

Annual Meeting – February 23, 2025

Warden's Report – Kathy DeSanti-Paulini

Good morning and thank you for joining your Vestry for our 2025 Annual Meeting, either in person or online.

My name is Kathy DeSanti-Paulini, and I am grateful to serve as the Senior Warden this year. I am even more blessed to follow in the footsteps of the previous two Senior Wardens, Suzie Garrod in 2023, and David Grove in 2024. Thank you both for demonstrating admirable leadership and thoughtful decision-making during your Vestry tenure.

Before I share some comments with you this morning, I would like to thank several individuals:

First, I'd like to acknowledge the Vestry Class of 2024. These individuals have contributed to vestry decisions for the past three years:

Chris Doyle, ECW and Pennywise representative

David Grove, Senior Warden, during his tenure David contributed to the success of many projects, including the Capital Campaign and the Solar project

Byron Knight, Outreach Committee liaison

Brian Land, B & G Chair, led safety projects for the pre-school, contributed to the Solar Project and provided legal guidance for multiple contracts.

Thank you all for your dedication and hard work.

I would like to ask the current Vestry to stand and be recognized. The current vestry team and their ministry assignments are outline in the handout. We are blessed to have an outstanding group to guide vestry decisions as we advance our mission. Thank you for your time, skills, and collaboration while serving the parish.

Next, as a congregation, we are blessed to have three talented priests – Jon+, Ann+, and Jackie+ to lead our worship and faith formation. Thank you so much.

I thank Jon for his spiritual and administrative leadership in our faith community. I am proud to be your partner in problem-solving, implementing strategic plans, and caring for our parish.

Jon has recognized the contributions of our staff members who daily serve you, whom I would also like to thank. They keep the Holy Comforter machine running.

In January, Danielle Lacroix assumed the role of Holy Comforter Preschool and Kindergarten Director. She leads a group of talented teachers, aids, and assistants supporting this important ministry.

Have you noticed renewed energy and vitality in our halls? Have you noticed that our pews are cozier? New programs and activities abound in weekly communications of *The Comfortable Word*, the Saturday email blast, the service bulletin, and the announcements from Jon+ and Ann+ during the worship services. The multiple Ministry tables in the Narthex and the variety of activities that address the needs and interests of parishioners of all ages are evidence of our thriving parish.

Please take time to read the Annual Parish Report and be proud of the work that we do, and consider ways in which you would like to contribute to the life of Holy Comforter in 2025.

Let's take a few minutes to celebrate our achievement of two pillars of the "Growing our Faith, Family and Future" Capital Campaign.

The first pillar was completed last January with a celebration of the retirement of our debt. How can we forget Jon+ burning our loan documents in the Chancel?

The Second pillar was the solarization project. A dedicated team tirelessly ushered the project to completion. This team, led by Jon+, included: David Grove, Dan Govan, Brian Land, Dawn McGruder, Peggy Miller, Patrick Richardson, Bob Robinson and me. The project included the construction of the solar array in the lower parking lot, and the replacement of McGill Hall and Chapel roofs in preparation for the installation of solar panels. We celebrated the solar array structure in November and completed the final solar panels and array hookups, and Dominion Electric approval on the last day of December. On a sunny winter day, we generate approximately ½ Megawatts which is more than enough to provide for our electricity needs and frees us from a monthly electric bill. We have submitted the paperwork, with the help of Dawn McGruder, to receive a tax credit from the Inflation Reduction Act.

The third pillar is the renovation of the 3rd floor. The Vestry will start planning for this project in March.

The fourth pillar is Stewardship of the campus. It is a priority to address the immediate and long-term capital replacement needs. The B & G and Finance committees have determined our minimum capital replacement needs (\$55,000) and created a yearly equipment replacement plan to address our aging and malfunctioning systems. The Vestry is committed to a year-round temperate worship environment.

The 37-year Master's Plan focused on building what we needed to support our worship services, our mission, our ministries, our programs, and our outreach. As a result of hard work and your campaign pledges, we have completed this plan.

This year we will begin the work on a new strategic plan, which will clarify our mission, vision, and core values for the next 5 years.

An element of this plan is a holistic approach to volunteerism.

Last November we launched Meaningful Engagement to link individual interests to our ministry programs. A large portion of our community has used the survey to engage in meaningful ways. Meaningful Engagement is now a part of our ongoing Stewardship work.

The 2025 Stewardship campaign set a stretch goal of \$1.25 million which is the amount of annual pledge we need every year to achieve continued growth of our parish, keep our buildings functioning, and support our ministries. **This a stretch goal because our pledges have plateaued at about \$1Million for the past 8 years.**

This has limited our ability to implement important children and youth faith formation staff positions, and it significantly underfunded our capital replacement fund such that each time the boiler broke, or an HVAC unit malfunctioned we had to take money from another part of our operating budget to do repairs.

It's like taking money from your family vacation fund to repair your roof.

It creates disappointment in your household.

In no way am I implying that we are not generous – over the past 30 years I have witnessed our generous response to building campaigns. We excel at short-term Capital Campaigns. Now, to achieve our staffing goals and maintain our mechanical systems, we need to shift to a consistent higher level of stewardship where \$1.25 M is the baseline rather than a stretch.

In 2025 in addition to creating a new strategic plan, the Vestry will focus on four key areas:

1. Manage lay staff changes: we have a plan to address staff changes due to transitions and retirements. This effort will focus on creating a new position for Director of Children Formation, redefining the Parish Administrator job and backfilling the Sexton position. We have researched and discussed how best to improve our staff structure and change responsibilities to gain efficiency without sacrificing productivity and pastoral care.
2. Develop and implement a new process to manage Community Hall rentals. This is an important way to grow revenue and fulfills one of the key purposes of the Ministry Center.

3. Fund Capital Replacement to ensure adequate money is available to pay for our projected new HVAC systems, building maintenance, and repairs. Our old systems have so many Band-aids and inefficiencies that we must put the money into new upgrades. I want to recognize Peter Erickson for his time spent troubleshooting our boiler and HVAC systems and for his expertise in evaluating and recommending suitable systems upgrades. This has been a thorn in our budget for many years and the vestry is committed to funding Capital Replacement at the necessary level.
4. Initiate the 3rd floor renovation by gathering new and updated bids which will enable the Vestry to decide if we have sufficient funds to start the project. Ideally, this project will begin during the summer school recess. The renovation will improve the flexible use of the space for children education programs or revenue-generating office rental, achieve ADA and air ventilation requirements, and create a music room.

The Vestry will continue our focus on communications, transparency, and volunteerism. We will provide updates on how your pledge money is being used to support our goals through our monthly Vestry Corner and quarterly Town Hall meetings.

While your Vestry is charged with the administration and governance of our parish, the heart and soul of Holy Comforter is our mission, ministries, and faith programs. We are pleased to share with you six different areas this morning. Thank you to Graham, Kerry, Susan, Pat, Lolly and Kim for your comments.

We have time at the end of the program for your questions and comments about anything that was shared or not shared here today.

Please join me in welcoming Graham Miller.

Thank you again for joining us today.