

St. James, Bedford, Rector's Wardens' Report for 2014

As I write this in preparation for our Annual Vestry Meeting, it is the middle of January, 2015, and I am wondering where 2014 has gone. It seems like yesterday we planning for our last year's meeting.

The year 2014 began with the Vestry Meeting, at which some twenty parishioners participated, and we reviewed our position at the end 2013. We found that our attendance numbers were fairly consistent with the previous year, and our financial position would enable us to carry on God's work here, as we have been doing for the last several years. We still have a solid core of faithful parishioners attending our regular Sunday services, a very dedicated and active group of ladies in our ACW, and several other volunteers who seem to appear from nowhere when the need arises. As is the case in most parishes, the ACW is the backbone and driving force of our parish. During the past year they have, once again, held the Ash Wednesday luncheon, the St. Patrick's Day ham supper, two rummage sales, the chicken and biscuits supper, the Christmas Tea and Bazaar, and they are always prepared to do a last minute event when the need arises. We owe them a great deal of thanks and recognition for all that they do, and we would find ourselves in a very different situation if it were not for the ACW. We truly appreciate all that you do for our beloved church, and we say thank you to each and every one of you.

During the summer months we held joint worship services at 10:00 AM, and they were well attended. It is always good to see more people in the church and to have a little more time for fellowship following the services. Another very successful Vacation Bible School was held in August, with twenty seven children attending. A follow up to that event was a Christmas party held at the parish hall for all the participants, and some of the parents, with the hope that there will be even more participants next August.

The Altar Guild continues to do their work, though it is mostly behind the scenes. We all benefit from it every Sunday, and on special occasions, as the altar is always lovingly prepared, with the proper colours in place, and the flowers beautifully arranged. Thanks go out to Karen and Hardy for all the flowers that they supply during the spring and summer months, and for maintaining the flower gardens around the church and at the entrance to the property.

Our buildings are in very good shape, as much has been done this past year. Barry Bockus has given very generously of his time and talents to bring our buildings more in line with the standards of today. He, with a little help from some volunteers, has insulated the parish hall to the extent that we are now seeing a significant saving in our heating costs. Some insulation has been added to the church tower and ceiling, and more will be added to the basement to make our heating system more efficient. Other additions and renovations will all contribute to lowering our costs of operations, and the cost recuperation period for many of these improvements is very short so we will begin to benefit from all our efforts very soon. The interior renovations of the rectory have been completed and the exterior work will hopefully be done in the spring. Our huge, old oak tree was taken down last year and the fence will be fully repaired in the spring. The lawn will then be redone and we should once again have a nice yard. The hedge and excess growth of brush at the west end of the parking lot has been cleaned up looks much more welcoming.

We are blessed with the people we have around us. Andy faithfully leads us in our worship with help from June and Lynn. June regularly presides at morning prayer services in Philipsburg and Farnham, and also visits parishioners who cannot attend services, often administering home communion to those who desire it. Elizabeth continues her work as our sexton, keeping the church and parish hall clean and tidy, and also acts as our coordinator for the hall rentals which bring us some added revenue, as well as provide a service to the wider community. Unfortunately, our organist, Francine, has had to step away from providing our music and we are in search of a replacement organist. Lynn and Andy are leading the weekly Bible Study, which is well attended by people from several parishes in the area. Dawn is continuing her work as Parish Secretary, and Hardy manages to keep our finances on track and keeps us up to date on our current situation. Barry and Barbara have been a great addition to the Corporation as Wardens and hopefully will continue in their roles. Our sidesmen are faithfully on duty to welcome us, and any visitors we may have, at our Sunday services. Barry has joined our small team of readers so that we are able to organize a schedule for regular services. Some volunteers have come forth and we have been enjoying a coffee hour after the service on every second Sunday of the month. If anyone else would like to be an organizer for any particular Sunday, we would be glad to speak with you. I thank all those who have contributed, and continue to contribute, in any way, large or small, towards our common goals.

We are still carrying on our discussions with the neighbouring parish of Stanbridge East, Frelighsburg, Pigeon Hill and Stanbury, praying that we can reach an agreement that will enable all of us to continue our presence here in this area for many years to come. There will, obviously, need to be some changes to the way we do our mutual ministries, but hopefully we will be able to reach a conclusion that will be both beneficial and acceptable to all the parties involved. In the meantime, we strive to continue to do God's work here to the best of our abilities, as we have done for nearly two centuries.

Thank you, all, for your continued support, encouragement, and participation, as we, with God's help, continue to do His work here in this place, and beyond.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Dryden, Rector's Warden
[450-248-7311](tel:450-248-7311)