

# Rector's Annual Report – 2012

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In many respects, as I sat down to write the annual Rector's Report, it seemed like an impossible task. After some thought, I believe the reason I felt that way is simple: while one might be inclined to think that no one in the parish is more of an "insider" than the rector, in some ways I am still very much an "outsider." The reason has nothing to do with warmth or hospitality, but familiarity. You all have been extremely gracious in welcoming Sarah and me into your family, but we're still getting to know each other. As an example, when George Garrison passed, there was no greater "insider" than him, even (and maybe *especially*) me. This was simply because George had been here several decades and I hadn't even been here several months.

Probably the most interesting illustration of this came at this year's Centenary Celebration. My relationship with All Saints had begun 6 months previous in December, when I first became aware of the fact that you all were in the midst of searching for a new rector. What followed were many conversations with the Call Committee, the Vestry, diocesan staff, and anyone else I could think of who might know something about All Saints and the diocese. I'd read Dr. Cox's phenomenal book and even been here to see and experience everything firsthand, so when I received the call to become your rector, I had something of an idea of the richness of the history into which I was entering.

However, as I sat in the Centenary Mass and later followed Dr. Cox on his tour of the parish, the enormity of the heritage and tradition here at All Saints began to sink in. I had, and occasionally *still* have, an overwhelming sense of being propelled *forward* by everything that's come before. Having had some time to reflect on this, it makes sense to me because, as something of an outsider, we don't have much shared history or context for me to look *backward* on.

Therefore, I want to focus this report on the vision for All Saints looking forward, addressing the needs and desires you've shared with me on Sunday mornings, over meals of all kinds, and in meetings of various groups and committees. Along with this vision naturally follows a set of goals that the Vestry and I believe put us closer to achieving it. Most of these goals have specific components that will be easily evaluated this time next year because I want us to be able to see our progress and celebrate it. Some of these goals are admittedly ambitious, but I absolutely believe that they are achievable. Also, because I've spent time outlining these goals and our reasons for having them, I've provided a summary list of them as well.

## **INCREASED INVOLVEMENT IN MINISTRY**

Just about every guild or job being done needs more people doing it. We need more acolytes and lay readers serving. We need more greeters and sidesmen, not only to share the existing duties but expand them. I watch many visitors leave after Mass rather than head to the Parish Hall unaccompanied. But if there were some extra greeters available, they could be more intentional about engaging visitors, ~~dragging~~ walking them to the parish hall, and making introductions. We also need more people serving on the Hospitality Committee week after week to make sure that something awaits them in the Parish Hall.

Another need is for more Lay Eucharistic Visitors. As the only priest currently on staff, I'm the only one regularly taking the sacrament to the sick and home-bound now and unfortunately that's a number that's growing. By increasing the number of people visiting, I can be freed to meet some other goals while still having people visited more frequently than they are now.

## **SERVICE/OUTREACH**

The second goal is to develop and implement a plan for serving regularly in the community. There are all kinds of opportunities in Hillcrest and San Diego to minister to the poor, the sick, the friendless, and the needy, as the Book of Common Prayer puts it. Kay Phillips has volunteered to begin collecting donations for the St Paul's Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly or PACE and that's a great start. But we need to be active in people's lives to follow Jesus' example. Several of you have expressed an interest in this and I hope that more will join in forming a group to evaluate our options and help me put a plan in place.

## **OUR LIFE TOGETHER**

There are several components to enriching our life together. The first is ***improving parish-wide communication***, which means increasing the content on the parish website, resuming publication of the parish newsletter *For All the Saints*, and increasing the amount of parish-wide emails detailing calendars, announcements, intercessions and so on. These are all things I can do and have done in the past, but I need to have some of my time freed up, as I alluded to in the goal of more Lay Eucharistic Visitors.

The second is ***providing more opportunities for Christian formation and community***. This was the primary reason for moving the 10:00 Mass to 10:30; to accommodate Sunday School and adult Christian formation. The desire remains for a midweek evening Bible study/small group for those who cannot attend the existing Friday morning Bible study and a membership class

that will help those wanting to learn more about All Saints and the faith in general and make some connections within the parish.

The third component is ***providing more opportunities for fellowship***. My goal is for the parish to offer at least five events where our main goal is to enjoy each other's company and have a good time. We had one such event this past November, which we called *Jamaican-Me-Thankful*. The food and the music were outstanding, we had lots of visitors, and a good time was had by all. We will have another similar event next week, Tuesday, February 12, a *Mini Mardi Gras*. Future events don't have to be as involved, with food and live music. They could be a parish picnic in the park, a movie night with popcorn, or any number of other things; I heartily invite your ideas and suggestions. These events give us not only opportunities to get to know each other better, but also any non-members that have been invited or just drop by.

The final goal for enriching our life together comes out of the desire most frequently shared with me: ***to increase the number of children and young families at All Saints***. This is a general and more long-term goal, but there are some things we can do in the short-term.

The first thing that we need to do is ***have a nursery in operation***. This goal can be accomplished easily, quickly, and cost-effectively by updating the existing nursery in the parish hall. This also means having an attendant for the nursery so that parents have an opportunity to worship as well.

The second thing is already beginning to happen, which is ***providing more opportunities for children's participation***. George Dreyer is already training the acolytes as young as he can and giving them things to do. Serving at the altar is a vital part of a parish's culture, particularly one like ours where worship is so central to our identity, and so I'm delighted to see it already underway.

The third thing is to ***create a set of "Quiet Bags,"*** which contain various activities to help occupy younger children during Mass. These will be especially helpful to parents now, as we currently have no Children's Chapel (see below), but will remain so even once it resumes. They will serve visitors (or, as I like to think of them, "members-to-be") who may prefer to keep their children with them or whose children may not want to leave their parents. They will serve parishioners who believe their children should become accustomed to remaining in Mass, even if their participation is limited. Most importantly, they will send the clear message that All Saints values and takes their needs into consideration, which is essential if we want them to be a part of our family.

## *Sunday school and Christian Formation*

The final part of this component is not a goal for 2013, but for the long-term and it has to do with Sunday school. It has been shared with me that our current set-up is not ideal because it asks children to sit through not just Mass, but Sunday school as well. I completely agree and so I think it's important to share the entire vision so that it's clear where we are in the process.

This first step was to ***provide something between the Masses*** so that it was available to those attending either; allowing both parents and children either to stay after the early Mass or come before the late Mass. The second step is to ***implement a formal Christian education program*** that builds on itself year after year and provides a comprehensive approach to the faith. [My personal preference is for *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, a highly successful program used with children ages 3-12 all over the country. Setting up the program can be a highly involved and somewhat costly process and so I'm certainly open to other possibilities, but I believe that this is *the* area of parish ministry in which we should be highly-invested, given our connection to the preschool.] Also part of this second step would be once again ***offering a lectionary-based Children's Chapel*** during one or both Masses, as Lu Locke had been doing already, so that young children have the opportunity to engage worship in a way that may be more accessible to them our formal worship. It's important to have *both* aspects of Christian education because the Sunday lectionary doesn't always lend itself to teaching about sacraments, tradition, and worship; that's not its purpose. In fact, it doesn't always help teach about the Bible itself, outside of the context of the snapshots we receive over the course of a three-year cycle. It seems like an awful lot to ask children to keep it all straight when most adults (and even some clergy!) struggle with the same thing.

The obvious response to this vision is that we need children to put in all of these classes! The question may even be asked, "Why do we need all of these things if we don't have the children?" This is a legitimate question, but it's based on a slight misconception. The fact is that we *do* have children. There are a dozen kids under the age of 12 that attend regularly that need to be served as best we're able. Just as important are the approximately 65 children and their parents that are here, but don't attend regularly: All Saints Preschool. These children spend more time on our property and their parents visit it more frequently than the vast majority of our regular Sunday congregation. Also, it's my understanding that many of them have been invited to and have attended at least one Mass here and yet are not regular worshipers. Why is that? Because we don't offer what they're looking for in the way other churches do.

I have a great many friends and acquaintances from high school and college that were not faithful Christians when we were in school together and yet I know that quite a few of them are now active members of congregations. What's changed? They have kids.

Several of my friends were raised as church-going Christians and believe that it's important that their kids are too. Since their decision to go back to church is motivated *by their kids*, they generally look at the ones that offer the best experience *for their kids*. Having created that list, they then choose the one that offers *them* something too. I believe my experience is universal because invariably the first question our pre-school's parents ask me is "What do you offer for kids?" After that they want to know what else is going on, meaning Bible studies, small groups, and other classes, which also matches up with what my friends have shared. In some ways, it's like those who return to school after some time in the workforce. They approach it in a new way because they want something out of it; whether it's to do their jobs better, to get a better job, or just out of genuine interest. Young parents that return to church for their kids want something new out of it and they often find it in those classes and small groups that open up new avenues of thought and prayer. The vision I've outlined is the *basic* picture young families are actively seeking out. We would benefit from a children's choir, junior high and high school youth groups, mission trips too, but those are things that can wait until we have moved some of those kids to regular Sunday worshippers.

As I stated in the beginning of this report, it's my primary intent to look forward because I don't have the capacity describe very much firsthand if I start looking backward. However, in laying out goals and visions for All Saints looking forward, I can't help but think that it all sounds somewhat familiar. Many of you have shared memories with me that sound an awful lot like what I've described: lots of helping hands in the various ministries of the church (often "recruited" by Fr. Satrang himself), building projects, membership classes and Christian formation, active youth programs. The vision for All Saints looking forward is very similar to the vision looking backward, which reminds me of one of my favorite quotes:

*"The Church [All Saints]...is not something we inherit from generations past or take over from our predecessors. The Church [All Saints] is on loan to us from future generations."*

I'm not interested in All Saints becoming something new; that's a lot of work and suffering that I wouldn't have chosen for myself. I'm interested in All Saints being what we've always been and I'm here because I know you are too. Please consider how you might help the Vestry and me begin meeting these goals so that we might not preserve but enrich the heritage of those who will come after us.

## Parish Goals for 2013

### **Increased involvement in Ministry**

- ❖ 5+ LEV making regular visits
- ❖ 3+ new lay readers
- ❖ 4+ new ushers/sidesmen
- ❖ Add to Hospitality Committee

### **Service/Outreach**

- ❖ Develop/implement a plan for *servicing* in the community
  - Possible subcommittee action
  - Explore opportunities at the Episcopal Church Center
- ❖ Begin taking up regular collections for PACE

### **Strengthening the Bond**

- ❖ Improve Parish Communication
  - Resume publishing *For All Saints*
  - Increase standing and changing content on the website
  - Regular parish-wide emails; announcements, intercessions, forwarded articles, etc.
- ❖ 5+ Special Events for parish fellowship
- ❖ New Member class/Weekly Bible Study/Small Group
- ❖ Nursery in operation
- ❖ Provide more opportunities for children's participation
- ❖ Create a set of 3-6 "Quiet Bags"