

RECTOR'S REPORT

The Rev. Paul Stephens

All Saints' thrived and prospered in multiple ministry and mission areas during 2016. I encourage you to spend time reading and studying the other reports contained herein as they tell the story of various committees and commissions planning and working in numerous ways. These committees and commissions do the heavy lifting at All Saints'. I am thankful for the engagement by individuals and groups in countless ways. Your work is the backbone of our common effort to be disciples of Christ at this time and in this place. Thank you!

I want to hit a few highlights and accomplishments for the year.

Worship. Because All Saints' is a welcoming and inclusive church we experienced growth in 2016 in the number of persons actively engaged in ministry, including growth in the number of services offered, the total number of persons attending those services and average Sunday attendance:

	Number of Services	Total Attendance	Avg. Sunday Attendance
2015	282	10,847	163
2016	350	12,196	176

Part of that growth is attributable to members of Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church, our new ministry partner, joining us mid-year. We were blessed to invite and welcome that church family into our midst. Of course, that invitation and welcome was grounded upon the 15-year old full communion agreement ("*Called to Common Mission*") between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and gospel hospitality. We were also fortunate to welcome to All Saints' several individuals/families who either found a new church home or moved to our area in recent months.

All Saints' has long been committed to excellent liturgy, and our efforts on that front reflect our search for a deeper relationship with God in a community grounded in sacramental reality (our fall confirmation class of 20 reflects this new engagement). I trust that the community gathered to worship and praise God will continue to strive for excellence in its liturgical offerings and continue to develop and nurture people's relationship with God. Gathering around God's altar week after week feeds and sustains us, and inspires us to share the Good News with all.

No matter the service you normally attend, I hope that during this time of transition you will continue to be faithful in your worship attendance.

Christian Formation. Offering Christian Formation opportunities on Sunday mornings and throughout the week is also important to our faith development. The Lectionary Class, taught by Les Alvis and others, is well attended, and offers an opportunity to dig deep into Sunday's appointed texts. Over 1,200 attended this class in 2016. An additional 606 youth and children were involved in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and the Youth Sunday School class during the year. Adults, please join the Lectionary Class on Sunday morning and make sure your children are also present. Christian formation is vitally important to the future of the Church.

Outreach. We fed 19,480 guests at Saints' Brew during 2016 (since 2010, we've served 128,270 persons). These efforts have significantly decreased food insecurity in our community. Many people prepared and served these meals, while others purchased food and supplies, altogether contributing countless volunteer hours to this endeavor. Fortunately, we receive a substantial amount of food (coffee, sugar, creamer, cereal and the like) donated by individuals, churches and other organizations, as well as financial contributions to this important ministry, all of which keep out-of-pocket costs low. It is hard to believe that Saints' Brew will observe its 10th Anniversary in 2017. Because of this ministry, many know All Saints' as "the church that feeds people."

In the fall, All Saints' was invited to submit a grant proposal to the Family Resource Center for the funding of services to homeless families in our area. The proposal was approved by the Center and work has begun. You'll hear more about this important initiative in the coming weeks and months. My thanks to the Outreach Committee for its assistance and oversight and Albert White agreeing to serve as church liaison.

Financial Health. We began 2016 expecting to experience a large budget deficit of some \$24,000 for the year. As I write this report, all indications are that we will finish the financial year at or near the breakeven point. This result reflects both your generosity and the careful stewardship by vestry, committee chairs and staff of the resources entrusted by you to the church.

Your generosity was also evident in your commitments of money toward the *Saint's Alive! Living Generously, Giving Generously* 2017 operating budget campaign. We saw an increase both in the total number of pledging units and a \$22,086 increase in overall giving. Thank you!

I had previously reported to you that after several months of study and work by the Finance and Executive Committees, the Vestry approved a plan to pay off the Renasant loan and refinance the parish's building indebtedness with Community Bank. The new loan closed on December 27, 2016, and will allow for the complete payment of the building indebtedness in 10

years. The new interest rate is 2.49% for the first 18 months of the loan, after which the rate will increase to 3.713% fixed for the balance of the loan term. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel!!

As I complete my 8 years of ministry in Tupelo, and prepare to move to Jackson to become Canon to the Ordinary, please accept my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all who contributed time, effort, prayers and financial resources during 2016 and in past years. Your engagement in the life of All Saints', and more recently in Christ the King, is valued and greatly appreciated. Thanks to our wardens and vestry, past and present, for taking an active role in leading our parish in countless ways and for being willing to devote the time and energy to focus and vision about the challenges that the future no doubt will present. And to our church staff – the best in all of Christendom and a dedicated and energetic group who always rises to the occasion – Thank You! Y'all have made my job so much easier. I add a special thank you to Martha, my wife, for supporting me in this work and the demands it sometimes presents.

Our time here will be remembered fondly. Thank you for your support and love.

Shalom, Paul+