

RECTOR'S REPORT

Submitted by David J. Lucey

February 5, 2021

Dear Franciscans,

The Annual Meeting provides the church with a wonderful opportunity to review our life in this past year, and this has been a challenging year in the life of our community, our region, the diocese, the Commonwealth, and the nation. Our culture was straining and in conflict with itself even before those strains and conflicts were intensified by the actions taken to fight the pandemic of COVID-19 and the political environment of 2020.

It was March 13, 2020 when Bishop Susan, Suffragan Bishop and Ecclesiastical Authority in the Diocese of Virginia, directed churches to cease in-person worship, including pastoral liturgies and visits. This decision loomed large in the life of our Parish, but it was taken by the Bishop in order to keep our members and clergy safe.

St. Francis made the shift to new ways of worship quickly. Beginning on Sunday, March 15, we were using Zoom Meeting to gather. That was a small group of 39 participants and maybe 50 attendees. By Easter we gathered over 130 participants and close to 200 attendees. Over the next eight months, we typically welcomed 70 to 90 participants and with multiple worshippers included with many of the participants we generally had a worship attendance of between 90 and 130 attendees. All of these metrics are welcome signs that our community is cohesive, engaged, and remaining together.

While some Franciscans have not been participating in Sunday worship they still consider St. Francis home and are supporting us in prayer, pledging, and hope that we can gather in-person soon. Interestingly, we have now been joined regularly by folks who live outside our region. Some are associated by previous relationship with our community. Others found us online.

Some of the ways we have maintained our connections is through a step-up in online services, spiritual practices, and study groups. The Daily Offices have been prayed at 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM every weekday since March of 2020, a Bible Study with the Rector reviewing the upcoming week's Gospel reading was added soon thereafter, Contemplative Prayer continued on Monday nights, the Men's Group on Wednesday mornings, as did a Woman's Bible study on Thursday afternoons. In each of these venues, the gathering and dispersal times became moments of connection and sharing, as has the virtual coffee hour after church on Sunday's. Much of this has been due to the attention and diligent work of Wendy Pan, Dana Anderson, Kathy Anderson, Bill Rachal, and Jennifer Murphy, the members of the IWC (Invite*Welcome*Connect) group.

I will let the financials and the other annual reports speak for themselves. They all speak to a community which has a special sense of care for its members and those that it serves. Because of that aspect of St. Francis, singling out people is fraught with risk, but I am going to do so anyway, and I am also going to note what a truly wonderful community I have been invited to serve.

The challenges of the year meant that all sorts of adjustments had to be made and different ways of working taken on. Those challenges were met by every member of St. Francis. But in the wake of the Bishop's directives, I wish to note the work of Tracey Kelly, Associate Rector, Jane Keihn, Director of the St. Francis Creche School, and Lynn Fallon, Parish Administrator for keeping us going in difficult circumstances. All were, or are, staff members and all were doing tremendously challenging work. My deepest thanks for their devotion to St. Francis.

There were also a bevy of lay leaders, some in official positions and some not, who continued to do outstanding service to St. Francis over this past year. Leslie Siegmund and Pat Ward, co-chairs of the Winter Gala give us a

memorable pre-lockdown success for Outreach and sociability. Brice Eldridge, Vestry Liaison for Operations, worked overtime on issues for technology and for the ongoing life of the Creche School. Also supporting the Creche School in its lockdown and preparation for re-opening were Larry Pratt, Board Chair, and Simon Smith, Treasurer. Patrick Killoran, now our Communications and Technology director, immediately began supporting our Zoom Church by setting up the hardware, directing, and producing our Sunday offerings. All the work these dedicated volunteers did kept the church on track.

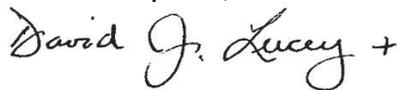
In the area of support for our church I would also like to point out the contribution of the Stewardship Committee for this year. Chaired by Richard Storey, and supported by Tom Wood, Joshua Kim, and Olivia Grady, I cannot say enough about their creativity and engagement. They have inspired the underlying faithfulness of this congregation and in conjunction with Molly Reynolds, Treasurer, produced a successful campaign to fund the church and its mission for 2021.

One of the important aspects of being Christ's body is to serve the people with whom we live. Although we went into lock down and some of our work was postponed, other aspects of our commitment to serve in Northern Virginia kept going. In addition to the success of the Gala, a success to be enjoyed by our co-chairs and congregation alike, the Outreach Committee, chaired by Ginger Roll, has continued its work with Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington, Cornerstones, and Second Story. It has been a challenge but wonderfully gratifying aspect of life in this past year, contributing to the life of our neighbors.

This year's Vestry has been outstanding. They have responded when things went wonky and I am grateful for their work and their support. The regular members of the Vestry were Betty Boutros, Dwight Chewning, Brice Eldridge, Gary Pan, and Karen Shindhelm. Our Executive Committee has also been exemplary and their attention to the life of the parish deeply humbling to watch. Please thank them all: Jeff Wootton, Senior Warden, Denny Sisson, Junior Warden, Molly Reynolds, Treasurer, and Jennifer Murphy, Registrar.

Please excuse my liberality in noting the accomplishments and reasons for hope of this past year in noting so many outstanding contributions by the members of this parish. It has been a remarkable twelve months. I pray that the next twelve will not be so notable in disruptions but a time dedicated to regathering, healing, and enjoying the community that you have built to serve our Lord.

In Christ's peace,



David J. Lucey
Rector