

Rector's Report 2023 **The Rev. Mike Angell**

I have a colleague in the church who has tattooed on her arm the phrase “Semper Gumby.” She says it means, “always be flexible.” 2022 was a year of incredible flexibility. As I reflect back on the year, I find myself grateful for all the ways you demonstrated resilience, compassion and leadership. This parish again proved itself grounded in our mission: being a **diverse** and **welcoming community** seeking to walk in the way of Jesus and to reveal Christ's reconciling love in our city, nation, and world.

We started off the year in the midst of a new surge of COVID and had to significantly cut back attendance at services, and enforce strict guidelines for in-person worship. Thankfully those restrictions were able to ease a few months into the year, but we were slow-walking a great deal, making sure we didn't set plans we had to then retract. The year started off slow.

In March, my un-planned leave also demanded flexibility from so many. I am grateful to your vestry, staff, and the leaders of this parish for all the ways they took up the work, kept ministry and worship going (even holding Holy Week without a rector). Even while I was away, and especially after coming back I and my family felt the love and care of this place.

In the midst of such a tough year, our talented parish staff worked incredibly hard. The Rev. Julie Graham brought her depth of experience, steady leadership, faith, and laughter to difficult times. Julie continues to build great community with our young families around the PrayGround and is growing the leadership team for Grace GatheringS. The Rev. Chester Hines also stepped up. I have begun calling Chester “The Ambassador,” because he can gather a group to navigate a sticky question with grace and determination. His presence grew at Holy Communion this year, and we are blessed by it.

Hannah Shanks, thank goodness, agreed to stay on as our Director of Operations. She brings a genuine competence and a spirit of joy to the office. Jim Kern kept a competent eye on our books as Financial Administrator. Barbara Wallace has this place cleaner, more organized, and feeling more like home for many of us. We are so glad to have her as sexton. Mary Chapman continued to guide our music program as we navigated masking guidelines, Covid procedures, and the lack of a consistent organist after Steven Cook departed to follow his husband to a new call in Nashville. We continue to search for an organist, and all the while Mary remains an energetic, pastoral, and flexible presence. It is such a joy to have the choir back consistently.

I am incredibly thankful for this congregation: for members whose generosity, creativity, and passion for justice push us to make a needed difference; for a staff that inspires and challenges one another, and who so often put up with my next “great idea.” Though I wouldn't have chosen to take two months of leave, I am grateful for so many leaders who stepped into the breach. I have been trying to continue to make room for others as I have returned.

We are taking hopeful next steps together. Since our gathering this fall, several leaders have been initiating new directions for ministries. You can see in our “Register Report” that the fourth quarter of 2022 had the strongest attendance numbers we have seen since 2019. Our online engagement also continues to be strong. 2023 will be a building and re-building year.

I am deeply encouraged by the Stewardship numbers this year. We have both the highest number of pledges and the highest dollar total in my time as rector. You are investing in the growth of this church. In the year ahead, I invite you to keep leaning into this work. Our city, our nation, our world needs a church like Holy Communion. Our capacity to grow into the ministry God dreams for us grows each time one of us takes a step in faith and says, “I'll step up and lead.” I pray this year will stick with us, as we learn to step up and maintain our flexibility in the years ahead.