

Fr. Robin Dodge's Charge to the Parish
The Church of the Holy Faith Annual Meeting
27 January 2019

This is my third Annual Meeting here at The Church of the Holy Faith, and I have to say what an honor and privilege it is to serve as your rector. People still ask me, "Are you happy here?" and I always respond with a resounding, "Yes!" I love New Mexico, I love Santa Fe, I love Holy Faith, and I love you, the people of Holy Faith!

And what's not to love about you and Holy Faith? You are committed to fulfilling the mission of Holy Faith to welcome all people into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord. You do so by fully participating in the more than 50 ministries that Holy Faith offers, a sample of which you can read about in the Annual Report. Of special note are the Bible Study groups as well as other Christian formation offerings, such as the Spiritual Classics discussion, the lay-led theology class on the Jewish Gospels, the monthly men's lunch, and the Lenten soup and study series. We now offer three Bible studies each week: for men on Wednesday afternoons at 3:00, for women on Thursday mornings at 10:00, and a co-ed evening study on Mondays at 5:30. What other church offers so many study groups and attracts on average more than 60 people a week who are committed to deepening their faith in Jesus Christ?

You may have heard me at a Sunday forum or read my message in the latest Faithway newsletter, or read the piece by our new Bishop, the Rt. Rev'd Michael Buerkel Hunn, in the latest issue of the diocesan newsletter called *Together*, that the research arm of Forward Movement publications called RenewalWorks has identified four stages of a person's spiritual journey. They are 1) exploring the faith, 2) growing in

the faith, 3) deepening in the faith, and 4) a life centered on Jesus Christ. The research data from hundreds of congregations in The Episcopal Church show that 18% of Episcopalians are in stage one, exploring the faith. They are curious and in need of welcome and inclusion in our churches. 55% of Episcopalians are in the second stage, deepening in the faith. 24% of Episcopalians are in the third category, on the personal journey of deepening their faith. Only 4% of Episcopalians identify as having their entire life focused on Jesus Christ.

Among the drivers that move people from one stage of the Christian life to another are engagement with Holy Scripture, a deep life of prayer, and regular participation in the Holy Eucharist. The Church of the Holy Faith exists to help you deepen your faith. I have just mentioned the opportunities here for engaging with Holy Scripture. Holy Faith also offers ways of deepening your prayer life. Each weekday at 9:00 in the chancel and 4:30 in the chapel, a hardy group of individuals gathers to pray the Daily Office in community, either Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer. Not only do the participants hear much of Holy Scripture, but there is also time for personal and corporate prayer so that prayers are being offered for, and on behalf of, the entire parish. There are also other prayer groups such as the Rosary Society and the Daughters of the King, as well as more informal prayer chains, that make this parish church a House of Prayer. If you want to deepen your own spiritual life, you may want to participate in one of these prayer offerings.

And, of course, Holy Faith take its celebration of the Holy Eucharist seriously, thanks to the commitment of the altar guild, the flower guild, the ushers, the lectors, the acolytes, the musicians, and the clergy! We worship together in the beauty of holiness

to praise and thank God, to transcend division, and to celebrate the mystery of faith. Part of the reason for moving the baptismal font to the entrance of the church this past year was to invite the worshiper in, embrace them in this holy space, and then draw their eyes and eventually fully in body and spirit to the altar where they can meet their Lord in the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood. By the font's placement at the entrance of the church, theologically we also are reminded that it is through baptism that we enter the Body of Christ. Thanks to the annual permissible draw from the endowment fund and a generous \$100,000 contribution from a parishioner this past year, at the same time the font was moved we were also able to shore up the underpinnings of the nave, lay a new floor that integrates the whole space, and refurbish the pews so that we can truly worship in the beauty of holiness. Holy Faith offers three Eucharists each Sunday, in addition to the Tuesday evening Taize Eucharists and the Wednesday and Thursday noon Eucharists for you to regularly receive the Sacrament and deepen your spiritual life.

All these offerings takes a coordinated and dedicated staff, which Holy Faith has! Donna Lukacs as parish secretary does a fabulous job of keeping the parish calendar and assigning rooms, while all along fielding inquiries, answering correspondence, and keeping the offices running smoothly. Mark Childers as parish administrator and director of music & liturgy does an incredible job of coordinating ministries, especially those related to our worship, so that in all our prayers and praise we glorify God and are transported through the music and liturgy in this place to the nearer presence of God. Marcos Castillo as facilities manager and Rocio Salazar as housekeeper do a tremendous job of keeping our campus in tip-top repair and operation and cleanliness

and tidiness like never before. We also have a dynamic team that ministers to the youngest Christians in our midst, with Therese Saint-Andre and a group of faithful chaplains volunteering to ensure that there is an age-appropriate children's chapel each week during the 8:30 service; Kathlene Ritch assisted by Gail Fine in leading the youth choir; our faithful nursery attendants, Maria Sandoval and Veronica Vigil; Ann MacVicar who continues to spearhead Children's Adventures; and Janet McCroskey, who not only works with our youth acolytes, but with all those who wish to serve at God's altar here at Holy Faith.

I am joined by some of the best clergy colleagues ever. Fr. Jim Gordon is a fantastic associate rector and compassionate priest, engaging in the full range of liturgical duties of preaching and celebrating, as well as overseeing pastoral care for the parish and the Sunday Forums. Fr. Richard Murphy is invaluable in assisting with the weekday masses, and we are delighted that he is able to join the Sunday rota more frequently. We are thankful for Deacon Pat Masterman's presence in her diaconal role in the liturgy of proclaiming the gospel, leading the prayers, calling us to confession, setting the altar, and dismissing the congregation, as well as providing pastoral care and interacting with outreach ministries. As many of you know, for the last two years I have been trying to call a priest to fill the third clergy position on staff. I am delighted to tell you that the search is over and the Vestry and the Bishop have affirmed my call of the Rev'd Pamela Graham as Associate Rector. (Mother Pam, will you please stand and accept our thanks and gratitude?) Mother Pam will officially come on board this Friday, February 1, and she will join the other clergy in the wide range of liturgical and pastoral duties, with a special focus on children's, youth, and family ministries, as well

as women's spirituality. Please introduce yourselves to Mother Pam in the coming weeks and welcome her to Holy Faith!

With our commitment to an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ, the values that Holy Faith embodies, and the gifts we have been given, we are called to share our gifts with the larger Church. Many of you participated in the Ordination and Consecration of our new bishop, the Rt. Rev'd Michael Buerkel Hunn in November, under the leadership of our own Mark Childers who was Assisting Master of Ceremonies for the service, and who was made a Canon of the Diocese for Liturgy & Music by Bishop Michael Vono at Diocesan Convention for his musical and liturgical leadership at the last several diocesan conventions. Canon Mark also serves on the General Church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music where he chairs a committee looking at Prayer Book revision. Mark and Deacon Pat serve on the diocesan Commission on Ministry of the Baptized. I serve as diocesan Canon for Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue, and along with Canon Mark, as diocesan canons, we serve *ex officio* on the Chapter of the Cathedral of St. John in Albuquerque as it searches for its new dean. Fr. Jim serves on the Diocesan Council, which acts as the Vestry of the Diocese.

I want to thank our Vestry who have been faithful stewards of Holy Faith this past year. While we are sad to see Van Horn, Lynne Rauch, and Jacki Walker rotate off the Vestry, we are delighted by the election of Dan Green, Leslea McCabe, and Charles Rountree, who will join continuing members Mitzi Barker, Penni Chambers, Paul D'Arcy, Guy Gronquist, Heidi Hahn, Mike Ward, and myself. The Vestry has worked hard this past year on a number of issues to assure that The Church of the Holy Faith is on firm

footing for years to come, and the results are gratifying. I also want to thank you, the people of Holy Faith, for your faithful stewardship and commitment to an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. Thanks to your generosity, as you heard in the Treasurer's Report, Holy Faith once again finished the year in the black, this time with operating income over operating expenses totaling more than \$172,000; and we are able again to adopt a balanced budget, this year with pledge income increasing year over year for the fourth year in a row!

Part of our commitment to an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ means that we are called to spread the Gospel – the Good News – of Jesus Christ. Not all of us may feel comfortable evangelizing on the streets of Santa Fe, but when we're here at Holy Faith we should do our utmost at extending hospitality and making people feel welcome. Our greeters, ushers, and docents do a fantastic job of welcoming newcomers. And, of course, our Hospitality Team does a fabulous job of extending hospitality in terms of food and drink at receptions, upon which they were called last year at an unprecedented level and carried it off with their usual aplomb! But you, the people in the pews at Holy Faith, are part of what people remember about this church. So, be sure to greet people around you each time you are in church, introduce yourselves, get to know them, invite them for coffee hour and, most importantly, invite them to return.

You know, there are on-line reviews for everything these days, and churches are no exception. Hear some of the things people have said on-line about Holy Faith: On Yelp! by Chrysanthemum from Boston: "When they say 'the Episcopal Church welcomes you' – they mean it...They're a friendly congregation." By Sylvi from San

Francisco: “Dignified traditional liturgy with Rite I sung mess, friendly people. As an old-school cradle Episcopalian...I felt right at home. Not a dying church! The parking lot is full on Sundays for all three services!” On Facebook by Christopher Rigdon: “Warm and welcoming. Beautiful liturgy and music. The sanctuary was peaceful and a nice sacred space to pray and meditate.” By Raphiell Ashford: “A warm, friendly and welcoming Anglo-Catholic church.” By Pamela Hays: “Beautiful Church. Always love to visit it when in town.” So, I say to you, the faithful and friends of Holy Faith, keep up the good work! Keep those glowing reviews coming in!

One of the reasons I think Holy Faith receives these kinds of reviews is because of the joy that is palpable in our worship: there is joy in our singing of the hymns, there is joy in our participation in the prayers, there is joy in our receiving the Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood. One of the criticisms lobbed against Christians is that they are not a joyful people. Well, that’s not true of Holy Faith! Remember the words in this morning’s lesson from Nehemiah and from Fr. Jim’s sermon, “The joy of the LORD is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8.10d). Yes! The joy of the LORD is our strength, and may we go from strength to strength with God’s help!

So, my sisters and brothers in Christ at Holy Faith, I charge you with three things: deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ, strengthen your bonds of friendship and hospitality and, finally, increase your joy. Remember, in St. John’s Gospel Jesus told us that he gave us his Good News so that his joy may be in us, and that our joy may be complete. Amen.