

It is hard to put together an annual report like the one you are viewing and *not* be overwhelmed and amazed at the sheer number of people who are involved in the vibrancy of our ministry together at St. Francis. It is also very humbling. This is a helpful and healthy reminder that I am not responsible for the richness of our life together. I, like you, play a role. The accrual of all of the people and all of the actions over the course of the year reflect what continues to be a healthy parish. Thank you for your part in making this so.

It is little wonder that we focus on the individual, or, perhaps more precisely, the human. The flesh. We are an incarnational tradition. We believe that not only did God bless and hallow the whole of creation and human beings in the beginning, but in the fullness of time, God entered into the totality of our being. Jesus is the sign of the presence of God with us and for us no matter where we are. Not, as some would counsel, as a cure-all for everything that ails you. Rather, God's entrance into the fleshly realm of our reality is the full and beautiful and harrowing participation in our humanity.

It is not that God is apart from us. But, as we note in the Christmas proclamation, God is *with* us. Not in angel choruses singing from the heavenly realms. Not in spiritual mumbo jumbo that is fully divorced from our experience of life. Not even in the wishful thinking that tends toward superstition if we are not careful. God comes to us where we are and is with us where we are. And for those of us at St. Francis, we happen to be *here*.

What I have noticed this past year about being *here* is the ongoing surprise of the myriad ways that God meet us in the flesh and allows for life, enters into our sorrow and pain, struggles for what is right, and celebrates the ongoing entry into who it is that we are to be on the part of all people. I know this because I saw it. Which is, perhaps, one of the perks of my role. I get to see the goodness and grace manifest in so many ways.

So, some of what I have seen includes:

1. The amazing work of Patricia Lydon over her term as warden, and her ongoing support even while caring for her husband after a bike crash this past spring.
2. The willingness and grace of Kim Henderson, Sue Rutz, and Annette Herber to step into leadership roles in difficult circumstances and to do so with such wisdom and courage.
3. The wonderful work of Jim Fredericks and Richard Weidlich to lead the choir and continue to provide such richness and beauty week in and week out.
4. The Choir and their grace in handling the different configuration of their make up and keeping the focus on worship.
5. The amazing leadership of Claudia Bilotto and Gerrianne Delaney in leading the *Miles for a Mission*, and the committee that put together the best race yet was truly phenomenal.

6. Deacon Edrice Viechweg ended her ministry with us in April of this past year. Her sense of the gospel, commitment to those in need, wisdom, and sense of humor were a blessing to us all.
7. Vicar Debra Slade continues to awaken within all of us a sense of the presence of God through her preaching and equipping others for ministry through the Lay Eucharistic Visitors and Prison Ministry programs.
8. The former wardens of St. Francis—Alice Smith, Carol Rice, Ed Happ, Frank Baker, Lillian Kraemer, Betsy Adams, Brian Snover, Tad Kinne, Nancy Geary, Jim Quinn, Cathy Ostuw, and Patricia Lydon continue to be sources of support and wisdom.
9. The community partners that we engage with from Building One Community to the Interfaith Council to Stamford Cradle to Career to UConn Stamford and so many others offer a vision of what the church looks like in the 21st century. It's name? Collaboration.
10. Speaking of collaboration, Rabbi Josh Hammerman and Imam Kareem Adeeb are two individuals who embody for me the best of what inter religious collaboration means. They are great friends and wonderful representatives of the heart of their traditions.
11. The Vestry and their monthly reflections which elicit deep thought, pathos, and a vibrant connection between faith and life.
12. Joe Mygatt and Peter Weber and Chuck Harless who are the unsung heroes of Building and Grounds.
13. Mario Forte and his work as Property Manager.
14. Maria Mills who has worked tirelessly for years to keep the churches and parish hall clean and beautiful.
15. The Book Club group which loves to engage in all manner of discussions around books that are of a “religious” theme as well as finding the theological meaning beyond a more “secular” book.
16. The ongoing faithfulness and consistent great work from Cindy Schroer who provides support in the office every week.
17. The unbelievable and high level of work that Alison Quinn does gratis as our bookkeeper. We are extremely fortunate to have someone so skilled doing this and her generosity is amazing.
18. The Lay Eucharistic Visitors are the embodiment of what the meal they deliver symbolizes: love and grace. Their support of those who are unable to attend worship is a wonderful ministry.
19. The Prayer Shawl Ministry Group can be a bit irreverent I have heard, but its work is nothing short of holy, as they develop shawls and caps and gloves for people to use as well as know that they are being prayed for every time they use these items.
20. The Finance Committee may seem a bit esoteric when it comes to incarnation, but these wonderful minds are set at tasks that allow us to recognize our financial situation and to

respond in ways that allow us to maximize what we do as a parish and prepare for ongoing ministry.

21. Tyler Stevens' work with the youth from Sunday to Sunday and the Easter Egg Event provides a safe and fun experience for the children who attend on Sundays and a great start to the Easter weekend!
22. And to Audrey Roco who so generously gives of time and talent to cover the thankless job of our financial secretary. You rock!

You can see that the list just keeps growing, and the reports that you will read express more of the incarnating of God's love and presence in our midst. I know there are more people and programs that could be mentioned, and Lord knows how much I recognize their vitality to our life together. However, more importantly than being a place holder for certain types of work that we do or a pat on the back for doing something good, all of this work is a part of the incarnation of the holy in our midst. We may not always recognize it, but God meets us in these actions, and in their own way, these activities bring about the presence—some might even say the kingdom—of God. Because of this, I am blessed to minister with you. Blessings on you all!!