

January 7, 2009

Dear Fellow Members of St. Mary's,

Our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25 in the parish hall, immediately following the 10:00 AM service. The Vestry will again host a brunch prior to the Annual Meeting, and child care will be provided. On behalf of the Vestry and as in the past two years, I am providing the Junior Warden's report in advance so that you may have time to read, reflect and pray on its contents prior to the Meeting.

2008 Parish Financial Summary

Although a final accounting has not been completed as of the date of this letter, it is safe to say this was a challenging year. Our 2008 operating budget of \$373,983 was supported through member pledges of \$261,000, transfer from endowment of \$69,588, and income from other sources, including the rental of our facility to other groups.

We hope that the remaining outstanding pledges for 2008 will be received prior to the closing of the books and the report to the Annual Meeting.

Under Tom Holtey's able leadership, the Property Committee exercised careful discretion and sound judgment in prioritizing the necessary maintenance of our historic property. Nonetheless, these expenses have exceeded budget, which will deplete the balance of our property reserve fund.

Again this year, the Vestry and Investment Committee continued a best practice model to determine the contribution from the endowment as a percentage of the three year rolling average of the market value of unrestricted assets. For 2008 this percentage was set at 4.5%. The resulting amount of \$67,622 was slightly less than the budgeted amount of \$69,588. The difference will be carried forward in the 2009 budget. Notwithstanding the current market conditions, our endowment can support this level of disbursement while still allowing the principal to grow at a rate exceeding the projected inflation rate. This conservative contribution from the endowment enables St. Mary's to maintain our historic property and to support programs deemed important to the congregation, especially our music and Christian Education programs.

2008 Progress and Successes

Membership continues to be a focus of attention for the Vestry, including the attraction and retention of new members and also enhancing the programs deemed important to the congregation as a whole. In January we held three Adult forums to continue the "Coffee and Connections" initiative to solicit the ideas and conversation among the congregation to inform the evolution of life at St. Mary's. The Vestry gained important information and insights from our members concerning Christian Education, Outreach and Worship.

Based on feedback regarding Christian Education, Middle School students now meet at 9 AM on Sunday mornings. Children in the K through third grade attend the 10 AM worship service until the second

hymn when they leave with their teachers for their Sunday School classes. These changes have been well received, and we will continue to make adjustments as appropriate to enhance the overall Christian Education program. Isabel Phillips worked tirelessly over the summer to implement these new programs, and we owe her our thanks.

St. Mary's historic commitment to Outreach continues with gratifying results, which are especially appreciated and significant in the current economic circumstances. A comprehensive and detailed report of all of St. Mary's outreach activities, including those funded through the parish budget as well as those sponsored by the Women of St. Mary's, was provided at last year's Annual Meeting. Under Elisabeth Comer's leadership, the Outreach Committee holds an open meeting to get input from all interested members of St. Mary's prior to making its semiannual disbursements. The November Foods 'N Fancies bazaar, sponsored by the Women of St. Mary's, raised over \$12,000 for outreach, an amazing and blessed accomplishment in the current economic climate. Among our most significant outreach initiatives has been our active support of our sister parish, Santa Maria Virgen, San Salvador. Leveraging the work started by Paul Pyzowski the prior year, six members of St. Mary's spent 10 days in El Salvador in May working with the local parishioners to build an essential road in an isolated mountain area. Father Julio Rivera then joined us at St. Mary's for several weeks in September. In December Peter Chase gave the sermon at the dedication service of Santa Maria Virgen's new church building, whose altar was given by St. Mary's. Closer to home, dedicated volunteers continue to staff the Miracle Kitchen in Framingham, and Tim Green continued his collection and shipment of gently used appliances and furniture to victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Ike.

As a result of suggestions from our members, our Worship service has been modified to include more contemplative services of Morning Prayer enhanced by special music. Kirsten Johnson and the adult and junior choirs have again worked tirelessly to provide our exceptional music throughout the year. During Lent, we used the wooden cross and altar candles to support the solemnity of this season.

As part of the planning and preparation for our 200th Anniversary in 2013, the Property Committee has initiated an energy audit to identify steps we can take to make our historic property more energy efficient. In addition, long range planning for capital improvements is also in process.

Proposed Budget for 2009

At this writing, the proposed budget for 2009 has not yet been finalized. However, our preliminary budget calls for expenditures of \$379,200, an increase of less than 2% over 2008. We continue to contain our expenses to the greatest extent possible. Committed pledge income for the year is currently approaching \$200,000, which is still more than 25% short of the budget requirement of \$270,500. To all who have responded in this difficult economic environment, we express our deepest gratitude.

If you have not yet returned your pledge card, please give this your prayerful consideration as every pledge is especially critical to carry out the work of St. Mary's. Pledge income represents over 70% of our operating revenue. If you need a new pledge card, please contact the church office or Julia dePeyster, Stewardship Committee Chair, at (617) 905-8568.

A Look to 2009 and Beyond

In preparation for our 200th Anniversary, a Steering Committee will be formed to begin to plan and oversee the celebratory events and related projects. This Committee will function independently of, but will be responsible to, the Vestry. Please let us know of your interest in serving in this group. Having considered a number of initiatives to mark this significant milestone in our parish history, the Vestry plans to continue to engage the expertise of specialists within the Diocese to help evaluate that which is most feasible and appropriate to the continuing growth and health of St. Mary's.

Other Highlights of 2008

The following events were key in support of our continuing emphasis on Membership:

- The Adult Forums to further the "Coffee and Connections" initiative
- The addition of nametags for coffee hour and other gatherings to help newer members and visitors remember the welcome extended them
- A successful summer Parish Picnic, held indoors for the first time in collective memory due to inclement weather
- A "Welcome Back BBQ" for both old and new members on a beautiful September afternoon, complete with games and coupons for an ice cream truck
- An El Salvadorian menu for a family dinner in September during Father Julio's visit
- A challenging and rewarding Lenten lecture series, sponsored by the Women of St. Mary's, in addition to the return of Sunday evening Soup and Cinema dinners
- The distribution of our current Olan Mills church directory
- Continuing enhancements to our website, including a daily blog during the mission trip to El Salvador, current photographs of all parish activities and posting of the approved monthly Vestry minutes

The Junior Warden's report is not intended to be comprehensive in its review of the many activities of St. Mary's. More detailed reports will be presented at the Annual Meeting on the budget as well as on the many ministries, activities and organizations that are part of our parish life and family.

Again, we encourage you to attend the Parish Annual Meeting is on Sunday, January 25 following the 10:00 AM service. This is an important learning and sharing opportunity for all of us.

Yours in Christ,

Mary Green
Junior Warden