

**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR  
DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN FORMATION  
Tommie Moore**

When we turned the page on the calendar on January 1, 2020, we had no idea what we would face in just a short period of time. We were busy the first few weeks of 2020 welcoming Phillip as our new Rector, celebrating Epiphany, planning for our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, conducting our Annual Parish Meeting and getting ready to host the 193<sup>rd</sup> Annual Council of the Diocese of Mississippi in early February. After we finished a successful Council, our thoughts turned to planning a Celebration of New Ministry to formally welcome Phillip, Lent/Holy Week/Easter, Christian Formation offerings, and other day to day responsibilities. But then everything came to a halt. COVID-19 made itself known in the United States and quickly changed the course of our year.

In early March, Bishop Seage suspended in-person worship services, as well as in-person gatherings, first for just a short period of time, then later, indefinitely. It quickly became apparent that we had to adjust to a new way to “do church” and make our offerings available online. So, we got to work. In short, we learned how to pivot. And we learned it wouldn’t be the only time we’d have to pivot. By “we”, I mean the extraordinary group of folks that pitched in to help! We could not have done everything we did in 2020 without the help of so many.

We learned about livestreaming services on Facebook. We learned about camera angles, audio and video control and the quality (or lack thereof) of our recording equipment. We learned about upgrades that were needed in our video equipment, internet and Wi-Fi capabilities and with the support of the Vestry, we were given the resources we needed to put the upgrades in place.

We learned how to produce a podcast for the Sunday Lectionary class, thanks to Les Alvis and Caleb Bedillion. We learned how to schedule Zoom meetings for the Vestry and Executive Committee, ECW and book club, choir rehearsals and later for the Lectionary Discussion class, just to name a few. We learned how to plan on a short-term basis, instead of our usual long-term basis (this one was particularly hard for me...I’m a planner...I love a road map).

We learned we needed to enhance our social media presence, not only on Facebook, but to include Twitter and Instagram. We learned how to do that efficiently through Hootsuite, a social media marketing and management dashboard.

We learned how to offer Christian Formation to our younger members for whom Zoom would not be a good option. We learned how to be creative in putting together packets for them that would continue to offer Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in a way that would be meaningful for them. We learned children love getting these packets in the mail each month and we love seeing photos of them working with the materials we sent.

We learned how to take care of each other when we can’t physically be together in person. While

calling parishioners to check in is a viable alternative when you can't gather in person, we also learned that we can't wait for the time when we can fully gather in person again.

We learned how to "work from home" and while it's not ideal (working from home for me took twice as long and was half as good), it helped to keep things moving forward.

We learned that when you publish a monthly Cross & Crown newsletter and calendar, chances are it was going to be out of date before parishioners received it in their mailboxes. We learned how to condense the weekly Saints' News email so it wouldn't be so exceedingly long, but still kept parishioners informed.

The Office was budgeted \$16,400 for office supplies, postage, printing expenses, computer expenses and advertising. Extra expenses that were not part of the Office's initial operating budget in 2020 included technology upgrades to enhance our online capabilities (campus internet and Wi-Fi upgrades and installations, equipment) and the redesign of our website.

Christian Formation was budgeted \$3,975 and we spent \$2,177.95 on the youth curriculum subscription and supplies for the mailings to the children in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

As I said at the beginning of this report, we didn't learn about these things by ourselves. A big thank you to our extremely cooperative, flexible and capable staff, Nancy Sweat (always unflappable, always calm), Rick Armstrong (problem solver and willing to do anything asked of him), Michele McBride (can solve any mathematical problem that comes her way), Taylor Sparks (outstanding musician and tech expert) and our volunteer staff, Michelle Hester (a master at making learning fun for our younger parishioners) and Joellen Murphree and Vicky Vance (timely, thoughtful and compassionate care responders). And an even bigger thank you goes out to Fr. Phillip for his solid, steady leadership through his first year with us and one that his time at seminary didn't begin to cover and Billy Walton whose wise counsel helped us navigate the risks and seriousness of the Pandemic. They all deserve our deepest gratitude for helping us get through an unusual year with many twists and turns. But the help went well beyond the staff. We had a host of parishioners that stepped up and helped us through the learning curves and over the hurdles. There are too many to name, but please know how much the staff appreciates all who pitched in and helped us over every hurdle. It would not have been possible without each of you!

We learned a lot in 2020. We learned there are many ways to "do church", but we also learned that the most important thing we can do is stay connected, in whatever way that may look, while spreading and living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We'll continue to explore options that will enhance our worship and programs, both online and in-person (when we can safely gather in person). In the meantime, please feel free to contact the Office with any suggestions you may have. If we don't know how to accomplish it, I feel sure we can learn.