

SENIOR WARDEN

Deanna Alford

One year ago, I was asked to allow my name to be entered for Senior Warden. My first and immediate response was a resounding NO! After being approached by two other persons to reconsider and spending some time in reflection and prayer and conversations with Tony (my husband) and Donna (my sister), I agreed to stand for election.

After being elected to the Senior Warden position I had a great deal to learn. Thankfully, we have a wonderful and patient Vestry, Junior Warden and Program Administrator. I have actually enjoyed my first year of my two-year term as Senior Warden. I have had the wonderful opportunity to learn more about the business of the church and get to know wonderful people that I rarely spent time with before being SW.

At the Vestry retreat in February, we began work on many significant projects coming in 2019 and 2020. Tasks that were outlined during the Mediation process with Rev. Peter Gray were monitored under the watchful guidance of the Mediation Implementation Task Force co-chairs, Harry Dieckmann and Donna Timmons. Those scheduled for completion in 2019 have been completed.

Search committee was another big event in the life of the parish for 2019. I had the chance to sit in on Search committee meetings and phone interviews during the search process. Although I did not travel with the Search Committee, I was certain that we were going to find the right fit for All Saints' and Christ the King.

At the end of September, the Search Committee met with the Vestry to recommend The Rev. Phillip Parker to be called as our new Rector. It was an exciting and energetic meeting. I notified the Bishop, called Phillip to set up an interview and started the ball rolling to where we are now. Many steps occurred between late September and his first day December 1, 2019. It was truly a highlight of my tasks as Senior Warden.

However, not all things were easy and cheerful through the year. Being on the Vestry or being Wardens sometimes calls on us to make difficult decisions. In July, we began discussions about church security. At the August Vestry meeting, the Vestry was given articles and policies of other churches, including other Episcopal churches in the Diocese, to read and discuss at the September Vestry meeting. These discussions were prompted by the changing atmosphere that our community and world face daily, *including incidents that have happened over the past few years at All Saints'*. Sadly, less than one week after the August Vestry meeting, there was an incident at All Saints' and Christ the King where a man tried to finesse his way into the Catechesis atria during the open house, stating that his children were in there. His presence felt threatening and he was watched and guided to the adult class in the South Break Out Room. After several more attempts to gain access to where the children were the police were called. When police responded, he was questioned and being known by Hannah Maharrey,

Director of Saints Brew, he was encouraged to leave the campus and the police departed. After the 10:45 service, this man attempted to get into the car with a woman and her two daughters. He was stopped by our Deacon, Billy Walton and our Junior Warden, Wayne Averett and he was told to leave the AS/CtK property and not return. This lady and her daughters were visitors that day and have not returned since this incident. She and the girls were not the only young ladies he approached in a threatening manner. This man continued to be a threatening presence and prompted a meeting between, Rev. Sarah Gaede, Junior Warden, Wayne Averett, Program Administrator, Tommie Moore, and me. We decided that he was a credible threat and chose to employ an off-duty officer for the foreseeable future as we worked through the process of security and safety plans.

To say that the officer's presence was met with mixed feelings would be an understatement. Wayne and I met with numerous law enforcement professionals to seek advice on the best way to handle threats and other safety issues that could present themselves to a parish. We discussed individuals like this man, active shooter scenarios, medical emergencies (accidents, heart attacks, strokes, etc.) and weather emergencies. At the date this report was written, we no longer have an off-duty officer patrolling the grounds. Although the man is presumed to have left the area and is no longer a threat, the decision to dismiss the off duty officer was not done by the church or wardens, but by the Lee County Sheriff because one of his officers was verbally confronted while doing the job he was asked to do. Officer or not, uniform or not, weapon, concealed weapon, or no weapon - as you can see, this is a difficult subject to navigate. I continue to stand by our decision to hire an off-duty officer after this incident. As mentioned before, the discussions were beginning BEFORE this threatening action took place in August because of previous incidents earlier this year and previous years. A security team was developed with Andy Atkins as chairman.

We will continue to work through this issue with the goal of seeking and serving Christ in all people and keeping All Saints' and Christ the King members and visitors as safe as possible.

Also, as planned during the Vestry retreat, the Stewardship campaign began earlier in the year than usual in order to be completed before the arrival of the new Rector. The Stewardship committee worked hard on informing the parish of the upcoming needs of the annual budget and the needs of the building capital campaign.

The Vestry has also been working with the Annual Council Committee preparing for the 193rd Annual Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi to gather in Tupelo. This is a huge event for a parish our size to host.

Speaking of huge events, All Saints' began its ministry on October 3, 1870. To celebrate our anniversary of ministry, we will begin the 150th or sesquicentennial celebration at the Annual Council in February

and continue to celebrate through 2020. What a great way to say “Happy Birthday” to us and start the celebration by sharing this with the entire Diocese. Stay tuned to newsletters and email blasts for more exciting news about a year of celebrations.

Even with difficult tasks, 2019 was a **GREAT** year at All Saints’ and Christ the King. I look forward to the second year of my Senior Warden tenure. Many more great things are in store for us all!!