knew this to be only a meteorological tease, as the first day of spring is months away, nevertheless it felt good. I love early spring and the anticipation of longer daylight, warmer temperatures and lacrosse. I am ready for the change of season.

Change seems to have been the central theme throughout my two year tenure as your senior warden. Last year at this time I spoke about how well this parish had navigated through a massive change in staff and clergy. Little did I know then that change would continue to follow me each day of my second year. Today I feel as if our circumstances are a COUNTER scene of the movie Ground Hog Day. For those of you who have not seen the movie, Bill Murray plays a weatherman who is covering the annual emergence of the groundhog from its hole. He gets caught in a blizzard that he didn't predict and finds himself trapped in a time warp. Each day he awakes to the same scene and is doomed to relive the same day over and over. In other words no change. He finally recognizes that only through his own personal growth, could he break the cycle. Contrary to Bill Murray's character, St. Mary's, because of its strength of culture has grown with change. But I must admit I would have preferred a few days not waking to something new!

Back in October, when Weezie gave me that sad and unexpected news of her decision to move to Colorado, I knew this parish was going to have to relive a big change again. How would we respond? We could trip over this new circumstance and stumble; or we could embrace it as an opportunity to move forward with purpose, continuing to listen to God's calling for St. Mary's. I believe in the later.

Our parish is strong and growing. We are still following the findings of our Discernment. We are more engaged. Bucking a national trend, our Sunday attendance is up. Our programs are robust and well received. We are living a better sense of service both in-house with pastoral care and away through expanded outreach. Enthusiasm and vitality grace these buildings and grounds

Weezie's legacy is the incredible staff and clergy whom she recruited to St. Mary's. We are blessed with such capable people who help this parish grow and flourish every day. They will guide and sustain us through our Rector transition. A few comments about each of them.

Elizabeth Baker: EB is our gracious front desk gatekeeper and administrative assistant extraordinaire! No task is beyond her capabilities. Her smile and enthusiasm are infectious. EB has taken on an additional role as staff liaison to our Pastoral Groups. She will be a terrific asset for our growing lay pastoral care teams.

Ashley Cameron: One of the consistent themes that emerged from our various discernment sub groups was the need for better communication. Well we can put a check plus next to that task. Since Ashley has brought her talents to St. Mary's, our visual, digital and written

communications have risen to a new level. Ashley has such a wonderful can do attitude with a focus on continued improvement of our numerous communications. Ashley also feeds her own passion for outreach, by coordinating our various outreach ministries, including our recent successful mission trip to Ecuador.

Amelia McDaniel: All you need to do is wander the Sunday School hallways to see the fruits of Amelia's efforts. Our Children's ministry has grown to a size not seen in decades. Amelia finds so many ways to connect our young children with God's spirit. Her soft nurturing manner plays an important role in helping our young families feel connected to this church and its mission. Amelia also is our liaison with St. Mary's Episcopal School. Program coordination between the church and the school has never been better.

Matt Rawls: Many of you know Matt is a recovering lawyer and left a life of litigation to become our Director of Youth Ministries. If Matt could work on his public speaking, find some humor and show some enthusiasm, he really could go far in the church. Seriously, Matt has re-invigorated our Youth Ministries. His charisma and leadership, on display in planned outings, mission trips and confirmation classes, attracts and retains the interest of our pre-teens and teenagers. Not necessarily an easy assignment! I think we can all agree that Matt has brought an entertaining and different dimension to our pulpit. I personally look forward to his monthly sermons and the connection of the Gospel with his misspent youth.

Ryan Tibbetts: Ryan is the newest addition to our staff. I first have to say to the ad hoc search committee tasked with finding our Director of Music, well done!! Ryan has hit the pedals and keys magnificently and upped our game of an already fine music tradition at St. Mary's. His interest and talent in coordinating our music with the service enhances our worship. I hear nothing but kudos from our choir members. And an added dividend, we benefit on occasion by a wonderful accompanist, Ryan's wife Kate on her flute.

St. Mary's has grown from a small country parish to large program church. Thankfully we keep many of the traditions and culture of our humble beginnings. One aspect though has evolved dramatically, the administration of our daily operations. Mike Koschak, Executive Director, Church Operations and Deedi Trabosh, our Accountant together have fully restructured and upgraded our financial reporting and data collection. Using their professional talents, our financials and parish data are reliable and timely. Mike reviews our contracts and other expense items for opportunities to save money or better deliver a service. His ability to keep the parish trains running on time frees our clergy to focus their energies on more pastoral care and expanded programing. Mike oversees the management of our dedicated Sexton staff, Paul Pace, Gersain Agudelo and Clarence Dixon, which in the past was a responsibility handled by the Rector.

Bob Hetherington: How fortunate we are that Bob continues to make the drive from Westminster Canterbury to serve this Parish. During these past couple of years Bob has been our oak tree. His spiritual leadership, caring mentorship, clarity of message and seasoned experience has comforted us during our many changes. His challenge to us to listen to Gods calling, to lean in and be accountable has been a simple but powerful guide. We are so thankful to have him in our life.

Andrew Moore, fresh from Greenwich Connecticut, Andrew arrived in Goochland County a little over a year ago and hit the ground running. Today he is running a bit faster. Little did he expect his job description to include leading this parish during our intermission between rectors. I am confident Andrew is up to the task. Andrew grabs us with his sermons and expands our spiritual thinking. He is a talented teacher. Thoughtful and caring, Andrew has touched many lives in this parish in a short time. We are so grateful to also have him in our life.

Our clergy and staff, in a word, are terrific. On any given day that I might walk into the Old Parish Hall or other buildings, I feel a positive energy, sense enthusiasm and listen to laughter. They are bright, committed and cohesive. We are blessed by their presence. Our added staffing is the direct result of needs identified in our 2016 Discernment.

Let me switch to a challenge that this parish must meet in order for us to continue to build off our Discernment and maintain our momentum and growth. That is Annual Stewardship. As you heard from Joe, we had a significant financial operating deficit in 2017. When the 2017 budget was developed, the Vestry agreed to invest in enhanced staffing, recognizing those additions would cause a deficit in our 2017, and possibly 2018, annual results. Over these two years, the expectation is that Annual Stewardship would catch up to the added expenses. We are falling short of that goal. The 2017 deficit, assuming most of the pledges in arrears are met, is approximately \$90,000. We carried over our surplus of \$34,000 from 2016 and thus the net combined deficit is \$66,000. While we exceeded \$1,000,000 in 2017 annual pledges, we missed our goal by \$50,000. Had we met our goal, we would have been close to breakeven. The difference is 6%. Fortunately as Joe has pointed out, because of our strong investment performance, our portfolio gains more than covered our 2017 deficit. But we cannot rely on strong markets to fund operations.

I worry the same scenario could play out for 2018. Our budgeted goal for 2018 Annual Stewardship pledges is \$1,100,000. Based on our current pledging trend, our best guess is that we could again be short \$50,000 - \$75,000 and we won't benefit from the carryover of our 2016 surplus.

Many of you have increased your 2018 pledge over 2017. Thank you. But a number of you have held your pledge flat. Some for many years. And quite honestly, many of you give well below your capacity. Our need is not huge in percentage terms. Our needed increase is less than ten

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percent to balance our annual operating fund. The Vestry has responded to the call of our Discernment. But if we want to continue to underwrite the operations of this parish, to enjoy the fruits of this terrific staff and to present a strong fiscal picture to Rector candidates, we must step up our Annual Stewardship.

We have many lay people of this parish performing marvelous work. I would like to recognize each and every one of you, but time does not allow. I would however like to offer our eternal gratitude to the three retiring heads of Altar Guild: Betty Rinehardt, Joanie Robins and Sue Thompson. These three ladies have led this ministry with grace and beauty for over 18 years. Thank you ladies.

I am delighted to welcome our four newly elected members to the Vestry. They will be strong contributors. Our retiring class of 2018 has been an especially good class and this parish has been enriched by their leadership. Betsy Rawles, Bruin Richardson, David Rose and Charmaine Trice.....All four have made significant and multiple contributions towards the welfare of St. Mary's, much of it behind the scenes. They share a sense of humility and grace in their work. They have servant hearts and we thank them for their service.

It has been an incredible privilege to serve as your Senior Warden. I love this church. I love our history, I love our culture. I love our heart. Most importantly I love all the people I have had the honor to work with on a day to day basis. Thank you for your support through amazing change. I am confident that if we continue to listen to Gods calling for St. Mary's we will remain a good place.