

# **A Recent History of the Progress of All Saints Church**

## **And What is Needed Next**

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**December 2020**

***Our new Vestry could be helped by a review of where we have been in the recent past and where we might need to be headed this year. The review below is offered to help, but is mostly in the context of the operations and management the Vestry needs to address. What is less addressed below are the overriding and paramount concerns of ministry and mission, which are the subjects of other discussions and efforts being made among the Vestry, the Clergy, the Staff, and the Congregation. The point here is to be sure that no one might think that our leadership is more concerned about management and finances than Gospel ministry. In fact, the opposite is true. The management and finances are merely some of the resources needed to fuel fruitful ministry, recognizing that the Holy Spirit, prayers, and our sacrificial service are the most powerful and blessed resources of all!***

The All Saints Church Vestrys serving from 2011 through 2013, under Senior Warden Todd Miller, each made their marks upon the expansion and faith of our congregation and ministries. It was a time of spirited newness and enthusiasm that brought a clearer identity and cohesiveness to our parish family. However, the amazing achievements of those Vestrys presented huge ministry, management, and financial challenges if we were to produce optimum fruit of it all for our Lord Jesus and His Gospel mission.

A sharper focus for each Vestry began in 2013 upon the completion of the 2013 Strategic Plan, which was formulated under the leadership of Stuart McFarland and several other church leaders. The execution of all but a couple of the many action items of that Strategic Plan took two years and were the focal points of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 Vestrys, under Senior Warden Richard Ranger. This was also a time of deepened prayer, discipleship, and mission emphases that substantially impacted the hearts and faith of God's people. These were hard and sacrificial efforts that provided the foundations and structures necessary for most of the huge strides that have since followed, as partially mentioned below.

The 2016-17 Vestry, under Senior Warden Richard Miles, built upon the Strategic Plan momentum and substantially updated and reformed, for decades to

come, the way the Parish does business. It was likely the most industrious Vestry year in All Saints' history. The impetus was fueled by the 3-month 2016 volunteer tenure of Todd Miller who led us to study, create, or recast our personnel manual, preschool personnel manual, employment contracts, pension plan, health insurance plan, short term disability plan, property insurance, parish endowment, accounting procedures, building engineering studies, long-range physical plant maintenance schedules, parish bylaws, columbarium operational policies, and much more. A herculean effort by all involved.

Upon prayers and listening for the Holy Spirit's direction in this stream of preparation for future mission, the 2017-18 Vestry continued working under Senior Warden Richard Miles to accomplish the greatest financial stabilization and strengthening benefits the parish has ever known. Jonathan Stroebel once again led our annual giving initiatives producing the highest parishioner pledges in our 120-year history, by God's grace. We are approached \$1.6 million dollars of pledges alone for 2018, almost double where we were just seven years before. Giving above pledges took our annual totals above \$2,000,000. As if that were not blessing enough, the Eshelmans and Espys prayed, created, and led a new capital campaign effort. That amazing ministry effort was so successful, by God's grace, that our Gospel mission, building rehabilitation, and endowment fortification are all advanced and already assured of some of the major impacts hoped for before we began. The expansion of our local and global mission work, addition of new clergy, and the completion of our first new roof in 96 years were huge – yet only the first tastes of the blessings to come, all to our Lord's glory and honor.

The 2018-19 Vestry under Senior Warden Jonathan Stroebel brought ever-enhanced fine tuning to management and the solidification of our annual giving – at least until the COVID shutdown. There is no doubt but that Jonathan's sacrificial and industrious efforts for the Lord and the church were the main reasons for these blessings. Our building enhancements during this Vestry year included major initiatives that had been awaited for decades in some cases. There was also a significant enlargement of our church staff and a reengineering of our preschool management and operations.

The 2019-20 Vestry under Senior Warden Cary Buckingham brought an explosion of new initiatives and higher-level management implementations. Cary

was blessed with an extraordinarily expert and exuberant Vestry who acted like an executive Special Ops team bringing the fruition of the Kingdom Campaign capital effort, a new Strategic Plan, new management committees, new accounting systems, major building and grounds initiatives, new clergy, and more.

We now stand in the midst of our 2020-2021 Vestry under Senior Warden Cindy Wade. Though her tenure might be short term because of a delayed Annual Meeting and elections, caused by the virus shutdown, Cindy has already worked to mobilize the parish to come to the forefront with ways to improve relationships within and beyond the church under the model of Jesus' Kingdom. The challenges of the shutdown find the Senior Warden and her Vestry triaging sudden and urgent financial, administrative, legal, and regulatory needs. No one saw it coming, but this Vestry has more acute challenges than the others before it. What might we prayerfully discern to be the Holy Spirit's calling upon this Vestry, in the unfolding and ongoing blessings and work God is providing through us?

The prayers, listening, and discernments of the Rector would suggest the list of needs, initiatives, and goals below. What is needed next is for the Vestry to pray as well, for the Senior Warden to take the counsel of the Senior Wardens before her, for the Vestry to come to a vision consensus, and for goals and delegations of authority to be set for the year ahead.

Here are the Rector's insights, opinions, and suggestions, in no particular order.

1. The principal theme of the 2020-21 Vestry should be strategic plan implementation, continued management enhancement, financial and annual giving stabilization, and Kingdom Relations within and beyond the parish.
2. While the Gospel mission imperatives, strategic planning, financial enhancements, and Kingdom Relations activities will swirl around us, what All Saints needs very much is to finally come to grips with its annual giving and/or budgeting challenges to stabilize us for the years ahead.
3. Our finances continue to lag behind the velocity and voltage of our ministries, activities, pastoral needs, growth, and operational challenges. While we have made huge strides and have many ongoing

improvements underway, we need an orchestrated, focused, and comprehensive effort to sharpen and discipline our giving and/or budgeting across the board.

4. The call upon this Vestry is to not neglect or squander, but rather to gather and utilize every drop of the fruits of the Vestrys immediately preceding us. Those fruits include our prayer, discipleship, and mission advancements, our brand new Strategic Plan, our 2013 Strategic Plan achievements, the two dozen new operational changes provided by Todd Miller in 2016, our building and grounds accomplishments, the momentum of our annual giving, and the once-in-a-generation blessing of the capital contributions God's people provided to us during the Kingdom Campaign.
5. In order to make the most of it all we need many points of focus, with the Vestry to determine how it might best aid the process of each.
6. Financial Management. We need to do several things here.
  - a. **Finance Committee**. We need to make the Finance Committee stronger, more active, and more exacting.
  - b. **Audit Committee**. We have been deficient in our record of audits over the years. Audits are vital. They are also required by the canons/regulations of the Episcopal Church and our Diocese. Yet, many (most?) churches don't do them, so we're hardly alone. We need to permanently raise up an active Audit Committee. Audits must be excellently done starting now.
  - c. **Accounting Changes**. For quite some time, the Vestry and other leadership have desired substantial changes in our accounting reporting systems. A few years ago, Frank and Company, CPAs, were retained as consultants to the parish and helped us to establish new accounting systems and charts of account. Smythe Kannapell, CPA, joined us a couple of years ago and has led us to new levels of excellence and accountability. Other accounting employees have been added. Enormous work has been done already. But we need to see this to a proper resolution and we are still a year away, I am guessing.

- d. **Committee Work.** We have a roster of existing parish management committees and their memberships. Our committee structure should be examined and improved.
- e. **Our Preschool.** The All Saints Preschool is a ministry of the parish, owned by the parish, and operated by the Vestry. There is also a Preschool Advisory Board whose members are approved by the Vestry. Likewise, the budget of the Preschool is under the Vestry's authority. The Preschool is not a separate entity and has no federal identification number of its own. The employees of the Preschool are under the Rector's authority, as are all employees of any parish. Not many years ago, the Preschool and Parish at-large seemed to operate separately and even competitively in some ways. Those days are gone, thank goodness. There is an excellent swirl of relations and operations among Preschool and Church leaders. Our faculty is the best ever and enrollment has been maturing year to year. We look forward to even greater success for our school.
- f. **Parish Growth.** We have an interesting dynamic at hand. Annual church membership and giving increased substantially each year up until about 2 years ago when we seemed to plateau. Also, our weekly attendance hasn't kept pace with membership and giving. The 2020 shutdown makes 2021's growth difficult to assess. I am assuming that we will stay even at best, but more likely be diminished a bit. I would expect growth to resume again in 2022.
- g. **Building and Grounds.** Bill Garner, our Facilities Manager, is a super star. What Bill has done, together with regular assistance from our Building and Grounds Committee, is extraordinary. A once-in-a-century roof replacement is behind us. Heating and air upgrades have been made. Stone walls have been repaired. Our Rectories have been cared for and improved. Much more than this has been completed with an organ refurbishment and a replacement of church windows lying ahead among other projects.