

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

River Hills, Wisconsin



ANNUAL REPORT for the year 2015

Presented at the Annual Meeting, January 31, 2016

St. Christopher's Mission Statement

The mission of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church is to share the Gospel joyfully with everyone; offering a place in the heart of the North Shore where God's love is personally experienced. We are a sanctuary for spiritual growth, dedicated to serving Christ in our daily lives.

(2014)

The Annual Meeting for St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
January 31, 2016
10:15 AM after the 9 AM service

AGENDA

Opening Prayer

1. Call to Order – Mary Cady Thickens, Senior Warden
2. Approve Minutes from 2015 Annual Meeting
3. Presentation and election of Vestry Candidates

*Chris Mortenson—to be elected to a three year term.

*Dick Hackl—to be elected to a three year term.

*Kathleen McGarry—to be elected to a three year term.

*Kathie Eilers—to be elected to a two year term.

[Explanation: In the class of 2016, there are three openings. Diane Eisen and Bill Warner are rotating out. Kathy Stanford left the vestry prior to her term expiring at the end of 2015. Kathie Eilers, who was filling an unexpired term this year, will stand for her own two year term. When Darrell Fischer left the vestry, Tom Davies moved to Senior Warden and Mary Thickens replaced Tom as Junior Warden. MaryBeth Ansley was appointed to serve the remaining two years of Mary Thickens' term on vestry.

Our vestry, according to our by-laws, can be from 6-9 members in size (not including the Wardens). This election will give us 6 vestry members, plus the two Wardens. If anyone is interested in being on the vestry, we welcome the opportunity to talk to you about vestry membership.]

4. Presentation and re-election of Wardens:

*Senior Warden: Mary Cady Thickens

5. Presentation and Election of Deputies to the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee.

*Diane Eisen

*Wendy Sopkovich

*Mary Thickens

*Marisa Roberts

6. Introduction of the Clerk of the Vestry: Harry Ansley. And our Treasurer, Barbara Eckblad.

7. Remarks: Mary Cady Thickens, Senior Warden

8. Discernment Process: Mary Thickens, Senior Warden

9. Stewardship Campaign Analysis & Executive Summary – Financial Plan for St. Christopher's: Chris Mortenson

10. Recognition of outgoing vestry members: Diane Eisen and Bill Warner, and outgoing Co-Clerk of the Vestry, Janie Asmuth.

11. Adjournment.



**Minutes of the Annual Meeting
St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
January 25, 2015**

1. Call to Order:

The Rev. Debra Trakel called the meeting to order at 9:40am.

2. Approve Minutes from 2014 Annual Meeting:

Bill Warner moved that the minutes of the January 26, 2014 Annual Meeting be approved as presented. Ada Nielsen seconded. The motion carried.

3. Presentation and Election of Vestry Candidates:

*Mary Thickens—to be elected to a three-year term.

*Barbara Eckblad—to be elected to a three-year term.

*Alan Becker—to be elected to a two-year term.

*Kathie Eilers—to be elected to a one-year term.

Judy Scharfenberger moved that the candidates be elected to the Vestry as presented. Diane Eisen seconded. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

4. Presentation and re-election of Wardens:

*Senior Warden: Darrell Fischer

*Junior Warden: Thomas (Tom) Davies

Dick Hackl moved that the candidates be re-elected as presented.

Emily Vaill Pfaff seconded. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

5. Presentation and Election of Deputies to the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee:

*Diane Eisen

*Wendy Sopkovich

*Mary Thickens

*Barbara Eckblad

*Darrell Fischer (alternate)

Kathie Eilers moved that the candidates be elected as presented.

Betty Stroock seconded. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

6. Introduction of the Co- Clerks of the Vestry, Janie Asmuth and Harry Ansley, and our Treasurer, Barbara Eckblad.

7. Remarks by our Senior Warden, Darrell Fischer:

Darrell reflected on what he saw as a very good year at St. Christopher's, noting with both amazement and pride the many good things—big and small—that happened in 2014 thanks to the involvement of so many within our community: the choir; the music of the piano, organ and Rays of Light; Sunday school; great fellowship, from coffee hour and pot lucks to picnics and Ladies' Night Out; outreach, from The Gathering to a host of fund raisers and Endowment grants; the garden; a new website and more.

He reserved special appreciation and thanks for a resilient and collegial vestry, collaborative, respectful and open to discussion, and for Debra, for always challenging us to be better, do better, while at the same time helping us to put everything into the proper context.

8. Presentation of the budget: Barbara Eckblad, Treasurer.

Barbara provided an overview of the 2015 budget, as approved at the January 20, 2015 Vestry

meeting. She noted that this budget again reflects her recent efforts to be more cautious in projecting income—reflecting, for example, only pledges actually received before finalization of the budget—resulting in a more realistic view of any potential deficit. This stands in contrast to historical tendencies to overestimate income, leading to underestimated deficits.

Other observations included:

- *the 2015 budget reflects a 1% decrease in operating expenses versus 2014, despite including a 1.9% increase in staff salaries;
- *building costs, while optimized, still represent 23% of operating expenses;
- *17% of the 2014 budget came from the Church Reserve Fund;
- *while the actual 2014 deficit (\$29,686) was significantly lower than the budgeted deficit (\$80,991), this was mostly due to special one-time contributions which could not reasonably be projected to recur in 2015;
- *the projected deficit in the 2015 budget is \$110,211.

Debra added some historical perspective, noting that deficits are not new to St. Christopher's, with generous, wealthy parishioners generally coming forward in past years to cover the shortfall. Because the great majority of those benefactors have either died or moved away, St. Christopher's is left with a deficit history which is not sustainable. Based upon the 2015 budget, the Church Reserve Fund, our savings account, can only help for perhaps the next 3 years. Offsetting that short timetable, she believes, are the strengths to be realized from the combination of a great community, a great facility and boundless opportunities.

Debra also mentioned an additional issue which will likely need to be resolved within the next 1-2 years: the monument in the Memorial Garden does not have space for as many names as there are remaining plots. The Memorial Garden Committee--Bill Wernecke (Chairman), Janie Asmuth, Kip Jacobs, Owen Perry, Kathy Stanford—are working hard on potential solutions.

Before moving on to the next agenda item, Debra took time to thank Barbara for all her hard work in greatly simplifying and clarifying our budget documents so that we can better understand and manage our finances going forward. She also offered her special thanks to several others, including: Ada Nielsen for her great efforts on several projects; Kathy Stanford, also for her work on several projects—especially the garden; MaryBeth and Harry Ansley for their behind-the-scenes work; and that very special group of confirmands—a remarkable group of young people ready to help usher in a bright future.

9. Recognition of outgoing vestry members: Dolores Mishelow and Dick Hackl:

Debra thanked Dolores and Dick for their service, noting in particular that Dick had served another year beyond his expired term as Senior Warden to help provide some continuity in transition.

10. Adjournment to continue our worship service.

There being no further business, Debra adjourned the meeting at 10:29am and returned to the worship service.

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Respectfully submitted, Harry Ansley, Co-Clerk



Transition Timeline

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, River Hills

January 2016

Phase I – Initial Diocesan Information Sharing

(December) – Met with the Bishop and Canon for Congregations to understand Transition process

- Focused on saying goodbye to Debra
- Obtained additional member for the Discernment Committee to ensure that the committee reflects all demographic groups of St. Christopher's
- Supply clergy were found for all worship services through June
- Arrangements were made with local clergy for emergency pastoral care
- Vestry and the Diocese determined that no interim rector was needed and that the entire congregation will be asked to participate in the discovery phase.

Phase II – Discovery Phase

Diocesan Office of Transitional Ministries – The Office of Transition is responsible for obtaining names of discerning priests through national Diocesan Transition meetings, networking and web-based information sharing – Peggy Bean, our Canon for Congregations is currently searching and obtaining names.

- Candidate names coming into the Office for Transition
- Peggy will be meeting on an ongoing basis with the Discernment Committee to have a better understanding of the ministry of St. Christopher's. This will aid her to better evaluate potential candidates to be considered.

Discernment Committee – Christian theologian Soren Kierkegaard wrote “Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” The Discernment Committee will look at our history and address the following to better understand who we are:

- How does the past impact the identity of St. Christopher's today & tomorrow?
- The founding years of the congregation were focused on family education, social justice, current issues in the world, and locally and collaborative leadership – is this true today?
- Explore and understand the dynamics of today
Please participate as often as you can – all voices are needed to be heard together
- The committee begins to compile and assimilate the information gathered.
- The committee completes the portfolio for the National Office of Transition Ministry
- The portfolio information is communicated to the wider church.

Phase III – Interviews

Preparation – Discernment Committee prepares for phone interviews, putting together interview questions based on the discovery phase; coordinate interview logistics. The committee will also:

- Review OTM (Office of Transition Ministry) portfolios
- Review resumes
- Research online presence – read blogs, hear sermons, etc.
- Rate candidate portfolios and resumes in relationship to St. Christopher's goals and the qualities we are seeking.

Phone interview candidates

- Discern additional information about candidate through the personal conversations
- Discern the candidates and the strengths of each as compared to St. Christopher's needs and priorities
- Discern those candidates the committee wants to visit?

Phase IV – Congregational Visits to Discerning Priests' Parishes

- Visit parishes to observe the environments and the candidates' interactions with parishioners
- Observe and interview the candidates in their parish environment
- Meet and interview wardens
- Review the results of visits – which candidates to move to the next phase
- Discuss and choose candidates to invite for a St. Christopher's site visit.

Phase V – St. Christopher's Visit by Discerning Priests

- Vestry interviews candidates; committee serves as hospitality
- Show candidates the area
- Candidates meet with the Bishop
- Decide the candidate to call to St. Christopher's
- Notify Bishop Miller of the committee's decision
- Issue the call
- Draft Letter of Agreement and Covenant of Mutual Expectations, including receiving the Canon for Congregations' review
- Candidate and wardens sign the Letter of Agreement
- Bishop Miller signs the Letter of Agreement
- Announcement made to the parish and the wider church



From the Senior Warden

The Vestry can be described as those members of the parish, elected by the parish, who represent the varied interests of the church-going community at St. Christopher's. They are all, except for the Rector, volunteers in their role as Vestry members. They serve the parish because they love the parish. The Rector, by canon law, chairs the Vestry meetings.

Opportunities and challenges that come onto the agenda for the monthly meeting are submitted by committees, church members, other Vestry members and, of course, the Rector. Agenda items are discussed, occasionally debated and then voted on with a majority being necessary for approval. In practice, the Vestry usually comes to consensus before a vote is taken. Issues vary in magnitude and range from building and grounds issues, to adult and children's programming, to strategic planning, budget and endowment considerations in order to preserve a strong Christian tradition that is attractive to all individuals that worship here.

In addition, each Vestry meeting includes a time of check in where members do some faith sharing with one another; and there is always some time to discuss a broad view issue to remind the Vestry that its role is to help keep "the main thing the main thing" at our church.

I am very proud of our Vestry not only for what we have accomplished in 2015 but how it is done. We say in meetings that "how we do what we do, is as important as what we do." Respect is the key element that I find central to how we listen and respond to each other when dealing with all issues that range from simple, to critical and sensitive. Respect may seem fundamental in nature but it is central to how we operate and hold ourselves. We are not a corporate board, we are a church Vestry. It's been my experience that not many boards operate as well as does our Vestry.

The Vestry is a committed and resilient volunteer group as well. We range from active younger families to empty nesters. The team keeps showing up and executing in order for St. Christopher's to be the best Christian experience possible.

One last note, Vestry meeting minutes and financials are always available to you. Each month they are posted on the bulletin board in the community room. You are welcome to look at them and take in the breadth of topics and considerations addressed on a monthly basis.

This year we are particularly focused on the discernment process of calling a new rector.

Sincerely,

Tom Davies,
Senior Warden

Treasurer/Stewardship Report

*“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” Luke 3:1-6*

It seems that every year about this time I look back over the past 12 months and wonder where the time has gone. Do you do the same? This year, I seem to be more focused on the future. I am preoccupied with 2016, and wondering what God has in store for our faith community at St. Christopher's. There will be lots of changes for us. They will come, whether we are ready for them, whether we want them, whether we resist them, whether we embrace them. They will come. Will I be ready? Will we be ready?

We are now past the Season of Advent – that season when the community of believers remembers that it is to *prepare* for His coming. The prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament challenged the Israelites – and us – to prepare. John the Baptist does the same in the Gospels, like the passage above from Luke, which we heard read the Second Sunday in Advent. But what does that mean? When I looked up the definition of *prepare* I found this: *to put in proper condition or readiness*. To me this seems to mean that if I am to *prepare* and we as a parish are to *prepare*, we will need to *do* something. We will need to actively put our parish in a proper condition of readiness for what God has in mind for us.

I'm not sure what that will look like, but we Episcopalians believe that through prayer and faithful conversation we will learn what it means. In 2015 our parish has grown in our understanding of the relationship between our personal financial gifts and the truth that all we have comes from God. We have increased our offering back to God in the form of our pledges. Our Stewardship Effort was focused on “Choosing Life for St. Christopher's” with a goal of raising our pledge offerings by at least \$1000 per pledging member.

To date, of the 65 members who have pledged, 44 have raised their pledge with an average increase of 25%. This has lessened, but not eliminated, the deficit we would otherwise have experienced. The Vestry has made a decision to expand the use of the Endowment Fund *earnings* to fill the financial gap between our offerings and our expenses. This will give us more time to continue the work of raising our commitment to our Lord through our pledge offerings. All of this is hard, but I believe holy, work. It is the work of preparing.

I invite you to join me in praying and talking together, faithfully, about how we keep our focus on *preparing* – putting our parish in a proper condition or readiness – for what God will call us to in 2016 and beyond.

Blessed 2016,

Barbara Eckblad,
Treasurer



Evangelism

The newly formed group of three: Carol DeSisti, Diane Eisen, and I, have just begun what we expect to be an every one to two month gathering. We attempt to be open to the movement of the Spirit as we consider evangelism in the St. Christopher's community, within and beyond the walls of the church, and bearing in mind there being endless possibilities for proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.

The committee sponsored a bring-a-friend-to-church-Sunday in the fall of 2015, created informational welcome folders for visitors, and encouraged the giving of existing St. Christopher's pens as invitations to church. We hope that through our efforts, St. Christopher's will inspire new ministry, and grow in faithful witnesses. Every day is bring a friend to church day.

We invite your presence and ask your prayers, and we pray that every part of our parish family will assume their commission which comes with baptism, and every day go into the world in peace, to do the work that God has given us to do, to love and serve as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. (BCP p. 365-6)

Emily Vaill Pfaff



Music Report

The choir continues to struggle with small numbers. It may be a sign of the times that people are just not into choir singing. The small numbers are also a reflection of the downsizing of St. Christopher's membership. In spite the small size, we continue to support the music at the 10:00 AM service on Sunday mornings and the Holy Week services and Christmas Eve.

We sing a wide variety of music from plainchant to the occasional Spiritual. We have also broadened our repertoire of service music to include musical settings of the Mass from GIA Publication's "Gather Hymnal," a hymnal series popular in Roman Catholic congregations. We also use music from the "Voices Found" hymnal, an Episcopal Church publication that includes hymns and spiritual songs by, for and about women. This is very important to our choir since it is composed entirely of women.

We need to thank the six women who sing in our choir, Diane Eisen, Laura Gough, Julie Holubowicz, Dee Lee, Judy Scharfenberger and Nance Schmid. Without their voices and dedication, music at St. Christopher's would be significantly diminished. They bring so much to our worship services.

We also have some very good singers at our 8:00 AM service on Sunday mornings. They delight in gathering around the piano during the singing of hymns and service music forming a small choir. It is a great joy to accompany them and all the other 8:00 o'clock worshippers.

John Beardsley,
Music Director



Nursery Report

St. Christopher's nursery is available for parents to take their children all year, serving our youngest parishioners and their families during Sunday services. Our nursery is bright and cheery and well stocked with toys to engage our youngest members while their parents are able to worship. There is no expectation that children be in the nursery. If you wish, your children can remain with you in the church. Even crying is lovely music as it is the harbinger of the next generation of church members.

However, should you wish to have your children in our nursery you should know that the nursery is staffed primarily with a bonded staff person who we contract with through CCN Nannies. She is assisted by the generous volunteer efforts of our parishioners of all ages. At all times there are two people staffing the nursery. And together, throughout the year they provide dedicated, consistent, safe and nurturing care for our little ones. We have beepers you can use as well if you would like us to contact you during the services.

Diane Eisen is the parish liaison for our nursery, Gust Olson arranges for the CCN Nannies and puts together the volunteer schedules, in the event you would like to volunteer.

The nursery is located down the main hall off the community room next to the rest rooms. We accept donations of items in good condition. If you have something you would like to donate, please take it to the office.

It is with deep appreciation for all the parents who have shared their children with us, and the staff and volunteers who care for them as well, that I submit this report.

Blessings,
Diane Eisen



Children's Ministry

The children's ministry at St. Christopher's Church has made some small but noteworthy changes this year. We still have four classrooms just as we did last year. The youngest classroom, or the Ark, has the four- and five-year-old children. The Knitters have our first and second grade children, and the Weavers have the third, fourth, and fifth grade children. The Journeyers still have our oldest children, which include the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. We have two new teachers this year: Robert Claud Diedrich and Nicholas Weseman teach in the Ark together. They have been wonderful additions to our program. They teach alongside our veteran teachers, Maddy Fischer who is now in the Journeyers classroom, Rachel Powlen who is now in the Weavers classroom, and Zach Fischer and Micky Braeger who now teach together in the Knitters classroom.

The curriculum we use to teach the children about God and His people stayed the same this year. We are still using the curriculum entitled *Spark: Activate Faith* for the Ark, Knitters, and Weavers, but we went back to the first cyclical year of the program teaching key lessons from the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament stories are presented in the fall, and the New Testament stories are presented in the winter and spring. This fall the children learned the stories of Adam and Eve, Joseph, and Baby Moses. In the winter we shifted to Jesus' birth, the Angels Visit, and the Wise Men. Currently the children are hearing the stories about John the Baptist, Jesus' trip to Nazareth, and The Disciples.

The Journeyers, on the other hand, went back to the *Rite 13* curriculum since we had so many new children join that class this year. *Rite 13* is a two-year program designed to help children build self-esteem in the context of the Christian community. This curriculum focuses on three main objectives. The first is to build a sense of community within the group, the second is to establish relationships within and among the children that value their gifts and talents, and the third is to help children develop a basic understanding of God's call to all of us to live in accordance with God's word. Over the course of this year the kids have discussed how to make choices and decisions, how to ask for help, and what their image of God is.

The children's ministry at St. Christopher's Church would not be possible without the dedication of our wonderful teachers, the support of our parents, the stories of God's powerful work, and most of all the participation of our wonderful children. I am truly thankful and blessed for everyone's help in making the Sunday school program at St. Christopher's possible.

Katie Madlung,
Christian Formation Coordinator

Outreach

*Our mission: The Outreach Committee of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church works to **spread the word of God through serving others**. We listen to and **care deeply about the needs of the people** in our immediate community and the world beyond. We will work to **inspire the parish to be involved** in the outreach ministry which is firmly grounded in Christ's teachings.*

Current committee members include: Steve Petrie, Chair; Harry Ansley; **CAROLYN** Davies; Diane Eisen, Kathleen McGarry.

In 2015 our work included; awarding of grants to local agencies; new initiatives; on-going outreach activities.

2015 Endowment Grant Funding

Homeless Children was the focus of our 2015 Endowment Grant Funding efforts. The process remained unchanged:

- Mini-grant applications were solicited, for grants ranging from \$1,000 - \$3,000 each, with 8 agencies/programs submitting requests;
- Committee members individually reviewed and evaluated each application according to established criteria;
- The committee recommended to the Vestry that two (2) agencies be awarded grants for \$3000 and \$2,970. The recommendation was approved at the October Vestry meeting.

Those funded programs for 2015 are:

Casa Maria Hospitality House:

Children's Play yard was built on the property of Casa Maria allowing the women and children who stay there a space to exercise and play in a safe environment with adult supervision. The nearest public playground for Casa Maria is eight blocks away. When the weather is right and the children can play outside, the whole house is more peaceful and mothers have time to work on job hunting, researching education opportunities, and housing.

Welfare Warriors:

A nonprofit consisting of poor mothers who serve mothers and children in poverty. The organization publishes booklets and survival guides that teach mothers how to acquire services and navigate through the number of support agencies in Milwaukee and around the county. Their MOMSline is a resource line that helps connect mothers and caregivers with information and the tools necessary to survive homelessness.

New Initiatives

Among the new initiatives undertaken both by the committee and individual parishioners during 2015 were:

Confirmands Service project

The February 21 project involved sorting, organizing, and handing out clothing at St. James'.

Dinner at Casa Maria

The Outreach Committee was invited and joined Casa staff and residents for dinner on April 16th.

Collegium Ladies concert

The December 13th concert was well attended, with donations totaling \$1022 going to Casa Maria.

Christmas for Casa Maria

The Parish provided numerous toys, books, clothing and \$340 in gift cards in support of guests at Casa Maria.

On-going Outreach Activities

St. Christopher's continues to be involved with several on-going ministries:

The Gathering

Continuing a relationship dating back 33 years to involvement in the founding of this meal service program, St. Christopher's volunteers served lunch 5 times during 2015 and is committed to 6 service dates in 2016.

Sojourners Family Peace Center

Each week a parishioner cuts the grass and does lawn work during the spring, summer and fall months. That ministry continues in 2016.

St. James Sundries

Parishioners contributed sundries from travel and/or other opportunities as well as cash. Donated and purchased sundries are regularly delivered to St. James, where they are distributed to various inner-city programs which support the homeless, benefiting over 200 recipients monthly.

The Garden

Parishioners assisted in planting, watering and nurturing and harvesting a variety of vegetables for the second year that were distributed to the Sojourner Family Peace Center.

School supplies for children

Parishioners contributed school supplies that were distributed to Believers in Christ Christian Academy.

For The Outreach Committee:

Steve Petrie

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild prepares the church and altar for worship service. This includes Sundays, special seasonal and weekday Eucharists, baptisms, weddings, funerals and memorial services. We are also responsible for the bread, wine, candles, and polishing silver.

In addition to our regular weekly activities, in 2015 we met the Saturday before Easter to prepare the church for the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Eucharists, and in December, the Altar Guild hosted the "Greening of the Church" the Sunday before Christmas.

Thank you to all members of the Altar Guild this year. Each and every one of you are always willing and able to step up, especially at the last minute. Your continued help is appreciated in 2016. I would again like to say a special thank you to Lois Degener who continues to take home our linens each week and wash and iron them. This saves the church a considerable amount of money as many churches have to pay for this service. Thanks Lois!

We continue to look for new members to join us in this wonderful and important part of the worship service. The time commitment is minimal (About 15 minutes before or after Sunday services) and we are more than happy to train! If you are interested or want more information about what we do, when we do it, and how we do it, please contact me, or any member of the Altar Guild. This has been a wonderful labor of love for me, and I look forward to continuing into 2016!

Blessings for a prosperous and peaceful 2016!

Judy Scharfenberger
Altar Guild Director - 2015



Fellowship

We had another robust year of fellowship and hospitality at St. Christopher's, anchored by our weekly coffee hour after the Sunday services. We had new faces helping out in the kitchen and plenty of familiar ones, making it truly a community effort. We also hosted several special events like Mother's Day pancakes, end-of-the-year picnic, the Collegium Ladyes concert and more. In 2016, we'll continue to consider ways to engage everyone in this special calling. Thanks for all the support.

John Diedrich and Harry Ansley



The Gathering and St. Christopher's: An Enduring Partnership

It's been 35 years since The Gathering was created in 1981, 34 years since the first Saturday lunch at St. James' Episcopal Church in January, 1982, and St. Christopher's has been a partner on that journey from the very beginning.

Ever since St. Christopher's parishioner George Green played a critical role in creating The Gathering, we've contributed our collective time and talents in support of the mission of The Gathering in countless ways and on untold occasions. In recent years our focus has been on providing volunteer groups for Saturday lunch services, about 90 times since The Gathering started keeping an official count, including five (5) times in 2015, and have committed to the following six (6) dates in 2016:

- January 9
- March 12
- May 14
- July 9
- September 10
- November 12

To everyone who already participates with us at The Gathering, thank you. If you have not yet had the opportunity to serve, we urge you to join with us soon. If you would like more information, or want to commit to any of the remaining 2016 dates, please contact Harry Ansley (hfansley@yahoo.com; 414-731-8350) or MaryBeth Ansley (marybethansley@yahoo.com).

The Gathering continues to directly address the issue of hunger in Milwaukee by serving those in need. We pray that you will choose to help continue the work of so many of our St. Christopher's "family" and support The Gathering in their ongoing efforts to stop hunger—one day at a time, one person at a time.

The Gathering
"People in community feeding the hungry."

Harry & MaryBeth Ansley, for the Outreach Committee



Caring Committee

The Caring Committee is a group of parishioners who volunteer to assist at functions at St. Christopher's. We attend weddings, funerals and other functions to provide oversight and hospitality for functions at our church. The blessing is that, though the "committee" is fluid, we always have someone at the Church to represent St. Christopher's.

MaryBeth Ansley



Building and Grounds

Over the course of 2015 there were a number of major repairs done at St. Christopher's – but nothing to do with the telephones!

During the summer, the parking lot was re-surfaced, but its composition continues to be a long-time problem. The floor in the ARK was replaced, as long-term leaking from an old radiator had led to water under the surface and warping. Two sump-pumps were replaced, having come to the end of their lives. Slate shingles were replaced on the roof over the office & community room to prevent leaking. The sprinkler system under the garden was also repaired. The rubber nuggets that are the surface of the playground were replaced. And at the end of the year, the HVAC condensation tanks in the attic above the office were replaced with larger ones to prevent a recurrence of leaking into the office during the summer.

As always, most of the work that we do to the building is a capital expense and our Endowment takes care of it.

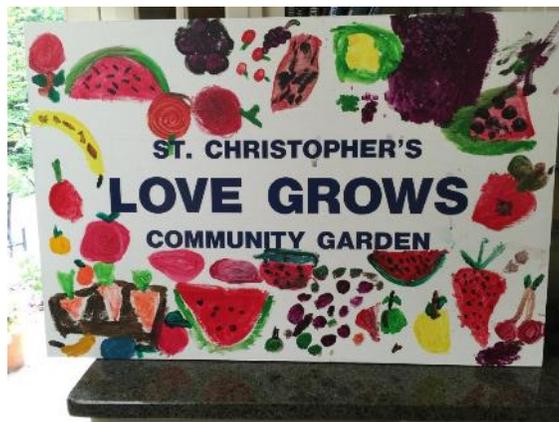
More routine events included cleaning the windows & painting the church in the early summer; as well as regular inspection of the elevator, fire-alarm systems, water quality, and suchlike.

We continued to be pleased with the landscaping services provided year-round by Chris Oberndorfer. In honor of Curt Degener, an old friend, the Oberndorfers planted a tree in his memory near the south driveway. Other trees were removed near the Memorial Garden.

Amplifying the Memorial Garden continued throughout the year to be the subject of much thought, but has not yet been resolved into action.

As has been mentioned in previous reports, many thanks to Mike Schneider who each year saves us thousands of dollars, and is dedicated to the well-being of this building as if it were his own home.

Gust Olson, Parish Administrator



Liturgy and Worship

We continue to worship with quiet confidence at our 8AM, traditional Rite 1 service and with vibrant gusto at our 10AM, contemporary Rite 2 service. Boy do we sing at our 10AM service! We are assisted by a small but amazing group of choir members and each Sunday, the roof gets raised in song. Thanks to the gifted John Beardsley for his hard work in helping to make our worship services sources of praise to God and comfort to our members. And thanks to our flexible choir for taking on the challenges of new music, and for their lovely rendering of old beloved hymns and anthems.

The tone and tenor of our two services is very different, one from another. They are created to be different. We will continue to have two services as the norm during the regular church year for the foreseeable future.

This year we returned to our single service during the summer time. During this time the two worshipping communities worshiped together at 9AM. The result was that folks who did not know one another to be part of the same parish, met one another at coffee hour. We will soon have to decide if we are going to have two services or one, this coming summer of 2015.

This year we have also continued to use our Community Room for worship with our Children's Liturgies (predominantly led by our children), and of course, for the Annual Blessing of the Animals. Rays of Light, the praise and worship band that has graced us with their gifts these past three years, has continued to play for our Children's Liturgies and occasionally at other times. They are a wonderful addition to our musical tradition here.

There continues to be a stalwart group of people who meet on Thursday mornings at 7AM in the Williamsburg Room to worship God and fellowship with one another afterwards. The Holy Eucharist is over by 7:30AM and folks either leave then for work or stay for a quick breakfast and coffee. The conversations are wide ranging and interesting. Regulars are: Carolyn Davies, Bob Slater, Barbara Eckblad, Susan Hackl, Kathleen McGarry and Pam Thicken with other folks stopping in from time to time. They heartily welcome new additions to this time of worship and fellowship. The coffee is always hot!



The Year in Review—2015

Baptisms: Juliana Beth Seelig, Reese Kimberly Palmer

Confirmations: William Braeger, Robert Claud Diedrich, Ava Fischer, Zachary Fischer, Nicholas Holmes, Katherine Stanford, Nicholas Weseman, Olivia Weseman

New & Returning Members: John N. Allen, Ed & Liz Kilpatrick (Will, Coleman, Payton), David & Dedi Knox, Kathleen McGarry

Memorial Services: Anne “Ricky” Lindemann, Curtis “Curt” Degener, John L. “Jack” Wagner III (Committal), Jane Thomas, Frederick F. Hansen, Liliias Macon Bruce, William D. “Bill” Browne

Marriages: Barbara Jean Eckblad & Steven Wayne Petrie

Events

1/11 Baptism of Julian Beth Seelig	4/26 Bishop’s Visitation with Confirmations Bach Chamber Choir concert
1/18 Baptism of Reese Kimberly Palmer	5/10 Mother’s Day pancake breakfast
1/30-/31 Confirmation Retreat, Racine	5/17 – 8/9 Debra on sabbatical
2/15 Children’s Service with Rays of Light	5/30 Last day of Sunday school & parish picnic
2/17 Shrove Tuesday pancakes and Burying the Alleluias	Planting Day for the garden
3/29 Modified Children’s Service with Rays of Light	6/7 9 AM Summer service schedule begins
Holy Week: Agape Dinner and Maundy Thursday with overnight Vigil, Good Friday worship, Easter Vigil	9/2 Joint Vestry/Stewardship meeting
	9/13 Rally Day followed by parish picnic
	9/20 Sunday school resumes
	10/4 Blessing of the Animals
	10/17 Diocesan Convention
	11/8 Service with Rays of Light
	11/15 Stewardship Ingathering
	11/26 Thanksgiving Service
	11/29 Bring a Friend Sunday
	12/6 Celebration of Joint Ministry Collegium Ladyes Benefit Concert
	12/24 Christmas Eve Pageant and Christmas service at 10 pm
	12/25 Debra’s last worship service

Ladies' Night Out met four times
Book Discussion group met four times
Diocesan Convention - St. Christopher's sent deputies: Diane Eisen, Mary Thickens,
Wendy Sopkovich, Barbara Eckblad, the Rev. Debra Trakel



Photograph by Mike DeSisti