

Fr. Robin Dodge's Charge to the Parish
The Church of the Holy Faith Annual Meeting
25 January 2026

Those of you who know me know that I have a song for every occasion. Well, this Annual Meeting is no different. With apologies to Brigadoon, one of my favorite musicals: "What a year this has been! What a rare mood I'm in! Why, it's just like being in love." Yes, I love this parish of Holy Faith. I love you the people of Holy Faith. And I love the resilience of Holy Faith.

Yes, what a year this has been. This has been a year of change and transition. When people face change and transition, they can become anxious and fearful. Well, that wasn't the case with you at Holy Faith. My job as Rector is to manage change and tamp down any anxiety and fear in the system. Remember the words that keep coming to us throughout Holy Scripture: "Fear not; do not be afraid."

When our long-serving and efficient Parish Secretary Donna Lukacs announced that she wanted to retire from Holy Faith after ten years, God provided us with Elisheva Herrera as our new Parish Secretary, for whom we give great thanks to God.

When our beloved Associate Rector Mother Lynn announced after four years at Holy Faith that she wanted to move to Colorado to be closer to her daughters and their families, God provided us with Fr. Simon Carian as our new Associate Rector, for whom we give great thanks to God.

When our wonderful part-time Coordinator of Family and Children's Ministries Sarah Stone after two years in this position at Holy Faith announced that she wanted to

return to her full-time medical practice, God provided us with Emily Perea as our new part-time Coordinator of Family and Children's Ministries, for whom we give great thanks to God.

We had nothing to be afraid of, we had nothing to fear, because God does provide. During these times of transition, you the people of Holy Faith were resilient.

During the past year, your Vestry adopted an aspirational budget with a lofty and ambitious stewardship goal of \$1 million in pledges. With encouragement to new parishioners and challenge grants from existing parishioners, you the people of Holy Faith were able to fulfill such a spiritual goal because God provides. God provided you with the seed of faith. God provided you with a love for Holy Faith. God provided you with a vision of what could be. Your Vestry was prepared to revisit the budget and make changes where necessary, but they didn't have to because of your faithfulness, your commitment, your generosity. Sure, we didn't reach the \$1 million goal in pledges until the summer, when we took time to celebrate, but you blew through that goal by the end of the year with giving of nearly \$1.1 million. As a result, instead of a budgeted \$62,000 deficit, we ended the year just \$2100 shy of breaking even. Some may say, sure, but it wasn't a surplus. I say falling \$2100 short on nearly \$1.5 million in expenditures, just 1.4 thousandths off, is pretty darn good! After all, a budget is not set in stone, but a snapshot in time and a blueprint for the future.

At this time, I want to give a shout out to your Vestry for their careful stewardship of this parish during the past year. I especially want to thank our Treasurer, Charles Rountree, for his diligent review of the books, his commitment to communication and transparency with regard to the parish's finances, and his constant optimism. Charles's

Vestry term comes to an end with this Annual Meeting, but the Treasurer does not have to be a member of the Vestry. So I have it on good authority that Charles is willing to continue serving and I expect that the Vestry will elect him as Treasurer when we meet immediately following this meeting.

Mike Morrissey's term on Vestry also ends. I shall miss his steady hand, insights, and wise counsel as Senior Warden, but give great thanks that he will continue in his role as chair of the Investment Committee.

We also have to say goodbye to Kaki Grubbs from the Vestry. I shall miss her compassion, clear thinking, and spiritual commitment around the table.

But we remain in good hands because God does provide. In addition to your continuing Vestry members - George Case, Pam Jones, Steven Shore, Preston Stone, Rebecca Tobey, and Jacki Walker - we welcome your new Vestry members: Kelly Enos, Paula Price, and Michael Smith.

I also want to give a shout out to the staff who also had a big part in keeping expenses in check and who work tirelessly to keep this parish a well-humming machine: Eli in the front office and the first face of welcome, like Donna before her; Emily getting her feet under her desk as she builds on the good work begun by Sarah in the area of Family and Children's Ministries; Rocio and Marcos who keep the tremendous asset of our properties sparkling and in good order and ready for any use by our many and varied ministries; of course, Mark who as Parish Administrator keeps everything on an even keel but who as Director of Liturgy and Music works with all the volunteers and singers who make our worship so beautiful, engaging, and pleasing to God; and Mtr.

Madelynn, for her faithfulness in worship and care and thoughtfulness in preparing her sermons and presentations for the Women's Spirituality Group. And we welcome Fr. Simon, who is a joy to work with and who already has captured us with his knowledge, warmth, and enthusiasm.

I have other good news to share which you may have already gleaned from the annual reports or your own experience. Attendance at Holy Faith is growing. The Average Sunday Attendance at Holy Faith increased over 12% last year from 211 in 2024 to 239 in 2025. When you consider that the average Sunday attendance across Episcopal church congregations is 27, 90% of Episcopal churches have fewer than 100 attending on a Sunday, and less than 1% of Episcopal churches have more than 300 in the pews on a Sunday, we must be doing something right at Holy Faith because God does provide. You may have noticed that we have had an increase especially among our younger people in the congregation. I want to especially thank Pam Jones for all her efforts in this regard. She was the volunteer coordinator of Family and Children's Ministries between Sarah and Emily, and she has spearheaded new offerings for our children in the form of Faith Explorers at the 10:00 hour on Sundays and Youth Group at 12:30 on the second and fourth Sundays of the month.

As Rector, my charge to you is to continue showing up for worship on Sundays and other times during the week because that is what glorifies God, nourishes you on your spiritual journey with Jesus, and sustains you in this crazy world of ours. But go more deeply in your faith. Try a new offering that Holy Faith provides. Join a study group. Attend a Sunday Forum. Volunteer with the Women's Guild. Participate in one of the outreach ministries. But go deeper in your faith. We're going to try something

different this Lent. Rather than having a Wednesday night soup supper and special Lenten study which ends in five weeks, you are invited to check out one of the existing Christian formation offerings that can continue to nourish and sustain you beyond Lent. You can choose from Evening Bible Study on Mondays at 5:30 led by me, a Spiritual Classics discussion on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 led by Fr. Simon or me, a newly constituted Men's Bible Study on Wednesday afternoons led by Fr. Simon, Women's Bible Study on Thursday mornings at 10:00 led by me, and a new discussion group led by Fr. Simon on Fridays. You'll be hearing more about these offerings and initiatives as we approach Lent in just less than a month.

As for me, I will rejoice in the year this has been and pray that in the year to come we will continue to grow from strength to strength in God's presence and with God's help. I will continue to love the resilience of Holy Faith. I will continue to love you the people of Holy Faith. And I will continue to love being your pastor, priest, and the Rector of Holy Faith.

May God richly bless you all and may God continue to bless the mission and ministry of Holy Faith!