

## **Rector's Report** **The Rev. Paul Stephens**

Having begun my service as rector of All Saints' in January of 2009, 2014 marked the sixth year of my ministry with and among you. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your lives these past years. Please accept my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all who contributed time, effort, prayers and financial resources during 2014. Your engagement in the life of All Saints' is valued and greatly appreciated. When I have fallen short or not been able to meet your expectations, please forgive me.

A special thanks to the All Saints' staff for their continued dedication, commitment and hard work. You do so much for so many while constantly moving us forward on multiple fronts. I also want to offer special thanks to our parish leaders who are finishing their elected terms: Stephen King, Senior Warden, and Carol Alvis, David Hastings, Donna Timmons, Amanda Foster and Rufus Van Horn, vestry members. Your passionate service for the people of All Saints' and the broader community has not gone unnoticed and is greatly admired and appreciated. "Thank You" also is extended to our other elected parish leaders as well as committee and commission chairs and co-chairs, teachers and committee members. Your work on many fronts makes my work at All Saints' possible. I add a special thank you to Martha, my wife, for supporting me in this work and the demands it often presents.

2014 was a year of growth, discovery and achievement. Many hands made our work easier – thanks to all! Through your investment of time, talent and money and your continuing support of our parish and its work, it was a year marked by many successes and accomplishments. Please allow me to share the highpoints of our life and labor.

We celebrated Eucharist 134 times on Sundays, 60 times during the week and 39 times in homes, hospitals and nursing homes; over 10,000 individuals attended these celebrations. We also prayed the Daily Office once on Sunday and 27 times during the week. Additionally, we baptized 3 and Bishop Gray confirmed 8.

During 2014, we celebrated the lives and witness of ten faithful people who were connected to our parish: Gus Staub, Robert Strickland, Irene Chambers, the Rev. Ray Goodman, E.S. Furr, Hazel Walker, Donna Freeman, Jamie Harper, Wally Kimmel and David Sparks. *"May they go from strength to strength in the life of perfect service in your heavenly kingdom."*

We joined others in the Diocese in celebrating the ordination of Dr. Billy Walton to the diaconate. We are grateful for his assignment to and work among us as vocational deacon. His is a ministry of service and I am grateful for his many contributions to the people of All Saints' and the broader community.

We continued to offer a variety of quality and stimulating Christian Formation opportunities for children, youth and adults. I am especially grateful for our formation teachers and leaders who invest their time and effort in forming the minds and hearts of children and youth. Thanks also to those who have taught or are teaching adult formation classes. You continue to challenge us to be

more knowledgeable about scripture, ethics and theology and become even more committed servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We started and completed a successful capital campaign in which over \$1.2 million in commitments were received, allowing the parish to service its indebtedness for the next five years. Moreover, your generosity allowed the parish, at year end, to make an additional principal payment in the amount of \$100,000.00 on the building note. This payment, coupled with an additional special gift of \$25,000, a \$25,000 bequest and other special gifts, reduced the principal balance of our building note to \$1.998 million at year end. Since 2009 the principal balance of our building obligations have been reduced by over \$850,000 an outstanding accomplishment.

We welcomed Cub Scout Pack 85 and Boy Scout Troop 85 and their respective leaders to All Saints' and found numerous ways to support their programs and initiatives. We look forward to being partners for years to come.

The Communications Task Force, chaired by Stanford Adams, built and launched a new parish website. It continues to be a window through which people far and wide view our parish and its work. We also were intentional in increasing "our reach" through the use of social media platforms, particularly Facebook. We also experimented with YouTube as a way of communicating with the parish. Expect more innovation as technology becomes more and more accessible.

The Vestry formed a Strategic Planning Task Force. This group, chaired by Dinetia Newman, has worked diligently for several months as it imagines what the coming years of ministry at All Saints' and in the surrounding community might look like. We anticipate that its final report will be submitted to the Vestry in 2015.

The Vestry also created a local discernment committee to explore the call to ordained ministry by one of our parishioners. You will soon learn more about this journey.

While we had our ups and downs during the year, your generous financial support and careful management of resources by staff and committee chairs/co-chairs' allowed our parish to end the year with an operating surplus.

Funded by generous memorial gifts, we marveled at the transformation of the "dead space" between the chapel and bell tower into a beautiful garden in memory of Smokey Livingston. "*May Smokey continue to know the strength of God's presence.*" Thanks to Pete Poland and crew for your work.

The Vestry accepted a gift from Pamela Cox of handsome Office and Eucharistic candles and candlesticks in memory of Mary Gardiner Tims. *May MG reside in God's eternal and everlasting glory.* The Needlepoint Guild continues its work on kneelers and cushions; when the Guild's work is complete these items will be beautiful additions to our Nave.

Our music program received a major gift in 2014. Dr. John Blakey gave the parish a grand piano. We are grateful for his wonderful gift and look forward to the piano being used in multiple ways in the coming days. Presently, it is in the parish hall.

Support of Saints' Brew and its ministry continued to grow and prosper under the leadership of Mona Warlick and Beth Harris and numerous volunteers and supporters. Contributions of money and food items were such that during the year 1,798 volunteers served hot meals and provided other support to 21,365 Saints' Brew guests. Health screenings and legal services were offered on multiple occasions. Thank you area doctors, nurses, technicians, lawyers and law students for offering these services.

Many "pious and charitable needs" of our community and of individuals were funded through your generous contributions to clergy discretionary funds. The needs met included medicines, food, clothing, housing, emergency lodging, utility assistance, payments to physicians and physical therapists, transportation expenses and the like. We were also able to provide scholarships to youth so they could attend summer camp sessions at Bratton-Green, Happenings, Winter Solstice and DOY. Additionally, in special situations I was able to provide funding for other "pious" projects and purposes within our parish. *"In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

For several years your leadership had hoped to establish and fund a "building reserve fund" to cover future unexpected capital expenditures. A generous gift, insurance proceeds and a grant, together totaling over \$26,000.00, allowed that goal to be realized in 2014. We hope the fund will continue to grow in future years.

All Saints' youth (and adult volunteers) continue to be involved as participants and leaders in local, regional and diocesan ministries and programming, including DOY, Happening, Winter Solstice and summer camp sessions. This involvement builds lasting connections and friendship that will continue to grow over the years.

Once again, our parish responded in multiple ways to the needs of Tupelo and surrounding communities following the April tornadoes. Debris was cleared, people were fed and prayers were offered by many for our community.

All Saints' and its members have a history of active involvement in local, regional, diocesan and national church ministries, including the Tupelo Ministerial Association, Lee County Long-term Tornado Response Committee, DOY Council, Happening Staff, Diocesan Disaster Preparedness Committee, Diocesan Finance Committee, as Diocesan Treasurer, membership on the Bishop's Nominating Committee and as deputy to General Convention 2015. Thank you for your service in these and other ways.

In September we celebrated two plus years of ministry at All Saints' by the Rev. Stanford Adams. Your support of Stanford and his ministry at All Saints' was meaningful to him and to me. I am grateful for the healthy and meaningful way we said good-bye to Stanford and his family.

As we look forward to 2015, I ask your prayers for our parish. May we together continue to be engaged in and transformed by God's redeeming work in this time and place.